THE ARGUMENT FROM THE DRANSE

The Dranse is a river. It is an old word in the Savoy language, sister to our word drench; it means a torrent down the mountain, a torrent is a flood that the rocks control. Shaped by the rocks it shapes, a mountain torrent is the perfect reciprocal gesture, a word among things, fluent and responsive, carving out by passing by. It is a fleeting gesture that changes eternities, a mark elapsing that leaves behind hard meanings where it passes.

[The poem begins on Saturday, 7 August 2004, in La Borne.]

Not lost too much
tooth the touch of	

tender in the fine

a fork among friends

O salt to love who
after hamamelis
lit the whistle
hard on its going down

a gong for spraddle
or butter a mother
be care, keel, any
anyboat you see

smell of kerosene
making sense green
a furber or a foal
wagtail on 2 lawns
slow grade up cliff
startling chough clouds
limestone patter of sunshine
organdy pear rock

pine lime chalk calvaire
watch satellite sputum
gel on monitor stickum
explain to the pharmacist

donít smoke lobelia
not catering blue pipit
oblige wooden guest
palace union semaphore

means always carrying
overanxious psyllium
protractorís narrative
circular newspaper

what was said is neophyte
it bleached pleadings
of foreign capital embedded
in domestic cleavage

alternate with druidry
take to the sea scum
sloshed ankles of a Thalassite
proncer & the period

magnesium epopteia
sly words for raree
flash your popinjay theory
buster your sorebones

oneís neck is long
spirit history Oneida
sharing their SUV
a woman picks her nose

the mountains notice
canít fool them analysis
particulate chemist
waiting at hot crucible

Sumerian alphabet discovered
this is it cloud on that land
scattering wheat amazed
bone white of pearl barley

account for matter
quills release in enemy
to ink or restless
ceremonial pause

All the waits to small a get
midlight on the balcony a pax
waits a pope hand signal on the high
who do it with raised hands
harrowing heaven every death
time to go to bread
hill to have a horse
cool now but the sun
under Mont diEvian
iwe are named for what we see

Say? That too imponderable
konversatie chipping at the wall
roughcast philosophy all the kind
a diner on the moon a soviet
uncertain about articles

a man the man man itself
chelovek a preposterous guess
this & not that or better
butterfly bush all purple brushes
diplomats assemble neckties and begin.

The ostensorium has golden censers
hands touch everything like flies alighting
nothing past the blue of place to gold
the somber mountain of what happens
down which it is to come down cloud later

second coming! river running north
cold in case a squadron of jackdaws
measured against math resistance
pure morality or puritan the lip of left
never kissed the body’s folds

aching for political caress
where does everybody live
there can’t be fields without streams
stream without loosestrife cows bells
down Mont Chéry the goats stampeded

dense manifesto a creed to need
write in one paragraph what is believed
to be the case or who dropped the sparrow
in the first place and who the hero the thrush
sings to what alphabet to write that name

drenched with particulars the rocket burst
fireflowers over the limestone lake the folk
hurry up the narrow road to be amazed
sound & light as if no other where together
only here across the clear green water rose

a touch to be as dense as history
chance the prepositional rapture
charlatans of sun disease
rehearsing islands to goat farmers
mountains are to lose in but what

Akkadian policy where it all went wrong
language used to letter laws
write down instead what never was
and make it be Gospel of Bethany
the afterlife of Madeleine-Marie

language goes wrong when it records
annals should be pictures scratched in rock
or a church built of common stones
mysterious basketmakers weave history in
but writing means for pure invention

