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A MODEST SUMMER SNARL

Capricorns are waiting
for this summer to end
I also ask
suspend
this tedious jollity of sun
you specious joyfolx.

21 August 1992, Woodstock

ΞΙΦΟΣ

THE SWORD OF GOING

for Charlotte

1.

the sword of it
waiting
for the occasion
that infidel
who is time

2.

translate me
from the common
to that demented
edelweiss or chardon bleu
or auerhahn or any rare
commodity
stalks the imagination
of tourists in a rich
vacationland an Orient
splendid with syndication

3.

stand on this cliff
and see a cliff
climb this mountain
and see a mountain

4.

and from this window
when I look out
what do I see
but another one
no better and no worse
looks in at me

I call that traveller the Sky.

22 August 1992

for Charlotte

The beautiful intersections
as what the morning
is about
a consistent hazing
of motivations
in a gloss
of simple hope
it will be the day
of liberation
all the abattoirs of earth
will drop their knives
the beasts
inside us will lie down
the squirrel rushes towards me
as I busy myself
with these unlikely
dreams
I am a man
who never dared to hope
and filled my mouth
with simple wanting
begging the heavy bread
of what is simply here
the appetite
is nefarious it is a blossom
huge red
like a dahlia
grown in a temple garden
but still with longing
still the desire

for all directions
to go the most abstruse
and what my dry hands

hunger no wonder
the kingdom
is not peaceable
desires rumbling
like tanks
through the defiles of quiet mountains
what is here
if I stop
to unpossess it
raindrop
a dove
walks a carpet of fallen seed.

22 August 1992

NOW AT THE END OF IT ALL

for Charlotte

The end of it
one has to talk
linden language
with hearts in your leaves

there is nothing more unnatural
than what is taken
for Nature
a blameless circumstance
secured from dying and from thought
safe in apparency

this editorial
comes up to my knees
a man could drown
in the rhetoric of feeling
before he ever feels

an arch
is hollow
a brick does not decompose
this borrowed car
still seems to run.

22 August 1992

for Charlotte

Not sure and not sour
shadow over the little church

pray with the lepers
that the war heal pray
with the animals
that the forest
never forget how to hide

that they arrive at the river
there is no story
of how they ever crossed
yet here they are

unless they were always here
and there is no crossing
over! and these
are the first

the first animals!

22 August 1992

Organisms wait.
There are cars.

It is sun.
A town
I've skipped
all summer.

The first sight
I come back to
is on a trine
of grass
between the road and the road
across from the leafy tulip tree
Chuck Stein
cross-legged in equipoise,
eyes closed.

22 August 1992

MAGIC

for Charlotte

Just doing the ordinary
house on chicken legs
come to me my
Berkshires in the rain
my softest memory
whoe wet blue
through and through the home
counties he says the name
America frequently
the way priests clear their throats in church
having another agenda
not hard to find Tom's red face
empowering the ordinary words
these unscrubbed hands negotiating
between sunrise and a heron
what can we know of a man when we know
every coot and gallinule and stone
and borrow from the French vielschreibers
discourse enough to choke the Virgin's ox
it is just a house of grammarye
just the silent witness of your sleeping body
just the kettle whistling
dyslexia in the dark like everyday
a pencil a candle a celery
the house of common and the house of words
no hallway doesnt run everywhere
tired of waking in this body
squirrel in mid-leap weary of the air.

23 August 1992

for Charlotte

It is a long movie with little changes
mostly this morning winged behavior
bird with chipmunk obbligato
around the local roots of Yggdrasil

whose crown is in Lambeth (or *lammed*)
and whose tap root in Santa Monica the Blest
where Unoffended Beauty prances
hardly different from the arriving wave

where kamikaze dogs attack the ocean
and here I sit behaving my own squawk
caffeine-spritley the rites of getting up.
(Portrait of the Artist Lost in What He Sees.)

23 August 1992

On my way to hearing Strauss's Macbeth
I hurried up the warm lawn stepping over scarlet pimpernel
to get to understand his understanding of the play:
These are the things love makes us do.

23 August 1992

TO A POLITICIAN YOUNGER THAN I AM

I appeal
to the child in you

the one we knew
I better than you, you

just were it, I saw
enough for us both

the delicate embarrassment
of being young

but that is where all
our Power is from.

*Ach Kindheit, selige Kindheit!
Deine Kraft webt um mich,
Deine göttliche Schwachheit
Lockt mich hinan!*

23 August 1992

TOD UND VERKLÄRUNG

The two parts of death —

the public, which is the gift of it,
your death in all its circumstances and imagery and language,
the gift you give of all that
you give to the world

and the private,
the gift, inexpressible, that Death gives you.
It is this death we paint by silence, theology, despair.
Only Egypt and Tibet have seen this far,
to the end of that giving, the renewing.
(Egypt told Plato, Tibet told me.)

23 August 1992

STUDIES FROM THE CHABLAIS

for Charlotte

Insertion is an issue
but doubt is peregrine
a ruler on a map
timetable the telephone on fire
a lakeshore
north of composition burns
I look for a manuscript vanished from the world.

