

7-1992

**julA1992**

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## ROOT GESTURE

*for Charlotte*

The inside of the body  
describing itself  
outside

the inside  
mapped on the outside

for good measure

named.

Ymir's geometry

this valley your long lap.

This said, the unsure  
speaks itself outwards,

because to be sure  
is not within to be,

language *is* anxiety

your Minnesota eyes.

From the inweaving of the red and white rivers  
a net of glimmerings is spread

mindwalk, smell of gravel, her boat shrouded  
in the winter season yet

from the cliff we saw sailing

north into summer habit

birds we thought they were.

Apt, the arrant descriptions  
cloud the mind until we think we see.  
Then the mind-pearl falls  
wallowing in the cup of nectar down

droplets of splashfoam catch some light  
we know to need.

And no more said.

1 July 1992

## AB/HOMINATIONS

Mozart  
when I woke I'd test to remember  
did I, who Mozart  
was and Schiller's  
words for Beethoven's Ode to Joy  
could I sing  
was I still a baritone  
did I remember anything  
everything was I still me

or a bass or who am I I used  
these mysteries to remember  
and why Mozart? Hesse.  
Why the Ode to Joy? Love

carried me to that immense kiss.

1.  
Mozart when he isn't great  
but I let everybody else be just OK

2.  
Acoustic guitars trying to be swell  
or do complex Bach so simplex I swoon with  
langorous boredom waiting to begin.

3.  
And butter, that natural mayonnaise,  
the two detestables. Example:  
on ruddy beets smoking with skatol.

3 July 1992

---

*for Charlotte*

The ability to touch it  
varies with the angle of approach  
because the sky is blue  
it touches everyone

3 July 1992

**Bodies**  
**rescue**  
**us**

# **from conver sation**

3 July 1992

---

Our first training should be precise attention to the actual reaction we have to each person we encounter. That is, pay close and articulate attention to the whole state of physical and psychic sensation entrained by the meeting. Each person met and each place entered. Without such alertness, we live in a jungle of names. In the deadly impersonality of convention and supposed-to-meanings we stifle. Some people make you sick. No blame, just pay attention. Some people make you feel like morning-glories. No praise, just pay attention. This is the actual.

3 July 1992  
*for Charlotte*



## INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING: WORKSHOP IN POETRY

Whatever we do is for other *people*  
where we are the *middle people*  
(neither gods nor animals)  
but all people are the circle of our love —

Poetry experiences.  
We experience poetry.

Its value to us is experiential.  
We will use the composition  
    (apprehension / *trobar*)  
of poems to test/sense/register  
the conjuncture of It with Me,  
    to resolve the long seduction of the False Duesa.

Not what do you mean?  
What do the words mean?

What the poem means.

So here we're not reporting on the CIA or on architects and  
their graftsmen, but on a far subtler and more dangerous  
conspiracy, *of the Self against Reality*.

As tantrists, we drink the poison.  
That is, we use the poem as a weapon against conventional  
mind (the mind through which the utterance of time and  
language comes filtered to be "ours"), against the conventional  
mind to find the Plain Mind [*tha.mal.gyi.shes.pa*].

3 July 1992

---

*for Charlotte*

Morning tide o giver of romance  
an old ice shaver holding papers down

in case the wind. And where was electricity  
hiding all those centuries?

Where was Moses when the light went on  
and what else did the mountain see

and we still have to learn to read.  
Tide, wind, earthquake, river, night.

Charge your batteries from the ascending tide.

4 July 1992

LAKE SENECA LAKE ERIE NIAGARA FALLS FROM THE AIR

Lake Huron  
down below  
so wide and blue.

The seen  
is earth,

the seer sky.

I think of Paul Blackburn & am very sad.

4 July 1992  
over Lake Huron

On this nice street  
the only grafitti's  
a wall by the parking lot  
showing like a cartoon  
one 1950ish two-slot toaster  
with four wavy heatmarks going up from it  
into the pink air.

4 July 1992 Boulder

## BOULDER

I like the resistance of this place to news.  
Ross Perot never rode through this town in his Oldsmobile  
and The War still means Vietnam.  
Politics is get your toxic waste out of my aquifer.  
I could do something with a town like this  
if I could forget enough.

