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DEAD ANEMONES

Blown anemones
outrageously spread

wilder than in their prime
their hearts dark blue

and everything else a little
paler but how they open

a gasp of color
before we yield them to the snow.

1 March 1994

FINDING THE BLAME OF WALL

Cistercian windows
the light is rose enough.

Finding the vetch-like flower grew
in the crannies of the ruined
pillars of St. Jean l'Abbaye

gape doors framing
a little dairy van switchbacking up the hill

Vetch-like
in point of color
(blue) and tremulous
grew over my head or my hand's
reach

piers and pylons of the nave, holding
from here an older hand or face
locked in the geometry from the unruinable
thereness of a wall

There is no place to stow them when they go
they are here with us forever
but forever dwindling

until this whole great
abbey burnt down by peasant rebels is

just a rock suspended in the air

waiting one moment to fall
and this moment is all we are.

1 March 1994

IN PRAISE OF THE NETHERLANDS

1.

As if to be a part of things, the one
pushing out into the daylight now
disguised as a dead flower
thrown into the snow

where such things go
beyond knowing
onto the span of the Black Bridge

the little things that happen in a house
death of a man, the waning
of a flower, the throw
of one or the other
out into the forget.

2.

More, more, the things
that need to speed

the brain is that parcel of forgetting
imperfectly engined.
Sometimes it remembers in me

and then it is sea.
The returning
quality

bringing it home,
Home is wherever it finds me
to reveal.

3.

“I must ask you
to show more assertiveness,
the dreamy pass-

ivity of your reflections
is a mood
wasted, something like a sky

with two many moons in it
and nothing to be seen.
Relax like a stone church

into the shadows by the canal.”

4.

The aggressions of Amsterdam
erode the comfortable ignorances.

Philosophy is that snow
on which the sunlight falls

or else the sun
so lost

in the unrecoverable glare
of what is simply there.

1 March 1994

HORLOGE

This is the time I keep time in
chained to a little clock
I wear around my collar
inside out

down it hangs inside my breast bone strong
and burrs and shivers all night long
and I wake spouting nonsense in the yellow dawn
sounds like talk and sounds like listening

the words working quietly over there hum all by themselves.

2 March 1994

Spelunca maxima vel antro ingeni

here is my lie: something
like a gemstone

wedged out of the boulder a bridge is
built from such as these and I

with a blue penknife pry out red stone.
Garnetry of indolence and youth,

a city fair. White
ramparted (arkose sandstone's

ruddy rather, a vast horizon
with an island skimming a far sea)

see from the cliff. I keep
coming back to that memory.

Riverside Drive. What you return to
is a city. The definition

loops around me like her hair.

2 March 1994 Hopson

[answering Bialy's Brooklyn Bridge]

who said what
(pointing
upward
silver-fingered and

who was listening?

There is something to be said
for going there
something for sending
podakys Akhilleus
in my place

something for staying home
watching the moon stain us with new snow.

Buy it. They can always
build another.

The Moon.

Wed Mar 2 22:34:54 1994

RELIGION

As the usage
of the old wood
eras of wax
the sloven light
reveals, nick
by fingernail

or: every verse
however slovenly
is one libation poured
distillate at it is
or smelly ferment merely

of (the best offering is) mind.

Hence the ceaseless offering of word.

Or: that is not the mind
of course but first fruits of
if first indeed
first telling
when no lies are told

except the lie of who I am and what I think I mean.

Or: there's always a scratch on the furniture
somewhere, it's not
that the imperfections don't count, they do,
it's that they are remarked

and noticed, taken
mind of (repented)

and that's an offering too.

Sometimes I think the morning only comes
to show the wrinkles on my sins.

2 March 1994

VARIATIONS OPEN EVERY DOOR

1.

for Robin Jacobs

first her gauntness of the one who's gone
fast out of this cycle where we need
each other critically and say so little

and what we say is like a glove, isn't it,
shaped just like a part of us
but nothing in it, nothing of me in it

just the shape we leave in things
but where are my hands?
We need her first, a little time

so little time left in any afternoon
for all the weary hours we must spend
getting to that point we don't desire,

a little time, a little time. And then the time is up.
Then we remember that in languages we know
the hand is a feminine noun. We know

why the glove is empty, why the fist
is formed to fight (fingers concealed,
four hidden inside one) but no one there.

3 March 1994

VARIATIONS OPEN EVERY DOOR

2.

for Elizabeth Bethea

that what happens is a hill or there is more
to these alternatives the wise despise
with their this way only and their one-way streets.

We chanced upon a hill, it made us
what we are, the ink was thick
the contract stood a long time waiting

while we played in the snow in the huge
soft aggression of push and shove and snow
the wet of it the waiting and finally

the evening happened also and we signed.
Then sat around in our damp clothes
drinking and thinking. The books were waiting too

full of everything of meaning. And no choice.
All the fictions lined up around
some new incurable truth.

The president is dead,
the moon is empty, I have made
a terrible mistake, and lick my fingers.

