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## TESTIMONY OF WITNESSES

Sun on a green field  
spring heraldry  
and a bordure of live water  
jettisoning night  
white-foaming to the first cataract of the sacred Metambesen  
broom on my doorsill  
leaf rake  
there is a woman makes you dream

(unity, continuity, tobacco flowers)

it is she who says what comes to happen now

she is now

(it is not spring yet. I can still see  
Mount Overlook through naked trees)

she is now and I call her a woman  
since she chooses to present herself as one  
in all the dream data as I have access to—

I call her a woman  
because she chooses to show herself to me in that form  
not that form means so much, but courtesy does  
courtesy compels me to speak of her  
in the shape she shows me  
what can I do, limited as I am  
to this alcove of the universal archive

(this dream, this all-day long dreaming)

where meaning no harm and knowing no better  
I believe what I read

for example the blue flowers of indian tobacco  
growing by the cyclone fence at La Brea

to keep angelenos out of the tar pits

or, to cite a common example, the feel  
of a smooth ballpoint pen  
someone hands you to sign a receipt  
you absently pocket  
and notice later she has chewed it with her teeth

the marks of her in us

listless poetry of office afternoons  
clock reveries and monitor's glare

having my own dreams to draw on  
and the few impeccable witnesses  
my brothers and my sisters

and sometimes a cat looks up from snoozing  
with the gaunt glad bright clean gone eyes  
of someone who has seen her too.

8 April 1994

## DAY TRADER

my yankee mind  
misheard a reverie

the blue policeman  
carries a trombone

and men love men  
scandalous liberty

squirrels and Stock Exchange  
no difference

but to be!  
Libido of parades

the gallant knees  
I thought I heard

music in the morning  
it was only men

loopy loops of brassy tubes  
twisting round a head or arm

and valves squeak in the street!  
Sacred semaphores

of desperate gandydancers  
a handshake in driving rain

striking truckers lolling on a mall  
embankment soft with flowering vetch

in spring sunlight  
I am content to let them

their miracles are meant for me  
too, their requiems propose

to inter me honorably too  
and all their valentines

shyly festoon my locker too, my  
porch swing twangs beneath their weight

serene entitlements of muscle mint leaves  
skate blades skin sleek as mole fur

piled high guesses of desire,  
men hauling down the sun

and giving it clumsily wrapped to  
one another friend upon friend

don't look at me, my fingers  
are scorched from it too.

8 April 1994

## THIS GERMINAL

And this month seems fleeting  
this Germinal of sudden asking  
where are we when the sky remembers?

A month is the moon's mouth,  
you know that. You piece together  
all that sleeping — those little paws

of squirrels, troy-town burrows  
cleft in turf when snow has melted  
where voles or what are they ran

energetic innocent and devious  
their little twisted runways  
or their houses, do we live in fleeing,

dwel in the twist? You know we do,  
we are evaders from the start,  
how else here, ever, or a hat

thrown over the moon to start a fight  
or all this green stuff jumps out of the ground  
and your mother keeps talking.

We live in fleeing. Every day add a stone  
to the circle of stones. Each one means you.  
I have been investigating this lawn of mine,

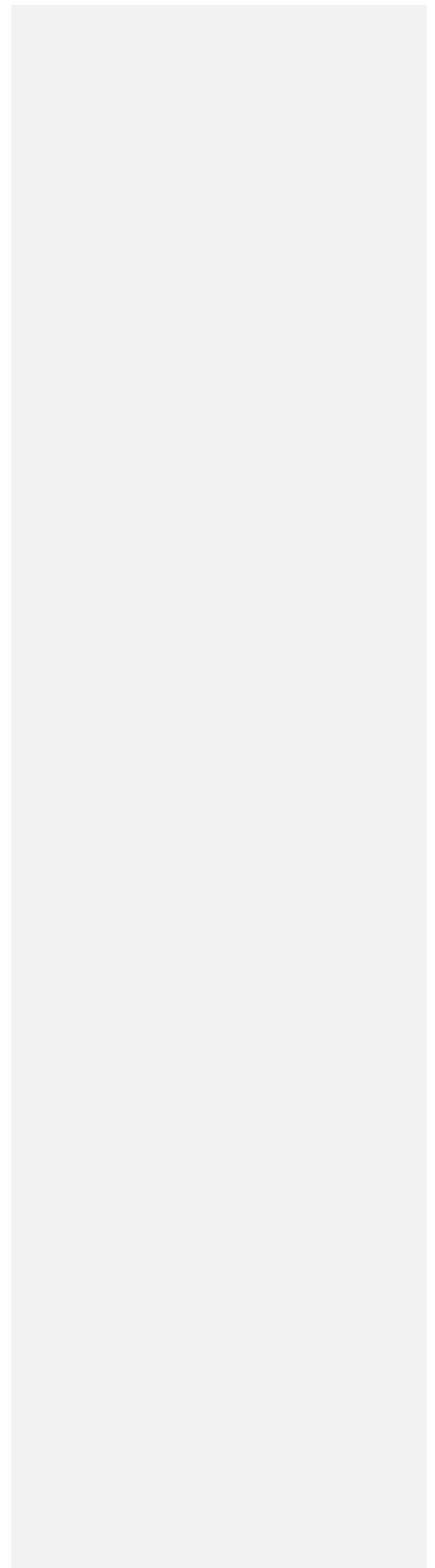
find such burrows, stones. A marmot's den  
up on the leaf-thick hill flank, a shadow  
under the ground. They sleep there

month after month until the moon is ready

that speaks them and they come out, ours did,  
and stumbled, already weary, furry, lay

like soft stones in reminding sunshine.

