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THINGS

1.

Things growth pattern natural lunacies
cycle end deliver this to the house of things
natural extension namefall a cactus
to be at the end of a cycle growing
things young beyond their clock
a self situation Magdalen espresso tied
to a thorn madness of a sunray
piercing a quite house these are dancers
to be at the end of a cactus understanding gone
a quiet dyslexia disrobing certainties
a father guessing at his consequences.

2.

Things trusted us with physics the ball
the bullet only objects of cognition
two men persist in washing white clothes
where it flows through a great deal of it
the river hits us on the head with light
at the end of a cycle a commuter train
a summer a bag of ice cubes a bullet
dancing off the stucco work of public buildings
you feel the bones inside the leaf
a tree is waiting a bullet is trusted
a ball to find a basket in the night
her shoulders tense with holding nothing back.

22 May 1993

THE BEAUTY

40° bright morning
night leaves no scar

22 May 1993

On this auspicious morning
silent beyond measure

not to tell a story not
give way again to what I see

it unfolds from necessity
into the untellable
only

fables of Inorigin

it never began it never minds

inorganic actors silent in sunlight
thronging the dawn mind

little by little the door opens.

22 May 1993

ARCANE MEASUREMENTS

failing a less durable pavilion
we shelter in rain

planetes — homeless person
is ours the only?

Things occasioning each other,
every atom a Jehovah
busy at the Mind of Work
and nothing faltering

only our Will to Benefit
can make differencem
only the commitment to being everyone.

Homless home. The art
itself is wandering.

Follow like an old lute book
the words' hinting
at other words

story embedded in the charcoal of
something smouldered something sent

saint? glisterner? sign-painter
in Somerset?

a woman with a ladder
and a pot of ointment,

strange deodars over Sonada
bent down in worship,

a woman on a ladder, certainly.

22 May 1993

hawk over highlands
sheen sheer
between sun and us
under it

the river

22 May 1993
lower Hudson

MONA LISA TO THE BUDDHA

for Spenser Holst

Wipe that stupid smile off my face.

22 May 1993
New York

To be accurate at night is difficult

& on a moving train more so
often one's own spittle
dries out or fails to be lubricious

and the eyes are dry. Marble Hill.

I think of the Earl of Orford
(when one travels one isn't
anywhere one simply is)
bent clean-fingered over his artful press—

we laser-print such liberty by now
but oh the texture of his paper's hand,
the tooth of it, the weave,
rough inside the words. Don't expect
language to do all the work in a thingly world.

22 May 1993
New York

I want so often to write a painting by Dorothea Tanning
about young women in blond closets at eventide,
vespers of the barn swallow, evening
of absolute bat. Enough I know my table from your chair.

22 May 1993
Amtrak

If there were a skunk outside
to tell my fears to
he would hear me out
in that quiet way of theirs
like a French director filming a huge misty field
over which an army of extras will soon come
imitating avarice or war

and he'd spit out into my hand
one of those fine jewels the littler carnivores
—weasels and fishers and mongooses—
favor us with in folklore and Asian art, spilled
out from the *concretion of forgiveness*
a rare red stone.

22 May 1993

Paneling of the room then a tree
having nothing to do with each other

America is the acausal country
nothing comes from anything else

it was decided that way from behind the beginning
when Susannah Martin brought her dratted English bushes
her lilacs her viburnums like handfuls of smoke.

23 May 1993
KTC

She watched a shoveler fly low over the pond
while Lama was talking. And something ducky
is crying out loud right now, duck or crake or crow
combo. Or is it sunlight?

The sound
of what is seen.
I am not used to these
trees.

The shadows
fall the wrong way
speaking from our own bedroom
somewhere else.

Which confuses the birds too.
Nothing to eat yet
so this must be morning.
The electronic carillon

of the Franciscans
up on Bingo Hill counts eight o'clock
sideways, a nice old English
ring this sunlight

falling past the tower the tune comes from.
We wake
green as usual
and quietly described.

23 May 1993
Tashi Khang

Bronze lamp
looks dusty in sunlight.
Measures measure us.
Something this past night was my mother,
this early dewy light her chiding.
Why have I strewn dust on the world,
my hair, my books, my mountain bronze?

