2-1993

febD1993

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Recommended Citation
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ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR THE COCK SPREADS ITS WINGS IN SILENCE

for Charlotte

So much said this morning. Is it air that matters?

Is it music? Looking for a name or some other infamy a thousand years away from the hairs on my upper lip that want to brush against your cheek not even bothering to talk.

Snow plow woke me. Trying to make marmalade. People are trying to sleep. I love you better than weather.

22 February 1993
FRAGMENTS OF THALES, 2

I hope you pay attention to the day Three Knife that is speaking in us now. In it now.

The etymologies of popular feelings swept back like slush to the side of the road defining it. You can't get from a going (a road) to a staying (house) without treading up to your ankles through it.

Or you could sit down in the slush and make that your home, the slippery, intimate, accommodating. Till your body heat melts it back to water again—emotion. Θαλης, the universal empowering condition. Defining nothing, it touches everything.

22 February 1993
THINGS LOOK LIKE ONE ANOTHER

for Charlotte

Things look like one another. Portugal
a shelf that runs around the room
just above the picture rail: yellow plates
with blue cocks on them. New Years Day.
A starfish is a kind of textbook
left open all night in the rain.

Who says me?

You are my author & delight, my shirt
stained from your blizzards. White
intaglio of chemistry. Visit
a distant university, a Wheatstone bridge or arc
over the dissimilar conditions.
Ions. Relatives. Sparrowhawk on sycamore
reading these faint obituaries in the snow.

The fallen. A cracked cup to give my friend.

22 February 1993
HISTORY MEANS TO INVESTIGATE

Then the word speaks itself

because someone had a cup and a pencil
drank tea and wrote letters
ivory envelopes to hide
the tender destinations

on their secret pilgrimage
every day is

to live in moving

and let it seem
only as if we took the way to Moscow

for example. What is written
is hidden in the wood

that hides the stick of graphite
we call “the pencil.” Carandache.

The cup also was paper
like the Journal d’une autre fois
the queen was reading when someone
sneaked in and saved her life.

The headline said A KISS
AGAINST SCARCITY and then
there was all this sudden magic

the dog howled and the moon relented.

In his shabby paper cup
the good man's tea
was strong and sweet
was hot.
Scarcity
is an unusual problem in her class,
indifference in his.

Accuracy
in ancient Sanskrit poetry
had to do with a precise balance
of syllables against the all-too-lucid
propositions of that gushing mathematics
they had in mind when they said the gods.

I don't know what do to now with
the big pieces of night you left me
along with the feel of your hip.

The light in your tired eyes.
To investigate what will become of me.

To hold you in the crosshairs of the night
like a moon trapped in the window.
Somehow you will sleep in me tonight.

22 February 1993
The cycle of Mexican days
dependable
no leap years no precessions to confuse
this moment with mathematics

for these are Earth Days
this lord's breakfast
and this lady's sleep,

here now the dark star we walk on.

The Twenty Lords. The Thirteen Maidens.
We are them all their children.

23 February 1993
4 Cawuk
THE BLENDING OF SANDS

for Charlotte

Sands,
my Malibu

I burn a stick of incense
in a cup of sand
I brought from the Pacific,

can I put out of mind ever
what ocean did
and what that water said?

what ocean
made me do

dog tracks in the surf quick washed
into the unspeakable intimacy of the sea
that never ends

I think of you sitting there on the headland
on the grassy cliffs on the road to the west end
studying the fall of cormorants towards the horizon

their wet wings shudder
on the red stacks
they always face into the wind
you tell me

your bright eyes
seeing
always
face into the wind

how an island
keeps you chaste
no lover can speak so close to your heart's ear as this surf

magnet of my body
alone in the sky
among the surfers the celebrants of music the dogs

I set this brass bowl up
with the sands of the Pacific in it
to hold the ocean holy

and responsible for our minds

this bloody parcel
of who I am
against our island

Cuttyhunk Rapa Nui
there be sands.

The blending of inhibitions produces a liberty,

no more free than geese
actually against the winter sky

but seeming free

and by their seeming keep alive the legend of liberty

until we hunger for it
so when someone shows the way we rouse from torpor,

follow. Thus Gosnold,

thus a world
of liberal men and women
woke these decades to a sudden gong—
o poor Church you beauty
you logocentric thing
gave up your gong your drum
and when you silenced the tinkling brass
you gave up with them
your old wordless *praying in the mind of God* —
where else would prayer ever work?

so the sea shows the way a little
pray without words

pray in the mind of freedom pray in the sound of it the om of it.

