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THE POPE VISITS LOURDES

Every time you twist it Jesus dies again
that’s what religion means the repetition
of a gesture until it’s figured out at last
by those who make it saint and fox and fool

Lourdes this week is full of Africans
they show on television the holy ghost
clear in the color of their clothes
they trust the place to which they’ve come

a woman stood up in those rocks and spoke
strange words in dialect to a little girl
it is not expected to be understood
just drink this water it will do you good

the wind blows open the door and light comes in
remarkable opera of the ordinary
morning at his fingerprints he pauses
anxious for the least trace of significance

the book he’s been trying to banish for 2000 years
not meaning but experience, not obedience
but setting sail, not fasting but enduring
the onslaught of mercy in a boundless world
she must have said
this candy bar cures hunger
this lake heals distance
but this water staves off death

not because of what you think but who I am, she said.

13 August 2004
La Borne
citizen machine built of illfare
what the govt does the govt is the mouth
of money the man of ufacturers
makes malfare to make the many
into money the eat the citizen machine

13 VIII 04, La Borne
MODULATION

Amplitude arrest (the hill) stony
person person talking person
listening in this language
hear me means understand
the mind of it so simple is

a raft is foundering a jar
is full of beans a woman
puts on in each hole she
jabs with her grandfather’s cane

the dead make the best farmers
aloha we’re back from the reef
the fish are safe from the sea
where a different air controls

and music spills and nothing bells
and nobody knows, old plastic
radio grungy on the shelf
screams a dumb old song she loves.

13 August 2004, La Borne
(Pope in Lourdes today)

What would he be coming
why would a mountain be so far away from the sky
why would a whistle carved out of wood
why would a bell

among so many bells
be ashamed of its word
a bell has a word
a wood has a bell
why would he be coming when everyone is going
why would a sick old man
came to where the young girl cures disease

will he be cured
will he cure others
will he cure the bell of its voice
will he cure the town of its bells
will he cure the valley of its mountain?

14 August 2004
I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

she said in the patois of the place
meaning You are that too –
you little girl kneeling, old man scoffing,
you lovers trembling in the shadows of the rock,
you fox running away under the bush,
you all are, all of you conceived and born without sin.

She came to change our sense of our
own nature. We built a shrine
to the messenger and forgot what she said.
She is the messenger, mother of god,
our sister. She is the message.
If we are immaculate we are healed.

You are immaculate, she said,
in your beginning, no sin
but what you do.
You were conceived in joy and born in pain
now everything is up to you.

14 August 2004
La Borne
What analyst waits for the soap
to leap from the fountain
like the moon rising?

Experiences cleanses itself,
water runs, running water
purifies itself in 100 feet
his father said.

Rest
in confusion a few
days more he says,
the Kleenex of light
will dry your tears.

Nothing to understand
nothing to change
just leave me out of your dreams.

But he knows he’s forgotten something
something they both need to know
what was it?

The Tagus
flows into the sea.
Ash from Hecla
is used as medicine.
Something like that.
Something about weather.

14 August 2004
It’s only a number.
Lammed, central resonance
of a name, all our names,
lammed, L. goad, instruction,
meled the teacher
prodding you from behind,
pushing you forward
to your own nature.
The good teacher is
always behind you
pushing, poking,
doesn’t stand in front
blocking the view,
always behind,
only behind you,
lammed, thirty, only a number
but everything is.

Everything is behind you
prodding you on.
Just a number, lammed, ‘a goad
for animals,’ just
a number but everything is.

All numbers come from one,
everything except you.
Only you are different,
you with your name across the sky.

14 August 2004, La Borne
If the tree weren’t there we’d see the meadow stretching up the hill we’d see a tree far up and very small. Taninges, Samoëns. La Chartreuse de Mélan full of silent art, some of it geared for sound. Wind. Weary. The botanic hillside of La Jaÿsia up through the Carpathians past the chapel of the Holy Magdalene, Mary the Magnificent. Who makes us great. Her door was locked but there was a little hole in her window, big enough to put my hand through, you aimed the camera in, latch of her gate this Song of Songs. I’m thinking of Magdalene and looking at a tree, a willow it may be, but what do I know about the endless love affairs of trees?

14 August 2004, La Borne
cloud over mountain
read the instruction
manual then you can cry

14 August 2004, La Borne
Dark in two hours. Light in nine more.
Summer winding down.
Snow in the far south massif.
Que sais-je? the book asks
and answers in a thousand volumes.
Say something, mountain.
Just because you’re stone
you don’t know how to be silent.
Only people can do that.

14 August 2004, La Borne
Life is just numbers
but what a number?
the miracle pills
the birds the stars
all the namables
that keep us going
on the botanic garden
path uphill ever
higher to the ruins
on the top, shrine,
stone we pray to,
the breeze up there
that reads us like a book.

14 August 2004, La Borne
Cow with no horns.
Castigate. Cow with one
foot on a rock
Columbus coming.
Early morning Pleiades
even cold mountain
summer who.
Cow with a cliff
near a song.
Coming. Still coming.
Like a camera who.
Tell by signs
some seen some held.
Cow too far
away to tell.
Away to hold.

15 August 2004, La Borne
said kind things
for a change
about the light

mash the sun
over said field

the duke
made it different

gave it colors
a cross
every
town spells
its own way
mountain.

15 August 2004
of a tyro
rafting from La Baume
down the Dranse clear
to Thonon-les-aBains
in all the flat
lake glare
astir with mountain
air, smuggler
of the most precious
one we can’t live
five minutes without
sustains him.
We go to the source
and ride it wrong
back to where we
thought we began
but thought folds
in upon itself,
it takes forever
not to go home.

15 August 2004, La Borne
Then the promoter comes
a godless man whose father
invented or imported
god in the first place
I forget which, I hardly matter.
The garnet twins,
what do they mean
by riding their horses
so deep into the woods
that they forget me?
What color am I then?
Leave most of the words out
and find out what’s being said.
Analyze silence. Dip
the tip of your tongue in it
and you’ll know what lies
between and what
it lies between. What tells
truth. The silence knows.

15 August 2004, La Borne
VOUGHA SHI NO

Wish something to tell
ironworks the Fair
shoot carbine break
bottles I hear them
from up here
above the brass band
the pitch carries ski club cake sale
the little bar prepacked
crepes and cidre
fish for trout
woodcarved monks
and marmots the lottery
booth. Booth
is an old word
like bench. Like what we do
to each other.

Voguez chez nous, have fun
with us. Trust nobody
who looks at you,
a true friend stands
beside you behind you
the rock goes up the
water comes down.
The arguments all
are silent here. Pythagoras
must have been a god.
He found it in the street
in him. Where everything is.
The highway up your body
to and fro the head.
Via sacra. I am the white
line down your middle
wet in any weather
quiet arrow, painless pain
finding you
where least you think you are.
So many rivers
are between us.
Genders, gardens,
languages. We were just
as the beginning
when you died, you had
almost conquered me
kissed me on the mouth
so many times
I’m sleeping now
the long sideways
sleep of numbers.
We were supposed
to do it, we were
supposed to be the one,
our mouths to say
the word. And now.
Loss of a lover
loss of a part of speech
loss of a color
from the spectrum
we once could see.
They didn’t know you
at all, thought
you were someone
but no, you were everything.
The world has never
gotten over the loss.
Numbers don’t work anymore.

15 August 2004, La Borne