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for Charlotte

To be in love and have that love approved—
Is that not better than bamboo in gorges
Is that not almost wonderful as ferns?

23 March 1993

What you arm yourself against
never comes to combat.

Perhaps it has been already defeated
by all your anxiety

and slinks away to hide
among the unthreatening unmade.

Or maybe it has defeated you already
and the surprise that waits for you at the crossroads

—missed plane, smiling surgeon, falling wall—
is only that First Assailant's coup de grace.

23 March 1993

for Charlotte

How long it's been that I've known you
Since I've known you.
What is my body for?

23 March 1993

THE GIFTS

The image of it waiting
tone or stone—

Charlotte's home
the jewels of elsewhere cool in her hand.

24 March 1993

The orderly unfolding of it
is on the face of it
like a forest. Underneath
it's like a cup with dust in it.
Just a little. You can rinse it out.

24 March 1993

PRAYER TO THE MAGDALEN ON THE
FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

for Charlotte

the one who
with her curious hair
inveigled
through his public toes

(customs
of those times!)
the feet of God
into her oily mysteries

look kindly
on this devoted lover
let her
understand love

from the bottom up
it always rouses
to attend
that feast of clouds

from which only crows
and doves and such
depend
their messages

easy to hear hard to read
o Magdalen lady
of a tower
climbing ever

the auricular stairs
or spiral galaxy
into the mind of the world
be gentle to us

who clamber after
up the steps of you
feasting our eyes
on all you remember.

25 March 1993

ALL ANGELS

When you say their name like this you bring
all the angels (German gothic, copper-roofed
Brooklyn's most gorgeous verdigris
right next door to the Masonic Temple,

the rites of (hu)Man
are all we are.

Mystery on mystery piled.

grey stone
the color of the sky.

Angels of copper and vinegar
angels of pennies and railroad tracks
violet paper rupees angels of walls
angels of yardsticks on fire, flaming rulers,
angels of topaz and spearmint and hope,
shining eyes of the Sikkim princess! angels of war.

When you say a name the Arrivers
arrive, I told you that before, and all
you have to do to bring them is to say,

just say. And what you say
will enter to you whispering, a thing
follows its name like a shadow follows
this squirrel leaping across the snow.

26 March 1993

ARAB MERCHANTS DON'T WRITE HOME

The settings
that come near

not wanting
or to say

the price of something
a dark spot

*in the circle
of vision*

something seen
someone's son

a traveler
out of his element

in northern ferment
what water sees

indifferencies
strung

like harp strings
to send far

over his mind
the cool Black Sea

sends light
crazy into the west.

26 March 1993

for Charlotte

What eye done and gone in a day
Does do to stay in what is seen
You travel from red light to red light
Like a geranium — things forgive as you go

Looking is not the same as seeing
And eye is cagey about done and been
“the ultimate welfare of the State
i.e., roses” makes no sense to him
(He eye) or her (on high) to gather
Disparate elements in one provender
Then feed it to swine (“...and those are
Pearls ...”) what his eyes marvel at
Is there (*da*) solid like a house (*dar*)
There for the seeing (*darshan*) for a benefit
(*Don*) or gift you (all that is not eye)
Keep insisting is roses. Eye give roses.

You are all that is not eye. Eye sees
You tell, the mystery. Every spoken word's
A marriage (“to give in marriage”) and
A child born wise. Eye saw two doors
Donation of the light. Be at the house
When eye gets home noisy with roses.

27 March 1993

To give oneself the outrage of permission
stoking the ocean liner engines
for a pointless journey into the heart of the world

balançant ta mâtüre you also carry
windswept and sun-leached the medicine of wind—
πασχω he says and the leaf turns over

settles to the courtyard dust just in time
to meet a gust of breeze arising
as if it came from out of the ground.

2.

