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SERENITY: IN THE MEASURE OF MY MOTHER

1.

Try to behold this, just this —
a Smaragd (they say meant emerald &

who can answer them, a word
in the first place is always,

a word is always answering itself)
or proven Gold

I cannot walk in the shadow of that alchemy
I am black with believing

& I have set my kiss
on the place of no known origin

from which all comes. Obscure
battlements on a forgotten wall:

city is an inference from being far,
a rumor older than the rock.

2.

So they believed me when I said
you cannot see me when I dance but I am dancing

and they —lovers of shadow they were too —
poured from a metal pitcher some

dark exciting fluid of course I never tasted
any more than they could hear me sing,

yet I was singing in their bodies (already,
I am a part of their shadow but not the dark part),

I stood close to her in the crowded room
close close and said whether you feel me or

not or like what you feel
I am the contour of everything.

3.

And this cup has nothing in it
but you think of pearls when you peer in

and princesses tasting vinegar or gall
at the back of their throats after they speak

because certain words —everybody knows them—
recoil on those who use them

and the afternoon is barren with bird song,
a fountain twitches and you are not glad.

When I come in from hunting
I try to carry in with me a handful of mist

the fond fog I rode through
hearing the invisible chatter of my dogs

who never find anything, they never kill,
I come back with fog in my hands

as a way of forgetting my name—
women sometimes forgive a man for holding tight.

26 April 1995

Conversations with the moon
I meant to matter

long it may have been, a composition
of utilities, powergrid, tesserae

of underhandedness — where is the island
English speaking, you angry shore?

27 April 1995

The becomings of starlight called
down over the evident rain

this moment morning
there is an horizon in things, a walk

around a sudden altar
rejoicing in nearness

*[unmason'd stone,
Jordan]*

here we are here we are
a pretty little anthem plaintive

the way geese remind the sky they're passing
stars made us

and we south
and the place will never see us more.

28 April 1995

A runaround or
rambutan a kind of tropic
fruit of Ind

or what we taste
is terror
it is father

or the thing that does
is in us fine
as apples

or April waiting
her breasts berate us
feeding us far

far from that anger he
is an enemy of fruit
a governor

to betray our speed—
we were summer and canoe,
a quiet rifle shot

and the leaves fell back again
indifferent
to our piddling adulteries.

28 April 1995

The only time we're allowed to look ahead
is morning. We think: "It is today, a new
day." Or even, boldly, breathless: "It is now."
And then we fall back into being

and share the mood (or is it blood)
of trees, stumps, bridges, buses, leaves.

For nothing's natural. The Naughty Children
have filled the Nursery with their experiments.

Outside the room, some tell us, is an inconceivable
never-yet-apprehended world called Nature.

We do not have the eyes to see it yet.
What could that Nature be to which all

our roses, smiles, religions, lips are artifacts?

29 April 1995

THE REVEREND NAMES A STARLING FROM
THE PULPIT

The reverend names a starling from the pulpit:
You woke me soon you drill like hell
Into the holowtoothed whistlewicked pain of dawn

Like a child at the checkout always wanting more
Or those city villains whose reward is music
Thunderous monotonous and fast. Whereas you peep.

You squeak. You skirl, you skreel, you keen, you even
Speak. “Wake up, god’s man, we call to you from hell
—the world outside your window— we

Are the ones you pray for all night long,
Lost souls, peaceful seeds, feeders in our flocks,
We multiply, we debone the sense of music, we eat.”

30 April 1995