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I smiled into the mirror
After a time
The image smiled back

1 July 1993

Slim candle lit
What does its flame
Light up inside?

A candle's wasted on the air.
Deep blue fire beneath oxygen,

Candle lit inside
The body's shabby furnished room.

1 July 1993

THE STRUCTURES OF STARTING TO REMEMBER

Somewhere at the end of the weekend
I imagine something like normal life begins
my normal, lost in esperance,
a cry in the night, when
I want to sit quietly and render
Cæsar his due, the rent
mind pays to local mind,
supper-song, a book before breakfast.
I never let myself read before I write.

There is so much to be said
and none of it mine! all I need
is to say it. We do not own
the water that we drink, cells store,
passes through us, goes
back to the world gold.
The passage is all we know of it
and the rest of it we are.
We don't know where it comes from
or who listens. Instead
of writing sermons
you should be saying my prayers.

2 July 1993

Create the thing in the face of the morning
how far there is
and how far to go

it is a matter again of Gypsy Sally
bent gracefully over to look into the little boy's eye
pretending to see

but all the while impressing
now and forever her
form in the mind of him

or how seen is made to see
outrageous innocence
blue by the porch post morning glory.

2 July 1993

FIRE SACRIFICE

When we burn it means the voices
of a hundred local gods are

crying out, the conscious inhabitants of us
can intersect with us

only in things. Burnt offerings.
This thing that is mine

I give to you, annihilating with it
the difference between us.

We become one
well-intentioned love and live at peace—

theory of fire.
The gods inside my arms

turn out to need this exercise of praise.

*into the surf as long as streams go running,
while in mountains shadows bathe the hills,
and the sky, while it still nourishes the stars—
ever your honor and your name and your praises linger
what land soever may summon me away*

he said and she was already burning
really, not with his glorious unmanageable
words, but really, and her ardor
leapt out and the gods of her body
watched with her city while she prayed
stepping up onto the burning pyre
till the flames burned all her differences from him away.

So when we come to make holy we burn
no living one, only wheat and oil and cotton,
things at the threshold between us and the gods,
things by their nature in-between.

Spatter of rain, tree fall, pine like a minaret,
calling. I will notate the cries we hear from fire,
sigh of the log giving way to flame,
licking up under loose bark, the burr of it
hurrying along the sap ooze, all crackle
and tiny detonations, it enters
the structure of the thing and releases
difference into ash. Coughing in smoke
we move like shadows and become the gods.

3 July 1993

EVENTUALLY SURMOUNTED OBSTACLES

River of noise and the island in it
where music seems.

Parallax
of all our vision — who saw
Swedenborg when he saw angels?

3 July 1993

This page skipped over in the haste of writing
suddenly is mine. A boulevard
of violets and assignations, a priest in his cassock,
my body in my clothes— is that not a city, summer?
Isn't this long white Cadillacs and admirals, and the chief
drunk on guesswork forgets to start a war?
Isn't this now, and now the only time, and no more time,
and we are free of angels and of men, stuck with birds,
rivers everywhere, that land that meant me from the beginning
I could always hear it calling, every cloud its prospectus,
every raindrop its messenger. And the nights!
Basins of stone wine, baskets of ripe apocalypse,
and women are the only army, African algebra renews the
mind,
semaphores and olives underfoot, not a word in sight
and everybody talking, a dream's enough to live on,
the moon coin in the sky slot works the big machine,
everything succeeds. Except I stay for morning,
they're all asleep now, I wake early, I hurry
through fog to the uninhabited part of the island, just me
and the mist and the geology, just me and the moss,
glad sweater. All of that is behind me and the island
only is actual. A rock in some salt and no more,
perfect gemstone of the mind, add rain,
the actual. What I did with my sudden vacation.

3 July 1993

Bad smell of a man ashamed of himself
huddles behind his messy door—

free him from such bad opinion
ought to be Star 1 on this blue field—

patriotic chant for the full moon day of
independence of the Bizarre Western Republic

& just stop killing but o with your gospel ears
dyed hair and ukulele I know you will not listen.

4 July 1993

What will become of me
if I can't endure my own memories?

Birds walk on the roof
restless like me

sleeping when I could really think.

4 July 1993

Goldfinch arrives
autumn leaf flying back to the tree.

4 July 1993

Whenever I begin a day angry at history
nothing speaks right.

Anger at what *they* do
spoils the sway of language,
which is *theirs* before it's mine.
Only the rhythm is me.

[Literature is not the language of the dominant society
it is our breath
desperately trying to find the way out.]

4 July 1993

Once upon a time an open door a bird
and that was that, a fleet of ships came in
till the house was full of language,
hawsers, lascars, toucans, little blackish seed
that had been dropped in Paradise
the night before. The waves brought here.
Here now in sunlight like a prophecy.
Before there was this country it was a city once
a capital of translation, bales of silk,
lurching cows and heralds with brass horns.
On misty mornings you can see the plan of it,
ghost streets shimmering in fog above the land.
The land always remembers.