4 July 1992 Boulder

Being subjected  
to the projected  
sounds of  
what I would not  
think of as music  
especially except  
that it manipulates,

comma, I offer  
that what's interesting  
about sonic pollution  
(and æsthetic pollution  
in general) in these  
otherwise savvy terrains  
is what it shows about  
our deep contempt  
for all the arts and for  
our minds and all reception  
of spiritual things,

so there sift down unheard unfelt all round  
the meaningful oak leaves of Broceliande.

5 July 1992 Boulder

---

What the world needs  
is some news.  
Brown squirrels here  
walk don't scurry.  
Red staghorn sumac  
riper than ours.  
Locusts hang leaner longer pods.  
The mountain goes up.  
Is this enough?

5 July 1992   Boulder

---

*for Charlotte*

When one finds one who has been before one  
and one hears that one whispering inside one  
what one says oneself when one is speaking  
or even when one is keeping silent then one  
has found in fact who one actually might be.

5 July 1992 Boulder



---

I'm being asked to think again. Thought is what follows  
Composition, a reading of the bones so thrown. Reading the  
cards, the stars.

What battle laid these needles down? Three hundred million  
years, they say, these Flatirons, compact alluvium long ago  
turned hard, a granite espousal.

Every word says marry me.

6 July 1992 Boulder  
*for Charlotte*

---

I can make so many mistakes in one simple answer.

**6 VII 92**

---

It's quiet enough to be morning but  
who believes me?  
Wary, they push their strollers through the creekside park.  
Water is what flows.  
Contempt is in the air these days, I feel it in me too  
hating its way out.

6 July 1992 Boulder

---

Rollerskates rollerblades  
the difference is elegance  
but is it enough?

6 July 1992 Boulder

Of course a morning takes its census.  
Just like a Bible king  
I check the livestock of my flesh —  
the changes in the inward lotus of my thigh or  
the curious sprawling lameness in my right wrist.  
And then I look over to see you,  
your dear parts. My deaf ear  
hears you. In my dream  
the saucer finally landed and brought  
a new grain for us to grow.  
I woke up eating them, one by one,  
huge kernels big as popcorn, chewy,  
starch-fleshy, good, canted  
with odd angles, bigger than any grain.

*I have eaten  
while earth people were angry and suspicious  
the protein of the stars*

When it finally does come  
they will look at it  
like Detroiters at a Subaru  
full of terror and loathing and special pleading.

6 July 1992 Boulder

---

*for Charlotte*

Lying awake thinking about this broken tooth  
I notice that just in between

the stifling night and the stifling morning  
a cool breeze came down the mountain

I watch you sleeping light under a blue sheet  
wondering how deep in things we make our house.

7 July 1992 Boulder

---

Natural tooth  
a shell remembers  
cello Baching on the mall  
argent, the supreme, the metal

I can use this word against me,  
respect me, delivery  
of multiplex anxiety,  
a wound that talks.

I sell this stuff, you know.

7 July 1992 Boulder

---

*for Charlotte*

The strangest thing is the *audience* —  
the rapt attention  
with which language listens to language.

8 July 1992 Boulder



---

*for Charlotte*

However we veer or nod  
or take the cliff road or check the mall  
white roses growing out of rock

the words listen to themselves closely,  
closely always raveling weaving  
like technicians at the control panel

hardly breathing, their dope-stained fingers  
nudging tricky dials towards certainty.

8 July 1992 Boulder

## THE TRANSMISSION

A lot of education is teaching younger persons how to be unhappy in the precise way that one oneself is unhappy. This is done by urging compromise, self-disdain, and by studying works of art as unapproachable in their otherness, along with contempt for artists who make things day by day as daily practice. Universal goals are set a finger's reach beyond the truest mind.

8 July 1992 Boulder

[MORE ON TRANSLATION]

People always mourn the loss of sound (Louis Zukofsky shows us how to cherish), or deplore the different ranges of meaning between one "language" and another. (*L'esprit* doesn't match one-to-one with *mind*, or either with *Geist*.)

But what I mourn in translation is the loss of the *play of mind*, as it shows in the brisk or stately entrances of the morphemic units that speak meaning,

the *induction* of the poem image by image.

For the text ("original" or "translation" or "imitation") is a *masque* whose characters to be true translations (i.e., make sense) must enter and speak in the same order.

