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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

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*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



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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-spritely 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



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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