5 July 1993

HEATWAVE

In eagerness to assign blame
a roc simpers down from the hot wet sky
to exhaust us with his explanations

heat is a kind of day
that has no night no dream no hands
it wakes up spinning

a boat in the dust my feet
sink to the ankle in pale dirt
they left behind my house the digging

“a song in the rigging
the wind sang in another language
hearing it made us happy

we are not difficult to please.”

6 July 1993

That the machine is so slow to start
and waits for the weather
seems true but not a thing worth
travelling from your home in Devon
in big slow ships through ocean storms
to a place you still don't like
and you call this America!
It is anyplace where postage stamps
are too expensive, where you wake
confused from dreams—
we still have to make America
right here, before sunrise, now
on this porch, these
sacred squirrels witnessing.

6 July 1993

So much waiting
for me. A belt
to strap weight to
so a man can use
his hands while the strength
of his body carries.

With his hands might
twirl a Mani wheel
churn butter knead dough
catch in blue bushes
a bird they tell stories of.

To go anywhere at all
it is important
to do much less.
For example his father
once drove ninety miles
for a day game at Shibe Park.
There are memories
like rocks at night,

heavy, smooth with
being carried, the
indecipherable color
of what is in my hands.

6 July 1993

TO A GREAT PHILOSOPHER

F.N. gewidmet

You gave someone music but it hid,
hid like a hawk in the sky

and all you thought was meaning, meaning
but all you had was a tune that made her move.

7 July 1993

PROMISE OF A WHITE MEDICINE

Syphilis was the tantra of the Nineteenth Century, the sinister initiation very young men sought out to change the camber of their lives. Spreading their arms in the dark and squeezing their eyes tight closed, they took on the transforming disease that would, they dimly hoped (reasoning from Beethoven, Schubert, Nietzsche) punish them with uncontrollable ecstasies. Interesting despair would arise, and discussable catastrophes of personal truth. In all the great literature from Julien Sorel to Joseph K., what is the subject of fiction but the paretic splendor of sunset, the godly hero sinking into insanity and crime? They vaunted, they matterhorn'd, they sinned and raved and collapsed — a “respectful world received the news of their decease.” Unable to prevent or cure the disease, they chose to glorify its effects. These lesions are seen not in the body itself, but in the lurid phantasms of war, amour, crime, politics and even philosophy. No one but lucid Heine ever told what the actual flesh suffered, stretched out in his *Matratzengruft*. Because disease was not of the body for them, any more than leprosy was in the Middle Ages, whose hideous presence seemed no more than an enigmatic remark mumbled in the dark by some angry drunken demiurge, a sign, a sin, a separation.

Maybe in our time we will grow wise enough to see disease in the body, and face it there. And see, even with ailments comfortably termed non-communicable, that the gods of one body

do in fact attack the gods of another. And maybe we can learn to honor the many gods of the body, and not ignore their cries. Maybe we put on clean clothes to honor, not to sterilize.

7 July 1993

CENTRAL PARK, SUMMER

One step at a time
the mime walks over the mind
people on the benches
have nothing better to do
than have him walk
all over their time

art is made of them
their half-suspended inattention
following vaguely his
absolutely lifted foot.

7 July 1993

HOOSEGOW

Folderol of living systems
try to entertain,

a branch for holding birds
a tree's appetite for light

and when it wants to eat no more
it lets the dingy saucers fall.

This happens, bud. This is time.
This is the courthouse on the moon.

7 July 1993

What is written is terra cotta
in it some unmade mulch and soil
conspire to maintain
some unintended blossoming,
item, a red flower risen out of guesswork, pure.

8 July 1993

BIRD FEEDER

What comes for my seed?

The seminarians the aurochs the spotted pard
the pendulum the ladies in waiting to the Queen of Spain
the lowland minstrels the carrot sellers of Louvain
drunk as squirrels on the Feast of St. Jean.

If you wait in the suburbs long enough
every city comes marching by.

8 July 1993

THING SEEN

Packet of parsley seed
face down on the table, an ink,
 an envelope,
Harnett's trompe-l'oeil is built into the eye—
nothing is trickier than a thing itself.

8 July 1993

THE EXPLANATION

If I were to explain this to you, this poetry,
it would be like telling you the train
rolls into the station under Publix Square.
There is a huge lake nearby, birds on most roofs,
you come from some nervous greeny suburb
and a hawk in your head is soaring now,
everything you are poised for the quick meat.
The kill. When the song comes out of your mouth
and pigeons fly up from the park into the public sky
and all the people get out of the train and go to work
and all of you, all of you, know the truth of things,
only you know you know it, and are suddenly at peace.

8 July 1993