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for Charlotte

These are to be assumed---
the hope of humankind
to reach beyond the cave
a small fixture called The Sun
small enough to fit our laps
and held with a brass prong
to turn it towards
all we have need to declare.

And these things too we must remember

1 September 1992

I am Merlin. I have no choice.
The instruments laid down along my veins
point me to the world he sees is.
I cannot turn away. Even the dark
below the stone is full of interest, is the song
folded tight in upon itself,

*to wear the music
as she wears her hair
long long and intricate
the airs the aires
move round her*

And I am Merlin and I have no choice
no more than a blackbird no more than an eel
caught in a weir of osier twigs
no more than a rock

.

so I came along the path remembering
how late summer used to have its fill of animals
and wondered to be so alone on the high track
sheltered by trees on the ridge west of me
from the cold wind coming in off the river

end of September. And a deer was waiting for me
at the turn of the path, he stood for me
in the song I was singing, stood and I stood and sang
not loud and he heard and stood then
turned calmly and moved away, and another with them
their tails only flirted when they leapt
over the little brush along the road

and he had told me Merlin, you are Merlin.

for Charlotte

Let the clear weather dear weather
remember French the alarm did not go off
I overslept from a long French dream of attitude
and what do they do to make us beautiful
villains at the feast contend for scraps
a local amazement fills every local air.

1 September 1992

THE MOON LIKE A COMMA IN THE UNREADABLE TEXT OF THE SKY

for Charlotte

La lune comme une virgule dans le texte illisible du ciel
I said as we drove along and saw it ahead of us
four days old and I wanted to make sport of French pomposity
and all I did was discover one more truth about the moon.

1 September 1992

in his ears
and pays attention only to the weather

I saw their faces last night,
all whom I have injured
sorrow that we forget our dreams
and they looked back at me
with the long forgiveness of earth forgiving us
brightening their faces,
no passion to it,
no Dostoevskian aria of disdaining to disdain me,
just the geologic calm.
I was a wound in them they knew how to heal.

And that was that,
I gave them all my joy,
beat of the cascade,
the king has waterfalls for ears
and drowns the kingdom with his greedy listening.

There was a dream I had in the cold bedroom
that it had snowed. Light snow, evening,
in a city I was leaving. Living. Leaving.
There was a car and a need to go. There
were streets and amusing obstacles—
wheels on curbs, wrong way streets,
medians and sudden slopes. All went well
and I drove into the obscure city we all
visit before waking. Silence
and the smell of lilacs. Blackness and good morning.

Sorrow on us that we forget the dream,
sorrow that we wake and in our hands
only the sensation of some cold, gripping the wheel,
laughter, Charlotte beside me, my fingers cold,
gold, remembering Midas
 whose asinine ears gave everything away
except the dream the king half-animal half-mineral
kept to himself,
 a silent chamber in the core of hearing
where he could want without touching
and touch without changing and no one spoke.

2 September 1992

LA GROLLE

Drinking from The Shoe
a dialect of leather
made of pottery and pepper
filled with eau-de-vie and lemon juice
and sweetened with black coffee

I dedicate this round to my friends in the riff business
delicate linings have clouds around them

you can count me anywhere
and never find even a number.

3 September 1992

RAIN

for Charlotte

Let it be my skin this water
so sensuously sobers.

It's not that I have something to say
but that something *is*.

It doesn't have to make sense
it has to *say*.

3 September 1992

for Charlotte

Prayer flags in the rain
their colors all but leached away
look the better for it,

prints of Their Excellencies in thin black lines
wavering gentle on the shabby grey cloths
delicate in the hard rain

unperturbed as mind ought.

3 September 1992

TIME

for Charlotte

Just this morning don't want the hurry to begin.

Portugal is a coast in Europe
somebody goes by in a car

I can't prove any of it,
hold back the daylight,
let me keep this cathedral dusky cloud-soaked tree light,

I'll agree to anything right now
agreement turns me on
anything you say Gabriele
to hold back the day
I'd parse the fractions of T'ang bronzes
a ting has three legs waiting for the fire
aching for wine
or what did they warm in it,

cocorico, a wave front through the parlor,
the chimney clock says anything that comes into its hands

how much of all this is you
after all
seamless webster of a woman's fall
redleafed the sweet Interruption

even organ music is better than beginning,
no more hurry, I am myself the heart of time

and being motionless get caught
redhanded by the rain.

