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THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD

for Charlotte

Melchizedek was waiting. And those others,
the Wisdom Kings and the not so wise,
priests of it, stone-carriers, shell-musicians,
women of the truth.

In shadows
you still see them, can see them,
they hang around all the corners of the day,
not just at morning,

slosh idly
in the sea shallows, shadows, the water
comes up to that delicate line on them
between ankle and knee (different for each
person) where The Body begins.
For me it's three north of the astragal,
inches a sea wind tells me I'm alive.

It's Rockaway. It's Ithaka. It's Krete.
Your flippy dress seagulls with a seabreeze
I yearn to feel. The inordinate precision
of printed texts, those accurate maps of nowhere
cough on the small print, names of all
the others, every word, every city
is my lover, mother of me,
my peace.

Wave-talk. Sand shushes me,
sand script, toes splay in messages,
read quick what waves wash.
Gone again. When the water reaches My Body
well before kneebreak
the magic begins.

You hear their voices too
old charmers, farmers
of psychedelic wheat

rye barley

the grains are toasted
in hot sand
then winnowed free
air-dried
ground coarse to look
like the sands of Samye Ling
and swallowed down with
minimal liberating tea.

The Wise bring yeast.

From the shadowy portals of Notre Dame
a voice is calling, womanly contralto, *Ego
sum oriens*

and then again
in the language
of ordinary places
Je suis levure

as time
I dawn

as place
I east

As food
I yeast

O be
hold me

contoured
of the ever

dark a
shade

despising light
I rise to it.

The sun a dark core.

24 April 1993

Talking into an empty world

he said me
I mean to wonder

or Empty Talk

to slip
between the cracks

of a world grown so
compacted

the way we live
for the fun of it

the billions
on us!

and what
to say?

The ear's a lovely hollow place
whose hills and rills around
coax the sound to come in

Symbol of the Forty-Ninth Degree:
a liar sleeping with a leper.

The moon

a gull's cry
trapped in granite.

25 April 1993

THE THINGS OF THE BECAUSE

for Charlotte

were waiting
slow birds
at partial seed
a Muslim dying

measures minding
our habits a cloth
unwound from the hips
hoping other

and this mild
waking this clear
hachure of branches
greying

as if water meant it
and some eyes
were pleasantly
willing to look

and it is never
this way is it the blue
cloth of religion
indelible indigo

I remember that
from the first
intensity looking
at my body

wondering where all
the colors came
and yesterday

was just yesterday

when opening the eyes
you lent me
after the dark of
talking I saw

suddenly my hand
as someone else's
holding
what I held

and not even for a minute
fell for it
thinking so this
is me

the roughness of it
is all I have to give you
as of a rope a
rock. Of a ship.

26 April 1993

[responding to a poem of Michael Blitz]

the hawks
have it

that's the problem
or the incunabular
vacancy
between how we learned
to say it and they
learned to fall

alright. It is
almost as simple as
this. Clarke is dead,
yesterday we saw
a turkey vulture
take off by the river.

Only it isn't.
The man finally
holds the form
holds him.

26 April 1993

[foreword to a video reading from *A Strange Market*]

Those who know the day¹ beware
talking into an empty world

[I present these images:]

to show the pieces of my world
or heal them to speak—

pieces, here and there.

There will be *friction*
between what is seen and what is said—

how could it be other
wise?

For friction is the essence of it,
rough, the pull between
Nature and Mind—

nature, that Caliban of (master) Mind.

The places
that live me,

here.

26 April 1993

¹Shakespeare's Birthday

THE LORE

*old house old something
old people inside
old woman on the roof
washing her face with black soap*

*old house old same thing again
old door with no lock
old window with no glass
old woman with dirty face*

I read this on the computer screen
in Welsh a language
some corpuscles of me some
twist of me pretends to understand

it does not matter our lies
finally turn into truth at least
the kind of truth that language knows
comes back to us again

same thing again again
from every billboard from the screen
from the crow in the leafless tree
and every child repeats it

screaming his heart out at high noon.

27 April 1993

I heard the wind of yesterday
blowing the day in o
a bare tree sounds better than a leafy

the hollow bony hum of it
shivering a moan
and the house hears!

reverberations
of the wind's lyre
hum too in the home wood.