24 February 1993
for Charlotte

I will share with you
everything
now

even give you one of my two 1.50 markka Estonian stamps.
—pale blue Baltic grey of starvation white of snow—
I will make it my business
to let you feel
what it feels like to be me and see
your thighs across the room

I will share this blue sky
share
my salt. My wood.

Strangely I began
my being born.
The four kinds
of man I am,
born of fire born of air born of water
born of you
I will share
the splinters of my identity
my flowerpot my broken promises
(I broke them for you)

I was a morning
I was a hurry
in your horse
—you had no horse but the sea—
and it ran in you
to meet me
where I was a signpost at a crossroads
every fork of the road
led to us
now.

And I was a block of ice
carved in the shape of a skull
to adorn the blue banquet

a performance of *Rosamunde*
by puppets, the music
sung on seashells only
tuned to ring

there is an analysis
like an auto
carries everything I mean
far into
some interesting looking forests
I used to be,

pine, upright, mast-wood,
I would squirm around on the grey felt seat
to watch it dwindle
behind my father's Pontiac
chugging on into the eternal north.

24 February 1993
CHARLOTTE CALLS FROM DARJEELING

Four degrees here but the weather changes.

There is an aspersion of common light, abhisheka of the Ordinary Elements, bread and yeast and rock and wheat all meet,

millstone knows fire, air carries what has come from very far, and water understands them all.

The mill. The brewery. The point.

The stone works wheat and into the flour a population comes,

the fermenters from the galaxy arrive—

wine is the blood of bread. The two of one arcane substance (“Arise, Arise,” being air, get high).

This is the abhisheka of the Ordinary Elements happy as the morning light under the bluest in weeks Bach light, Bardo light, the sacred most ordinary sky.

The weather changes when you call. You bring the news, day is real now,
all the stuff that worries me around
just mouse-scurry, squirrel-chatter, the scolding
of my formidable reputation.

How could I tell you over the mirroring phonelines
(I heard three echoes of me, one echo of you)
of the wintering goldfinch at the seed,
the juncos, purple finches, cardinals many,
blue jays, sparrows, and the stray waxwing from the
population
that bothers the bridge,

how do you say tufted titmouse in Tibetan?
Come home in Hindi.

This is the part of the initiation
where the simple words we say
are repeated over and over by the circuitry
automatic mantra function of this
electron universe we stumbled in

this is the abhisheka where you hear
your own voice saying what you mean
clearer than you heard it when you spoke

this is the wang where words come home again.

And this is the abhisheka of the empty bowl—
mind at rest in the silence of what you mean.

25 February 1993
THE NATURAL

Low by the tide
pool flooded
every year
this time a
bridge of ice
beneath the broken
stone bridge,

Brücke, whereinunder
trolls it
a personage
of the earth's
long drama.

Speaks stone.
Talks back.
Gives milk.
Laps up.

It is necessary
(not necessary) to
know this one.
Feed this.
This remembers us.

25 February 1993
I PERSIST IN THINKING THERE IS A MEANING IN YOUR LETTER OTHER THAN WHAT YOU SAY

for Liz

“I feel having started me a difference wasn't for you.

Process some options, have enclosed they will. Enclosed what I guess you want, my bright anyways.

Anytime if you were in your absence.

Writing it to be developed out to have a file some applying

I might have progress just in the fall of direction in reference able to sample some of my shaping to base shining. Enjoy this.”

25 February 1993
This is close to the point where the tragedy spills over into a nimble seacoast. *Deracinate the obligation*. Things are bound to change. So much so your great-grandfather's lighthouse (le phare du bisaïeul) soon stands forlorn in the vast uneasy fields of beets and kale which get along well enough in sandy soil. The thing you really have to do is dig it out, leaf by stalk by stem, the self-incriminating evidence you make up as you go along. But you. Can't live. On sand. Even salt needs a little cheese to make it work, meat on your bones, irrigation ditch from the fen. All you can tell from music is something going on that has some business with the heart. But who and who they are who scurry to the beach even before sunrise, to wash their forearms from all the red stains, beet farmers, Vikings bloody-elbowed, no man knows. A woman stands in the doorway of the windmill shooing crows. Or imitating them. I think she wants to be one of them, to fly away always inland, inland, until there is no rushing but her own immaculately lightless wings.

