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NIGHT SOUNDS

As a kind of amazement
maybe
a kind of ark in the attic
with real animals in it
you hear prowling through the ceiling
when your head is somewhere in between
prayers you can't remember and a face you can't forget
the predictable ornaments of the dark
come towards you always looking like eyes

2.

but the hearings
the footsteps and gentle snuffles
the slither over,
hoof clatter
the length of your mind

for a while all you can think
is what you hear
and what it looks like
up there in the empty attic
pink insulation stuffed against the sky.

1 November 1993

MATTHEW OF WESTMINSTER'S CHRONICLE

Egregious the piracy
a land against some man.
The waves fall for it,
broadly the Conquistador.
M. Guillaume, from around Caen
thick with apple trees and November

and up in Waltham the cross tilts outward
to remember Harold Last-King,
nodding good-bye to him at the chapel door

but the cross always tilts inward,
casts its shadow on the glee that masks the mind.
Remember all your dying,
this time and next time,

while the great ones
with palm fronds in their hands
or bowls of rice or milk or empty bowls,
they die to demonstrate.

1 November 1993

ARS LONGA

Landward the scribes
tend on the ocean of pure inscription
not yet desperate

believing somewhere comes a final word
when written
brings an end to their laborious swimming

scribbling onward to some haze of surf
that might be land or rock
or maybe just more rhythm rhythm

sound and sense in a nowhere dance
and all those miles to reach
before the dubious beach.

2 November 1993

VITA BREVIS

Everyone's life is exactly the same length at the moment when they say "all my life." Like a measure of music, it is the same length no matter how many items are in it. The perception is plenary, impartite, whole. It is, at any moment, all my life.

2 November 1993

ASGARD

The place that waits
continuous
with a beginning

apt for all our leavings
like the hotel in Montreux
the fuchsia dangling scarlet

or paler into the lake
calm under so many angers
but above us

as if we were trailing leaves
flowers and the rest of it
drooping down from heaven and

otherness ties us to our own.
It is a box, remember,
fanciful and adequate at once

for all that we would think
to keep in it,
darling, our broken gods.

2 November 1993, 14:28

It is not time to fight an old battle.
Instead, this morning, see
if I can make peace with a new enemy
before the habits of hating grow too hard

and the iron rails lead forever into the morning haze
carrying everybody away into Siberia.
Yet, o Moscow, it is from Siberia
that the sun rises and comes to you again,
every day, every day the new life,

the *Why* in the sky, ah winter,
so few hours you give us to remember.

3 November 1993

MOSAIC

Angry at the surge of grace that gave me,
I deal another stone. I carve these tenets
Arbitrarily in arkose, sandstone I read
In sunset red, and trace new laws
From what the birds said mincing overhead
Careless with their shadows. Do this. That don't.
The ceremony of instruction enthralls me.
I compose a multiverse where everything obeys.

4 November 1993

THE REVERENCE

Burnt a slip of paper
had a Celtic cross on it
and a hammer of Thor,

wanted to burn it
just from respect
folded the paper

and the flame took well
burned quick & sent
two horns of fire

out either end
symmetrical upswept
and fine: sign

of the oldest
west, *boukranion*, bull
horns upturned,

horns of uterus,
being everything
to us, a sudden god.

4 November 1993

OBSTACLES BIGGER THAN THE MOON

The little meanings I left in your mouth

so raw a sister in the sweet of time
fragarnt and billy-fool

for her we lost our white. Sool. An eye
under a bridge staring upriver—
everything comes here, pay the troll,
fear of every nook and cranny,
face it, fear of hole

because the Eagle in his high reluctance
abstains from earth

can I be that bird, father, or so
many animals in the woods or
pesh for fish in the blue water? Da?

Daddy? The trouble with never is now.
The trouble with women like her
is you have to leave the man world
to be with her and then you're nowhere,

not a man and not a woman and
what cabinet do you relieve yourself in
then, hero, what door?

You're a kind of magic flower then
pissing pollen all over the rug
and nobody wants you cept she does
want you hanging around.

The trouble
with anybody is everbody else.

Flesh talks and who listens?
Everything comes her. Open sympathy
her camera. Keel scrape her music.

And the damned things is she's whiter than you'll ever be
or ever was, take my meaning,
in such a blue going.

