

9-1993

## sepC1993

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And why don't they speak French on the moon  
if you're so smart  
(and they're considerably smarter)

Is it the mood the mild the changelessness-on-high  
no need for subtlety

Let me get a word in and explain:

*Cancion del vaso*

There was a glass  
I studied it  
nude in my room  
nude glass

empty man  
empty room  
I saw the sun  
come out of it

I heard the moon  
go down  
deep inside it  
disappear

though the glass was clear  
I could not hear  
a word of any language  
just the sound

of the moon  
going down and going down  
and one glass  
I was too nude

to call it empty  
and yet it was  
and the sun  
kept coming up

the glass  
held only itself  
the room held me  
I held the glass

and heard  
the other language  
beyond the moon  
it sounded like an empty glass.

10 September 1993

## THE MALADY

Caught it  
from the sun  
the disease  
called seeing

seeing and saying  
nothing and being  
above it all  
and going away

to one's own  
other place  
the dark one  
full of music

you share  
later  
too much of  
maybe

when you come again.

11 September 1993

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Soon the birds  
you are  
dream of seed  
the mating  
of strange specimens  
a male bird  
completely supported  
folded neatly  
on the female's back  
who stands  
watching Mount Kilimanjaro  
as if to understand  
such quiet treading  
she is trod  
dance and dance floor and  
all that alchemy  
spurt from delicate wiggle  
nothing lasts too long  
something may come of this.

11 September 1993

## THE LAKE

Fraught as it is it harrows me with clouds.  
So one of these words I'm going to take a ferry  
over the lake (it's all the Rhone you know,  
in one side and out the other, washing  
Pontius Pilate's bones) and see the king,  
there's always one in residence,  
pick a little harbor town with clean white jetty  
with its crenelated tourist castle along the shore.  
And there he'll be, *mon roi*, the king in exile,  
my better half, my Esterhazy. So tell me  
(I'll tell him, after the preliminaries are done)  
how and by whom and from what great lineage  
you, stemming, have found —when?—  
refuge here? And he will say (for instance)  
"I am Hrombreht Romebreaker, of the Sicilies,  
sprout of Guiscards and the Templeisen—  
glad potentate beneath the orange trees I found  
one day a villainous Calabrian had crept  
into the affections of the newspapers who —  
in special editions, be it said— denounced me  
in mind and morals, so I fled with much money  
accompanied only by my memories  
to this elegant annoyance they call Switzerland."  
Thereafter he will give me tea, and display  
photos of himself with movie stars, Marilyn,  
the Pope. At the sundial we'll say good-bye  
and I'll catch the evening steamer from Versoix  
asking myself —serious for once, really  
trying to understand— why are all my kings  
like that? Why do I (a working man  
by inclination) adore these fainéant nonentities

who seem to live by surfaces alone,  
useful as moonbeams but with fine old names?  
Is it the names I love, or the idleness itself,  
or is the name itself a seed of quietness,

a nest of non-doing, a final requiem  
after all the kingless frantic hurry of our nameless lives?

11 September 1993

WHAT I DON'T HAVE TO SAY IS A GARDEN

What I don't have to say is a garden

these experimental flowers

\*

The sex of mental flowers  
petals falling from the sky  
as if "one day" they  
answered.

A bunch of desires  
plucked from a life's hoping  
and offered as a composition  
in vascular reality

set in "your" hands an offering

(the Irish word for Mass  
the Spanish word for more  
the Russian word for sea  
the English word for  
look

the flowers  
(witch  
elder, coryllus, pansy,  
ragweed —the sun  
rising through apple trees—  
44 degrees—  
campanulas a memory, a few  
ipomoeas, cash them in,  
squirrels and bluejays  
so much scolding  
chilly fingers, chicory)

are durable  
the way mistakes are,  
even after corrected



they are remembered

an oafishness or  
unexpected grace,

I wish we could use the broken glass  
it looks so pretty so  
all diamonding and sierra sharp  
among the tame rondures of the kitchen

that flower,  
deciduous, indigenous,  
perennial, grows  
    in the profoundest shade.