23 May 1993
Tashi Khang

Every night is some dead person

telling us what to do. The following day
is our answer. That is how we live

in this country, listening hard but
paying not much attention.

And then we do.

Don't say so much — nobody's listening.

23 May 1993
Tashi Khang

Snug in blue peignoir under yellow coverlet
almost awake, pretending to be less so
she turns the eye not nestled in the pillow
towards me a little and espouses me.
No sleepiness there. And then a moment
later she really is asleep. This makes me
feel like sunlight sneaking through windows,
silentest permission, yellow interloper
playing on the floor while we sleep on.

23 May 1993
Tashi Khang
for Charlotte

for Charlotte

To unmask this impostor at last.
The birds help every morning
with their telegraph their honorable
Code. And the flowers when they get a chance,
orderly apparition of the phlox
all over Sunday — what does it mean,
a season, *un saison?* — down along the tracks
and fleabane now — humility is no help,
you still have color, texture, *name*.
You still have me.

24 May 1993

[from a renga sequence:]

Hagoromo on the strand
the words produce nothing
not even a place to stand

is this hunger that feeds me?

.....

Melville in the Adirondacks

up Gore Mountain
in summer
bear scat in shadow
honeyheads still in trouble

25 May 1993

I saw a bunny rabbit on the lawn
its ears in early light
made me think of the four-horned goat
we saw on the cliffs at La Chaux

who are these people?

we climbed all afternoon to drink the milk
of brown cows of the Abondance breed
drink something from a shoe eat cheese
the milk was warm the day the goat
scampered down to look at us

what does it mean to say it “made me think?”

25 May 1993

EVERYTHING I ASK HAS BEEN ANSWERED
TWICE BEFORE

I chase you like a Jew chasing yeast in springtime
I chase you like Catholic begging forgiveness
like a Hindu drinking warm milk

they happen to us and we wait

Grandfather, who are these mouths
that open around us every dawn?
the swift skims low and bounces
twice off the surface of the pond
pursuing meaning

we interact with elements

I have not done with you yet Mendeleev
red finch burns green leaf so that
in twilight shadows leaves like silver scars
fishermen hang over the copings of bridges like ghosts
haunting a condition down there
that is not theirs

they have no right
to what they find
Grandfather
who listens when you talk?

you have no lack of messengers
at all

the soap in the soapdish
repeats your latest improvisations
the old bottle on the derelict windowsill
is full of your light.

25 May 1993

Cactuses on porches babes on lawns
around swimming pools swallows drunkenly hurry
say something quick if you're speaking at all
or at least smart though we have no lack of vellum
say something lucky with eight sides all painted red
say something quick we need it fast the beginning
is never a moment too soon a mirror.

25 May 1993

Could those hoisted kirtles Sir
Scudamore over the barbican
saw be clouds? Red
lifting to white dissolve
in golden deer. Arrange
history for your kids
like a long long night of
druid poets sitting around
never quite fleeing sobriety
composing this interminable
renga. Two of us ran
up the steps showing all we could
and the steps sang too and the buzz
of incense interfered with the
guitars till we ran wet.
Work even harder than a crow.
Smart men bear such golden keys
and deftly fit them to the nimblest keyhole
the door that runs faster than the house
through meadows and stockyards the lilacs
the ferry-boats the trams. Doors
run and they trot after, knowing
the answer at last and desperate

for an ear to whisper it into
and all they have is lilac blue jessamine
chlorine town and country odors.
Still they have their keys, deer watch
their passes in the air, metaphors
weather into mantras, gain power
as they lose significance, of all that ever
was or will they keep the endless list.
Too long this yellow tool. From the hole
falls musical form. Clink on the floor,
yummy smell of green clay from the kiln.
New magazines, old news. Clatter
as she picks it up and hands it back,
try harder, knight of my garter,
self-consoled with breakfast treacle.
Dash out and learn the plural of light,
history is an arbitrary garden, no seed
is ever wasted but so few actually
blossom, you never know, just as well,
industry is built by greed on fear,
breaking hard sunbeams into shade.

26 May 1993