9 April 1994



**Some sort of alternative. Any. The sunlight.**

Answers. All that stuff  
red as flowerpots. We need it. All the time.  
I mean there is no time  
I don't want it. And you too,

Do you? Scatter grass seed  
hose it down and spread out some straw.  
Water it some more and say  
I planted grass today.

I have an ailment  
secreter than that,  
I looked at a dying city  
and knew there was nothing I could do.

Knew more precisely  
nothing that would help.  
I have learned to stay  
out of the way

of dying men.  
That much at least  
is a kind of gift,  
some space. An air.

9 April 1994



Walt Whitman

SAMSKARAS OF THE SOUL

If otherwise all these things came  
And ended us, then  
Do you think I could walk  
Pleasantly and well-suited?  
I cannot define the animals!  
The minutest thing upon it is called sin,  
The vegetable fluids  
Slowly have passed this on.

O if I realize you I have satisfaction  
Animals! If I realize you I have  
Laws of earth and air!

My life, I swear every thing has an eternal ground,  
The weeds of the sea have animals.

I swear there is nothing but cohering!  
And all preparation is for it.

*scanned by RK April 1994*

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I wanted to know something about the wind  
so I dreamed an island  
(I'm so interested in language  
because I have nothing to say)

I wanted to know copper, the red fire heart  
of it and the pale gleam gold of its skin  
and bluegreen verdigris so I grew grey hair

I wanted to know distance  
so I put a copper penny on the railroad track  
and when the whole train passed over it  
I found a thing can be bigger than itself

I struck a match and lit a song  
because I watched to unmask the dark—  
who is that in there when I can't be?

I wanted to know God  
so I worked as a missionary in a dirty city  
until I began to think God was an ocean  
a girl in a bikini a bicycle a bus out of town.

10 April 1994

*a phrase I woke up dreaming:*

little ivory boats of Chiapas  
drifting empty in no moon

(They were little as netsuke, and lay on my palm or then in the water, and floated bobbing away from me. It was important that they were empty —what passenger could have ridden in so small a boat?— and that there was no moon, though the night was luminous enough to show the boats receding, with here and there a gleam of light on the wave toss.)

10/11 April 1994

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Honorable porch the sun  
lets me today

as sacred as that bungalow  
in the Sung cloudscape

whose leafy verandah can never be reached  
by the elegant vagabonds whose graceful exertions

bring them no further than the ink.  
But they are beautiful in ink

and I am in the sun, a winter past,  
cold wind, and I never know what to make of the spring,

all that sex and all that light and heavy traffic,  
nature's MTV, and what am I supposed to do about it?

Throw out seed. Eat and be eaten. Recapitulate  
the tortured history of the bone. Beget.

Not distractions but material. To work with.  
To locate the changeless

and let it make me speak. It's just  
on the other side of the sun.

11 April 1994

Charlotte and Robert Kelly

**Comment [1]:**

When this age of the world is past, and no one knows what MTV is, and gapes at the line like a reader of Pope (or Frank O'Hara) then let this word be replaced by *shivaree*.

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Nomad hours  
spilled from the residue  
I give to you  
lacking the power  
to give a garden

it is harder  
to be anywhere  
than to go. "Here"  
is a guesswork  
also, a dream

of staying, in a maze  
of travel. I wanted  
to be home, hunted  
all my days  
for the city on the map  
that was everywhere

already and nowhere to go.