As he did, unhid, foul rancid kerchief slung round his jaws.
When one has been everyone and been dead
and walks again through ordinary doorways

squeaking with lime dust and cinnamon,
the chinks of tendentious instruction
leave their blue persuasions as our veins,

when one has been dead and come to be nobody again
and walks through the house calling for wife or sisters
stop crying and get me something to drink

from this strange world where water still knows how to flow.

28 March 1993

Something always needed to be said
I could not help the woman
driving off into a mistake

in a small grey car driving to that nonsense
which is the playful hedges shaped
to look like almost sense, the topiary
around the house of hell

where she will become the one
her self one time had the chance of fleeing.

28 March 1993

They carried the living and their food
down through the roof hole the ladders
were saplings tied with branches crossed
and going down into a house was climbing
down into a shadow

 they fetched the water
 from the sky by itself or
 rarely the rock taste of the spring
red-slimed with something that left

its taste under a fingernail. Then was a house.
A message left under a tree.
All this is meant for me.

A message under a tree is a shadow.
A hole in the roof is the moon.
A rock is something you can touch.

I am just something you can name.
The lesson is sinew of something, lithe rod,
bow strung by a man's last strength

but he has no strength. It trails on the ground like light.

29 March 1993

ÇATAL HÜYÜK

1.

I want to talk about extremes
extremes of it I want to claim
as my own the blue dust that flakes off the wall
I want to own the shoulders of her
raised a little in the hunch of meditation
like a vulture flying out of plaster
her mind on One Thing
but her arms trail down caressing the necks of beasts

I want to claim the beasts the needs
so specified their mouths are open their hooves sing
a score of grievous musing in dirt
I want the dirt they stand on the wind
that rushes up her clothes

for she is clothed she is the first one she is
clothes herself and later
she will be a tower by the sea
when everything is flat
and what she is is the changes that we work are made to work
must make and still loop our lovely arms around the beasts.

29 March 1993

Know these to arms a sight
holding in the morning
what in the night time even conceives
a distant sound like a waterfall
suddenly happening to a house.
I have forgotten everything but the names.

30 March 1993

for Charlotte

By the huge Sawkill
rising,
 rushing bigger
than the Dranse you said

here by the bend of it
under the high road
the first flowers

of this long year—
snowdrops, droop-headed
in rain-bright.

“We have come through,”
the dying man reported,
a smile left in the wood,

rock, green shoots
even by my house wall,
flooded road.

30 March 1993

me now.

The cat of mind
prowls free of the head house,
alley free, puddle spring with a cloud in it,

where does it go or? No.

All it is is going. Not from not towards.
And certainly, animal, not here.

31 March 1993

Then there are close things blue things
there is a metal hidden in the air

all this is vague as a sail on a sea
a formula in historical linguistics full of C and V

the central government appoints the mayors of each commune
and the mayor appoints five members to a municipal council or
zhueho, opinions differ whether the word derives from the
word for “play” or the word for “yoke,” and the people of the
commune elect five additional members

or Latin *dig/itus* “finger,” Greek *deik/numi* “I point out [with a
finger],” Tibetan [*tchik*], “one.” Or Greek *lam/bano*, “I go,”
Tibetan *lam*, “a road.” Chinese *deh*, “manly and thingly virtue,”
English *doughty*, of similar meaning. Or our language. Or
words for everything around the room, and not many words
for outside. No specific word in English for “snow in August.”

But it is not vague it is a prayer
hard as a fingernail. Only the god could be vague,

inattentive perhaps, away in Ethiopia drinking coffee.
It all is closer than we thought—

which makes the exclusions of Bosnia even more inexcusable,
the brothers and the sisters, the look

in the eye of a dying woman.
In the street. Sniper fire. The massacre of the Vyukovans.

It is close. We have our dialects, our smells.
But we have language. To have language is to be the same.

THE APODICTIC

to know you as my hands know you my arms
are a mind that tries to comprehend you

but like meditation it is so easy I can't believe
the self-revealing evidence the breath

31 March 1993
for Charlotte