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Arts are agreeable. The masters sit
like crows at dawn, making use
of all the remnants of my night.
Scraps. Scars. Dark incisions
into the meat. The beaks
of beauty. This analysis
lasts as long as Chartres.

2.
The things they do
see through and through.

3.
They are the most beautiful. The griefs of us
turn into tune. Of dimmallest adultery
an opera. The passion to represent
is fugitive, the exorcism lasts.
Dead men all tell tales.

19 February 1995
KTC

The map
of that other country
keeps getting closer.

An anxiety
you can taste,
held too long in the mouth,
like a squeamish
but greedy
fisherman clutching a trout,

wanting it, wanting
to let go.

19 February 1995
KTC

importance of things
I measure

the message
by the telephone

the instrument is all

19 February 1995
KTC

All that I am lies open
to the stars'

teeth. Easier fingerings
on the slopes of Gold Mountain

such as Chinese in California
marveled to see so far from where it should be

at the center of personal experience.

20 February 1995
KTC

a smell of incense
in the bedroom

then the sand she sat on
brought home to fill an urn with
ashes of the living

the stench of love
in unlikely places

this narrow room
is all I know.

20 February 1995
KTC

NON-STOP STOCKHOLM TO BARCELONA

The wings reach out from the snow
to find a soothing smallish ocean—

this is the curious
compassion of money

that everybody knows
what everybody else wants

and wants it too.
This is how salt began

and memory, and arithmetic,
then music.

Later mercury
and the soft answer

every lilac offers
to the saddest question.

20 February 1995
KTC

R A G S

Sometimes certainty's worth more
than a rag on a mannequin's rump
or same floating over a fort at twilight
Taps playing, ready to come down
or same wiping my brow — usually
use the back of my hand, my sleeve —
after a day of productive labor
—teaching people to be mindful of death—
what else could poetry be?
But most of the time the rag's worth more.
We delight in the shiver of the unexplained
but fatal mystery of our lives, and go on voting.

21 February 1995

for Charlotte

Let us assay this new day, and question its severe
antique character— snow. Quiz it with an emerald
convexo-concave lens my Nero, analyze
whatever you see by the simplest Greek verb,

every killer is an unkind scholar, rife
with some abominable discipline. Discourse.
I wonder if the newspaper will ever come,
I need the news for kindling, the great events

catch somber fire in the smudgy ashes under
this great blank veined timber of my life—
I mean the news burns us. I mean the life we run
is the little fuel our former lives have left us

to light our way to, to where? Where the flower
of this complex bitter seed of all this thick world
around us suddenly opens from us and is us.
And that is no place, that is all just flowering.

21 February 1995

SITTING ALONE IN WINTER SUNLIGHT

is being part of a consortium.
Man working on a rock wall,
the thud of order.
Easy words, my masters.

Once in the blue light of arcane
desire I lingered, old bookshop,
to hear an old man tell the dreary
history of all the people

—poets, dancers, harlots, mostly dancers—
who had been me. Supple
as a bronze hip in Rodin
his heavy insinuations

restored me to love. Work
with people. Translate. Don't leave
the sacred language of your own body
unspoken in all the fervent Europes

you imagine church by street by girl.
It began with a little magazine.
Forty years ago. The dust itself
is alphabet by now, and book enough.

22 February 1995

Whenever it says so
the day comes up
like a dog at Santa Monica
hurling itself into some waves

we all, all, surf. It is time
we balance on, dear Polynesian.
Wrap the flowery
sarong right around the water.

22 February 1995

[and the wind's hips squeeze]

I want to be an island morning
faith by faith arriving
all the policy of air
— lactose interludes — Gregorian doowop —
and get the sinew back, wet-poulticed and steamy,
a mustard plaster on the public mind

to heat through the five stages of private life:

Householder
Neighborhood
Swann in Love
Girl Scouts of the Galaxy
The Oracle

You'll have to stick around to learn what each one means.

(The highest balcony in that hell
is called The Family Circle.)

23 February 1995

ORNETTE AT THE GOLDEN CIRCLE, MID-
SIXTIES

In all that startled silence
harbor gulls
scaring young girls

a yellow boat
on a nobody sea

She screams for me.

23 February 1995

Cushioned on the fathomless power of the obvious
I am born alone again, coffee in my hand, an analyst
of fugitive conditions, amateur of apparitions,
all that stuff. Good morning, snow,

will you be my paper? Can I write the news on you
like a drunk peeing yellow signatures?
And after I've interviewed the last raindrop
will anyone still be listening? Breath

is the matter of interpretation.
Breath calls out to you, any words its tricks
to keep you listening, mix its shivering urgent mist
into your silent mindstream so as to make

your breath resonate in sync. Or so
my guess is — and the body is just one big guess,
isn't it, adorable, false, but good enough for us.
Where did that you come from? Dark sky,

the way I like it, the grey of morning, the wet outside
to match the turbid rallyings within. How dark
inside a body is! And all this breath
escaping from that concentration camp, saying anything,

saying everything, to babble truth in an open world.

24 February 1995

A THING FORGIVES LANGUAGE

You are aluminum
I make you rain
there are already
too many of us
in this sentence

two many
some one's radio
they think language
is a convenience
we know it's laundry

language the stains
that wash out of experience

word sleep
sooth soon
I am you
you make me me

what is there to forgive
the nervous affectation called silence

language would be natural
and continuous and behaviorful
as the sky or ocean is
as all the chances of

ocean wave typhoon and sea serene
are water, are just water,

so all the enterprise of
language is just breath

serene and elemental
air of us

stirred up by conditions
to express

but I am thing

and have only one guess—
the things with breath are you

the rest is me.

24 February 1995

All it takes is to be blue.
Then the sky, fooled, takes
up residence in your skull
and speaks through you.

This is poetry, or what the An-
daman Islanders (who do
not have the dance) call Fire.
I'm making this all up

because the blue sky tells me to.

24 February 1995

[Listening to Richie Gordon play Monk's "Let's call this"]

NIGHTSOUNDS

Truck dragging its way through cloud.
It might be wind, the brittle lightning,
someone's name scratched on an envelope.

All our body is is thinking where it's been.

24 February 1995, Olin.

Notice nothing. Do not understand.
The ink's pure liquidity
keeps you from being sure.
A dried out word
you wrote a minute back—
it's as old as Homer now,
old, old, old, no use,
all written out of breath.

24 February 1995, Olin

