

9-1992

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Weaving the day things
into a texture of singing

continuous discontinuous—
saying a mirror of is.

7 September 1992

AUDACIOUS VOYAGER

If the thing I meant to say
spoke back to me from the rigging of the ship

all the delicate confusions I use to hold
together the motive craft of my life's power

what would happen if death were easy
instead of tricky, undependable, sure?

Blue light of shrines in winter houses
watching wheat grow from former years.

That is the horror of staying, that art
is always the contemplation of the past.

the act is always previous to the grasp.
Eludes this now. Wheat or corn.

The text said: *Tu parviendras*
au centre de la Terre. You will arrive

at the center of the earth. Consider it
as the name of someone you know.

A home for an old habit. Here.

8 September 1992

IN DRUID HUMIDITY

Trigger happy
but no church bell

begins to tell
his dead friends off

would rather
not look

this is death
or near to this

on the other hand
is a tree

oak
is all he meant

an old road
to a dead savior

crystal capable
of waking

again rising
from the cave

and listening out
into the public

bitter talk
"could there be

enough of me
in this world

cities even
a sleek

garment a pretended
friend?"

enough english
to go on with

learn early
not to ask much

a rosary of horn
another cup

some dry cake
with raisins

and rain and rain
this is all

I ever wanted
and you to share

with me
and fame

and fifty foreign
cities to sack

and all the morningland
disgorging secrets

velvet at my feet
mongooses and moons

portals
of the dog

blue irony
of setting suns

in spotted rayon
the fashions

of being profitable
so much beauty

at loggerheads
with moral sense

snow any minute
while katydid

the sky is white today
I claim this island

after all.

8 September 1992

There are ways of answering the mail
so even the quietest correspondent
wakes up at two a.m. convinced
you have been talking in his head.

Dream is a desperate exile,
the train west from Paddington
into the green country where the light fades
and the Castle of Maidens

waits at the bend in the road.
One light in the deep window
meant for you. Go into the sound
of your footsteps on the stones,

stairs, carpet, bare boards
of your fated bedroom in the tower
sharp smell of crushed rosemary
underfoot, star maps on the wall.

You know all this without seeing it
any of it, and when they come to you
at breakfast full of sly reminders
of the night transactions

you even in pale daylight can see
only a glimpse of their faces,
the intermittent ones, the frail
identities that called you here

from the endurable sobs of your own
believable city into this beauty,
all calling and remembering,
into this dream that almost slays you.

8 September 1992

You will become
the farmer
the fish will speak to you
from the furrows in the field

we all came from there
the unremembering

the mirror place
of which this present
is the ultimate reflection
we live in

aching for geology
wanting to be home

in some pure perception
that tells us
we are where it really is
not just a shadow

for Earth is always elsewhere
and the path

in front of me still churns
from the footsteps
of the enlightened ones
settling dust.

9 September 1992

THE WORLD FALLS AWAY FROM WHAT IS NOT SAID

"My violences, my violences!"

As if an animal understood a thing
and from the faltering weather always changing understood

a man is fixed and flails
 violently to stay in place
free-fall of the heart,
 we writhe to be still.

10 September 1992

A Wind stands up

The house
isn't that where he goes to meet the dark inside the world?

can't see the lines
the brass polished last night
is tarnished this morning

whose breath on my mirror?

10 September 1992

Notations
for an exile no a holocaust
it meant to say
using a word I have no right to
but it has

it has all of them
at its service
even two Jews walking in the mountains
or one young one hanging on a cross

and I have none of that
no boat no Baltic
not even the misspellings of a child's
geography book.

I have the world, and you.

10 September 1992
for Charlotte

Demand circulation
of the atmosphere
as if I had a right
to breathe.

Bang on the walls
till thunder comes.
Hold this rusty iron
in my hands and smell it
then see what comes.

10 September 1992

The work to be done, the hard remembering
around a crack in the wall
a view of Paradise
we stand to get in all our heavy hours
caring these desires, a king
would be crushed by them but every
child wears them on her back or

a barrow to shove uphill all her life.

11 September 1992

THE MEEK ASSASSINS EXPLAIN EVERYTHING

They stand at the front of the room
between you and liberty
They are different from you
they have their minds all made up

about everything
They have assigned an activity
to every minute of the day
They tell you when you can talk

and what you are permitted to say
They know who to vote for
and how to eat to wear your hair
and all the people not to touch

beginning with you They tell
why the naked man is nailed
to the cross and why he's on the wall
supervising your arithmetic

and his eyes are sharing all your agony.

11 September 1992

Through the Gulf of Mance a dim flotilla drifts
in morning fog to inveigle one more island
in the embroidered hypocrisies of the Empire!
Pirates always come in boats.
No news is good news from the sea.

11 September 1992

THE PERCEPTION OF ORDER

Red feet of the mourning dove
Shuffling through fallen seed
Touch the center of the earth.

11 September 1992

The intaglio
fitted
on the convent wall
head of a man

his eyes
fixed firmly nowhere
and the shag
of his long hair

seem with their
stillness to provoke
all those fitful
breezes that make

late Saturday night
the red glass
candles in front of
The Heart glow

and that make this
face of his
for all the limestone
all the years

human, a lover's
interruption
of all the blank stone.
Answer him.

He is your only soul.

11 September 1992

I have given myself leprosy to have a reason
a black tent to creep off to in the middle of the congregation
so I can hear them alas they are always speaking
language is always speaking and I have walked
into the white exile and the red exile
and my flesh is not virtuous in its own reasons
and I am afraid. I creep through circumstance
—a man without family without care—
I find my quiet in the middle of what I say.

