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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

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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 day<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>Shakespeare'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

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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



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*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

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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

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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]