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for Charlotte

Scraps of dream
 scraps of remembering
brown banana peel slipper nested
 next to the Greek Revival door or
red head of the woodpecker
 eating sun seeds

 here
 nowhere else
a man's hands rising from the sea.

7 June 1992

TELLING WHAT I HAVE TOLD

for Charlotte

Take the sequence of them
and set a Diary around them,

grass woven flower wreathed old
coat hangers twisted to
crown of thorns the Mexican midnight
and this valley with a crown of cumulus above it

all my poems, take all my poems
years of
them, begetting centuries of narrative

in which they nest innocently immoderate
unaware of having summoned all this telling

a poem is a sum telling all that can be told

all the narrative they summoned to fit round them.
Samsara is the continuous,
healed by Tantra, the Continuity.

Isn't it this I've been trying to think all along, trying to think
clear to, for years: that all these poems

(15,000 separate pages when to Buffalo in '81, another
10,000 a decade later)

all these sighs and shouts and aux-armes! and seductions
and instructions

in fact [future fact] form a century of dramas, diaries, novels, which shadow around them as the white space of the page, full of boundless possibility?

White Shadows, then, all these poems I have written, each ready for its speaker in its scene. The words are here already.

Comment écrire tous les livres du monde: lire mes vers, et se souvenir.

7 June 1992

for Charlotte

**Rhododendron
flower woodpecker
finches dove
lime tree maple
because alone
I see the sky
in this glass table.**

7 June 1992

A pouch to keep your crystal in
I see offered in a boutique beside some skirts
soft as New Age interpretations of the Bible,
scent of patchouli, and after all, a hesitant
repentant odor of bayberry. Kind candle.
We will be clean again, not soon,
we have a dozen more charlatan presidents to go
before our next Jefferson rides into town.
I won't hold your crystal close between my eyes
and tell you her name, America!
She looks like Tamalpais, though,
and when she breathes it's suddenly Wyoming.

7 June 1992

ENOUGH

A name enough to bare
a blessing
black over one eye
broad fan
tail black wings

8 June 1992
for Charlotte

So many stories
simplified
into the skull itself shorn,

a stubble between

as if a grass grew
between the brain and the sun

watered by such thought.
And a bone is an ancient skill.

8 June 1992 Kingston
for Charlotte

These are what we have
a hand a candle to
hold it a night
to use it up with

and a breeze
walks through the linden trees
an Arab remembers
what he never knew

the sound of water
slipping through the dark
nothing like this
nothing.

9 June 1992
for Charlotte

for Charlotte

It's where they take us
an immense number of particles
swayed as a single
cloud on the town's horizon
holding the water tower down
on the top of Cherry Street hill
and of course my fingers are cold
it's morning and you're still sleeping
and I have to go out there
where the shadowtails spring
from branch to branch diverting
and offices are filling up with broken dreams
and the sky amazingly blue
over fierce trucks.

10 June 1992

And could be over, life
could be over, the turntable
still spinning but the song
is done

the hiss you hear
is no evidence
even
the most elegant
machine has Noise

it's over it's over
go home for dinner,
Egypt.

[10 January 1980 / Kingston]

An old text from a pocket notebook that went through the laundry. Here it is, and it may have been found before, but here it is, on

10 June 1992

**the certainty of elegance
condemns me to this system**

**there are solutions
but no chemistry**

**I am chained
by the factual**

1980]

[old poem recovered from the laundry, ca. January

10 June 1992

for Charlotte

Deer catching full
sunlight then
just dapple for Christ's
name look away
the Panther
waiting. All
beasts consent
to know you.
This (fact)
is your only star.

10 June 1992

for Charlotte

Hard to remember
the four white paraffin candles
still stuck shaft by shaft
as they came from their box together
now unlit in sunlight

describing the world anew
we pretend the same

absurd lovable differences

the changes
import me
from a mother place

to be here
as long as here is.

11 June 1992

SERENA

for Charlotte

They are coming now, quick
over the vague stepwork of the riverbank,
the host of barges tugs and simply
what people float on to take
the river air now lucent at twilight
the brickred fact of the old tug hoisted
long ago on the Rondout shore.
The boat of it. The boat of colors
with Osiris sailing back and
forth through the spectrum, guessing
always guessing at what adds
up to make the light. And I too
was Jewish once, Crimean, haunted
by the chessgame of the harbor
so many animate machines to place
in the serenity of water, they are coming,
they are the words that tell the
truth, they are the birds
who may be bats who may be black
and blue devices locked against the sky
because of our endless habit of looking.
Look and tell me what color the world is now.