My fingers are too cold to name you any more.

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1. Everything I don't have it in me to tell you— that is a garden.
2. A garden is one thing I don't have to struggle to tell you.
3. It is here already, and you are told.
4. A garden doesn't have to be *said*.
5. Isn't a garden, in the sense of Eden, exactly where little goes on except naming and saying and calling?
6. Our only proper relationship with a flower is naming it, we gods of the waning year.

12 September 1993

## THIS IS THE WAY

And then we hear them calling  
up from Bayside where the blue trucks  
lie rusting on their sides in the sea wind  
falls in from the sound past the cat  
green eyes of a girl from Ecuador  
who kept me up all night  
till I understood there was nothing but sleep.

12 September 1993

## BOTANY

All held in balance  
like a dream of mind  
taking over your neighbor's field  
and you find yourself summoned  
to Hell's Tribunal to explain  
the habits of ordinary pain  
and how these wishes are different  
such minds flowerless and by night  
strengthening their fragrance—  
the judges not unkindly wait for you  
you answer by accent alone.

13 September 1993

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Go solvent into sleep is it  
whatever goes on without you supposing

14 September 1993

*[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]*

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Medea in a black shirt  
stands up there on the rafters in the ruined barn

the jealousy of body

Let the wind touch only me

14 September 1993

*[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]*

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Let no one touch me  
who has not bathed  
in the waters of what I mean

wet people with green eyes  
half heart half dragon

Long Island Railroad skimming along the trestle  
startling blue herons  
carrying people home in cool seaside slavery

14 September 1993

*[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]*

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Open the seed capsule of the water caltrop  
found heaps of them underfoot at the tide line  
dagger-horned and scary as human faces if you can

14 September 1993

*[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]*

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How can I know the feeling till  
already it's wrong,  
Berlioz's head rolls  
underneath the trolley car  
the union of the living and the dead  
in the Church of the Fully Imagined Saints  
is easier than knowing  
how it will feel before it feels.  
And that too will just be feeling.

14 September 1993



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Everything is far of that away  
rustle of polyester taffeta  
Ukrainian flag a nest  
for her ferret, people  
believe what they read  
in one another's eyes  
those ancient liars.

14 September 1993

[Telemachus speaking to Circe in the last days:]

My father was the only one  
you never turned into a beast.  
Or so he said. I wonder  
when I think of my own longings,  
urges, appetites and emprises.  
Where do they come from?  
Darling, do me what you did him—  
and let me turn —if he did—  
into a wandering fine animal,  
an alchemy of changeful powers  
impaneled in one man.  
How did you wound each other  
such arduous penetrations,  
the food you served him  
("poison, potion") was a mirror,  
he drank the steam of his own breath  
rose from his dim reflection,  
my own face in dawn light  
you have also seen. He licked  
(I lick) your skin where he tasted  
the drool of all your lovers  
and last his own. My own. This bitter  
potion (love's portion) was his medicine  
the Gods call *moly*, black-dry rooted  
in dense desire, white flowering  
in a minute's passion, then the bitter  
—I taste it when I drink my coffee,  
lift the mug you give me, see the sun  
rise through steaming fragrances.  
Change me to what I am.

14 September 1993

**[Telegonus at Ithaca]**

How much one island  
looks like any other  
when you come to it  
over the flat sea  
in any weather.  
Through mists  
you land and take  
possession of anything  
that does not move.  
You fight for it  
before you know it's your own,  
your own blood reddening the surf.

14 September 1993

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They have given their name away  
and only have cream to show for it.  
They could have filled their mouths with sea foam  
they could have been spindled by the dark.

14 September 1993

*[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]*

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It being what it is  
what does it mean to be popular now?  
What is it that welcomes you  
nightly with temperate applause?  
*To be loved in a bad time by many—*  
how much we want that still.

14 September 1993

*[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]*

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Maybe it is only wind,  
wind blowing through winds.  
But the wind is listening.

14 September 1993

*[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]*