Did you think a poem is a set of propositions?

It is a *dance*.

8 July 1992 Boulder

## OLD FALLS ROAD

to the tundra  
over Alpine meadows  
elk

but why is it colder the further from sealevel  
away from earth?  
where does the heat actually  
live? is the heat a phenomenon of friction only,  
between over and under an us,  
karmic clash zone we  
have to be there to be?

5°F for every 1000 ft. 100° in Denver, about 65° here  
the guide said. And we were there in the high 30s  
watching the wind blow from the glacier and scour  
the breathless pilgrims dashing up the alp.  
We stood our ground  
to catch a quarter's worth of elk close up in the telescope.

9 July 1992 Boulder  
*for Charlotte*

---

In memory of me  
one time before

my tooth came out today  
and Stan Brakhage came to the door

I stay near the window  
counting sky sheep.

9 July 1992 Boulder

---

*for Charlotte*

Always to the measure of a dream  
the notable masquerades of the shadows  
do elm do willow do aspen  
stiff upright with quivering tinny leaves

hearing such, you know at last what the wind  
has always been trying to tell us.

9 July 1992 Boulder

---

Being able to rest as one person  
wondering who's awake at this hour  
wandering the big country house inside  
where the mind's already glowing  
and language is hard at work by its joyous crucible  
waiting and ready for us to come to town.

10 July 1992 Boulder

THE METHOD

*for Charlotte*

Hard to get the taste of it  
but it begins when a magpie screams

it makes me remember I hate remembering  
a cat stalking some prairie dogs  
a cat same color as the magpie  
stalking with it, standing avid six  
inches behind its tail  
waiting for the kill.

Murder in the air.  
Then the cat got distracted by your ankles  
and the bird flew away.

2.

Disperse the visualization  
into its non-component void  
an emptiness like rainbows making love.

3.

The athlete that is the sky  
convulses one more time  
and throws a cloud over the fore-range.

10 July 1992   Boulder



---

None of this compels me to remark.  
The world is serious  
you honkies.

**10.vii.1992** Boulder

---

Those who parade their commitments  
are like a field of rye fresh green in the spring.  
Those who parade their infidelities  
glow like broken bottles in the vacant lot  
New York sunset cats nervous milkweed.

10 July 1992 Boulder

PNEI HA-YAM

*for Charlotte*

You can tell I read the Bible once  
and am shaky on the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

say it in French I'm too close  
to the crazy tops of the mountain  
where everything is true

if few  
and you can get fun and profit  
from watching me struggle to accommodate  
to lowland ways.

This helps. Three  
days ago we stood on the top of a mountain  
at 12,000 feet in a snowfield with cold and rain  
and the only place I ever felt like that before  
was the smooth shore of ocean

the sea like a mountain touches everything and is apart.

10 July 1992 Boulder

---

My mother's family's Indian blood  
was jested but not spoken of  
like my father's sister who had had  
a child out of that lock  
they used to put on a woman's door.  
It was a shame to be anything else  
than what we were. But what were we?  
"They should think we're Jewish,  
then they'll give us good quality goods."  
Otherwise? Otherwise is unspoken.  
Evidently, to be is to be anybody else.

11 July 1992 Boulder  
*for Charlotte*

---

*for Charlotte*

And who brought the miller to his mill?  
Be kind to the woman behind the waterfall  
be kind to the rock

the auguries  
are everywhere  
like pigeonshit  
on the public stairs  
leading to  
a private place. Higher,  
into the ordinary. Life.

12 July 1992   Boulder

---

*for Charlotte*

Squirrels scolding  
out of the locust  
a jeremiad  
because of cookies  
thrown like torma  
offerings  
to what comes along.  
To eat. Like  
the marmots  
they have yellow bellies.  
Are bold. And paws.

12 July 1992   Boulder

---

The shirtwaist factory fire  
is what my mother and father remembered  
from all the years of bloody labor

until the end of her life when she  
at least asked me one day What  
*could* she have done but work

all day long into the night  
and all those winter buses and miles  
to walk from borough to borough

when she had no one to advise her.  
Guide her. No mother  
to tell her what to do.

