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“each thing’s simple contour”

one said, and bleak
rock, say, sandstone,
arkose, sediments of once-familiar salts
said what does
it know, lizard foot or
they called me “Lizard
Breath” she said

what people call us
red poet she
sketched out the delineation of a natal chart,
Leningrad: starlight: snow
sifting down like dust in a weather
you hardly knew it was winter

except the snow.
You are like that too

the point is that the place made of stone and metal and water
makes who lives there
hence we are made of minerals
in dubious solution

(frozen river; his cabin
heated with kerosene; a Himalayan smell
that was just coal, black
mountain, a mesa, a motel
comfy with showers and cable tv
crane my neck I see the famous mountain)

you astrologer. You donor
of a rod. You blue
kind of stone and a feather, something Roman and old.
Bleak of an eye
(like a kestrel like an eagle)

the river stumbles at your glance.
Gods again, troubles,
lyric nights in old Babylonia.

When people stay alone long enough
they become very clear or very confused.
You decide. Plywood warps in sunlight.
Is it true that passion is the only ground of conversation?

11 May 1993

THE SEQUENCERS

are those who
spin our places — owl, auto,
killing on their way to business,

beyond intention, or
the smiling personage who reads the news
eyes focused just behind our eyes.

In our faces with what happens.
Or an owl. Some call them omens
or karma-bringers, cats and weasels,
crows and their carrion. I saw we see them
and are suddenly not the place we were before.

Our life catches up with our hearts.

12 May 1993

A CORSY MAN A FOOL

boy must fear to be
stricken with conspicuousness
a trashy headland over the city's bay
coarse grass and fat
seagulls snoozing on the swell
the way they do
 the fear of it
is in him
 to become
a sluggish piece of landscape
a mother's lamb a kind of girl
among his harder kind a laugh
like a gull's raucous
unavailing explanations.

12 May 1993

(around Cleveland, great
bend of the suburban line
into lake light,

raptors falling from the clouds
onto the shearlings of Cuyahoga)

a language

I barely understand.

We keep this little place
this closet in the wind
to speak our native tongue
the little one
that no one knows.

\

Morning.
Morning speaks it.

Like a telephone
or an egg or a ship,

something undivided
low in the water from the Netherlands

cardinal blue jay two doves next
flag of the West these seedings
semences, bottoming

into alluvial or
up here high on the chalk ridge
breathing,
simple wedge of Russian sunflowers
find their way in.

Smack of wave on the distant hull,
a sound from the earth,

conveying
passages. Messages,
a sonnerie of ancient kings
presaging a common day,
o wind you royalist.

An absolute.
Up the hill a half mile later
we still hear the engine throb
quietly pervade the forest

matter, a boat goes.

We are speaking it now
in reminiscence

but most when (most like)
the wind
and now again among the finches

actual and everything in this
relation with my own eyes
seen between the window and the Canadian border
one day in May

even if not this day
it does fit,

nested in time
the sequences
align.

Topological reference points, valid
cognitions, graduate
students of a false idea, or non-idea, or history
that dim memory of not understanding
what is in front of my eyes,

yet there is a homeland of the wise,
Africa the Blest.

Things studied in these local schools

become themselves
only in the light of what is outside them,

the actual unanalyzed situation
when they sleep and wake
and not the thickness of a piece of white paper
between those conditions

and yet there is.

13 May 1993

I am made of this sunlight
I suppose that made you too
we sit beside ourselves with waiting
for the next shadow to fall down

of a leaf of what tree itself
made out of sunlight as above
shivering and full of morning sap
a dance we don't have to do much to do.

14 May 1993

*then at this keyboard open and the lease
lending my fingers a lax entablature*

THIS FRETTED STARBOARD

signed with destinies
a glue to hold the light above us
together with the shambling footsteps of our beasts

the ones that walk inside us
swaying their haunches as we walk

and call that music, you men of Ceos you women of Cnossos
this gnostic preponderous happenstance
that glamour is a lover in his sand surveying
swift currentings of sea breeze *look like her*

curl of kelp and hope of east,
easy fingerings
this song of mine

the wine she sent me
stoppered with seafoam
only yet no essence

spilt, no terebinth
crept in from the cask
no bitterness

the endless valley of old Fresno,
the endless sunshine
arched over her smooth back

so far from the sea
jagged as juarito
this bite-my-lip this yellow

sign your name to this esplanade
the sea is vanished now and the haze you see

is the color glints and beads and bindus you
see through your eyelashes wet with tears
you don't know why you just know the eyes
are busy grieving for you while you hope

the ones that walk inside us

and we can follow them in licit woods advancing
taste by taste to know the furthest Tree

madrone evening-red in any dawnlight prone
almost in the seawind pointing
west into all you guess of mystery

stretch your body out along the air
and find her there before you

.....

