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ROOT GESTURE

for Charlotte

The inside of the body
describing itself
outside

    the inside
mapped on the outside

for good measure

named.

Ymir's geometry

this valley your long lap.

This said, the unsure
speaks itself outwards,

because to be sure
is not within to be,

language is anxiety

your Minnesota eyes.

From the inweaving of the red and white rivers
a net of glimmerings is spread

mindwalk, smell of gravel, her boat shrouded
in the winter season yet

from the cliff we saw sailing
north into summer habit

birds we thought they were.

Apt, the arrant descriptions
cloud the mind until we think we see.
Then the mind-pearl falls
wallowing in the cup of nectar down
droplets of splashfoam catch some light
we know to need.

And no more said.

1 July 1992
AB/HOMINATIONS

Mozart
when I woke I'd test to remember
did I, who Mozart
was and Schiller's
words for Beethoven's Ode to Joy
could I sing
was I still a baritone
did I remember anything
everything was I still me

or a bass or who am I I used
these mysteries to remember
and why Mozart? Hesse.
Why the Ode to Joy? Love

carried me to that immense kiss.

1.
Mozart when he isn't great
but I let everybody else be just OK

2.
Acoustic guitars trying to be swell
or do complex Bach so simplex I swoon with
langorous boredom waiting to begin.

3.
And butter, that natural mayonnaise,
the two detestables. Example:
on ruddy beets smoking with skatol.

3 July 1992
for Charlotte

The ability to touch it
varies with the angle of approach
because the sky is blue
it touches everyone

3 July 1992
Bodies rescue us
from conversation

3 July 1992
Our first training should be precise attention to the actual reaction we have to each person we encounter. That is, pay close and articulate attention to the whole state of physical and psychic sensation entrained by the meeting. Each person met and each place entered. Without such alertness, we live in a jungle of names. In the deadly impersonality of convention and supposed-to-meanings we stifle. Some people make you sick. No blame, just pay attention. Some people make you feel like morning-glories. No praise, just pay attention. This is the actual.

3 July 1992
for Charlotte
INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING: WORKSHOP IN POETRY

Whatever we do is for other people
where we are the middle people
(neither gods nor animals)
but all people are the circle of our love —

Poetry experiences.
We experience poetry.

Its value to us is experiential.
We will use the composition
   (apprehension / trobar)
of poems to test/sense/register
the conjuncture of It with Me,
    to resolve the long seduction of the False Duessa.

Not what do you mean?
What do the words mean?

What the poem means.

So here we're not reporting on the CIA or on architects and
their graftsmen, but on a far subtler and more dangerous
conspiracy, of the Self against Reality.

As tantrists, we drink the poison.
That is, we use the poem as a weapon against conventional
mind (the mind through which the utterance of time and
language comes filtered to be "ours"), against the conventional
mind to find the Plain Mind [tha.mal.gyi.shes.pa].

3 July 1992
for Charlotte

Morning tide o giver of romance
an old ice shaver holding papers down

in case the wind. And where was electricity
hiding all those centuries?

Where was Moses when the light went on
and what else did the mountain see

and we still have to learn to read.
Tide, wind, earthquake, river, night.

Charge your batteries from the ascending tide.

4 July 1992
LAKE SENECA LAKE ERIE NIAGARA FALLS FROM THE AIR

Lake Huron
down below
so wide and blue.

The seen
is earth,

the seer sky.

I think of Paul Blackburn & am very sad.

4 July 1992
over Lake Huron
On this nice street
the only grafitti's
a wall by the parking lot
showing like a cartoon
one 1950ish two-slot toaster
with four wavy heatmarks going up from it
into the pink air.

4 July 1992   Boulder
BOULDER

I like the resistance of this place to news. Ross Perot never rode through this town in his Oldsmobile and The War still means Vietnam. Politics is get your toxic waste out of my aquifer. I could do something with a town like this if I could forget enough.

4 July 1992 Boulder
Being subjected
to the projected
sounds of
what I would not
think of as music
especially except
that it manipulates,

comma, I offer
that what's interesting
about sonic pollution
(and æsthetic pollution
in general) in these
otherwise savvy terrains
is what it shows about
our deep contempt
for all the arts and for
our minds and all reception
of spiritual things,

so there sift down unheard unfelt all round
the meaningful oak leaves of Broceliande.

5 July 1992 Boulder
What the world needs
is some news.
Brown squirrels here
walk don't scurry.
Red staghorn sumac
riper than ours.
Locusts hang leaner longer pods.
The mountain goes up.
Is this enough?

5 July 1992    Boulder
for Charlotte

When one finds one who has been before one and one hears that one whispering inside one what one says oneself when one is speaking or even when one is keeping silent then one has found in fact who one actually might be.

5 July 1992  Boulder
I'm being asked to think again. Thought is what follows Composition, a reading of the bones so thrown. Reading the cards, the stars.