11 June 1992

The specifications are intact
the union of the possible
with the necessary
spelled like today

the trolley car that does not run
the chin smeared with chocolate
or a view over Lake Zurich
wind whipping the flags

and Christ on His way to heaven
again and again. We have forgotten
almost everything we needed
and still came at evening

to the foot of a black pine.
The booth covered with branches
the seats inside it covered with
skins. Always a dying

behind this place we meet.
We yearn for what breaks,
hunger for hurt. Are dark
with forgiveness. And when

after all that smoky shimmering
between the trees, earth breath and
the actual night comes
it is always a kind of surprise.

12 June 1992
for Charlotte

for Charlotte

o queen Idea

the motorcycles some say sickles thunder
at the disagreeable impasse

where the hell of grumbling
reaches right up to the burning ghat and the river
swills it all away

the clock the clock and marry me

the precise affluence of your intelligence
conniving an affection
by which our divers Sprites commingle
and we are wed
to the measure of eternity
where the golden suns we saw over the Ganges

answers an all too measurable sense of earth
imposed by even the most well-meant Republic

on an infinite Earth.

In union we are made.

In closer travel
where the first deep
red roses of June
unravel in Hyde Park
where the tandem
lux-o-cycle
bears its couple
safe into the north
bound traffic on 9G
and three persons
needing supervision
trim a lawn and three
maidens sit on the
grassy margent of this

never ending destination

into our own tired
evening tending home

the sky is flushed now
with salmon night
turning towards us
the light
will never escape the earth
it draws us after
in the syllogisms of
an earlier poetry
hungered out of black woods
to meet a calm
by which the university
seeks to safeguard property

the ludicrous commodities of not you.

Where we are
together
is enough to be.

The rest is galaxies, a glass of milk poured on the gravel to appease.

13 June 1992

for Charlotte

When it's almost full dark the dark
red roses by the little rebuilt
temple to no god down in Blithewood garden
unfold a very limited color
intense and peculiar as if the world
were being changed right there
and new rules were being written
about colors and the speed of light
or is it just our "ancient eyes" grow wise?

13 June 1992

That it could after all be now
That the dark one went away
back into the forest of Wrong Decisions
from which I brought with such effort
such shadows home

It could be day.
There is water. There is a moment
between earth and the sun
when consequences cease. This is called
noon, no shadow falls.
Change, then, be simple. The water boils.

14 June 1992
for Charlotte

GROWING UP CITY

You get tired of things as they are
and then the funny papers begin
with the oinky cat that talks
the pinhead more subtle than Heidegger
and all those colors made from four
just like the body from four elements

all those dots or sacred points of light
or dash dash dashes to encode our meat

you get tired of admirals on their caravels
of bibles and national assemblies
of yellow buses flashing red lights and cars
swooning with frustration
locked behind them on their way to work

tired of children and palimpsests and wind
tired of hearing stories tired of news
tired of being so easy to amuse

tired of prose of sex of chocolate of ears
you don't want to hear anything ever again

you think maybe you believe in demons
in twilight shadow under ailanthus trees
waiting but the demons are tired of you.

14 June 1992
for Charlotte

STANDING AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE INNER CONTINENT

for Charlotte

1.

Waiting is what it was about
the hole

through-finders, blunt metal feathers
stuck in the grease of their hair,

things waiting to dine.
Able to find anything by color alone. The color.
The pharmacist under the burdock leaves
sleeping off his latest discovery. The hale
farmer with boring breath
and copious reminiscences of Robert Taft,
I love a loser too.

In the other room
the Cleveland Indians
like Chunnel tragedians
try to get Home.

It was 89° today so what.
The pilchards canned by the Chinese
and the elegant underslung dace
served up in sesame oil
will nourish an export surplus.
The church is filled with angry Serbs.
This is enough news
from the Caravan,

the silver paint is peeling off my stars.

2.

Nighttime, amaranth, a sickle swung
in heaven reaps the moon. O she
is pale tonight, and full and vague
breasting over the shallow woods behind my house,
these fifteen years of saplings
hurrying in their fashion to be war.

Endlessness, an owl.
We sat and watched a blackbird chase a jay,
a cardinal watching, three squirrels and six finches eating,
we saw the lot of things the little woods could show,
we saw our own interference
hung up in the tree with sunflower seeds inside it
changing the balances of things.

