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As a shoemaker works
against the weather below
he guessed these
these endings to his lectures Aristotle
notes scratched on the ash wood
wonder / the punctuation
turns out to be random

Greece
is on the other side of the day

belief has nothing to do with it a night is cool
after rain mist

again I look into the window of my hands
there is a liveness in railing at you
America the quacking of black ducks and

today Charlotte saw five pheasants in rain cross
the road and enter the brush at roadside
where I could see them also faintly
dark wine bottle shapes stalking under the spicebush

what we see / the beginnings
of an unpersuadable cadenza tells me
the orchestra will soon come back
the piece will be over the words
scatter over the domain of melody
until we can know nothing again

Greek on our pale ears

labe, labe phrazou —
they hear me sleeping
labe, labe phrazou —
they hear me knowing,

they understand the air at least
the bronze smell

when the breeze turns
quick below the leaf

in the Livermore Valley
gaunt against skylines the thrifty windmills whir

then the King failing to deter the Woman from her resolve
meek bent him down and accepted the water from her hands
washed his kingdom away and left him old

a mass-priest with a shabby book, oil slick on a stone.

11 October 1992

ABERDEEN

street heavy grey rough wool smell of
my clothes maybe homespun
a word in rain.

12 October 1992

WELSH MADE EASY

hwyaden a duck
feminine a broad
handsome white
sort of water bird
measured by pond
the green circumstance
that feeds a mind

and to speak
a quiet clamor
as if the water
itself were talking
inside the ear

all the coins of
this long long culture
my grandmother
in her black dress
a brooch of Snowdon
pricked out of jet

her white hands
pressing me into time
from the grey-green
channel before
anybody is born

it is another language
we are only
born speaking.

12 October 1992

yes I remember you you were a log
of hemlock moldering beside the track
and the red heartwood leached into the white chips
chopped from your meaning yes
I remember you you
were the river flowing brown as Thailand silk
along the barriers of language
where wetbacks slipped across at night
to bring music to exhausted children yes
I remember you you were a plate of food
poised on my bare knee I tried to eat at parties
but eating is so terribly naked I remember
you a red rubber ball wedged in the cleft of a tree
always a tree to become us
as if we only a little while were people or foxes
and then we went back to wood

but until that terrible hour you were your skin.

12 October 1992

but what I remember was an animal full of pain
a broken flower pot no longer a common sight
all that terra cotta lost from common view
ah gone to the moon madam gone to the moon

for the dog was broken with moonlight and moaned
softly from the pang of sheer desire
no other wound could I discern in the beast
except that which Love's penknife cuts in young and old

the torment house the liberal view turned back to stub
its itching nose against the looking glass o good my friend
there is no ardor in this interlude there is no fire
in this hearth against the Caledonian dismay

from here to Judgment Day without a glass of beer
and yet the sea is always kind by being always there
there at the counterpane of earth the plucking surf
turning ever beneath our chins to keep us clean

we sleep spread out as history and never wake ma'am
until the churches out of their dead slates make flowers grow
common vetch or sumptuous irises in holy drizzle
stop me if you've heard this prophecy the dead shall speak

and what they say will sell fat books that women read on trains.

12 October 1992

ERNANI

Let me explain what any opera is saying
it isn't in the words isn't in the acting
not even in the gorgeous opsis of the stagehands
dreaming up dim cosmoses for us to stare at
it isn't anywhere but what the music says
and all the story does is make some music flow
once just once long ago through Verdi's chest
he heard with force enough so we can hear it too.
If you want the richest story hear them singing
in a language that doesn't bother you with meaning
and then the meaning comes, the actual,
the natural history of this planet built of noise.