(hard for puers to have puers)
all comes to this new next
a fleet of uncertainties arriving
on the morning tide no water stands
mountain pitcher pour Aquarius

no strange vocabulary apple
red fish green shadow hill
hill habit slipside after
cunning rede-motes of old never
a spill of milk a spunk of flame

eunoterus or scrabalost no not
those radio all words are strange
in a foreign country lose all subtlety
that usually marks the delight of speaking
now just coarse where is this and when and how
and otherwise the spirits of the flowers
make the breeze that lifts the blue over
quoting Wordspear and Lakesworth too often
bramble bush here and a gorse over there
where the sheepís shadow climbs the hill

the herd corners after spiral path
chronometer built in stone and guess the sun
falters through the autumn gate to make born
who would do own faltering later coin by coin
until the green girl walked along the brick

which is the Greek for river where the girl
recumbent yet advancing swoon by swoon
enkindles amity among the moths our mothers
every creature was in time or will be
by virtue of that virtue held in heart wax

from the blond beehive achieve
intoxicating liberal magazines copper shells
to go to war with the priest and his cycle
when the wind dies down and every straw relaxes
pelargonium and lavender sun behind the hill

life is a valley it really wants to tell
the whole story now thunder on the mountain
rain spits a flower wet a pink one
and nobody knows the crest of Mont diEvian
in sunshine still and elsewise nubibus
colles celentur or pick the flower
and have done with it a pharmacist
of little wounds and wonders iwho
lit the light? no one but color is
so color has to do the work of heroes

slumbering inside the wooden horse in Cernagora
the plump girl in blonde wig is Helena
o peruke of falsity a cock crows also
just before dark like Hegelís owl
which had overflown these battlements

gold or no gold to tell the story
whole but name no names i pure
inventioni malignant by whose inferiors
temporary heartbreak and bus downhill
until the soldiers see the lake and cry

armistice of motives is a kind despot
a blue entitlement the theorist says
but others plead the Justinian excuse
one must rule the world to answer heaven
or build a sky that answers to his name

nobody needier than neat the Greeks knew
woodcarved language of the logothete
polychromed by famous men to kill a bear
or bring a Bulgar home all love is pain
incessantly consented to the sand is wet

the blood of virgins saturates the books
thought Commedia dellíarte practical vise
a turngrip shaped like a crucifix
lets the tyres change from wheel to wheel
all love falters the same circle describe the street

fall to its knees and not for prayer but work
between the virgin and the guava fruit
whose lake is thick with tule reeds the wind
chatters them together sticks on sticks on necks
to wake all things then meditator from his dreams

+++ thunders but no rain hear her voice "thunderbird"
but see no face it all is mountain
limestone religion two girls petanque
toss underhand the iron balls chop the jack away
all the mystic gates are closed by music

+++ the incendiary difference like a goat
calling to its mother on the hill a sprawl
of udders down the cliff and some high houses
oak castaways along the cloud road rapture
is it or time to begin screwdriver
hungry for the hard Christians here are dragons

here hard money drives a tan chalet up rock
and the keen scatterers of destiny girl by girl
petanque in the churchís shadow Saint Guerin
Pray For Us who smooth the stone in place
with such amazing effort that nothing shows
just a furry cat waiting on the wall

say nothing lest it turn to gold the baker’s wall
so bryophyted and vascular green too
the stolid amazements of what no one makes happen
trip by submarine through the green rhizomes
of the mindís valley where naught is where it should be
among the weltering artisans of local numbers

it is to live for other people that is all
interrupted by it never rained the headlight
explains the empty road too many particles
to call it mist alone or angry molecules
or barbara celarent where the teacher
turns his back at last on all the words

and when the words are gone the god is gone
Saint Antoine d’Egypte shown with a pig
borrowed from another Anthony or lent to him
which way does borrow go imprint a’s
object on b’s use of it or other way in
bells remind the empty church of all it’s lost
all the people who will never come again
and kiss the pig or beg the saint’s protection
against the usufruct of dream the hectic
dreamlife of moral personages lost in stucco
only in graffiti to recollect at last the icon
that spreads wide the mountain of remember

be small with ceremony the old pews creak
old jug for the spirit to take comfort in
be housed in mutter ..... the worst take shape
zygotes of influence and plasma of remorse
till finally nothing final even speaks why should it
sumac drupes as red here as in Algonquia