25 February 1993
REMEMBERING WHAT MEADOW GRASS IS LIKE, AND SAYING IT IN THE DEAD OF WINTER

for Charlotte

These are what we need
a beginning
as if of flowers
and then the spiritual
reprisals begin

a measure
borrowed from a plash of irises
beside a stream in Somerset
nine hundred years ago

Gwlad y Haf, to dream in Welsh
a Christian mouth
sweet with fresh praises

and when he spoke the name of Jesus over
and over there came into the river of his mouth
such sweetness he never knew from food or mead or kisses even

tasted now

in the quiet nothing of a silent mouth
also the sweet empowerment of love.

25 February 1993
Suppose I woke up in the morning and knew how to use the toilet and the toaster but nothing of before the night I woke from. No skill in my fingers older than this light.

Suppose my house a dream place and my flesh a dream, my whole life a glimpse between dream and waking. *I don’t remember, it may be as you say.* The vast wave full of roisterers in bikinis belly-surfing on thirty-five foot waves. And I was so late to meet her, half a mile away beyond the sudden beach the huge cathedral where they were waiting. This time I’ve really done it, a dream is always losing, I’ve kept her waiting too long while I walked around San Francisco and tried to get coffee in a closed cafe. Where did this ocean come from on my way home? Such green vast exciting waves lifting hundred at once and other hundreds coming in on nearby strands, to whole city seems to be playing in the surf halfway into the sky. A dirt path comes up from beneath the waves, along it a woman dressed in filmy green comes dry shod now, not even the hem of her mousseline is wet, how could I follow her method, how did you do it, dry, *but your face is all covered with sand.* I don’t remember. She smiled at my information lifting a hand up to her cheek to check. We forgive each other for being accurate. But the woman waiting for me in the church (which was a bank when I left it) will never be waiting for me now. Now
she may be rising on this wave, I will wait 
in stone shadows for her, this time 
it’s my turn to wait. The anxiety 
of always making women wait, of being 
in the clock’s control but streets take me 
and then I fall between the time and the town 
and no one loves me. The obstacles 
to any meaningful connection.

Now put bread in the toaster, ask yourself again 
Who’s asking? This is not the first time I have seen 
a woman in leafy green coming out of the sea. 
And you can know something is the second 
without remembering the first. For things 
have their ordinals built into them, 
Brouwer’s “two-ity” maybe that makes me 
uncountingly accurate without before.

Things carrying number. No sound at all, 
even of the sea. A smiling woman looks at me 
and mouths carefully what looks like 
the movements of tongue and lips that mean “seven.” 
Or it might be Severn. This is not San Francisco. 
This is the lost City of the Legions. 
Who dares to fall asleep and wait for me?

26 February 1993
CARRERAS SINGS ROSSINI'S OTELLO

Still holding silence as an agate
tight in the hand this welshman
(foreigner disdained) (fond of
the exile that defines him) has

and what he has is a slow ripening
cabaletta when he begins to speak.
Josep, sing so. Bend the Rossini
fiorature to match the sunshine

pouring in the unshaded window
by winter light undeclared to absolute
shape of sound into another
sensing. A Moor in Venice.

A woman on the moon. A word
anywhere. Exile ends in ear.
Trying to count with brittle numbers
the voice alone avails.

Don't know the plot of this story.
The name of our agony constantly
transforms. “Situations change.”
Let this dream end in self-forgiveness.

27 February 1993
(love’s bumper sticker)

MY OTHER MIND IS THINKING IN YOU

28 February 1993
for Charlotte

Things take too long to rise
it is “occasion,” a falling
into the marrow of the sea

from which the Florentine saw rising
like an iceberg painful and serene
in sunshine Purgatory

into the blue sky. It is a matter
of prepositions: the array
spread out for our attention

and the order
in which we look at each wave top
one by one fancying resemblances

by which we are false-comforted
brought into the feel of meaning.
Only something like nothing can help us then.

28 February 1993
THE VALLEY

Blue blue the river frozen over.
Sun hummocky ice the sun
over to Highlands. We have come
into the valley. We have learned
to live inside the crevices of things.

It happens all around us
and we breathe our little peace.
(As if we did in all this doing!)

28 February 1993
Bowdoin Park
GWYL DEWI

Tomorrow the politer Welsh
will wear a daffodil.
None here of either
except the sun
out of the ice.
I am its stalk
or stem. Connecting.

28 February 1993
Bowdoin Park