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# TOUCHING UNITY

*new Spel/s old roots*

Tree stuck  
to get her  
held,  
dowel  
reverent insertion  
deep.  
Early made this  
ramshackle mind.

We stuck  
to each she  
leaves green  
gospel a room  
left in us  
is us.

19 May 1995

## BORROWED BAMBOO

I  
]scatter out  
of age  
not blue memory  
exacter Livius

a *mund* or ditch us  
around the circum

stantial ferential  
*Nvmen*

a sort  
of feathers this  
veteran *fel*

bitterness of all  
surviving not men

amniotic leafy  
a city is how men sleep[

II  
]]cd be animat  
spur]spurn

anything  
can come out of the  
heart anything  
]care

cards fall  
Ægypt sneezes  
brick or back

of the Templ[

riverdivers[[

III

archi]*pelagus*

not

with standing

islands either

or further

truly and wisely[

meant to farrow

*eroici furori*

]Nabatæan aftermoons

In stony Pætra, Pætræa,

a city

in the wilderness

opined by winds

hear me who never spoke[

IV

Thes

are our roots

our only

have

thes

are them only

who we all

only are

a dare  
or shadow  
flown by bird  
against  
quick the rock  
you learn  
to read

thes  
are words are  
our shade

V  
Midafter  
noon high  
scorning this mere  
river

hundreds and hundreds  
sky seized  
the wild geese

from these  
we scryed  
to sculpt those

letter by letter  
utter actual

grass-glib  
the grease of speech[

VI  
Anser the sky

tell me  
in marble

meanings fly  
the fast  
by safety flamed

*fluctubus aut*

rare form  
a feeling  
is feeling

the birds left scars on the sky.  
This seen we scry.  
We listen to what it tells us  
in our heads when we look.  
That is the whole history  
of what we are.

20 May 1995

## REPARTURE

*Triste* answers  
to all the truths

plains plain  
as her face  
pearlmallow by dreamlight

we sleep  
around an island  
waves wake



*reparture* : the score  
tightens round my hips  
I give a public reading for the moon alone  
larger than ordinary streetlamps  
bellow in their night

*score* : a count or tally, a notch  
cut in the experience itself

by which the finger (say of a blindman  
or a child ignorant of history)  
finds it again, that place  
it needs to touch, to enrol it  
in his presentness, or



a count of twenty or some like number  
totalizing digits, that's all we have,  
an achieved number in a game  
of runs or goals or points,  
or all such numbers (we grow abstract  
as we grow younger) reckoned

as the pain result of all that play,



a piece of music with some paper on it  
only love or such like mystery can read  
and turn to singing, dancing, or ricj women  
with stiff aigrettes stalk up the marble staircase to endure.  
Or else a list of all your winters.



Some plants in us,  
the lotuses of commonsensual experiments  
loft up in us, unsoiled by understance,,  
pink as a cloud at the edges of the night  
or blue with whispers  
and white starred around  
a sunray fixed as the core of it,  
the stamina of what we witness  
and stays in us, forever, forcing  
recollection to arise as desire,  
this little floating astronomicon or flower,



and did you see the moon once  
spin on her chilly pivot

and all the unfamiliar seas  
dry as hopefulness hove  
into view, backside of a backside,  
and none to see? And none  
to lust for thee, child? The night  
was luminous, the moon was dull,  
the craters worn out with receiving  
daydust and far splendorings



from which our local lotoi, don't they,  
take seed and grow?

In this evangelical mud  
a pantheistical preening flower plumps  
crimson, outmanoeuvring the mind.

Be me for a change  
and know what you are  
from my strict trigonometries

*perspectiva liberalis*

*aut amoris*

the view  
from a freeman's eyes.

2.

*Nouveux, nerveux*, survivals:  
mints and madrepores, fresh word  
from nearer atolls, gannets  
imperative or low on wave  
I am tired of answering questions about the sea.

The statue represents nothing.  
No fish are taken in these waters.  
The Japanese have scoured the sea and gone  
—it is quiet even fifteen fathoms down—

the wrecks give light, and holothurns wind  
rippling through soft undertows in purple calm.  
The business of the sea is gone.

3.

To go the other way round  
to dig a long canal of Mars  
around your garden. *Mundus*,  
to protect the world  
as if it was your little town,  
the land inside your boundary stones,  
your own.

