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ON THE PORCH OF LAW:
FIRST MORNING SESSION

1.
this is not nowhere
or is not Japan

Galactic rumors
find me find me

the esurient also will I impleve,
the shouldered low will I lift up

until the broken daylight
mends

it harrows me,
this lithe between.

A woman.
Is there a remedy.
A republic.

2.
Notary, is there a remedy
for all the obsessions
Love wounds me with,

was I not a child
abused by Love's sly fingers,
by her glances roused,
worked over by the sight of them flaunting it
agitated by every breeze,
shes, trees, hes, clouds,
battlements?

Did I not gnaw the given bone?

Why does your law, maître, leave without remedy

this battered cordial creature this wounded Eye

for whom these daily! goldfinches turn
brighter every quick reminder?

I say I am a one corrupted by desires
not every one of them my own,
I say I am impelled by images—
are not the image-mongers liable,

those masters of must-see? I appear
as a plaintiff
in the court
of the galaxy
short-winded
despairing
yet demanding
the retributions
of cosmic jurisprudence.

For every one is abused by insolent images.

3.

And often the images have hands and loins and arms.

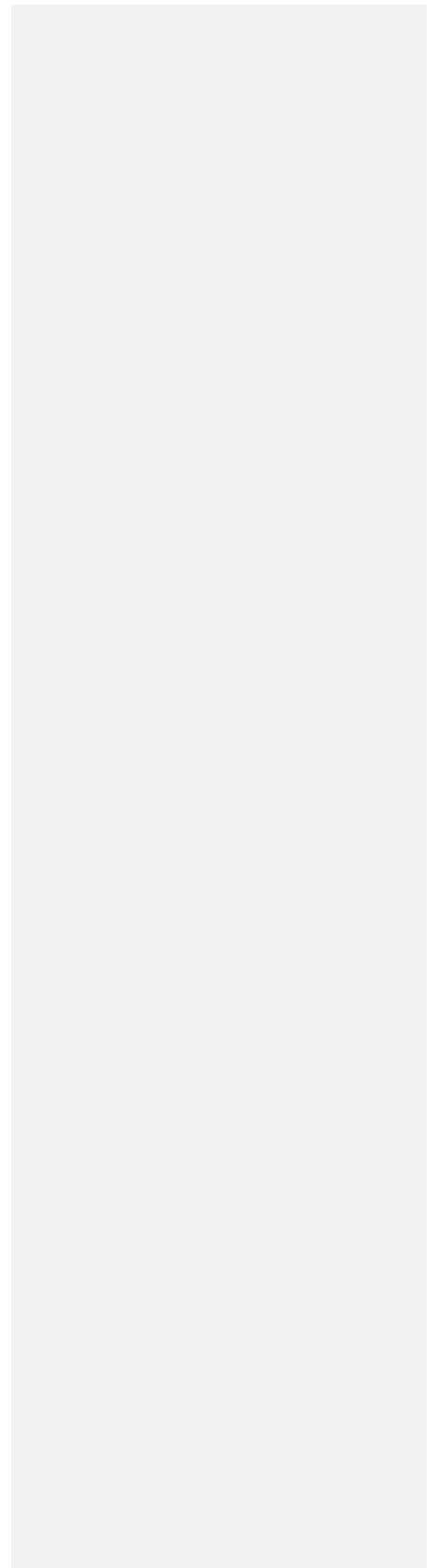
And after all the sparrows you suppose
are eagles adequate
to rape and savage
the quiet mind,

the easter feeling the slow
roll of mind to know itself
untethered by sense-objects

plausibly arrayed as a parkland of desires.
Each age discovers nothing
but to turn

one more way
away from mind
into the vague consolations of impermanence.

16 April 1993



THE ARGUMENT FROM FELICITY

that we are sometimes happy, that
there are weekends when the teeth don't ache
and blizzards do not paralyze

is the worst kind of evidence.
Sunshine distracts us from the dark.
The logic of the situation is infernal—

whereas in torment there is a dream of change.

16 April 1993

Castaway in the thought of rain
the convertible swerves across the brain
into the sleek black caverns of 1947
a dream tears all the way up the seam

16 April 1993

Though I did what I could
the night came down
and left dawn visible, much birded,
a little breezy, the woman gone.

Born and die alone. The mind
alone endures experience.
Nothing but this feeling
and feeling's nothing. The spaces
that make sense of words,

some spiceberry bushes by the tracks
as if time had never ended.

