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## THE CRISIS

Things keep imagining themselves  
the thunder the ear of corn  
August over the hill  
the rain right now

the candlelight.  
Another day it would be daylight now  
but night holds on  
hungry the thunder will not sleep.

Ruby peacock  
walks up and down my head  
along a path even shadier  
than this dark lawn

ruby peacock busy keeping still  
but when he shouts  
what will happen  
and all the world hears?

And they do shout  
even dawn has to come  
drenched with thunder  
cuckolded by candlelight.

A native ornithology  
a shaman in the trees  
at this blue moment  
mocking me, says

my blood is ink, says  
my hand likes far away  
that distant skin is best  
says I'm selfish

selfish as any man  
and full of lies.  
I hear him in the trees  
acoustics of the night

how accurate this valley is  
the beautiful ever-flowing water  
Muhicannituck  
tide in and river out

I have become one of them  
shaped by where I live  
the water outside me floods in  
where we keep our stars.

21 July 2003

It's where we live, and depending on our closeness to, our affine relations with, the place we live, that determine *how* the stars affect us. Stars are everywhere, but can only come to earth by means of earth's own various virtues. These virtues are the forces by which we are disposed to stellar influence. Else the stars the same for everybody. So people born at sea have all the stars but no inscription made of them in themselves. It is place that inscribes us. Buddha Eye, the local absolute.

## **SILVER**

Silver sum  
of all our rain  
burning gold  
the sun recurs

the crew is busy  
clearing fallen trees  
I wonder can I sleep  
now in this brightness

kept awake as I was  
all night by the wild dark?

22 July 2003

## **XENOLITH**

Get a big boulder  
set it on the lawn  
get a mallet get a chisel  
hit it till I carve a throne.

22 July 2003

Salisbury

## THEOLOGIES

Not defiled but different.

An outcome with no story  
a girl asleep in the snow

How do we bring ourselves  
to such weather? listening  
to what the hill says  
behind us,

the natives in their trances  
under the hedge

foxes reciting their prayers  
in front of us  
*triangulate their apostrophes*  
and find God  
the called-upon  
the target of their speculations  
the Intersection  
where all prayers meet

their prophecies,  
crows, doves, coyotes  
the one

universal object  
the imaginary subject

keep listening  
only the math is wrong  
always  
but the numbers are right.

23 July 2003

## PHOTOGRAPHY & WRITING

Photography has no pronouns.

This is its immense liberty.

To say

without being someone

a story

without whom.

And when they write about it

the object is called the 'subject'

a personless face

on its way to form

on its way to thing

piece of paper, gel,

array of pixels.

A love story

with nobody home.

Whereas writing (much more than oral performance, oral poetry) sets the pronouns dancing, each grasping at nouns and letting them go, each desperate for referent, for a plausible 'antecedent' as schoolteachers say, some thing, some thingliness to ground its algebra.

In oral poetry, there is always someone there, preempting the pronouns, always a mouth open and reciting, privileging the speaker as radical presence, the real “I” to which all other pronouns (all other beings, modes of being) are phantoms. Phantoms that take their bearings from this I.

Whereas in writing, only you have anything like that privilege. You can close the book whenever you choose, without damage. Whereas you are many and everywhere and all. No picture could be taken of “you” that would silence all the “me”s of the world.

24 July 2003

## **PRAYER**

To be knocked down  
after a storm  
like Charlie Chaplin  
or be a red stone  
passed from hand to hand  
among Freemasons  
but why  
or a ladder  
carted away from a window or  
a cup of silver filigree  
sets the wine free.

24 July 2003

## **THE NEWS**

Every day there is a new republic  
or a coup in an old one  
old King Death not so easily unseated  
corpses of rebels and onlookers piled in the street.

24 July 2003

## **BIRCH GROVE**

we live  
by altitude  
Bernal Heights  
take off your clothes  
writing postcards  
on what's left of you  
some day  
I'll come back  
waiting is so naked.

