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*writing with coffee on day-glo green
what can I mean?*

A letter to Baron Corvo
about the papacy
of course in white, white
as the story,

any story
gets itself told.

Toto told me
a dialect of desire —
one of the rare earths,

Po delta, all the way north to
be an agent of God and wear white among men

a boyish fantasy
because there are no men.

Nothing. The pope is a pale foreigner
just like you. You've gotten
your desire after all — to be somebody else,
famous, distant, no one can change you now.

13 October 2000
(from notation of 2 July 00)

in the heart of such enduring desire

what was the matter with my feet
was where they did not walk

they will hurt forever
till they walk whither they will,

they truly will.

I feel this now
putting them on. Rubber and Velcro,

your father's shoes.

13 October 2000
(from notation of 2 July 00)
for Barbara

SOUND CARRIES BETTER UNDER WATER

The aloe's
Root delights
In coming

Up to join
The green.

2.
Wood is too light
 To lift
A pencil
 Says too much

3.
Among the senses
I choose white

Among the colors
Touch.

13 October 2000
(from notations of January 2000)

Sun on lawn. By calendar
the peak is now but the trees
are two weeks tardy with their colors
which shows how much numbers know,
 No (a voice says)
Numbers stop meaning when you count with them.

14 October 2000

Tell a mystery. The phone rings
the way leaves move
in sunshine

casting interesting shadows
on the table
we have to read

short messages
to be sure

voice
you can't identify
at first

could be anybody
not even gender
is immediate

this shadow
could be your mother.

Listen.

14 October 2000

WHEN I WAS NOSTRADAMUS ONCE

All kinds of things to worry about a man
Is made of dim reflections broken mirrors
A scrap off the seat of her jeans to wipe his pen
Thus thirty years pass snows still cap the Sierras
And everybody cares or says they do but who
Really is counting somebody has to know *An amazed*
Angel starts the local alphabet build my blocks
You blonde terrasse cigarettes bridge of Avignon
In sun sun sun no next year no Jerusalem.

15 October 2000

SINTI

The intense gamboges of autumn elm trees
Pervades northern Germany. Even here one stands,
Survivor, and tells me it's time for me to go.
There are all sorts of diseases, all
Sorts of ways to run away from home,
Even if your home is on the road. A word
Nails you. A sunset stuns you. A tree like this one
Suddenly inhabits your brain. Run away
From this beauty before it runs from you,
The colors fade, the leaves fall down like last
Year's shopping lists. Now is the time to go.
Everything is on the other side of now.

15 October 2000

TO INSCRIBE IN A COPY OF *MALDORORI* I HAVEN'T FOUND TO GIVE YOU YET

Not just any monkey but one that howls
Not just any tree but a maple that shouts
Scarlet when everything else is green and yellow

I want you to be that kind of exhibitionist
Nonconformist the way I want to wake up
With your hands touching me. Your hands.

If I'm dreaming about someone I know, I'm awake
If she's someone I've never met then I'm sleeping
By now it's the only way I can tell them apart

Like Satan sitting on basalt high above the sea
Seeing all the different waves are one same water.

16 October 2000

The day he realized he would never die
Was the day he died

We carry knowledge with us
Like sticks of deadwood we scrape up in the woods

To build a fire
But who needs fires these days nobody needs warmth

Everybody gives light enough
Sticks give dark

We break something open
And there it is.

17 October 2000

All the disorder
things begin to remember

a lily on her stem
bending side to side

comfort, not wind.
Slowly find where we are.

If you can keep people from answering
the question might ripen

might show its breasts at the cave mouth.
We have too many answers.

Wear a mask.
Be a stone.

17 October 2000

There is some superstition in these things

a wire a string a bird
bedraggled in the rain

the curious punctuation things make
in nothing's long sentence

come home when you can.

17 October 2000

So in the night someone spoke to me
And left three lines of language in my head
One of them was drowned by sleep
And one of them was burned by waking
Leaving in my ordinary hands this
Absolute bright dark of now.

18 October 2000

DREG

Should be a singular. Should be a name.
Dreg left his Cubs cap here last night,
Will you give it to him when he comes in?

18 X 00

HOMAGE TO JACOPO FIJMAN

for Melanie Nicholson

Fetishized madness. *Sacer*,
Holy/unholy,
 a Self into exile
driven
 by the sense of self,

outcast manners.

2.

The Gods, who are they?
Who is the poet?
Who is listening when the poem talks?

3.

Who is as old as my father?
He used to take me to the Exchange Buffet
you took the food and later told the man
what you'd eaten they you paid. Honor system.
West Point. Is this
What the exchanges are that rule the world?

Business. Who is a Jew?
Who is round?
Who breaks language?
Who tells lies to the words?