12 July 1992 Boulder

---

*for Charlotte*

We could say it passes  
but the altitude remains

the virtues  
are insistent  
on the goal

Rumî is transportable  
it seems

it all seems  
and that's the music of it,

the ballet from *Don Carlos*  
(Paris version)

sails through my head like the magpie  
put there

over the Flatirons (red rocks)  
of the Frontal Range

(Rockies' foreplay) a paw  
(a fingernail)

held up to catch the morning  
light stretching across Kansas to our feet

rock dove coo-hooing on the ledge  
a snugger for city-fowl

love querulous in smoky dawns I rouse.

2.

Apocalypse



would be a leaf like this

slowly curling  
and uncurling in the mountain wind.

Rumî  
capacious

of erotic understanding  
more than I am

colors are Erôs, surely, colors  
(alors) and those fragments

of a moving body we call Time  
the Horæ, the Moments

conceived as maidens  
runagates,

if we let women be our time  
Greek as may be

will we not falter  
on the manroad

(man rood  
the bed

lifted up  
upright to Noon

vertical,  
crucifixus

these rocks  
as the face of sky.

To walk  
in that martyrdom

braver than I can

imagine me to be

skull hill or pyre  
on the lake

of lotuses  
opening

for all your sakes.

13 July 1992 Boulder

TACT

Robin Blaser  
comes downstairs  
to run the dryer  
dries his hair

to keep from waking  
Charlotte up  
upstairs, his courtesy  
silent on stairs

what shall we thank  
each other for  
all day long  
but tact and touch?

13 July 1992 Boulder

TWO PRECEPTS TRANSLATED FROM THE LOST ORIGINAL

*for Charlotte*

1.

To offer every  
for the town of all.

2.

Miss nothing. It arrives  
witty as an ancient mari  
ner. a submarine  
invasion of the lie  
by silver truth.  
Subvert the thing you only think you mean.

13 July 1992 Boulder

LIBERTY AVENUE, CITY LINE

One can have an autobiography  
without having a life.

The death was waiting  
under the cut-glass bowl of sauerkraut  
the waxed paper cornets of deli mustard

sliced meat  
of a red animal, all  
animals are red inside,

you bloody fool, you city.

13 July 1992   Boulder

LAPSUS

*for Robin Blaser*

On the Colorado terrace  
tasting the air, I couldn't  
remember Varley you couldn't remember Moreau  
and then the names came  
and the great sphinx woven of red and blue arterial within,

*the sphinxes of inside us,*

spoke.

Whenever we must know  
we must ask that crimson oracle  
to track the empty  
lunar landscape of the brain

which means grey nothing till a passion speaks.  
Even such passion as a painting kept in the mind releases,

a hip hard to see in jungle leaves.

14 July 1992 Boulder

## TRAVEL

Squeezing by between plate  
glass window and waiting room seat  
the young woman knocks a paper  
cup of coffee over  
their luggage so  
the purple napkin from Anne Waldman's  
party in South Boulder comes  
out of my pocket to be tossed  
into the clean-up operation across the aisle.  
A British Air 747 rolls by  
hugely outside. The perpetrator  
hurries back with white cocktail napkins.  
Peace comes back. On the Malvinas  
thousands of seamiles away  
sheep cough in the winter fog.  
Bastille Day. My friend George is fifty years old.

14 July 1992 Chicago

*for Charlotte*

Waking near you  
my face  
pressed against your shoulderblades  
soft in this humid morning  
in the strange  
bed that turns out to be our own

home  
from the glacier to this  
why does it seem so deep a valley  
one continuous  
not continuous a window  
on the world  
we carry with us

this love  
is an instrument  
to see

and what I have learned  
from loving you  
is not just love  
and not just you

I'm trying to say we see, I see, things differently now. That the  
canonic variations of love, that insinuating melody, illuminate  
somehow the world perceived. Not somehow — we know how  
it is done. What rises as mind resolves as mind, and we are  
one.



And that doesn't say it  
doesn't say us  
the sweet morning of you  
lasts till night

might understand  
to speak.

