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No one wants to know that knowing that I do
And that is dark among citizens to be
I have put her in charge of each supposition
And watched the way the leaves fall
No more than that is my science and eloquence and sea.

9 July 1993

EGO

I feel so lost, but the one that feels that way's not me. For example, is the little squiggle of black ink (might be nyer, might be nyon) an abbreviation for *The New Yorker* or the Pointe de Nyon? Something near or something far, trivial reminder or cathexed reverie? An n, a y, some more. Nasal or oral, round or oval? Long or short, a spurt of ink. Sometimes when you unpack an abbreviation (and *I* almost by definition is an abbreviation), it gets longer than it ever was before. Empowered by its apocope and prison and release, it expands suddenly hugely, and says more than it knows, more than a sign can say. I stand there in the unkind sunlight and see shimmering through heat haze twenty miles away the flanks and ruly snowy summit of Mont Blanc.

9 July 1993

ISOHEL

Reading Simenon is not the same as Saturday—
for instance the crazy braille my fingers read
beneath them as they write these words

are the prickle of yesterday and what it said
on the other side of the paper. The past
presses hard. Try to meet it. I am reading

instead of meeting the day. The heat.
The squirrels at their thievery,
a stifling day, a book without paper,

a druggist who dispenses sleep.
So might it be in the Campagna, too
languid for lust, too lecherous for repose,

a lizard on the line between sun and shade.
My bare chest feels as if it's wearing wool.
And the only thing left in my head is a picture

like a postcard, an ordinary street empty
with only a pale slouching dog on it
dragging his shadow across the sunshine.

10 July 1993

DEPARTURE

Things you can leave
there are

and then those others
the ones on trees
where roots repeat
forever and ever underground
whatever you see up there
those fingers reaching for the sky

our desires those old movies
whip us along,

purple fingernails of strangers
point out impossible arrivals
when gladly you come to the center of yourself
a clean house nobody home

24 October, 2016

for Bruce and Cindy, leaving the town

BACKYARD

The maple on the slope, its roots
on the downside some eroded
so like a bird's foot standing there
a whole tree perched between flights—

suppose them in the night to go.
Suppose a dried sacred orange
as a pymander hidden in your clothes.
Name everything in your pockets

and give it back to her, sweet thief,
a bluejay caught forever in your eye.

11 July 1993

I want to write sentences they will take delight in
("feel measure!") in three hundred years

(after the baroque revival, the second Lake school,
the new Novalis and ultra-Kierkegaard,
when Marx is fresh again
and a great, bluff bully from the Touraine
weeps at the human comedy again
and Miss Baudelaire wakes up at evening's dusk
and Second Ezra wakes up what's left of London

or whatever is, whatever ever is)

sentences,
sentences unhinged from rule and hardware,
long lines of luminous messages, semaphores,
outrage on emulsions, screens, the sky, the eye
taught its manners by machines,
however and wherever they do it, do it,

and still my crazy grammar will make hard sense,
crazier the better, glue on every corner,
crumbs of green cheese between the fingers,
something for you! for you!

inexhaustible, indestructible, leaving
echoes and clatter and strange garlicky reeks,
a flurry of frangipani, gets stronger
when you open the windows, where's it coming from,
from your hands, the words infect your flesh,
keep reading, smell the weather of these words
coming over the horizon like a Viking ship
or just a sunrise, a coven of gypsies,
a crowd of giggling kids tossing your heart from hand to hand

11 July 1993

NOW

The encounter with the waiting mind
how many manners are plausible in it
as if an orange in an old Dutch painting
rolled out of the canvas and wobbled your way
over the marble floor while the guard
also was snoozing in the doorway, a four
hundred year old fruit for you, a signed
testimonial from God that you are, you are,
and this is your only chance, things are
immensely what they seem, and are
so only for a moment, and then this huge
museum also closes down. Grab it and eat it.

12 July 1993

If I ask you kindly
will you tell me just this:
a Gypsy at midnight
telling the tree

and listening too—
if I crept close
what would I hear
the language doing

the whole world whispering?