17 April 1993

No ground for the permission
he had lived as a hermit
till the red stripes down his cloak were the color of
speckles on a trout's flank zipping down the Sawkill
past the murderers in baggy pants with their rods.
This week, this April, the killing time.
There are pale pale changes of things to meet the quieting mind
he hoped, he wanted life to last into knowing
and knowing quiet all things into quiet sense.
That is why one stays alone on the low hillside
gradully learning to talk back to the crows.

18 April 1993

Sympathy of ravens. One. Then another one. The strut
of prophecy, the strut of him. The kindness to endure
on ruffian abandoned offal, the supremacy of black.

That opera. I have heard you from the blue of sleep
soar into sentences I thought my throat was speaking.

19 April 1993

The egregious dispositions of a scroll
crawling with instructions from the wise
to the wise, shabby with imperatives, short
is not a virtue in these days, o Lord of Gerizim
one asks in vain among dove-merchants
for a blush-breasted whiteling that might
on a cool spring morning fly to you
in your gold house in faraway. The scroll
unrolls down my arms, tickles my elbow
as I make shift to read the rickety old
Samatitan characters, this is better
than Bible, this is heresy with pale thighs
and white-faced heifers at their food.
I stand up now and put you to sleep with it,
we snore together in the picturesque
shadowy inwards of the house of prayer,
I with my eyes open, you turned inward
to all your wives and husbands and that
sort of relationship. I am alone with God,
the purest language, the productive silence,
breeze in the hairs on the back of my hands.

24 October, 2016

HUECO:
THE DAY 8-BIRD IN A WATER BIRD YEAR

1.

The day 8-bird in a Water Bird year
reminds us of cat-tail grasses in the marshes
where somebody was born

— *this* is my nature
this mysterious and innocent proliferation
between the owned land and the impartial beauty of,
the sea.

Birds measure and declare you never
heard so many certainties so anxiously voiced,
joyous, scared, like Baptists at prayer.

2.

America is too big for just one calendar.
All these blue flowers on our lawn, just these
need Attica and Corinth and a pinch of Lydia
to say their whens: "I blossom when the solid
is full of sudden, I answer water, I carry the dark story
into meek sunlight where they bend to touch me
and the earth I come from rushes up to take them
home into the fatherly kingdoms of space,
glad victims you are of such bosses, alas,
I have only a blue week or two to tell you
all family is contrivance, trap, alliance, sleep."

3.

Discourse like that — mythy, hushed with awe
at its own soft lips a little dry with telling —
how can we ever get enough calendars, daffodils,
blue-eyed grass, gold finches on grey branches,
squirrels in their business suits among this glory,
needing, so many numbers needing, namedays
and saint's days and star reckonings

to know the time by any other name than now.

4.

Too big for numbers and Latin names,
America is a vow waiting to be taken,
taken and kept, prayer-flags on the hill,
semis snooze by hard along 9G,
sun's stuck in the sticks of maples, maybe,
or sycamores, anywhere, bag of suet
and a fallen barn, this medicine of mine.
So new we are,

5.

so many signs.
Where did I lose you
who ruled so pale
over my dingy mind?
So many signs.
Am I the sinner
who took the IRT
to the office every
morning hat on my head
and a key in my hand?
Am I the winter?
I own things now
and there are many gods.
Sundances, vespers,
trances, a house
burning on the plains
trapping the dubious
integers of love. Count me,
I am American,
I am made of numbers,
I have loved the world
this body tells me
till I imagined it *the* world
where *you* are
with your birds and phosphorus

your credit cards and truth.
America is too big for truth,
the calendar is every bird,
feet shuffling in scree,
a woman coming home
with an armful of scrolls,
imported calendars,
how can they work here?

6.

Opportunities to forget.
Nightmares.
I look up Waco in the dictionary, find
“hollow, empty, vain,
empty-headed, resonant, inflated

soft, spongy” the way ground is
or wool, heaped oily smelly
all over the ground
slumped from the shearer's hands,

and also a “hole or hollow,
gap or void,” it's a break
in the action, a “notch or nick of a wheel” or
gear turning or still,

an “interval of time or space;
vacancy.”

It is emptiness.

Not far down the page is *huevo*, “egg,” the shell
left empty when the bird of the day
(of the year) has flown away,

this shell the daylight is,
of some preposterous Bird that lords it
over us all day long in hot intemperate
yellow majesty. Short-lived time,

the egg. The breed.
And nearer still
is *hueso*, "a bone" or "stone"
or "core, the part
of the limestone
which remains unburnt in the crucible."