And understood nothing but each other.
Which is more than the grackles do.

3.

Treemarked, hieratic, the bronze
torc-bearing pontifex or predator
assembles small states beneath protection.
(The only cure is Mind.)

Not mental, Mind.
Not mortal, me.
The syllogisms of infinite distress
haunt the graduate students of philosophy

who wake to cure themselves of meaning.
Coondog trials, an acre full of pain.
In Sarajevo a woman lying in the street.
There's something about our readiness to kill.
No man shall look upon my face and live.

4.

That be my eye
some sodden miracle

to sweep the barren
underfoot and raise
spectacular Algol
to red prominence,

born to such politics
he mourned in a dusty
city far to the south.
Who knows what language
signs a letter
that frees a people?
The demon star
and how did they know,

how is everything
remembered from afar
from before the ice
a perennial idea.
Persists. We know
the eye that looks upon us
from the imaginary sky.

5.

Vandals came in their Corvettes
and Ostrogoths in Oldsmobiles.
We had no chance, just property.
The world gets around to misspelling
everything we thought we knew,

forgets, vagues, wears gauzy tee shirts
and rows of artificial chorus girls
kick their legs on Oxford Street,
one more dumb reminiscence of

your correspondent sous-signé
at this occult address.

THE PHONE NUMBER IS THE SQUARE ROOT OF SEVEN

I smell the breath of all the lies my lips have laid.

I wait the call of sleep beneath my tree.
And then the morning has some listening to do.

This is the end of the first section; he stands at the black door
convinced of the necessity of going on. Going in. The
bladderwrack he's gathered all along the shore should come in
handy now — something wet to feel his way. Something to
smell.

In the five heaps
no one home.
Our liberty
at last.

14 June 1992

for Charlotte

Shapes assuming shapes.
Pale shadows move in the orchard
suppose they are deer. Call me.
Sell me stars, tell me seasons
run liquid in my hands, I can stop
them if I choose. Learn how to choose.

The "nobler of the two
metals" the plumber said
would bear the sorrow of the lesser.
Copper. Galvanized steel.
Word shapes. Absurd trespass
schoolyard cyclone fence,
a mango from home. Am.

What shrieks impale for food,
the life of things. I think
I proved something standing at the door
looking in at the closed bookshop
(a French translation of the Abhidharmakosa,
some Greek and Latin books, fat lexicon)

knowing that this bookshop underground
led to the universal storehouse of scenarios
where my life led constantly, paused,
shuddered in some strange waterfall of grief,
and was renewed. Novelty.
Wherever we walk there is this grieving,
women I called them when I was young
and thought the momentary forms of them on high
were widows mourning for their crown princes,

weeping for the fixedness of things, the hard.
Smarter be scared for your own self, he warned,
fear of dying is the start of wisdom,
be specific.

A kind of tree. Every year
I learn those blue-purple bell-like flowers
on the road to the deserted village
and every year forget. Look up.
You will wake and see this word and you'll remember.

15 June 1992
Sakadawa Full Moon¹

¹ The flower is cow vetch or blue vetch. Sakadawa is the Moon of Vaisakha. Buddha on this day was born, and in another year uncovered His Enlightenment, and in another year He passed beyond Nirvana.

for Charlotte

Remarkable
in the fact of it
the hells made
out of a morning planet

and in the Dharma-ending time the bell
rings with a cracked sound because
the seven metals will not ring together, the bell

will not ring together,
the text inside your arteries
understands the gyaling's blare
better than brain,

the spirit is not cognitive, is not cognition, it is a music in the
moving,

and in this time the Sacred
Continuity is cut, is shorn
by those who sell it piecemeal, supermarket Tantra,
the spill of seed

the flesh is marked by the Black Lines of textual aggression
designating the sweet fullness of the body as a commodity
if it is a text you can revise it, erase it,

heaps of eyeglasses high as palm trees on the Khmer plain

the bell
does not hold,

the bowl between your knees
alone
holds the sweet moral milk

fresh even after the darkening of the night.

16 June 1992

Restlessness of choice o blue water of the Nairanja
no matter what, it sweeps away

o let it do my moving for me, let it mind
things carrying on all day long

and the night sweats when the blue mind
fires with smoky longing, a stink of paraffin

I love the smell of burning coal the kerosene
o restlessness of mountains o mind with o's

scattered through its wonder like stars
in the astonished midnight

let me keep vigil in the core of sleep.

17 June 1992
for Charlotte