+++ 

make more fit in everything too loose
make it tight and turbulent entablature
of a temple to an absent god or just the priests
are gone the god let loose is fire to roam
glad among kayakers and a prayer for rain

turn free by road assemblymen of hell
who caught this town before the avalanche
and made the tourists come to feed the goats
and the cows’ transhumances are green with love
all the occasional shadow kiss tastes of September

turning round to come in all the bitter
we need more salt the angelus begins
who kneels down among the ruins of a strange idea
came down from heaven reek of iodine
and everything looks small today

like staring into the chalice of a flower
mutations of large corporations compete
with natural decay to isolate tragedy from news
a blue feather floats into a street in Geneva
the lake spumes a jet of counseled air

so high as if somebody was saying something
three dogs in concert here like crystal goblets chinking
it is as if the coast were really edifice and opal
exalted voices of the children
spending their penny in the willows

lead down by tile the rain-smart roof
magpies many and an old man on a horse
clops through the town no turns to two
a couple feed their mounts on neighbor grass
between this life and the bishop

or how Saint Guerin must pray for all
ox and ass and Antoine’s pig and not till
well into La Captive does the author get a name
given by the beloved the provisional
the sole determinatrix of local actuality
who says ‘mon cher Marcel’ or some such
formula memory will not retain *(nous lépreux,
Paris se vaut une messe)* all the famous jabber
the mantle of this rock earth has so long
endured names sweet as melons from Cavaillon

the perplexing simplicities of Doctor K
sheís reading *So what is that bird there?*
open to a pretty magpie half by half
black and white old Feirefiz the sun
of Gahmuret was divvied up like one of these

his lower parts a natural heathen white
only the intelligence can sin age of reason
in this season Guerin busy with sick cows
the peasants cured the saint of wicked intellect
and made him a patron saint of sick animals

well did they know that the body cures the mind
the body builds the stone that puts the point of god
high in the mountain air only the body is pure
who can do no evil or at most be guilty
of carnal inefficiency or dwindled milk o road of milk

that leads through Spain by Santiago on to Wales
where Silver Roadís palace hits the sky
the stars are her footmen and the clouds
her gonfalons unfurled above the sleeping
personage whose error is in the name inscribed
+++

melon seeds return to compost heap
wasps are always near too many names
swimming pool the different shapes of men
meme taille et meme allure of these
simple hearted merchants of romance

wash in dragon’s blood and sleep below water
because only that one can whose life
is so constrained by verbal sinews it
might as well be immortal and it is
the way a rock is always too busy to die

the long identities the place called Throat
of the Devil where cyclamens are growing
on the soaked wall of the ravine the name
repeats itself in visitors who hurry home
cherishing the word cyclamen cherishing the devil

whose rocky body they walked inside
whose only body is their body
wind comes down the valley hard
every place is a body inside a body every
body is wide open to invaders

chattering Flemish in the supermarket
clash of chariots and melon reek
subtract a wagtail from a pine tree
butterfly swooping on the glacier the time
of things is scribbled deep inside

each one alone and none to wait for kindness
is all here and afterwards the farmers
scratch it out of the ground and make room for new
or where would the car go if the road
didn’t differ with the mountain breathing

firelily they call it all around the town
be careful of eternity the foam
makes the fingers shake like a walk uphill
in evening sunhaze down La Terche
distance is chimera anyhow a plow

to furrow sky with and plant such wheat
as grows to spring night with fierce little
lights in whose gleam nothing but themselves alone
light that just illuminates itself we pray to dark
to augment the instrument of stars loro influenza

to have by these need-nights a void
pronounced upon the Manifold or pleroma
while equilibriums of ordinary passions
totter to war the animal that tries
to answer every question with its teeth

a kenning for it or a darling coal measures
shouldering beneath the Yorkshire lies
seven hundred years to put the language out
and then the miners come in white silk scarves
in sooty tweed jackets solemn saying nought

it has to tell everything or else believe
because telling is a cure for understanding so
when every word is spoken all the things are gone
and the game plays itself beneath the apple tree
the steel balls arc and clatter down and women laugh