12 July 1993

Under your cliffs
a shadow
with hawks sailing through it
occasionally
nabbing light on the wing

and down there on the roads
and in the little thickets
golden animals
hurry from food to food
the machine for living

does not stop.
You stand by some water
reflected
without intention,
it is all so ready

to respond, the world
marries us constantly,
the boring romance
in eighty volumes
starring me and you
and that hawk over your head.

12 July 1993

CORBENIC

When you're raised to a thing
it lingers as your music
whether or not.

I have lost a little ardor
gained some in some other orders—
that is (as Enslin would say)
all.

He would be thinking
of how easy it is to say lilac
when you're thinking about Garance,

and he might say, after some silence,
finally,

the lilacs
blue today
I saw
had nothing
to do with you
I do

and make that his marriage,
middle summer, long after lilacs,
and Garance herself would be too urban
to take stock of such vegetation.

City people have no need of metaphors.
So in every street to find the Street called Straight,
in every town the sacred city, this wall its wall.
Everything from everywhere hurries to be here.

13 July 1993

BASTILLE DAY

Ambiguities arise in the passage of words
(*those winds*) through The Dark Corridors
(title of this shadow-play) to be sent by fax
(radio for the eyes) through all the grey distances
into the colors of being understood

all over the liberal worlds. News:
while I was bending a branch back
on a sapling a mosquito bit my arm.
The hosta is in purple bloom. Do you think
John will understand this Silence too?
It is the Day (after all) of the Lady. It is red.
Today a great people feasts its liberty
by pouring olive oil into door locks, slicing
top buttons off the waist of slacks,
speaking words backwards wearing baseball caps.

I am trying to make sure nobody misunderstands.
I love what is inside but oh that seemly wool,
that yellow slicker, that ancient marzipan!

I wear a fig leaf at the center of my mind,
I hide the joinings. Indian marketplace, a vase
(rimes with lace) full of shadows we know how to eat.

14 July 1993

THANKSGIVING IN JULY

Dry feast, a sky is all about calling.
Indian corn, say, thanks! It is
St Swithin's Day, a sprinkle of rain
in drought, may we trust one another
the way a Gypsy trusts the road: *to hide*
in going, to be least present when most
visible, a house with starlight on the walls.

We have kept our religion secret so long
we forget her name. We see her body
like olive wood polished by so many hands
move always in front of us, and we follow.
To give thanks is the same as being called.

15 July 1993

THE DANCE

It feels like music, it gets nowhere
but you can't stop touching its skin

night rave among bleak warriors
—dancing is no substitute for having a life—

Lord of the Dance, Nataraja,
Natanatha, guardian of what we do to the earth

when we move on it
intending nothing but to move

slow elephant hip
quick sparrow of an ankle

who can tell
but you

the messages
thereby communicated

to the authentic Relative Powers
our landlords in the heights below?

And how is the Blue Dragon pleased
by what he hears?

The amplifears. The skirling dreads,
the megatone.

Earth service, it takes a thousand years
to learn how to dance,

to listen to the ground
so that the body hears

and the mind doesn't interfere

and for a little while no one's making money.

O Pindar there is no value
to the dance

the dance is
and the dance is value,

the luscious pagan amplitudes of you.

16 July 1993

GHOSTS

At night the plates
sound as if they're gently
being moved around

a helpful ghost
is drying my dishes
in the dark.

How many
relationships
are done. Soft as a towel

things are wiped away.

16 July 1993

In the mountains everything obvious
for instance blue.

I remember everything you told me
the way I remember

the skin of your legs
glistening in summer

or was it a gull fell from the cloud
we took for a word

and pronounced it
and lived by that law?

17 July 1993

I have done the things that meant to be done
and left me with violet on my fingers
from a rubber stamp of a post office
in a country I have never visited
from a grandmother I was born too late to meet
saying Look you, there is a green ribbon
you can put it in her hair
or use it to make a river,
 this one,
that runs between these mountains and your sea.
I have done with things that do not talk to me.

18 July 1993

Is there a keeping and a king
we can forget, a closet to bring out from
the tender dark we need

in these days of such public light
and no one sleeps
couldn't there be cloth and beech tree and a thief

slipping away with what you thought you meant
who leaves you only with the time
free to think anything you please

no meaning and no end
like a bayou you spot from the highway
going back further and darker and wetter

until not even the language is the same
and even death has a different meaning
and then you see only the highway again?

18 July 1993