A bone without a name
that doctors handle,

a stone without hope,
a core of emptiness.

Hueco (or Waco), Texas,
19 April 1993 the children
in the fiery furnace
set out to find their father.

The cameras of the universal government
look with curiosity at the billowing black smoke.

20 April 1993

SERMON ON LANGUAGE

This — I mean whatever comes to mind when you read *this* — is an organization — from the proto-Greek *organ-grindo*, “the music swells, the monkey dances”— dedicated to enshrining reality deep in the heart of itself. Its code name is Language, and it was invented a war or two ago — actually during the Second Gobi War, the one that ended the paleolithic — to confer on sunlight such blessings as “It is sunning,” or “The sun is raining,” or “Shine happens,” according to the by-laws of your local lodge. For individual languages — like Basque or Xhosa or Cantonese or French — are in fact created and sustained as lodges of the ancient freemasonic society of Speakers, the ones with Language on their side, the so-called humans. All other societies —and every form of society— is subsidiary to this, this elegant and persuasive artifact which self-embeds its rules and by-laws at once in every member who pays *the dues of breath* — what we call speaking. You do not have to think very long or hard to learn that all mysteries are ensconced in language and extractable from language, and that obedience to the intricacies of language in turn reveals the exact *astro-dynamic efflorescent energy of place and circumstance* we nickname Truth. The conjuncture. The lock. The habit the heart wears in the market, the song it hums in the bathroom, the text encoded in its midnight snores. Language is astrology indoors, is the moon in the bedroom and the sun in your pocket, its rules are your rules and there is hardly a rumor — though there is a rumor — of anyone

RK

Comment [1]: Page: 1
from the proto-Greek *organ-grindo* “the music swells, the monkey dances.”

disobedient to its prescriptions. Timid Nietzsche and meek Blake followed its laws like lambs, and Lenin lay down with De Maistre to graze on public language. Only the one — there was one — who woke up to the *sleep of named things* ever broke the lodge law and got away with it. All the way away. Fainting, we follow.

20 April 1993

After the rain
the moss-covered rocks
astonishingly green
in pale light up
coming out of last year's leaves.

I live, why do I live
always so close to the line.

20 April 1993
KTC

When the date of anything arises
we say your number's up
in England it stays with the car forever
here we turn to another page
waiting in the antechamber keeps the count
waiting for the red rose with silver foil
arrayed around his petals a rose of gold
counted over the new spring fields
the folds the words a book is folds
the words fall in are lost there
found here a bird delights.
That is it. All we have is joy.
The rest is noise. The old lama
from the Calcutta charnel ground
lived eight years among burning corpses
and learned (or always knew? how
can we learn what we never knew?)
to let go of everything but joy.

21 April 1993
for Charlotte

The head is too long and swarms with desires

A B E S T I A R Y

when does the door
learn how to open?

when the shadow of sleep hits the number Nine
it's like a hat sometimes or a little girl

an afternoon a kettle

The strange part is we know all the answers
a dove calls a rain falls
so many differences come out of the ground

and in our economy the leading
commodity is *acquired inward experience*

the more the media. Every good boy deserves fun.

22 April 1993

THE MEETING

One tries what
one can or once
one could
if it matters

it will work
as and if it does
because of what it was
long ago

when you were really
you and not this
shadow they talk through
waiting for a word

you told them before.

22 April 1993

Standing close to the loading dock the pioneers
watched the furnishings vanish into coherence
as the man talked, christ he had a voice like a boat
and it lifted them over the waves of the actual
into a smooth current of running ever before the wind
or "downstream" they imagined it in layman's nautical
while the ground broke free under them and the weather
was. There is no place to be going to and no reason to talk.
Philadelphia was a song in a sad fife, loss of Limerick,
the battle of nowhere he woke from screaming every morning
and knew it was his wife. A dog beside him.
Beware The House. Down by the daffodils
a woman furnishes the rockery with blue bulbs.
Colors handle us. There is no accent on this last remark.

