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And why don’t they speak French on the moon
if you’re so smart
(and they’re considerably smarter)

Is it the mood the mild the changelessness-on-high
no need for subtlety

Let me get a word in and explain:

*Cancion del vaso*

There was a glass
I studied it
nude in my room
nude glass

empty man
empty room
I saw the sun
come out of it

I heard the moon
go down
deep inside it
disappear

though the glass was clear
I could not hear
a word of any language
just the sound

of the moon
going down and going down
and one glass
I was too nude
to call it empty
and yet it was
and the sun
kept coming up

the glass
held only itself
the room held me
I held the glass

and heard
the other language
beyond the moon
it sounded like an empty glass.

10 September 1993
THE MALADY

Caught it
from the sun
the disease
called seeing

seeing and saying
nothing and being
above it all
and going away

to one’s own
other place
the dark one
full of music

you share
later
too much of
maybe

when you come again.

11 September 1993
Soon the birds
you are
dream of seed
the mating
of strange specimens
a male bird
completely supported
folded neatly
on the female’s back
who stands
watching Mount Kilimanjaro
as if to understand
such quiet treading
she is trod
dance and dance floor and
all that alchemy
spurt from delicate wiggle
nothing lasts too long
something may come of this.

11 September 1993
Fraught as it is it harrows me with clouds.
So one of these words I’m going to take a ferry over the lake (it’s all the Rhone you know, in one side and out the other, washing Pontius Pilate’s bones) and see the king, there’s always one in residence, pick a little harbor town with clean white jetty with its crenelated tourist castle along the shore. And there he’ll be, mon roi, the king in exile, my better half, my Esterhazy. So tell me (I’ll tell him, after the preliminaries are done) how and by whom and from what great lineage you, stemming, have found —when?— refuge here? And he will say (for instance) “I am Hrombreht Romebreaker, of the Sicilies, sprout of Guiscards and the Templeisen—glad potentate beneath the orange trees I found one day a villainous Calabrian had crept into the affections of the newspapers who —in special editions, be it said— denounced me in mind and morals, so I fled with much money accompanied only by my memories to this elegant annoyance they call Switzerland.” Thereafter he will give me tea, and display photos of himself with movie stars, Marilyn, the Pope. At the sundial we’ll say good-bye and I’ll catch the evening steamer from Versoix asking myself —serious for once, really trying to understand— why are all my kings like that? Why do I (a working man by inclination) adore these fainéant nonentities who seem to live by surfaces alone, useful as moonbeams but with fine old names? Is it the names I love, or the idleness itself, or is the name itself a seed of quietness,
a nest of non-doing, a final requiem
after all the kingless frantic hurry of our nameless lives?

11 September 1993
WHAT I DON’T HAVE TO SAY IS A GARDEN

What I don’t have to say is a garden
these experimental flowers

*

The sex of mental flowers
petals falling from the sky
as if “one day” they
answered.

A bunch of desires
plucked from a life’s hoping
and offered as a composition
in vascular reality

set in “your” hands an offering

(the Irish word for Mass
the Spanish word for more
the Russian word for sea
the English word for look
    the flowers
(witch
    elder, coryllus, pansy,
ragweed — the sun
rising through apple trees—
44 degrees—
campanulas a memory, a few
ipomoeas, cash them in,
squirrels and bluejays
so much scolding
chilly fingers, chicory)

are durable
the way mistakes are,
even after corrected
they are remembered
an oafishness or
unexpected grace,

I wish we could use the broken glass
it looks so pretty so
all diamonding and sierra sharp
among the tame rondures of the kitchen

that flower,
deciduous, indigenous,
perennial, grows
    in the profoundest shade.

My fingers are too cold to name you any more.

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1. Everything I don’t have it in me to tell you— that is a garden.
2. A garden is one thing I don’t have to struggle to tell you.
3. It is here already, and you are told.
4. A garden doesn’t have to be said.
5. Isn’t a garden, in the sense of Eden, exactly where little goes on except	naming and saying and calling?
6. Our only proper relationship with a flower is naming it, we gods of the
   waning year.

12 September 1993
THIS IS THE WAY

And then we hear them calling
up from Bayside where the blue trucks
lie rusting on their sides in the sea wind
falls in from the sound past the cat
green eyes of a girl from Ecuador
who kept me up all night
till I understood there was nothing but sleep.

12 September 1993
BOTANY

All held in balance
like a dream of mind
taking over your neighbor’s field
and you find yourself summoned
to Hell’s Tribunal to explain
the habits of ordinary pain
and how these wishes are different
such minds flowerless and by night
strengthening their fragrance—
the judges not unkindly wait for you
you answer by accent alone.

13 September 1993
Go solvent into sleep is it
whatever goes on without you supposing

14 September 1993

[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]
Medea in a black shirt
stands up there on the rafters in the ruined barn

the jealousy of body

Let the wind touch only me

14 September 1993

[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]
Let no one touch me
who has not bathed
in the waters of what I mean

wet people with green eyes
half heart half dragon

Long Island Railroad skimming along the trestle
startling blue herons
carrying people home in cool seaside slavery

14 September 1993

[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]
Open the seed capsule of the water caltrop
found heaps of them underfoot at the tide line
dagger-horned and scary as human faces if you can

14 September 1993

[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]
How can I know the feeling till
already it’s wrong,
Berlioz’s head rolls
underneath the trolley car
the union of the living and the dead
in the Church of the Fully Imagined Saints
is easier than knowing
how it will feel before it feels.
And that too will just be feeling.

14 September 1993
Everything is far of that away
rustle of polyester taffeta
Ukrainian flag a nest
for her ferret, people
believe what they read
in one another’s eyes
those ancient liars.

14 September 1993
[Telemachus speaking to Circe in the last days:]

My father was the only one
you never turned into a beast.
Or so he said. I wonder
when I think of my own longings,
urges, appetites and emprises.
Where do they come from?
Darling, do me what you did him—
and let me turn—if he did—
into a wandering fine animal,
an alchemy of changeful powers
impaneled in one man.
How did you wound each other
such arduous penetrations,
the food you served him
(“poison, potion”) was a mirror,
he drank the steam of his own breath
rose from his dim reflection,
my own face in dawn light
you have also seen. He licked
(I lick) your skin where he tasted
the drool of all your lovers
and last his own. My own. This bitter
potion (love’s portion) was his medicine
the Gods call moly, black-dry rooted
in dense desire, white flowering
in a minute's passion, then the bitter
—I taste it when I drink my coffee,
lifting the mug you give me, see the sun
rise through steaming fragrances.
Change me to what I am.

14 September 1993
[Telegonus at Ithaca]

How much one island
looks like any other
when you come to it
over the flat sea
in any weather.
Through mists
you land and take
possession of anything
that does not move.
You fight for it
before you know it’s your own,
your own blood reddening the surf.

14 September 1993
They have given their name away
and only have cream to show for it.
They could have filled their mouths with sea foam
they could have been spindled by the dark.

14 September 1993

[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]
It being what it is
what does it mean to be popular now?
What is it that welcomes you
nightly with temperate applause?
*To be loved in a bad time by many*—
how much we want that still.

14 September 1993

[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]
Maybe it is only wind,
wind blowing through winds.
But the wind is listening.

14 September 1993

[A set of small poems for the beginning of Great Lent]