24 July 2003

## **HOMAGE TO APOLLINAIRE**

I want to read this article about Kazakhstan  
in a rain-soaked magazine I left on the deck  
on deck when I sailed off  
inside or to the opera  
I don't want to think about anything that's mine.

24 July 2003

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Butterfly

hovering at the edge of shadow  
edge of rain

the garden is well  
watered by the clouds  
the grass is all grown

now what can I do?

24 July 2003

## MAURIAC

what a moral eye he had  
a piercing understanding  
of how wrong the right was

and how deep inside the right  
the good was hidden

they used the insights of the prophets  
to bind their wills  
and break the spirits of the young

and still a century beyond their rule  
we think that pleasure's suspect  
and body's dangerous

25 July 2003

## HYMN OF THE NATIONS

The English used to drink green tea with milk,  
a fact, and where was I when that was going on,  
hidden in the condensation like a house elf  
or one of those puckish Slavic sprites  
who pinch girls' cheeks while they wait for buses  
on empty country lanes never far from wolves  
and now the idea seems so gross, milk is so unZen,  
so lower-class, unappealing, Kool-Aid at the Ritz,  
why bother, what happened, why is it all different  
now? And who put all the commas in my coffee,  
sugar everywhere, is it in my Pero yet?  
Did I put it there and then forget, like any  
colonial Englishman? "The clouds of Kazakhstan  
cast shadows on the Kremlin." Old Russian  
saying. The girls giggle and pinch right back.

25 July 2003

## **IBN RUSHD**

Reading what's left of an article on Averroes  
after the rain stuck most of the pages together  
I think back to the café on the corner of the rue  
des Saints-Pères by the medical school,  
the portrait medallions of great physicians  
carved up on the wall, craning my neck  
to stare up at Averroes over my coffee,  
that Arabian drink on such a narrow street,  
strange to put old conjectural faces of dead men  
all over any moderately new wall, especially  
a building aimed to heal the living  
via these busy students trotting along below  
shlepping thick textbooks, who knows  
what these people really want from life,  
their own or the lives of those they touch.  
Who knows what's in the books they carry,  
it changes every fifty years or so, someday soon  
we'll discover blood doesn't really move  
in the arteries, something else flashes through  
our long-suffering meat, bring back leeches,  
the eye is a brittle fragment fallen from the moon.

25 July 2003

## THE FATE MACHINE

Whip canisters  
align her thinking,  
ship.

Gannets'  
strange human chuckle.  
Whip surge  
strum foam  
a far strand  
choosing.

Seeds  
come with surf  
for story landing.

Places are blue  
together  
naked landing  
naturally sit  
bare wood step  
three from the top  
heather discourse  
as if a stranger.

Keep waiting  
as by machine  
the fate device.  
Gaze into eye slot

soft twinkling blue  
lights of the interior.

Diodes emit destiny.

26 July 2003

## TELLING THE FUTURE

1.

Always some waiting left to do  
some weft to parse  
through its pilgrimages  
before you can be sure.

For things have hands too  
and hands have palms  
and all the palms have lines  
all you need to do is follow.

2.

But you can't even be you yet  
so how can this major world religion  
tattoo your soft ankle with the five  
petalled generic form of that *difference*  
it is so easy to call love?

And who really lives in that house?  
Ask the neighbors  
ask what they smell and hear from across the lawn  
the smooth-cut grass that holds so many secrets.

3.

Where it comes from, runs and goes—  
then read the pattern of its pilgrimage  
through the matter world of other people's  
fixing, then call it an instinct, a drive,  
a deity, a cause.

4.

We always try to read the last chapter first —  
then we get married and hope the book itself  
leads to the conclusion we interpreted,  
this simple act.

Then we watch  
crows feeding up there  
deep in an evidently empty sky.

26 July 2003

“and had no other teacher  
but my father”  
and needed none

C.P.E.B., *Autobiographie*