+++ 

want to hide out from the jumbo jets up here
class struggle and theology and find instead by skin
a morality of leaf and bark academy of stone
spent so much time walking on the mezzanine
among those has-been lights men call the stars
the girl next door was one of those pale Russky charmers
eating in the lap of Lenin till the conversation banked
smokeless fire of the shivaree everybody got married
and no one came it is the rutabaga principle a head
made of wood and eyes made of all that’s been lost

a woman on a ferris wheel a champion of pain
o black Mercedes mother of all living course my street
barricades of torpor and a strange lake-dwelling fish
as if an eel caught philosophy and understood its practice
as universal doctrine not just its own long way home

home is always the next port of call among the wolves
three quarters up the mountain and the wind
get a receipt for the paper kiss a glacier
the shoulder’s sore from all it never carried
because the fated burden belongs to the wind

even if the servant sneaks beneath the hedge and smokes
and the snow melts not even by the core of August
and not a single name of tree survives in English
the man nipped a fox’s tail the tiger jumped
hardware and liquid crystal the moon’s on fire

+

nominal tower hawk on the head
oak fence gorse hedge poor hedgehog
flat from car the spill of autumn in the yellow air
the car is courage and a spear and sarx

means flesh when psyche’s gone to town
and left her mirror all steamed over
hot from her looking in it it is death
for the soul to take a shower

Parmenides was right there’s never
just one horse the palamino up La Chaux
clematis on porphyry lord loveliest imperium
nobody power but the body’s whim to know

to know by touch and stone remember
to go to come to back home to tell
these four will do and let the skin
be quiet with the language of the stone

+

rectiform crucibular investigative flop
to sail so long down the gutter in a folded newspaper
origami *Figaro* and out to sea among cockles
coracles limpets brooding on Lacan
nautilus keeps secrets in their ingrown rooms

all the strategies beasts incarnate to avoid
the simple blossom of the every which way wind
or greedily to snatch the air inside and keep it there
safe from music circulation of Lady Oxygen
cancellation of the Other and sermon for the self

mitigate a nettle wear a leek in that sombrero
let it rain hard down the cleavage of the mountain
gush the cosmetic parables size of a sparrow
allure of a jay shadows in the willow trees
weave the next millennium’s religions

all subtle poetries of hoopoe and plover
and gulls learn to fly at midnight
and their white tidings will rouse the house
no man will dare say their sermons for them
and women will wake up and say their dreams
though *Introduction to the Devout Life* was written here
if here is taken loosely cloud chambering la Tête Noire
two horses and only two Poverty and Liberty
broken china heaped outside old magazines
every word has at least two meanings

and the skull lasts longer than the brain
think on this voyagers with canoes on shoulders
sweating through Ouisconsin portages of old
the bone remembers in its strange fashion
where the pudding of the flesh lets slip

our parents called us lust in idleness
because Pontiac is cheaper than LaSalle
and a ghost haunts only his own terrain
humble as a bee disinclined to range
firewardens on their towers dream Byzantium

the naked Empress comes to everyone who sleeps
head of a monkfish caught on a tree branch
breath is a flag and the army is the skin
watch them falter through the rye oblivion
is a ribbon knotted round a knuckle

or comes who calls a skull is resonant
clear and clean is empty and a wind issueth
which tells all the wit this bone once held
Merlin or Mandeville a woman who knew all
and poured her slim pitcher on the table
milk of all known valleys the precious molds
make cheeses but the skull has two horns on it
or six or four and the horns are hollow howl
at sacred instances when priests think godwind blows
and they blow back to answer mystery with reverence

the faces face each other it is marble
each woman is a plausible envoy of her kind
a plenipotent just arrived from the archaic
one sees this face a lot in dreams and ten
thousand years ago saw in their sleep too

mother of magnesium sea wife temptress
the air’s vestal around her but she magnifies
all occasions are the sun of time all space is touch
all seeing is an anger of the eyes to choke the distances
hardware of her hours gondola down the blood stream

always so much singing passes in profile
we know this nose this hurry because a sky
falls into place around such angular momentum
thought it was a woman’s face in twilight seen
hurrying towards the harbor when black sails come

cloud come along come along high head silver blue
pirate sky with dory cloud down here invading pines
describe alternate universe where all the strings
uncoil at once and quarks are his and hers at last
duality is our unity brother humans who leave behind