Your garden.

To have pear trees  
and bend them to trellises so they grow  
right-angled and crucified (*en espalier*) — the fruit  
of that aching symmetry comes  
easy to our hand and is sweet.  
You never know how the shape of what you do  
affects the sweetness of what flows from you.

Our deepest body  
is behavior.  
Our real flesh  
is what we do.



Things might always be this way,  
the way the night  
has darkneses and darkneses  
and none of them  
have to do with how you feel.  
Music stems from such neglect.  
Cut off from a world  
that is responsive to our moods  
what choice does any  
shepherd have but song? Theory  
of pastoral. Father  
has left us here alone, only a flute  
to play with, and all  
the alternatives are wolves.

And the old shepherd rubs his hands  
and seems almost happy when he says  
Whether or not you love each  
other, you die alone.

4.

One summer day in '54 in low *relievo*  
among grey skies I saw sun lit far off  
the cathedral of Rouen. Just there  
the English burned her.

*In all conversation  
the sacrament is busy in the eyes  
focusing and remembering  
whatever we take for God.*

Through the smoke of what made Norman sunshine thin,  
peak, pale, plunder cloud wonderstance, I moaned  
in that sluggish orgasm called History.  
Discernibly all times are now. Disney, topsoil,  
Triton, Meyebear, the bishop with his wolf-eyes  
but a name like Pigge. A glass of water  
handed me by Jean Cocteau the elegantest admiral of it.  
I reach it up for poor Joan to drink.

5.

*Parmi les mousses du forêt de la Magie ensevelé*

After so many moon-times staring in his lap  
and weary of the sheer causality of things  
he moaned like the wind in an iron stove  
on a night that was windy more than cold

so why does a mind need a fire? Why is life  
so busy with contrivances? Solenoids to start a motor,  
brakes to rein it in, wheels, plumb-lines, levels, bells  
to call unruly time to order and perplex the night

with arcane wakings, ceremonies, sex and strawberries.  
He moaned like a drunkard remembering his mother's name.  
To touch the world he had made himself some skin  
and stretched it taut across his arms and chest

and built some bones to hold it to its work.  
But now the breast bone pressed down upon his heart  
like some common stone you'd roll on top of things  
to hide them safe from sunshine and from earth.

His heart moaned up against the stone. Sick with telling  
he had kept still too long. The things he knew  
knew him too. He moaned like the earth  
falling open beneath a crumbling wall. He moaned

and the stone cracked and his skin woke up. Ferns  
uncurled, and people's children began their vagabondage  
vague as guitars through his woods. What we sleep  
is never what we wake to. A moan means.

*In the holy forest nobody listens and everybody hears.*

21 May 1995

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Not by hurried disposition or circuit of long-familiar animals do we live—  
“the only stars we see from Heaven are the fires of human  
bonding,”\* but any angel would say that, are the things true that angels say  
as well as useful and adorable? If I came to you up any street  
swinging scarlet leather, would you listen with all your skin?  
They tried to squeeze a belt around the sky (‘reality,’ ‘Zodiac,’ ‘astronomy’)  
and are you busy in underground offices, languidly praying to Chance  
which never comes because there is no accidental world, no luck,  
no book of oddities. Everything computes — and that’s the terror.  
Are you adorable, Avenue of the Opera, are you eloquent and a river?  
In every elegant garden sits reading in mulberry shadows  
the woman I will never get around to answering. It is too fond  
in me to say so much, too fond in her to know so many flowers.  
It is my mother reading among blue hydrangeas.

22 May 1995

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\*Giraudoux, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*.

[ADVERTISEMENT]

[saluting André Breton's *La Clé des Champs*]

I was anxious for you and a stone  
rolled away from the blade of my door

*la clé des champs* means the magnesium key  
that lets you open meadows and go in,

escape from these illusory suburbs  
into the *actual* condition

of which most windows are just witnesses  
and most doors angry borderguards,

they will not let you in.  
Because the field or meadow or

—keep it simple— the world out there  
vanishes as soon as you step into it.

Its outness blanches and retreats.  
But with this key I stole from him

every wind is a keyhole and the lethargic afternoon  
an escalator full of angels.

Everything is what it is  
even when you yourself step in.