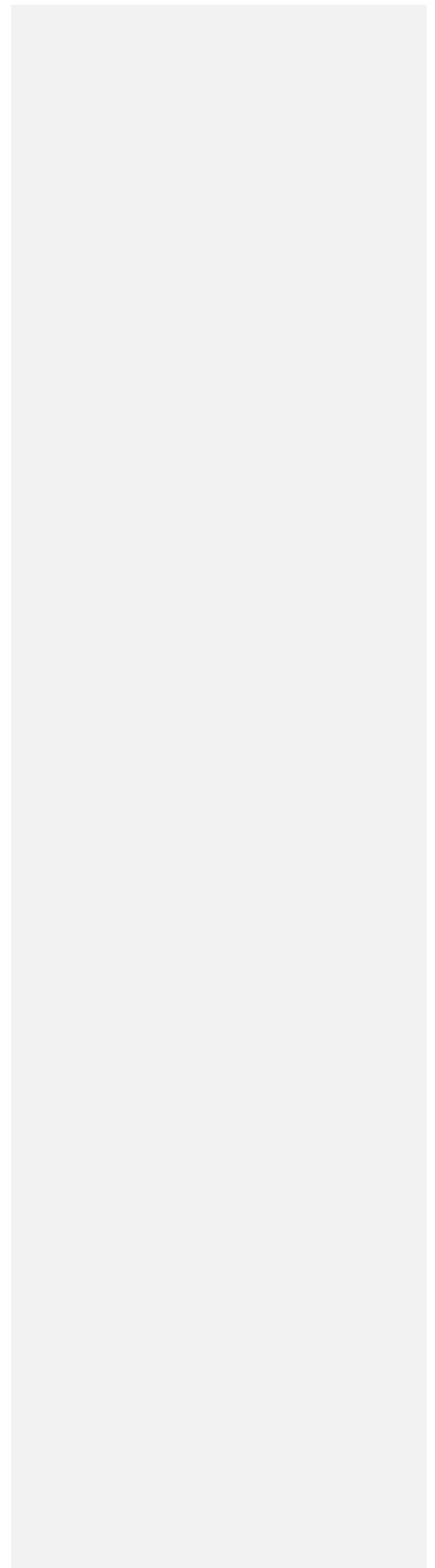
22 April 1993

φυλαξ και γαιας ωψ

Earth's face and that warden
of our senses need provides
to till our differences and from that darnel seed
provoke a Naxos full of wheatfields
stretching to the sea

and every kernel glut with life

23 April 1993



THE ROUTE

Locate the moon. In its proper slot
(a fox's eye at dawn; butter
oozing out of toast; a pilgrim)
it underscores the fortunes of the Wise.

Just left outside all night (mall
decisions; banter overheard in stone;
a toad wakes up, money changes
hands) it leaves an iris

at the side of the house, pointing
to heaven and busy being purple.
But not saying a thing. Food
is like that. It moves us to move

without discussion of the journey.
And so the ancients
in the books we forget to read
called the moon *the dead man's food*.

23 April 1993

You'll never guess who just came out of my mouth.

23 IV 93

Good morning verity
I know you slept all night
slim beside us
while in dream I wondered

counting the contours
things take as their own—
peaks and dales and hidden places.

We wait for our true names
the way an April maple waits for leaves.

23 April 1993

AND IF SHE TOUCHED HIM

One celebration of the Magdalen was not recorded. It was a time when the *Noli* fell away and her hands were at last permitted to understand how little happens. We don't know if when her hands reached out she felt nothing at all when her flesh engaged the seeming of his own, just wavered like mindless fish through the glory of his seeming body. Or whether it was just like every other time when they were people in the world together, the way everybody is and no other way to be. If it was like every other time, her skin knew the tiny ecstasy of touch, and that was that. Ecstasy of other-touch, the thing that no skin can do alone. We do not know. And in any case it all depends on what she remembered, after, when her hand fell back beside her, to the unquestioned reality —as it seemed— of her cotton dress, that felt almost rough after his smooth skin, or the mere air it had passed through to bounce gently off her thigh and come to rest. What did she remember? It may be that her memory turned to her lovingly (for the mind loves us) and says: "I am everything you remember, Mary, but do not touch me." The memory of a touch and the memory of no touch, these two are just the same, same substance, same emptiness. A shadow speaks. What it said and what we heard, who can be clear? Touch, no touch? Ever after it lives in memory, a dangerous neighborhood of mind. She looks down at her hands now and still tries to remember. All she could be sure of, all we have, is the permission.

23 April 1993
[finished 27 April 1993]

That I was caught there among the revelers
with a sad smile on my face like a rivulet
in April making haste over soft grasses
swept lank in the direction of its flow—
I slept with you because you were my body
and woke alone because you finally were not.

23 April 1993

AFTERDEATH

this honeycake delivered to the mourners
squeezed out of the body of the sky

death's placenta a feeling feeling
eventually we are born again to feel

23 April 1993