look up the names of things have you by the neck
or choke your prayers with kisses left from dream
the alternative to obvious is everything
the alternative to everything is not nothing is the one
thing permanent as the attention paid to it

come along donkey bray a buddy understands
come along rapture to tease the sleeping nun
ivory and silverplate brushes worked with amber
anything to keep her hair out of her eyes and let the light in
that part of the wind the human brain can see

don’t harden hearts against the felons on the gallows
their lives’ last spurt loves the world round them into place
for nothing lasts without the urgent want of it
screaming yesness on a migrant hopescape
until the cat seems to stand still and let you stroke it

the angelus rings over Europe sprinters wake early
down in Athens and wonder what Greeks eat breakfast
after all the high school philosophy a hundred meters
faster than anybody to make sense or naumachy
off Nauplion how fast a shmatte drives a skiff

believe the wind it’s all there is to be driven
inside and out the first of all things and last is wind
harsh pneumatology of a desert saint Antoine
stoned with abstinence staggers on his crutch
god the pharmakon for vision’s torments

he’s made crutches of his crucifixes and a bell
and the huffy little pig looks past his robe
hearing the ding dong of a lost religion
in desert stagger market stagger DAX and FTSE
stagger Glastonbury and watermelon pine

the girl with Corsican eyes the cloud down La Chaux
this vision lasts as long as time and then
Parmenides was sad all going and no coming
as if the road wrapped right back on itself
and gold people walked along it counting seeds

all they have he thought is what they leave behind
a measure? a moonchild? a sad trapeze
deserted by its acrobat? every night god sends
a little older than the television? an advocate?
dear god what has happened to her face?

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beyond Seytroux the same cloud the power pylons march from mist
everything surrounds everything and it’s only August the yellow
people walk below the ground crowding upwards to the surface earth
to be reaped like everybody else old snathe of time swung
and who knows what or who the blade of it be old mariner

one is ages from the sea here or any maybe lake
to milk the clouds up from or vaporetti in the bloodstream
woke still feeling the wool of whose garment on his fingertips
der change road to make the horses whinny and the hinny haw
spread the load around to balance lucency

decency? a stroke above the nine and be buried
hear the gongulous toll bronze above the catafalque
and the neighbor gospel lady hum in her pants suit
priestcraft is triumphant and the church is cracked
it’s the same car coming up the mountain over and over

ey go to mass and come back chemical come cured
small rivers with thick barges hoisting home
lock by lock the boat of it ascends sweet miracle
to get a loaf of bread out of a mountain with the troll
singing at his forge unalcheming all that gold

Corbá the crow Corbassière place with a lot of them
come down from the trees and get to know you
the dark of other people’s lives the shame of living
where so many didn’t and Abbot Guarinus
fell from his horse right there and died
	nine hundred years before her right over the pommel
the saddle fell with him some monks were mournful
carried here him north to the abbey he had founded
the lepers were kept up the steep path up Corba’s hill
everything intimate and sly the way death operates

Bernard hated the place but preached Jerusalem anyhow
got away as soon as he could mistakes of weather
that summer hail the size of pippins fell Crusaders left
Marlene betrothed in Canada everybody becomes opera
made of everything a cup of tea on fire in spirit sleep

the angelus woke him as if he were a village itself
but nobody is anybody really just numbers in a jar
with a few long wing feathers floating past
to make apparent identity remember palpable entity
but he had no right to talk about Parmenides

rescuing sleepy children from a burning orphanage
itself the most remarkable structure in the hamlet
they came there to ride horses and to sleep the long
sweet sweaty sleep of horses till fire found them
and no child tried to understand a few of the thoughtful

read books about the catastrophe in which they died
as if memory could be anything recovered out of nowhere
by impudent imposture of consciousness a written word
face pressed against her breast where playful dragons sleep
and every pool a wishing well they bend to read their fate

fact is fate every water’s ink nothing to do with Parmenides
Rossini is closer nothing to do with anything but the Old Mill
sea marsh the Jews of this man’s head and one of them uphill
stumbling rock road and what she did was dry the face
to this day she sits beside the road the napkin in her lap
an action is permanent things are not permanent
terrible history of to do and the shame of not having
a cabin full of crystals and not having a bathroom
full of sea foam and a bed full of mermaids with nacre
not having name in lights not even having lights