2.

Dauphiné Savoie and Vaud full of that plague
a merchant of Thonon accused & burnt
circumstances anneal the mind's reflective surfaces
renaissance philosophers read in a strange flickering light

3.

against new thought
green flag of war
a pilgrim holds
a shell to listen in

outer sign of inner
hearing transfigured
by ardent listening
not memory not description

4.

enactment means you
who can't read the contour map
for dark or wet but hear the song
lastering on the lips of the soprano
a sleeve of sense in a silk octave
count it a midnight voice
covet silence for its unfalsifiable
propositions

Ashley Putnam

5.

this grass grown for you
just this morning tread on me
a sort of monarchy unhinged
by excess oil this candle new
to survey you in merest wonder
match a broken word with a cancelled stamp
and mail it to your winter overcoat

6.

could this be enough to argue with
a hair looped around a branch bent around a tree
we are the only facts in the world
the rest is music and all its faces
heart of my ignorance
where is your lap when you stand up and walk?

23 August 1992

Women with parted hair
are liars I think

wanting it one way
and the other

to be all things
to all demanders

the scalp shows through
along the part

a pink frail sincerity
a sensuous perhaps.

23 August 1992

When the summer with its painted hair
returns once more in all the mock
sincerity of weather, the lizards and the boatsters seize
late pleasures in the hazy sun.

I'm in a maze. There is desire, and the disperse Crew
hams it in the corners of my head, showing and concealing,
a sleight of eye like television
tricky string and heartstring-tugging, holds

on like a pit bull. The irony of wanting
what everybody wants, the pain
of being just a population, predictable,
marketable, dumb. *Blöde*, says Heine

about himself, who failed to answer
the insinuations of the Spanish guitar
wielded by that pale Anglican in Ramsgate
he remembered till the end of his life.

Beauty also makes us run away.

23 August 1992

On the side of honesty
let it be said
and for truth's sake
let it be silent.

24 August 1992
for Charlotte

THE CHALK CLIFF

for Charlotte

The refractions
of an urgency
glossy, like holly
on the path
up to La Chaux
where nothing waited
but a cross
we are born
to be stretched out
over the whole earth.

24 August 1992

Limestone cliffs
Over bare thought.

24 August 1992

for Charlotte

We live in imagery

The preservation of an island innocence
day by day
a fox streaking through the dark
from where men live

never a glimpse of women in that house
on the switchback over La Moussière-en-bas
but in the mountain gloaming stood
out of darkness an old white horse.

24 August 1992

Who am I
to be so afraid?
I was never scared
walking the towns and mountains of France
with its summer lilacs and civilized dogs.
Why am I so frightened here where I was born?
Because fear is native. Fear is the nature of nature.

24 August 1992

DE UTILITATE DOLORIS

Organdy curtains
swallowing light.
Eyes half closed
I celebrate a Mass
of imprecision,
the world at half-color
strewn with glitter
tears on my eyelashes
make the world shine.

24 August 1992

Charlotte city briefly learn
the avenues of coming home

the lexicon that perfectly translates
us into the honest sentence of the bed.

24 August 1992

OF CHARLOTTE'S SINCERITY

Wild your hair means single mind —
smooth parted hair I learned last
night means a Liar,
the mind compartmentalized
at peace with duplicity.

24 August 1992

Meeting with a
man or with men
always seems furtive
to me, uncivil.
Slaves gossiping
below the stairs.

24 August 1992

for Charlotte

There are sentimental reasons for keeping the sun in the sky
and whisky in the jar a man's sturdy knees
jocular ruddy under a green woollen kilt
mud on my own holy ankles and a tree

there are reasons for a tree long lines
at check-in counters at Swiss airports blue flags
nodding by the garbage springs ice
eternal at the pale shimmering backside of the earth

reasons for cameras and giraffes
for organdy and burial of the dead crouched small in urns
for fireworks and bald logicians and escaping slaves
for poltergeists and glacial drumlins and this hand

I gaze at in the sentimental morning
wishing it were newborn on your hip
and we were just waking up together
into this world congested with such good reasons.

25 August 1992

[Zhena moya]

Be this liberty
to taste you

a wind to please
out of the north

smites our humid
passageways

the gulf of fear
that far between

to trust you
absolute

come home come home
shouts the shadow

to the tree
we both are children

of the one
sun.

25 August 1992

THE FOUR QUEENS FIND LANCELOT SLEEPING

Which wants him most?
she who is silent

She who speaks
controls

this tree his sleep

out of the unspoken
desire (unspeakable)
we name

why this man?
What
is the beauty of a person

my person that you want me
that you touch me

bound
into the dark of your decision

2.

I used to live there
I was a town
in her permission

streets bonded with sisters
vexed with each other's
velleities

sky shimmer
where they sauntered
slim in discontent

she walked angrily along the beach
and her dog slunk joyous by her heels

3.

why do you love me so

a sleeping man or boy is all barbarian
his looks slay
every one her heart

this dutiful sycamore
that shades his beauty

they stare in
to the obscurity
of their own will

he stirs
their eyes are hands along his hips.

26 August 1992