But they have taken the Oracle of the Pigeon
and consulted the Oracle of the Livid Spotted Wall
and have determined: Put him outside,
his thinking smells bad in the docile books of our shelves,
store him with the goat and last century's textbooks
of navigating by the stars. Store him with numbers
no one will count to again, store him with
porringers of pewter with inserts of china
bearing at the bottom of milk and oatmeal
a soft mauve portrait of an unknown flower.

noted quick 11 September 1992

CONDITIONS OF RAPT JOINING: THE TWO

The bells are real the music isn't
as to say the miracle of Long Division
results finally in the two of you

alone with each other out of all the world.
There is a hint of green even about your arguments
and amorous futures cling plumply to the bone.

They shall be one flesh bearing at least sparrows in her hair
and a dock-tailed dog saunters as his shadow—
their *besides* are beautiful, dusky, almost feel like meat.

No Portugal keeps their Spain from ocean,
no gold distracts their bank from Number
sheer until they are the only Ones.

Pale remonstrance of any morning to all the nights,
austere clarity against the multiplicity of dark
when light with all its oneness is so wife.

12 September 1992

for Charlotte

As an airplane flying through the clouds
passes in and out of visibility
like a minor Elizabethan sonnet
flirting with meaning
then not meaning much and hiding
like some famous pale deer in the forest
I hide, my dear, most times my
utter crazy love for you
in the humdrum ecstasy of everyday life
like when we walked through the National Gallery
past the blue skies of the Tiepolos
and brought each other to the Canalettos
—I always forget he worked in England too—
and hand in hand watched his Venetian water move.

12 September 1992
Kagyu Thubten Chöling

Watching the long freight train
haul north along the river
in full moonlight

not just the train
but every car of it
has its separate contract with the moon.

12 September 1992
Kagyü Thubten Chöling

THE PERMISSIONS

Now I'm sitting down and letting myself think
anything that comes to mind.
Anything that comes is mind.

Even all the things I never let in.
Because a poet for all the verbal bravado
is just like anybody else — only more so
(like the old joke), afraid
mostly of what goes on in his head.

Where else can fear live
except in our awareness?

His head. Her head.
A huge
flock of white birds swims down the wind
—too calm for gulls, too small for swans, who

are you who pass from view?
Who pass for new?
No benefit in holding
what by its nature is to pass.
Let the road be open to all thinking
and at the end of the day
(there is no end
to the caravan by land, argosy by sea)
there won't be a thought left on the road
or dead beside it,

only the steady lurch
of thinking heading always north

into the cold waste.
Void. The Plateau of Leng at the back of the brain,
its many wonders
stiff in the frozen Forms of thought.
Art. Lust. A flower
is the thought of sex there are no flowers there.

There is nothing but digression
every thought a divagation
there is no subject
only to go,
only the only, at a time, to go. The meek
persiflage of Wanting Mind,
who would imagine I would think of you now,

all of you, poets and princesses
dead at the foot of the cliff
a red thought-of-a-flower-in-the-hand-
of-a-dead-Sherpa caught in your hands
where you fell
fell into thinking, the dark
butterflies of never letting me alone,

this was climbed, this was fallen
down from, this is thinking
lurches sharply to the left
forgives desire into politics, raises
a rag over its head, surrenders,

thinking surrenders to lust.
Habit patterns of western thinking.
Infantry marches. Philosophers talk.

12 September 1992 KTC

[one more section of the *Ars Poetica*]

Poems are notations

written down
shadows of shadows

surface of the sea
a rippling line
(like the little white wave-gulls of Canaletto)

that divides
what we don't understand
from what we can't even see

or breathe to make guesses.

12 September 1992 KTC

MEADOW FULL OF WILD FLOWERS

We are easier with them in old books
the names of flowers
wild indeed today cold wind hot sun
with bees and yellowjackets
feeding feeding in that strange other Universe of theirs

that hurts us every now and then.
We are easier with them in old poems old Chinese poems
the names of flowers the name of bees
buzzes gently does not sting

no allergy to the shores of ragweed
that make the yellow edges of the field
around all the pinks and blues
the starting single red of the cosmos.

12 September 1992
KTC

ACE OF FIRE

balance of the little shirt
woven from the hair of my own goat

the Three of Fives waits for the Two of Tens.
Wind off the sun.

Five sailboats have vanished behind the tree.

12 September 1992
KTC

Summer
on the heath.
Face your scars,
your skin
is married to the world
more than most.

What a husband!
Rooftops with cold chimneys
rise out of his eyes.

With all that empty violence
he must be some sort of god.

12 September 1992
KTC

A quiet yawl with a spinnaker
on a river once I saw

its north was south, a little yacht
was overtaking it
like a boat from Egypt.

So far they have sailed now
it abides my failure to enquire.

At the seventh pylon I will find them again
in all the romantic silence of the afterworld
like limestone in moonlight.

12 September 1992
KTC

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13 September 1992
[Lost Words, 1]

Sketching the day's face
this very effigy
of a dying man
among all the sex changes of dream

lust is constant its object varies
not by moonlight or any thing so fixed
but by the rumor of apparency
if this then this

a word whispered in the dark.

2.

Whispered? Whimpered? A joke
comes back to haunt.
My mind is still full of the usual.
Me-stuff, the usual currency.
How to say "yes" in a dead language.

13 September 1992
KTC

There under the tree
a kind of waiting

that it was flesh and knew

that it knew and was afraid

and they came to him there
where all that waiting
was at the foot of some tree

and found him sleeping

That is a strange
power of waiting
they said that his eyes
were closed

and used him so
ever after
to be their knight their songsman
in the rafters
of civic morality he
would procure that music
slipped between

a lady and her lord and left them.

He woke too late
into the animal of desire.

14 September 1992

[from The Four Queens & What They Found]