Is the word some man you have to tell
The truth of what you touched or knew?

Who would lie to language listening?

4.

Isn't every turn to religion an instance of madness?

Isn't all religion madness?
Who dares to say what anyone wants?

Or what even want means?

A lack that is a fire, a fire that scorches every solitary thing it thinks of—

“another reality” the way a forest comes
close to a city and might one day enter it, overwhelm it,
become one flesh with it

how do we talk?

5.

Every statement, even a single word, is a dialogue.

6.

What do I have to do with answers?

I am a question.

Any answer would have to be an obscenity
Though perhaps a beautiful one, graceful,

Even decent. A rigorous obscenity
navigating by the stars.

(Do you smell toast?)

7.

I have seen her living fingerprint on my pen
fine etched on the silver barrel smooth
and you ask about muses!

And her fingerprints
whorl by whorl, loop by loop,
are exactly identical with mine. Identical
but not the same.

8.

Please solve me
the mystery of bread
the ferment, the “way
of being in the world”

pour water on the dough
the process calls for waiting
calls for

bread likes to wait. Ethical nature of bread.

To startle the reader with stars?
Muse, please mean me!

9.
A daybook of eternity,
a notebook kept in dreamless sleep,

Upanishad.

10.
 Darkness of the Fourth River
that flows out of Paradise
still after all these centuries
it comes, all the reflections of the trees of Eden
all seasons and all colors of them, all their fruits,

carries still into our days
the images of which Paradise was made.

And this river is called Poetry.

18 October 2000

He stood at the window and remembered the outside as if that were his house and this warm place, the tousled ruffled presences her hands had left in the folds of drapes by pulling them open then later (how much later, how much seen and how much turned from) pulling them closed, this place where porcelain cups propose the unlikeliest destinations, were in fact the whole world. Inside is outside and he is lost.

To be lost inside your house is a strange religion. Her mother's tarot cards are spilled on the drumhead table, glass over flame mahogany, some face up — that is the future — and some face down — that is the future that will never come to his, somebody else's future, the kind a lover maybe has in mind when he turns to the one he loves and says *Share my future with me*, his voice weakens, *some of it at least*, she looks at his hands as he's talking, blue veins and red muscle, how simply we are made, all futures are the same, she thinks, we are in the same room, same wind, same seeds, same answers. She doesn't have to say anything to him because already he doesn't understand. To say anything would mean he would understand even less.

Or maybe that is best, she thinks: Understand nothing, and then we are free. Free to begin. She shrugs a silky cardigan off her shoulders and slips it onto a plastic hanger, holds it over the left index finger like a fish she's caught in the air, sly, supple, quivering. There is a stone that means this kind of light, halfway between stone and silk, between a fish and a man. She looks up at her grandmother's crucifix on the wall beside the dried yellow roses. On the dead man's ivory body a little gouge of wound had been filled years ago with some red pigment to stand for blood. Now a strange thrill goes through her as she sees the lips of the wound are kissed with dust, the dust of this room, her dust stuck to god's wound.

The man is still looking out the window, his hand resting on the pane as if he wanted to become glass. In fact she can seem to see light coming through the thin skin of his fingers, that crimson light that children learn when they play with flashlights, the light of the inside of the body, our real color, the one we all are truly. Sacred crimson. What is the name of the stone we are supposed to become?

19 October 2000

Still find something there broken already by the sunset
as if Pindar between one god and another had found
something that time could not break and told it to us
not as a word or proposition but as the silences between

one kind of saying and the next, to wit, the chaos
delicate in the heart of music when one does nothing
and the song has already finished and there is only left
a kind of foreign language you recognize suddenly

to be your mother tongue. The fiction of belonging
to someone moves you. Of being as they say related
to this one and that one. Of being a man or woman
equipped as we all are against the night. Lightning even

has such a grammar. And the rain that still does not fall
remembers everything that you are trying to forget.

19 October 2000

Picture asses on the boulevard
What a way to work, to walk there
Strutting like so many Eiffel Towers
Preposterously upright

Every word I say is meant to deceive you
But perhaps not to hurt
Perhaps sunshine really is made from milk
Causes diseases tastes like sugar
Dances in the dark when your shoes come off

And things like that. Into the gate
Came on Sunday riding
With palm branches wafted round him in the modest air of cities.

All over again. One is born
To die and die and die
Until one gets the point.

19 October 2000

certain difficulties meet oak

(drums remember this and that,
a whistle, a harmonica
nobody loves)

the joys of cruelty
said Lautréamont
were born with and
will die with men

ka rinpoche, lu ma pong
precious mouth, don't destroy body

[notations, 19 October 2000/22 October 2000]