3 September 1992

AND NOW I HAVE OUTLIVED THE RAIN

They have a what was I thinking they had
a mourning dove's faint sheen of pink
along the bow of breast
they have a frame for church bells
to hang from but this bat-like destiny is not
what I meant

100 rappen to the franc

They have a table underneath a tree
a chairlift in all seasons a crow
they have a crow

I look down
the spyglass of my feelings
and see the glass top of the porch table
and in it all day long has been
today's white rain sky
gleaming through the murk of leaves

intimate reflection. Is that what I mean?
Döner kebab on the Edgware Road
a ferry schedule a plane?
No, it is more like a weaving frame
or harp or printing press or bed.
It's like a bed, a word
you can lie down in with your wife.
It is like a wife. They have wet leaves.

3 September 1992

If you say something you're silly
since there's so much to be silent about
while it thrills through your whole body
plowing the virgin field. If you say nothing
you are also one of the unrepentant.
Reverence for the boundary is all I ask,
a wet path along the chalk cliffs. A fire.

4 September 1992

If it really is a burden you can lift it
if it really is a flower you can give it to your gods

abrupt distinctions
piled up on empty words.

4 September 1992
END OF NOTEBOOK 201

DKAR.MDZES.A.YIG.LAS.HKHRUNGS.YE.SHES.GTER

Startled by sentence I find written
in Charlotte's hand, in Tibetan, on the table—

from the beautiful white letter A, the wisdom treasure is born

What is born from letters?
Joey holding his mother's hand all through
her labor on the birthing stool to bring forth
(6:52 A.M., 2 September 1992, Loudonville NY)
Miles Roger René Joris-Peyrafitte

who holds the letters by the hand

draw them from the sky

But the sky is mind, isn't it?

pronounced *inn'it*?

Inuit, Innana,

the sky

is just down these stairs,
turn left at the bottom of your heart,

Bauch,

a belly waits for a princess.
From the Intelligential Heaven
a mother wit ascends.

From the beautiful white letter
(I'm trying to renew

the charge, the battery is dead,
so eat the battery

like a Babylonian,

the Kingdom

of Heaven is like unto a rod
buried end-down in earth,

it casts a shadow
by which most men tell the time

a wise man pulls it out and hides it in a secret place)

But the words are always telling
telling, the cruel teacher comes along (as in *Louis Lambert*)
and rips up the boy's philosophy,
the word he came to earth to speak

(in fear of writing,
dark Socrates, stand
in the doorway all your hours,
breathe the sense of it,
don't speak)

his poem,
his heart-habit strivings
to declare

what isn't there.

There is a beautiful
letter in the air.
I see it time after time,
and all I see besides
gets born, Aleph, from that sign,

Aleph or Abel, slain into speech.

(I'm trying to renew
that color on the tree,
the Kingdom of Heaven
may be likened to a book
of blank pages
on which the sunlight falls
casting the shadow of a leaf or leaves
a child's finger traces
idly
the Kingdom
of Heaven may be likened to idleness.

All I know now
I knew at seventeen
from the laze life,

all the rest

counting all the wiles
of Gideon and Joshua

until the courthouse reels
overwhelmed with such innocent testimony
—all fantasy—

spiders living in the drawer

a book taken out in moonlight and publicly beaten
—hear the thumps and thwacks of the bailiff's staff

until the heart of language
lists its haunch (ventricle) hard against the wall.

Hear me, I was man.
I had a pride commensurate with my shadow at evening,
an appetite equivalent to Arcady.
Then I was stone.

Shepherds scratched
their easy avowals on me
and I have repeated through every age
the simplistic lovesongs they made me wear,

the Kingdom of Heaven is like a ball
a child tosses into the sky that does not come down,

they thought I understood the words I say,
but I am all saying, just saying
I am the hand holding your hand
and making you strong
as I can
while you say
what you have to say,

thus the Kingdom of Heaven may be likened also
to rowdy
peasants drinking stolen champagne just over the crest of a hill.