Get into the canoe,
son, can't help it, you're on
your way to her now, hero,
without a haircut, vandalizer,
mandolin, keep it up, the sleek
vessel makes its own way
current-coddled to the dark portal.
There she knows.

Pull the ripcord
and the river falls away, leaves you,
gull, in her mortal gather.

Diamonds of some sort in your hand—
you are suddenly conscious of not
having come with nothing. You are something.
You trade your canoe for a farm on the moon,
you kiss her shadow with wet sloppy lips.
Far away you hear those strange
animals Ordinary People passing
at cross purposes on the road above your head.

5 November 1993

BRUMAIRE

And the brume of it the mist of it
knows on. The speakable
confusions of the hill
worrying morning traffic in the mist
and here I am again lost in a name.

5 November 1993

VOWELS

As much as measurement
a day shaped like an alphabet—

wet feet, gong going, a woman
staring into the rain—

“an ox in a house
a camel in a doorway”

God is a window
with her pale blue eyes.

Is it enough to see
what we are given,

not looking, just regard?
I feel my wet feet—

is there some other animal?
broad steps, the beaver's lodge

“overbearing” an animal's
sense of what is right—

animals are people who don't ask questions
and how soon they will be old

only the come again,
the salmon,

unchanged, the same one
ever and again springing up the falls

unbearable with becoming.
His lower jaw lances out

for the final and glorious combat
we also this moment are.

5 November 1993

ORLANDO IN LOVE

(after an episode in Boiardo)

Something about guarding a bridge,
knights, a woman in a tree,
pine, and keeping a watch
on the devious vocabulary of divine explanation—

what justice feels like when you hold it in your hand:
viz., life after life,
a barrier to easy conclusions,
take the woman in your arms

even if you have to hold the tree up forever,
disguised as the earth.
We walk the way we think
whereas the knights are dubious

explaining the condition of the bridge,
Kafka-like, you can't cross and must cross
and all the while the woman
tells you everything you hear is lies,

o what a simple explanation, all lies,
under the green hem of her long robe
her truthful pink feet peek
dangling above you where she sits on the branch.

Believe her feet. How did you get here?
I was born. I opened a book.
I slept and woke and then
her insistences resolve me to some action.

This bridge (I claim) is mine,
I cried, I sneezed, I sneezed so loud
crows in a neighbor field
stood up quacking into the sky

and wheeled and wheeled around
trying to find the moment where they'd been.
Every moment is a dream of passage,

a word hard to read, a broken bridge.

I broke the bridge
and then I broke the river.
It is well to stand aside from all these questions
weeping for the death of fair ladies.

6 November 1993

That other language

the wind is making
sideways the truth shears
cuts through the streets of rock
this long week building

and what turns in the winds turn?

7 November 1993
Thubten Chöling

(Morning awkward)

Hand feels
as to say
it never penned
a sense in sound's corral
or spoke a sign of it

liberty you silent flower
growing from the trash of me.

7 November 1993
Thubten Chöling

NOVEMBER

Still time for slim reeds
stems slender seedpods
chivvied by a high blue wind

Nature becomes me naturally.

7 November 1993
Thubten Chöling

NOTES FOR THE PRODIGAL SON

Verdun sun
out the train window
mist in the trees
a woman in the mist

then the little forests
of the Champagne
sugar mines of Oahu
salt beds of Utah, all
power was given to me at the start

and I have spent it word by word,
father, in the swinery of sweet
poetry,

to speak so clearly
what I never knew

now come empty-handed
and full of knowing home.

8 November 1993

THE INSIDE ALWAYS TELLS

for Charlotte

The inside always tells
The wake-me madam
Pounding my parietals my frontals
The joining-of-the-senses
In that Suspicious Triangle
In the middle of my mug

“O sniff this wake-world
and try to curl around to sleep
noch wieder, thou art
a dog in love with pleasure nearness,
cross-eyed with desire, your blue
(*blaue*) flower (*Blume*) bloometh
at the tip of your Eternal Nose.”

Things arise not from discussion
Nor doth Verity unslip her garments
Till the mind holds still—

Peace me, Charli, and the dungeon roses
Spring out of the most uncrannied wall,
Plague-flowers, time-lilies, all spread their
Senses out, their meanings fragrant
And even in that doubt
The held mind haltered
Neuters the nihil and the brightness
Lasts—

 it is difficult, darling,
This guess I'm wearing
But anything is better than a hope.

9 November 1993