What battle laid these needles down? Three hundred million years, they say, these Flatirons, compact alluvium long ago turned hard, a granite espousal.

Every word says marry me.

6 July 1992 Boulder
for Charlotte
I can make so many mistakes in one simple answer.

6 VII 92
It's quiet enough to be morning but
who believes me?
Wary, they push their strollers through the creekside park.
Water is what flows.
Contempt is in the air these days, I feel it in me too
hating its way out.

6 July 1992 Boulder
Rollerskates rollerblades
the difference is elegance
but is it enough?

6 July 1992 Boulder
Of course a morning takes its census.
Just like a Bible king
I check the livestock of my flesh —
the changes in the inward lotus of my thigh or
the curious sprawling lameness in my right wrist.
And then I look over to see you,
your dear parts. My deaf ear
hears you. In my dream
the saucer finally landed and brought
a new grain for us to grow.
I woke up eating them, one by one,
huge kernels big as popcorn, chewy,
starch-fleshy, good, canted
with odd angles, bigger than any grain.

I have eaten
while earth people were angry and suspicious
the protein of the stars

When it finally does come
they will look at it
like Detroiters at a Subaru
full of terror and loathing and special pleading.

6 July 1992  Boulder
Lying awake thinking about this broken tooth
I notice that just in between

the stifling night and the stifling morning
a cool breeze came down the mountain

I watch you sleeping light under a blue sheet
wondering how deep in things we make our house.

7 July 1992   Boulder
Natural tooth
a shell remembers
cello Baching on the mall
argent, the supreme, the metal

I can use this word against me,
respect me, delivery
of multiplex anxiety,
a wound that talks.

I sell this stuff, you know.

7 July 1992   Boulder
for Charlotte

The strangest thing is the audience —
the rapt attention
with which language listens to language.

8 July 1992   Boulder
for Charlotte

However we veer or nod
or take the cliff road or check the mall
white roses growing out of rock

the words listen to themselves closely,
closely always raveling weaving
like technicians at the control panel

hardly breathing, their dope-stained fingers
nudging tricky dials towards certainty.

8 July 1992   Boulder
A lot of education is teaching younger persons how to be unhappy in the precise way that one oneself is unhappy. This is done by urging compromise, self-disdain, and by studying works of art as unapproachable in their otherness, along with contempt for artists who make things day by day as daily practice. Universal goals are set a finger’s reach beyond the truest mind.

8 July 1992   Boulder
[MORE ON TRANSLATION]

People always mourn the loss of sound (Louis Zukofsky shows us how to cherish), or deplore the different ranges of meaning between one "language" and another. (L’esprit doesn't match one-to-one with mind, or either with Geist.)

But what I mourn in translation is the loss of the play of mind, as it shows in the brisk or stately entrances of the morphemic units that speak meaning,

the induction of the poem image by image.

For the text ("original" or "translation" or "imitation") is a masque whose characters to be true translations (i.e., make sense) must enter and speak in the same order.

Did you think a poem is a set of propositions?

It is a dance. 8 July 1992 Boulder
OLD FALLS ROAD

to the tundra
over Alpine meadows
elk

but why is it colder the further from sealevel
away from earth?
where does the heat actually
live? is the heat a phenomenon of friction only,
between over and under an us,
karmic clash zone we
have to be there to be?

5°F for every 1000 ft. 100°F in Denver, about 65°F here
the guide said. And we were there in the high 30s
watching the wind blow from the glacier and scour
the breathless pilgrims dashing up the alp.
We stood our ground
to catch a quarter's worth of elk close up in the telescope.

9 July 1992  Boulder
for Charlotte
In memory of me
one time before

my tooth came out today
and Stan Brakhage came to the door

I stay near the window
counting sky sheep.

9 July 1992  Boulder
for Charlotte

Always to the measure of a dream
the notable masquerades of the shadows
do elm do willow do aspen
stiff upright with quivering tinny leaves

hearing such, you know at last what the wind
has always been trying to tell us.

9 July 1992 Boulder
Being able to rest as one person  
worried who's awake at this hour  
wandering the big country house inside  
where the mind's already glowing  
and language is hard at work by its joyous crucible  
waiting and ready for us to come to town.

10 July 1992   Boulder
THE METHOD

for Charlotte

Hard to get the taste of it
but it begins when a magpie screams

it makes me remember I hate remembering
a cat stalking some prairie dogs
a cat same color as the magpie
stalking with it, standing avid six
inches behind its tail
waiting for the kill.

Murder in the air.
Then the cat got distracted by your ankles
and the bird flew away.

2.

Disperse the visualization
into its non-component void
an emptiness like rainbows making love.

3.

The athlete that is the sky
convulses one more time
and throws a cloud over the fore-range.

10 July 1992 Boulder
None of this compels me to remark. The world is serious you honkies.

10. VII. 1992 Boulder
Those who parade their commitments
are like a field of rye fresh green in the spring.
Those who parade their infidelities
glow like broken bottles in the vacant lot
New York sunset cats nervous milkweed.