You are there where you want to be—  
but without my key you're a duck trying to land in a mirror,

you're a leaf falling forever with no tree.

23 May 1995

## HOMME HOMME

I am a man  
I have seen a barn on fire  
and never shot a deer

I have picked on people  
littler and even bigger than me  
and found money in the gutter

(a thousand-franc note,  
a five dollar bill)  
I have admired people on buses

and walked home  
and there have been days  
when I have even forgiven my friends,

I have confused myself  
with my desires,  
I have worn rings and secret tokens

love's laughable colors  
tattered in tournaments where I  
was the only knight who showed up,

I have fallen asleep  
while reading  
and let the book

finish itself without me,  
and I have left the church  
before the Mass was done.

23 May 1995

## DIFFICULTIES OF THE OPERA

Every day at noon the opera is interrupted by the news.  
Thousands more have died in Rawnda, Somalia, Bosnia and Karachi,  
My grandfather's city — it is dangerous, o America, to bear a name  
Ending in a vowel — every vowel is the shriek or moan of the dying.  
But the soprano never dies. The fat *tenore* bears her to the wings  
And clumps of flowers miraculously sprout from the flowerless audience  
To fall around her. She stoops and scoops them up and sweeps away  
Her arms full of roses at her next curtain call. He comes to, pudgy  
Fingers fluttering his hanky, wishing he had gardenias too.  
There are so few certainties and so much music to get through.

23 May 1995

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I think the nature of each storm is different,  
lashed flags in sea flurry, an old man strapped to his reminiscence—  
are any of us ripe for plain flowering, what rhododendrons do  
on a cloudy May morning, the lovers lost in the woods,  
monogamy not rare among the ones with wings? Winds.  
I don't want to make you feel good, I want to make you worry hard  
about things that never troubled you before. When angels do  
come down, it is not to the most helpless that they come  
— poverty and grief are strictly left to mortals to console  
since they create them. Why should angels help you if your brother won't?

24 May 1995

## M A D R E P O R E

a coral reef or colony of shoals  
the bitter residue of all their lives,  
a castle,  
                    you walk on it, it cuts your feet  
a we are singular  
in vulnerability  
and they are pluriform and yearn  
effectively to be one.

Suddenly tired, the mind grounds on unfamiliar names,  
a word one finds in Proust,  
shoals of suits and evening gowns in the orchestra  
waiting for the daughter of Minos and Pasiphae  
as if Paris is all theater  
and they only stop acting —Sarah!—  
when they clump out on the drumhead of a stage  
and the real — Racine — takes over.  
Only she is actual. Outside in the street  
the rest of us are sketchy dramatists  
trying to explain what and how we feel.  
I asked Olson once and even he wasn't sure  
if the Ocean is sufficient explanation.

25 May 1995

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After all it's done to us, now it smells like flowers.  
Halfway up the octave,  
between lily of the valley and lilac,  
who are you?

And someone is having trouble starting her car,  
if the road is not implicit in the base you'll never get there.  
A bird decides to mimic the whine of her solenoid.  
Or is this machine also (like the rest of us) talking to itself?

26 May 1995

## PASTORAL

*Pré ter-naturel, les chanoins mugirent dans leur chapelle  
et l'herbe forme l'objet de regard  
pour vingt-cinq ou vingt-sept brebis de Corse.  
Alors, psalmodie d'autres jours, songes de chanvre, la harpe  
entra et les chanoinesses fled with the sound of candles  
whipped out by a passing ocean breeze. Trade winds,  
my father said, that hold square-rigged  
merchantmen enthralled by the severe sameness of the sea.  
On this meadow preposterously natural  
lewd counsellors neither head nor coda  
fall in love with their disordered charges  
and they think music is some sort of an excuse—  
empathy, kingdom of sparrows,  
a tree bored with alphabets, the mower  
has piloted his mower over the hill and the roar  
of his engine soon follows. Peace on Earth. A quarter hour  
before his afternoon audiences, the Pope sits down to read.  
Asgard teems with good intentions. In a flash  
of anybody's eye heroes are born and die. We perish  
from lyrical distraction. What is to be done?  
A bitter world's in birth. Thoughtfully, over good wine,  
we study ways to make the food chain beautiful.*

26 May 1995