15 July 1992

I could have thought about it but the bullet just came out  
a word in some south Slavic dialect the kind trees understand  
better than men  
and clutch all their lives to a grey granite overhang  
with the sea not far

/ the evidences

of our values spew all round us the sands of the syrtes the  
immense Magellans  
who categorize the waves into theirs and ours and the Pope  
lifts his wounded hands over the oil of the world  
dividing and dividing

/ and this gap

is a kind of blessing / Wynkyn

de Worde first English printing

punctuations of the Underived

/ the epic of men carried on

horseback

into the bloody heart of the rose

/ by tin

/ I chanced them / the flowers the flow-ers

and their hands looked up from the string of my throat and  
gasp music

they way it always is

/ wordkind over glaciers, elk browsing in the

cirque

and yellow snow buttercups immaculate up out of dingy ice /

alors Robert

the *circulations*

have been on my mind all week, the current

of continuous discourse,

the cathedral of all we ever remember.

Granite again and lift / blades of muscovite letting in delicious  
light

the quick arguments of the Holy Spirit

/ over the endless forest.

16 July 1992

for Charlotte

---

*for Charlotte*

I don't know what it means to be anywhere.  
After a while people who are here  
are somewhere else. Or not.  
Or still are where they were or  
die along the way  
to being where they are.

16 July 1992

## MATERIALISM

as a species of river, the foundry beset by avenues of air searching into the heart of bronze. This absence is more devastating than any intrusive substance. Forms blow apart, shapes break — enough. I waited for the world of sinners meant for me to tame. To bend malevolence beautifully to a kindly form. As a curve might, in bronze or ebony or even flesh say, stroke me. The form, *Fratres*, is more than an assortment or happy package of contours. A motorboat loud bounces by. Sun's rays pursue the earth, slice through some powder blue-grey cloud and light on Kingston. Illumined like a Nineteenth Century allegorical painting, the far shore is full of stately hardwood trees dark against the receding hills. Westering sun, and now a glory tells on the broad river, just as on the near shore the first ripples of the motorboat's wake noisily arrive. Water slap. A sailboat moves from shade to sun. Mind's ear hears the sail slap against the breeze.

Any sermon like this is a delicate mistake, served by a scholar to a herdsman. My notebook rests on the old concrete wall, a tired brown bee sits down near it, preens, lifts off. Mosquitoes prowl, because it is a river and the train is late, everything knows

about us. It is a river, vivid, even livid now  
at this sweet every hour blue. Some rain over  
there, the train from Montreal rests in the  
station. The train from New York may  
breast it here. Everything knows and we  
wait. The human race is mostly waiting.  
Everything else is perfectly punctual.

16 July 1992 Rhinecliff  
*for Charlotte*

# μυριολ

*for Charlotte*

back  
among the birds

finches and sparrows  
rattling on our roof

waxwing & a chickadee  
squirrels the tumult  
of seed

no translate this  
virgula  
into another  
*language*  
another  
species of tuneful obscuration

this list of birds  
translate  
the song of them  
gets lost in the dictionary  
they all mean  
concelebrating the mass of seed

and into their quick sentences now  
the blue jay dives

and you know who he is.

17 July 1992

---

*for Charlotte*

The cardinal and his cardinaless  
arrive, a shine to them  
more hueful than the purple finches

Square yard of scattered sunflower seed  
is mostly hulls. It takes time to live.  
We angels of the instantaneous  
are clever as squirrels. And with no more sense.

17 July 1992

## THE VOICE

*for Charlotte*

Song to let no one speak  
no odyssey, and no one is  
and is the only one to interest  
us who have been too many  
numbers in the sun.  
Cool sky nobody home  
you hear singing constantly.

17 July 1992



---

In the deep sky that only the birds know  
There is a wing so vast that all the  
Animals and their humans dwell  
Tearless painless safe beneath its shade.

That is the right wing of one great bird  
And no one can tell what manner of thing  
The other wing of that one creature is.

17 July 1992  
(after the French of Antoine des Galapagues)

## LAVENDER

In between the lavender and the violet  
grosgrain ribbon holds the stalks tight  
in a tied magic bundle of shaman smells  
passes right through the city, the *dry*  
*warm resonance of summer*, I heard this say:

Be empty a while. The bowling alley  
and the skating rink are far, the diner  
with its raspberry tarts and its muffins  
sprawls dark before sunrise. Be alone  
a while. The kingdom is always waiting,  
the newspaper is full of generous lies.  
Think it away. Be empty, be alone, be wise.

17 July 1992  
*for Charlotte*