12 October 1992

As if I were waiting for someone else to come
and that told every story
the waiting and the coming what else is there
the maiden on her golden tower
and a red beard with no man
tossed on the October wind

*there is an oak tree in the mind
that knows the difference*

but knowing that is that the end
of the beginning the woman gazing down
into the red tressure of her garden
nothing much in flower
so many times he came and broke a branch and stayed

*there is an oak tree in the mind
that knows his name*

13 October 1992

the day of battle

and the woman stands in sunlight
shouts down from the summit of the sky

I AM NOT MY BODY

but the man in howling midnight
half broken on the crests of the world shouts too

I AM NOTHING BUT MY BODY

I am nothing but what you make happen
I am only my body and what it wants of you

the intersection

crisscross

the crucifixion

need you

to make me what I am

.

13 October 1992

THE MIND NEVER FREE OF WHAT WE HAVE SEEN

These are here for us too
in toto like Venice sleeping
under silvery mud
piazzas are under it
a sleek of poisoners
scattering gauzy pigeons

memories of every glory

memories to inhabit
and having this
need no other
except this alertness
to what the mind
sees steadily before it
inward looking

but we have been given
also this,
to walk on this golden ground
October, scarlet sumac yellow spicebush
tawny linden, it goes past us
and we walk upon pure colors
the tilework of this time

as we walked in that weird
English catholic cathedral
with shadows made of gold
it turned out were mosaics,
a haughty triumphalism
borrowing Venice and Ravenna
to splay against red brick,
this is the strangest building
I think I've ever been in,

the feel of it, only the beggars
on the steps were real,
the beggars and those pale
Stations of the Cross

that Eric Gill made, a lust
no dying God could silence,

the sleek slim of human *line*
against the dingy silence of the place.

13 October 1992

the blazing of the **W**ahoo

in tended gardens
 when outside such precincts
 blaze scarletter
 the self-sprung Sumac

we stopped the car to check the deer the giant Buck
hill-high it looked across the scrappy meadow
off that lane I will not mention
for fear I might be heard by hunters
 those small men with their sticks

and not far from there Charlotte saw
some pheasants easing into foliage
to be gone from us

 an age from us
 to see them
 iridescence in their throats
 the step of them
and the still-stand of the deer
 regardless.

13 October 1992

LYCOPHRON

and what would this be that is so near sleep the owls
nuzzle against the dark the blood of things vague in their beaks
I am too murky for notional judgment they called me Skoteinos
the dark one the obscure one no one understood
for I heard in her skin the delicate geography of her ravings
I knew all the countries of her agony and in each one
the same buttery sun slipped down the sky the same
rational fluid shaped like a vast uneasy plain
swallowed the light and held her cries between its hands
wave up and wave fall the cry of her intelligence rehearsed
the inevitable tragedy of those who are born
until I thought I was listening only to the gulls
the hungry white harrowers of her hells

*the sea has swallowed all argument and every meaning
and the princess has pronounced all the words at once*

I hear her behind me now warming her hands in a towel
wiping the whey from her chin and missing her father

13 October 1992, late

FIRST BROOKLYN SONNET

To drink this praise outrage
of alabaster or a storied urn
to picture narrative
but by showing it to limit it
to just this man and just this form
mother-helmeted against sheer slip
this black upon her bistre tell
spring satyr and mock Sileni
at the outskirts of the oval universe
galactimorph or lens like spring
Purim nights and Sunny in her underwear
pretending the moon above has wherewithal
to live: translate my fingers from old Greek.

14 October 1992

SECOND BROOKLYN SONNET

Football was one thing I never cared for
football and Davega's though I bought my chess set there
pedestrian the flavor of vanilla malted
whereas a patriarchal kind of inner food the sheen
of chicken fat around the derma yellow glinting
in wartime fluorescence o I was cheap
then and am cheap now a little memory
spoils the spicing of the soup break soak dried
mushrooms Miriam climbs before me up the B14
dissolve all my tropics into one Southern Continent
and let it be this word that fills my cheeks unsaid
for I have spilled an oral universe for you
telltale chalkmarks of hopscotch and permissions
stand on the trestle to make the open door.