4 September 1992

THE ROSARY

for Charlotte

What the morning lets is something rose
an old dried flower in a niello vase
and the petals from this cloudy summer they tell me
are soft with mold when we come home

unfocused flower! every week away is Ithaca
with its rats the suitors at the grain
the raveled web cracked cistern

and still they are flowers, twinned in the slim
silly vase, a slip of Edward Gorey work
come to us in yard sales,

all the Timbuctoos of carrying far
meanings into the stock of old words

"self-conscious" = insecure, but
selbstbewußt = confident, says Dorothee,
the differences.

Who shouts louder at the moon,
a dog or an eagle?
And for all the beating wings
neither gets the frail apperency of worshipful Light
into her amorous clutches

"I am not the one thing or the other
there is a natural attention
blue-shadowed now in morning murk
but I'll get ready I'll be your Protestant again
I'll learn the complex lift of local ocean
against this improbable day-sailer
with a keel like Christmas hidden hope below the year
and off we go to Penikese
so I can give myself airs among the other exiles
To go with the rosary
of experience
and let it play
saint-wise my fingers

until I feel completely
just this bead
(bird, flower, knob
of branch, why

rose-ary?)
and nothing else.
A word is always
praying to itself

for silence.
Who cares what
the papers say?
A dove

walks on the thick
mat of fallen husks
from all that fed.
And you

are asleep upstairs
in the last precious
body-guarded minutes
before the world.

Bardo of George Bush, with a little music. Here.
A bus goes by on the highway I guess.
I tell you this, adorable posterity,
in case these words still mean. Cool
breath around my elbows, cries of birds.

5 September 1992

CASSANDRA ON FIRST HEARING

for Edward Sanders

She-screams
from the he-heart
brained into Song

No one
is ever believed.
Beauty lasts

is all it does.

5 September 1992¹

¹Dear Ed, I wanted to say that on our way to the first performance of your magnificent music drama cum oratorio cum manifesto *Cassandra*, Charlotte and I passed twenty six deer between the river and Woodstock (2+10+3+8+3), some of them very red. Yet it wasn't Iphigenia we saw vanish into mystery, but your clairvoyance Beyond the Black Curtain. Thank you for the opera, and for the **hope** it —clearly personally and very unGreekishly— builds out at the end.

Will I live to finish this word
will the blue fall out of the sky
and be a dark bird humble among us
like a penguin lost in the latitudes

and a heart? When will the senators
break the back of the long sentence
that condemns them to futility
in pale buildings that taste like soap?

When will the moon forgive medicine
for taking the queen of headaches
yo tengo out of the back of my skull
and let me sleep? Who sleeps?

6 September 1992

OBSESSIONAL

I have battled all day against colors
using only the sound of water, the roar
of seals, the rattling plumage
of funeral cormorants hung out to dry

and still every leaf mumbles green green green
and things once seen stay in the mind
burning like Troy but burning forever.

6 September 1992

GOOD NIGHT, IRENE

Turned in the cleft of the notch
a key
 speaking Languages against the south

holding that crescent moon on its drunken back
over a palmetto — you've seen
the image — time after time
hawks hunted down the flanks of the sky

after you, just you.
In your serenity you forgot a man knows how to love you
however far you float

into the vague shadowplaces of the marshes of Glynn.
The war came and crested on your home terraces,
burnt back, stubble in a strew
of Christmas snow.

And now may come again. Where are you,
to whom a war would try to speak
and if you did not answer
might yet turn away?

Is silence our best and final politics?

8 September 1992

for Charlotte

The auguries
attend us
we are waiting
for that marriage
you and you
only understand.
The text
is wood the priest
is air we
find out bed
everywhere.

8 September 1992

for Charlotte

I have refused
nothing but the kiss
that says goodnight
when there is still time

moon and conversation
the dark wine
effervescent in the bones
agony of closeness

infugue testimony.

8 September 1992