27 April 1993

THE GREY CHURCH IN LA BORNE

for Charlotte

1.

Seeing is finished. Glad neurons resting.
But they never do. A color lonely
is paradise absolute. The *hinges*
of words too, that they swing,
Walt, move in and out of reference to,

a man born old.
A horse without a mountain.
Mexico.

(Where does your skin seem realest?)

Calcium and tree roots, maybe,
egg-white sticky on your hands
you are a porter, you heaved
the whole saratoga up the stairs
and opened all the drawers were in it
lavender smell and slick memory

(where does Eros generate
that morning feeling in your primary
field,
 your Compensation
for Separation from all other Beings
(that's called the Skin
full of feelings and manumissions and goodnights)

where does that delicate fever
surface-feeder sample along the light?

Low-lying remedies. Lynx
at your flower. Trumpet-shaped
the artifact
touches you

is all it means.

Holds you through the night till sodium comes back.

2.

if just once could find this answer
and engrave it on the light outside
so every glimpse of anything
would repeat it,

sense-organ

and sense-object and sense-consciousness
these eighteen lunatics of our normal lives,

no more than that except this keen misfire.

3.

Yesterday walking at Clermont
we saw Fred Hammond walking
through the woods east of us
with one of his fine old British
spaniels while the other, poor Sam,
limped towards us, a dog
of the dragon kind with up-swingeing
plume of a white tail unlikely
for all his mope. I hailed
his master and he spoke,
his mind on the sufferings of kind.
Beast selves walk with us in daylight.
Far up the rut a dying dog stoops to feed.

4.

While one part dies one part is a-borning—
we have no easy word for that relation, *get born* or
be born we say, and *birthing* means another thing,
she does it, or they stand around her
comforting with quotations from recent books.
Passivity is seems then to be born, a vast

fatal lapse whereby we are drawn screaming
and kicking through the Wire-maker's Jig
into the business of the world. The word
tells us this is something that happened to us.
No choice in this bitter lesion. Get a better
language. Bear yourself again.

5.

Art forms and sense fields and feelings,
old age and death and being born.
The story so far. Now it is time
for love, the serial, that orange juice
in front of us masquerading as the sun.
Drink me, I am Tristan's balsam, I am all.

6.

In Van Gogh's painting an old woman
walks beside the old church built
where two roads arrowhead a narrow angle
to join, like the grey church in La Borne,
in which will be a hamlet's little plaza.
Water plashing in the horse-trough. To hear.
A town is to hear. In Van
Gogh's painting the clock tells no time
but it can't be noon because the shadows
spread below the apse or are they
shadows of the pothos leaves that spread
between the window and the postcard
from this unconquerable morning light
not a cloud in the sky and just one
old woman on a cobbly yellow road?

7.

Instructions: from all the texts you have been given
(hundreds of thousands of lines)
just find among all those images
conjured up or cancelled out
or both self-embodying and self-unsaying
anything you can hold in mind

choose one for every degree of the zodiac,
the beast-wheel of arrant images
that in their completeness accurately reckon
a perfect picture of the entire world.
Then choose one more for me
waiting anxious outside the door of things

and this be my exile, a thing said.

28 April 1993

ELEGIAC

Things are catching up with me
The curse of gravity.

29 April 1993

for Charlotte

At 7:31 the geese come down
noising towards our pond

ostensibly from the river but who knows?
the brittle minds of birds

such Elizabethan voices
hocket red-haired habits

fall to a glazed circle: bird alone
loud gander in sun glare on pool.

Angles of such flight. Motivations.
The joyous music of our ignorance.

30 April 1993

When the tool is ready
the wood walks in.
Joseph talks to his son, the son
translates language into wood.

Be there and sit still. A sound
nailed to a piece of wood.
This paper destiny, crossed
boundaries, lines, lines

crossed out, breath
also nailed to the
what is it, is it time
uncoupled from its sequence and

nailed to the sky. Then.
Find it there.
To get onto paper
the heave of saying

when saying is the mind
coming back.
To the place we have
never departed.

30 April 1993

When the owl comes down and sits on the top of the birth pole
The unremarked messenger sidles from behind Corona Borealis
Breathless with complaining. A human life is more important
Than anything. And it says it again. To language is to listen.

30 April 1993
to WE eMagazine
[responding to Katie Yates]