no name and pronouns too dear that season to make sense
Arabic easier a gesture write a whole word in the air
God made them as they did why should a priest go to Québec
and bother half-breeds and Iroquois about a soul they share
portage over thickets of indifference to the dry martini of belief

no question really asks itself it needs accomplices
buses to the lake lost mail a phone call in the night
one had not heard the donkey bray civilian light
reformation light Waldensian light down this valley once
voodoo light every heart carried that desire carries

wanting is the worst and most of magic a postcard
from a pretty city on the shores of hell
everyone arrives and no one sleeps a nightingale
singing in the emergency room blood smells like copper
copper smells like money money smells like sex

fear is general among the living that’s how the dead
are different all desire and no fear not even fear
of not getting what is desired no more than a stone
can be disappointed the dead get everything
hours later ran still on the mountain the stone cross wet
after this comes that and after that a mulberry
and after that the ivy hurries up the wall and children
and so forth and the name of this is Time a hollow
raucous teens at the foot of the same cross pray for night
and all things cover them they are simple with fear
and where does the mountain go to flee human weather
fear is everywhere and it loves them too maite zaitut
a kind of game to play with lakes and rivers
walking in the rain to La Moussière pursued by bells
the natives of this little town are called ‘wolves’
respectable as eggwhite like a blue policeman
red republican procurer of indigent luxuries
an earth to sleep on and stars for a hat
truth is yellow truth likes to get hurt
because then the lonely world turns opposite
and one know where one is and is not Parmenides
who was that Parmenos he was son of
nobody is anybody’s son it’s all a daughter
a kind of island wine and kiss the sailor
the lamb sleeps in the cottage shadow on some moss
+nix nihil nivis umbrae on the mountain
don’t confuse a word with a preposition
shadows on mountain statue of General Dessaix
things stand for what they are is not a proposition
a rime with calico an old woman in church

that much is clear the church was empty
the holy water stoups were dry the cooper
image of the saint is gone it’s raining
no car to go home the city by the lake
where Lakota war dances get big crowds

o god the grief of sunshine sad eagle feather
the claws of what we do the broken axle
the bent wheel rolling down the arm
nobody can suffer weather like a lake
it’s dreaming women wake in lightning

echo of a dance that passed one footstep into heaven
a wolf looking in from the woods so many explanations
all it really is is whatever anybody says it is isn’t it
since no one’s listening salvation is not susceptible
to proof or demonstration but the candle burns

kids play in the confessional rehearsing sins
they’d like to do or are doing as they speak
performing and absolving in one gesture
and the dry old wood keeps creaking
the substances of things are the only answer

who’s there? the light asks who’s asking
says the dark and off they go again
wind down the valley and the girl cries
shadows of snow the dawn light caught
on the massif the breathing of the light

before the sun takes hold an hour from the world
over the neighbor mountain a dance? a Dante?
dark pink roses round the abandoned convent
a sacred heart above the rose-embattled door
and that man who shows his heart has roses too

but no one’s home pull back from that knocker
the echoes of such a house will slay the unprepared
the men-at-arms are far away the blue lights
of their car hurtling down the cliffside road in rain
and one is alone with the door that one has found

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be normal maiden samphire
semaphore club moss ruta
graveolens heavy-reeking rue

spinnaker stands out from Thonon
republic at home with lakes
les foulques come swim with us

Voughà shi no the sign says
least chance for meaning
all day the difference dances
wanderfrei unsalted egg
of a pastor without sheep
have fun with us it means

but no one’s speaking
so nothing to know a nail
a board a brass band

chervil and leeks are close
coffee cool enough to drink
a peppermill for the pope

smooth cry willow jay
a horse just happens
a stream of travelers

vanishes in the woods
what does the eagle care
he’s written his book

in splendor the darkness
sleeps inside the light
the word forgives its mouth.

7 – 13 August 2004
Saint Jean d’Aulps