14 October 1992

THIRD BROOKLYN SONNET

By virtue of knowing number the Andes even
are submitted to rule where in the highest pasture
the vicuña lords it each male with precisely
twelve consort does It is this beast
men from the bleak city must entrap
in the aesthetic hinterland the high learned places
which first taught Israel how to sin
hunt the beast (the bird the wren the salmon
slipstream silver in the bear's ravine) beauty
of architecture reminds a young man of stars
he sells his t-square and his alabaster
becomes an interpreter of dreams exactly twelve
one doe for ever hour of the day every wing
of the great wheel the mountains thronged with intercourse.

15 October 1992

FOURTH BROOKLYN SONNET

Twelve dreams would be plenty Sutter different
avenue Maubert is Russell Square Embarcadero
of the pigeons crows on Nyon Kaaterskill Falls
Darjeeling uphill by the monkey temple —that's
no monkey— what is black?— the coast
of Baja falling infinitely south Vancouver Island
with black beaks of cloud beating on the small
city of rain and right here where the late sun
pinks my hand with simple earthy life
the kind that men in dreams wield with content
over million-womaned foreign cities
where language is a kind of weather
rainstorms fall out of the suddenly open
mouths of faces you almost recognize.

15 October 1992

FIFTH BROOKLYN SONNET

The imperfections abound like food
can't eat without something dying a dream is plenty
calling from the mist beneath my own bought trees
all voice is love and talks about the science
love on earth in fact a matter of inserting
this inside that she says and striking the surfaces
that so give us pleasure it has been raining
and a voice worth hearing comes out of what happens
I hear her plainly for some while talk has been waiting
even mouths my name so I know who I am
in this discourse fallen out of the everything get wet
hiding that way in the trees while the rain insisted
in case I have forgotten after all these weathers
I will never forget you you wait inside my skin.

15 October 1992

THE SAME BOAT

the one we're in
the *Misericord*
locked to the dock
to tether me yet
again to going
sheer going

pump of my valve
we course the all of us
pumping together
no choice and no stopping
in gentle swoopings
over her dim Pond
proustwise through the green
impossible to hold

and suddenly a taste
holds it
long hair and strongest coffee
of a North Beach morning
and then the hold
happens off
and she is lost
whoever she was
into the human memory

the storehouse of all possible
misadventures
from which the mind
when the sun blazes at midnight
breaks free.

But where is free
in all these circles
eddyng,
the sweep of mind
over its own resources
golden leaves parachuting
down into scummy water,

where is *there*
when everything is here?
The otherness of answering
takes the breath,
the little boat
swings on its frayed rope
and we hope
idly at the shore,

no shore,
a manifold of colors
turning only into others,

memory remembers only the tether,
but there's a mindful
miracle beyond recall—

what makes me think there's any boat at all?

15 October 1992

VARIATIONS ON THE THIRD STROPHE OF DAVID GANSZ'S *PER MISSIONS*

1.

Veiled eyes though, see, do see. Take in, only. Nor hearts ease earth's hardness to withstand its own stability. Sin is a star that penetrates you, faith leads to silver. O apart you are, body, full of all hitherness and close, the yellow flowers of his passion queen it in the purple of your mass. Clement amnion to wash into this sphere once more the greenest howling, hope a royal noon receive us fallen from the One into the Cup of everyone.

2.

Validations are plentiful in a world of seeming, heal scars easy under sin's abilities. Parapentes float on scarlet updraft to do a little thrill upon these easy crusaders of the air. Body, you were mountains and were fuel, the cross your one erection when heavy metal parliaments blaze this decidedness. A tomb spares spirit — don't we know that yet? O grievous psalter science mumbles to itself from the unfriending "One Is None."

3.

Full of all hitherness I heard, and then the view was darkened into the guess of seemed only died, only seemed to rise? The yew comes at the end of it, darkgreen, red berried it bodies forward where the pale mountain used to swagger and now queen Hel has it, and it is an it, we think, but almost fearfully we purge our Europe, then past the little corporals of its morning theosophies we suddenly find a stone, a stone

4.

to view from, stand on, doze not, only hear and ponder, keep vigil by the hearth of mind. Pure meditation sweeps history.

15 October 1992