..... 14 May 1993

.....

look like her he whispers to the furrows
the little dunes
swept up from the low breeze that chases
in and out of surf,

wet sand contours sastrugi
look like her
the currents as they snake among the salts the salts
layering by density and gravity

among the metals contours of their oxygen
deep by deep the shape
of each of them, descending
to form a body
inside the water, the beast of her
to run there, stretch through the length of it, ocean,

look like her since there is no one else to see
he tells the sand the salts the seeds
of colors which are metals,

the four strings of his fretted lute, the C
the O the H (B natural)
the N
among these make mastery
this is all that music takes

be natural Creeley told his daughter
as and whatever
the comparison might be, take
hold of water

and follow it meek aggression
through all the art-forming energies of,

tide. As a nature
tides it over
till what is better
in the sense of other

finally arrives.
Times me
from my measure
into the absolute

fact of when.
Be like her
as music is
like whoever hears it

necessarily
in the act of union
prefigured
by the stars

embedded in the fruitwood
of the lute
—pear or cherry—
honeyamber

resinous with time.
Wood is years.

[14 V 93]

It becomes a habit
it becomes morning

the manifold
of it

the full thing.

15 May 1993

THE DISTINCTIONS

for Charlotte

the distinctions (raven
 in a tree they'll
listen to me if I tell
 what someone else thought
once upon a time —not now— and somewhere else
with a different weather,

as if that is wisdom
to be not now.

No one wants to listen
to what a man makes up right now.
Let us disguise ourselves as ancients,
let me go back to Latin
or latino
 my native language, quicksilver
 in a stony crucible

to speak the new as if it lasted,

resisted
quick or easy
transparency

same as this
immaculate blackness
in the tree

or carve it in
telling a people's custom
into
the place itself
 elaborate replications into limestone
columns, the heat all soaked
 out of it into the lucid
tumultuous imagery of

some new words
rubbed raw by caring
so much
for you all of you

to make them old
by speaking careful

two ravens side by side close touching
on one stub of a branch,

considering *the offerings*
abound,

they come down to receive
—renew—

star-feeders
then away to the vague nest

you want to keep this (music)
up in the air

like a man walking downtown
weary of rectangles
cut across the park
where the difficulties are waiting

just lay the lines down
the world will follow,

Ace of Importunity
played
with a sound of low trombones

this voice from the hedge
saying nothing easy.

Or nothing's easy.
I am a gypsy girl
I promise you
I need your touch
not just your silver

so-called,
rain-sky, statuary, bust of Pericles.

At the skirts of the wood the waiting deer reconsider
their situation leaves them with a flare of white

the vulnerable flirt, the man with an idea
everybody waiting for the library to open
to keep warm among the jettisoned ideas

And let that first impulse river you

why is it so hard to renegotiate
the entrance to a form you animate?

living inside the house
keep walking to the door
eventually you'll get there

but you can get lost
living in a house
like the ox of Yugpacan

and the house no more know you
than air remembers
some sunlight passed through

on its way nowhere too.
Live in the house
keep going in.

A little splatter of rain says.
On its way to a word. And says some more.

If it could only rain in the library
—it was probably a rabbit—
heart-leaves of linden in a hurry.

Crimson nectar
humming-bird
feeder we
put the color there for us
so we can see it needs refilling.

16 May 1993

DOGWOOD

Now this late time comes after.
Tree facts (lilacs, chestnut tower
flowers, honeysuckle —goatleaf—
dogwood) are arithmetic enough
for spring, you violenter us
breathing all those winterish surmises
into the dangerous leaf. Seed comes
some future, wouldn't the present
be endless if we could! A kind of ink
to write our names so slowly with
it finishes itself only as we come or die
or pass into whatever glory of the mind
you reach across such hazy Mississippi.
Steamy coasts, really unrelenting.
I walk on fallen petals by the woodshed.

16 May 1993