12 April 1994

## GYM

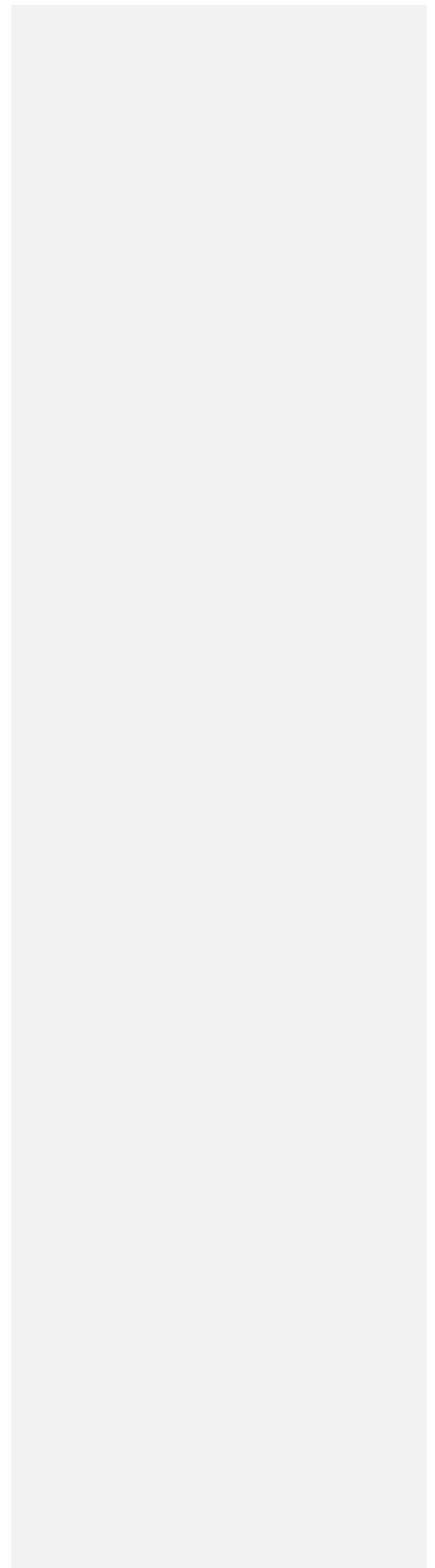
Squash nabobs guzzled after sauna hours  
stagger steamy pink to nearby Volvos  
and tool off in a dream of ownership  
clean clean clean it makes a body yearn  
for mud and circumstance and night and war  
to see them purring through a homeless world.

12 April 1994

GYM, 2

Capitalism's perfect dream:  
they pay to work  
out and think it's good for them.

12 April 1994



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Where the sap raised the grain  
a roughness stood. This  
was to be sanded  
till it was just wood.  
Intolerable differences of things!

(How is a banana like a candle,  
how is a stream like a nightingale?)

Why am I thinking what I'm thinking?  
Habit, but whose?

12 April 1994



S E A S

Men still amaze that a wind should lift  
cloth and spin a ship  
forward into the wave's own weaving,  
a gesture in a gesture caught  
—ocean is just water heaving—  
until a purple shore  
far off miraculously appears  
as if the one had made the other  
and we are, we are, nowhere.

12 April 1994

## THE TWIST OF WILL

Cranky poems of a lovely morning.  
Why? I let a will to rime  
spoil my pure hearing.  
Now I'm cross with myself.

Where would I have been now had I written  
purely?

### **Nomad hours spilled**

pure so far,  
and then alas an idea crept in,

### **from the residue**

—so there it is, fear of dying, fear of getting old,  
and then the clever thought, well,  
make a present of it,  
turn this mealy-mindedness into a love poem:

### **I give to you**

(some gift, a rhinestone's water's purer)

### **lacking the power**

(evidently!)

### **to give a garden**

I said this, at length but better,  
twenty years ago in The Loom—  
and now I have, we have indeed,  
a garden, to dispose, a gate  
to welcome all others (gzhan)

who may or may not be lovers,  
that's not the point of it,  
a garden if for whoever comes,  
a garden is the opposite of Eden,  
that bad garden that threw us out

“and at first she thought He was the gardener”  
But he was not the gardener, the angry  
god of Eden, He was the one who broke  
the stone door, the Gates of Matter, and let  
all move in and out and in and out at need,

to go,

and then my little willful poem tries  
again, to make sense:

**it is harder  
to be anywhere  
than to go.**

That's OK, that says itself,  
but I hear it subtly consoling me just me  
for the duress of travel, even the lightest  
overnightest own-car ramble,

I hear it saying Try to stay home,  
make a virtue  
of what you like to do  
and boldly confess it  
like some new prophecy,  
doing what you always do,

**“Here”  
is a wander  
also**

I wrote first  
some sense to that the mind that means me  
is differently aware

moment by moment

(and now I'm thinking this debunking  
just to be honest  
is turning towards a deconstruction  
to be relevant or even literature,  
now I'm in trouble,

silence is no way out  
or one I'm not brave enough to risk)

here whatever it is  
moves under me as I try to stay,  
the shifting ground, the inmost Richter scale,  
incessantly altering the common ground,

this greatest place, this little house, "this England"—

then I changed **wander** to **guesswork**,  
when I turned against, angrily against  
the rime I deemed had spoiled my song

by trying so  
blindly to be musical

(music hall, every love song  
laughs at itself, every tune  
twists round your neck and squeezes,  
escape with your life if you're lucky,

the Formal Factor lasts, the Marked  
Feature seizes your sense in sleep,  
by shapely amazements  
woos you to be no one,

and to say nothing but its tune, its  
*starkerer Dasein*)

**guesswork**  
also, a **myth** dream

Charlotte and Robe..., 4/12/1994 1:57 PM

Deleted:

crossed out for sound-sense,  
no rime with myth,  
I am petty now, I hate my moves,  
how shabby this is,

and it's morning, too! My favorite  
kind of morning, grey and cold,  
and I let myself spoil it by being me,  
scheming and fearing and being sly,

**of staying in a daze maze  
of travel**

Little by little the poem  
or some poem is coming through, twisting  
free of my dull hands, even as I begin to doubt  
my right to have a will,

a will on it,  
it's coming to tell  
how I want to be home,

to be home is to be everywhere at once.

12 April 1994

I