4 March 1994

What's kindly
is I write
into a mesh
of light

(glass table top
bare trees
coming down
from quick clouds)

my hand
is one of them
knobs
and branches

the inscription
is accurate
being momentary
I have not made

time to make
a mess
of all this that
comes to fall.

5 March 1994

THE PLACE

I haven't learned to do this yet,
let the tired mind wake up to this skin
seen from just this table, surely a mind
is part of the furniture, takes a few days
in a place to trap the new light and be.

Across the stream a small red car
seems mired in snow in the trees,
one of the things you find in the woods.
And Charlotte called one of my esses
a typical flat Irish ess, hardly a curve to it,
a curve collapsed in hopelessness.

What we see in each other when we look.
I could feel me in the funeral yesterday,
didn't want to share my death with
any other. Though the minister
bleated and pleaded like TV for friends
to come forward and *share*. Just share.
And come they did, and held the microphone
and shucked their way through a woman's life.

I did not want to share. (No object
to their verb, a strange intransitivity,
a wordy trance, a spate of blurriness,
they rose to share as one lies down to sleep).
I am wrestling with a new table at new windows
and the death of a friend. The tortures
of the trivial are notorious but undiscussed.
The fatal blur at the border of the mind

where toothache lives and shoelaces and tragedy

and from those weird frontiers a man runs
desperate for a center where the mind is singular.
And sometimes finds it here: a *word* alone
is a sign of it, that nexus for one instant
holds all its referents and reminds together
like a hand with a hurt bird in it.
A child breathes on it and it flies away.

6 March 1994

Dark but as rain
would not more
snow consent
to pardon us

They go to work
and have good cheer
this mystery
beyond me

how not to hate
the have to.
Smiling they come
with ancient

orderly competence
to attend
need of thing or
person — job

worthening them?
As a sky
paltry with light
has time to give

of rain? Weather
wants us.
To wake us
to the nothing

there is to do.

7 March 1994

One more visit from the alphabet.
Like a woman working in a fruit tree
(she's pruning, looks like
she's mounting the sky and has gotten
caught in sheer climbing)
across the road in late winter
preparing a spring no one
believes and everyone knows,
the difference, we are working
in emptiness and branches,
we are caught on brackets of air.
And we hope. But who?

7 March 1994

Clearing the mind for what happens
is clearing the mind of
what happens. The technic
cleanses the craftsman. For a minute
he is tool. After that
the wicked weather of all life
has him. Snow never lets you go.
And spring is worse.

7 March 1994

A monkey closes its eyes
the way the sea rolls out

and when the waves come in again
all the people throw up their arms and leap

and the water crest holds them up
and gets their bathing costumes wet

feel damp wool on warm pink skin
though all of these long ago are dead.

Any human face is a seed of the moon
but what is an animal's eye?

This picture can't stop looking at me.

7 March 1994

QASIDA OF THE MISTY DAY

Is it the kettle boiling or
The car on wet roads

Dangerous to put on shirts
The smell of yesterday outlasts all laundering

Lavender a name beneath a smell
The words you never thing to me

Turning clumsy TYXH the still believer
O Fortuna they sang in Austrian

Learned letters of a latin can
I spier this mickle fog

The much of me so meant for you
Was never a limer or a bricker or a few

Midcourt an apathy receiver
Measure is all — malte Hass!—

It is the car it's not the kettle
It is the broom and not the missed

So thick I can't Cedar Hill
Where garnet tail lights dwindle fast

OK no cats on this side of the house
Here we are at the windows in Bosnia

Every morning is its separate war
Quoits a game whereof one's pater proved

If it's not malt it will be merrier
It just means the cloud comes down to earth

Be a bird or a song-bidder a bird
Summoner listen how the news caws now

Osiers far from reddening yet the hidden
Magic-mongers throng below the leaf

No leaf yet no color but the cloud
O I love this the high the same as low

For once I walk intelligent with desist
Spongy philosophy like a lung a cough

Each one is sort of like the same
Vernacular identities in sport of pain

Unbidden the day floods with theurgy
And every breath announces visitors

Sir a great personage waits at your floor
Not flower though his hands are full of hues

To wake among the undesired
A shift of life experience to prose

Skim milk the mode of seeing's dhatu
A blur of circumstance yclept the World

I wound up at the nearest tree
Unwounded sparrows on my arms

Full of unexpected decencies
Who stole our camera a mountain

Things take their pictures back
Left with the feel of someone in the night

I try to look things up the books are frozen
One tree two trunks a satisfaction

Intimate confusions smelly old desires
A bench on the Embankment

Who walks with me down the smooth scrubbed hallway
I think I'm a solitary a monk a foolish violin

A teller making up a day's worth of money
A danger day to wake so far

Image the fogscape as a single word
Walk somewhere the cars can miss

Now look back and lift the broom's unlikely flower
Haughty in the grim uncarpentering light

Dripping sweat Narcissus brings his body home.

8 March 1994