10 July 1992  Boulder
PNEI HA-YAM

for Charlotte

You can tell I read the Bible once
and am shaky on the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

say it in French I'm too close
to the crazy tops of the mountain
where everything is true

if few
    and you can get fun and profit
from watching me struggle to accommodate
to lowland ways.

This helps. Three
days ago we stood on the top of a mountain
at 12,000 feet in a snowfield with cold and rain
and the only place I ever felt like that before
was the smooth shore of ocean

the sea like a mountain touches everything and is apart.

    10 July 1992   Boulder
My mother's family's Indian blood was jested but not spoken of like my father's sister who had had a child out of that lock they used to put on a woman's door. It was a shame to be anything else than what we were. But what were we? "They should think we're Jewish, then they'll give us good quality goods." Otherwise? Otherwise is unspoken. Evidently, to be is to be anybody else.

11 July 1992  Boulder

for Charlotte
for Charlotte

And who brought the miller to his mill?
Be kind to the woman behind the waterfall
be kind to the rock

the auguries
are everywhere
like pigeonshit
on the public stairs
leading to

a private place. Higher,
into the ordinary. Life.

12 July 1992    Boulder
for Charlotte

Squirrels scolding
out of the locust
a jeremiad
because of cookies
thrown like torma
offerings
to what comes along.
To eat. Like
the marmots
they have yellow bellies.
Are bold. And paws.

12 July 1992   Boulder
The shirtwaist factory fire
is what my mother and father remembered
from all the years of bloody labor

until the end of her life when she
at least asked me one day What
could she have done but work

all day long into the night
and all those winter buses and miles
to walk from borough to borough

when she had no one to advise her.
Guide her. No mother
to tell her what to do.

12 July 1992 Boulder
for Charlotte

We could say it passes
but the altitude remains

the virtues
are insistent
on the goal

Rumî is transportable
it seems

it all seems
and that's the music of it,

the ballet from *Don Carlos*
(Paris version)

sails through my head like the magpie
put there

over the Flatirons (red rocks)
of the Frontal Range

(Rockies' foreplay) a paw
(a fingernail)

held up to catch the morning
light stretching across Kansas to our feet

rock dove coo-hooing on the ledge
a snuggery for city-fowl

love querulous in smoky dawns I rouse.

2.

Apocalypse
would be a leaf like this

slowly curling
and uncurling in the mountain wind.

Rumî

capacious

of erotic understanding
more than I am

colors are Erôs, surely, colors
(alsor) and those fragments

of a moving body we call Time
the Horæ, the Moments

conceived as maidens
runagates,

if we let women be our time
Greek as may be

will we not falter
on the manroad

(man rood
the bed

lifted up
upright to Noon

vertical,
crucifixus

these rocks
as the face of sky.

To walk
in that martyrdom

braver than I can
imagine me to be
skull hill or pyre
on the lake
of lotuses
opening
for all your sakes.

13 July 1992  Boulder
TACT

Robin Blaser
comes downstairs
to run the dryer
dries his hair
to keep from waking
Charlotte up
upstairs, his courtesy
silent on stairs

what shall we thank
each other for
all day long
but tact and touch?

13 July 1992  Boulder
TWO PRECEPTS TRANSLATED FROM THE LOST ORIGINAL

for Charlotte

1.

To offer every
for the town of all.

2.

Miss nothing. It arrives
witty as an ancient
ner. a submarine
invasion of the lie
by silver truth.
Subvert the thing you only think you mean.

13 July 1992   Boulder
LIBERTY AVENUE, CITY LINE

One can have an autobiography without having a life.

The death was waiting
under the cut-glass bowl of sauerkraut
the waxed paper cornets of deli mustard
sliced meat
of a red animal, all
animals are red inside,

you bloody fool, you city.

13 July 1992  Boulder
LAPSUS

for Robin Blaser

On the Colorado terrace
tasting the air, I couldn't
remember Varley you couldn't remember Moreau
and then the names came
and the great sphinx woven of red and blue arterial within,

the sphinxes of inside us,

spoke.

Whenever we must know
we must ask that crimson oracle
to track the empty
lunar landscape of the brain

which means grey nothing till a passion speaks.
Even such passion as a painting kept in the mind releases,

a hip hard to see in jungle leaves.

14 July 1992 Boulder
Squeezing by between plate
glass window and waiting room seat
the young woman knocks a paper
cup of coffee over
their luggage so
the purple napkin from Anne Waldman's
party in South Boulder comes
out of my pocket to be tossed
into the clean-up operation across the aisle.
A British Air 747 rolls by
hugely outside. The perpetrator
hurries back with white cocktail napkins.
Peace comes back. On the Malvinas
thousands of seamiles away
sheep cough in the winter fog.
Bastille Day. My friend George is fifty years old.

14 July 1992  Chicago
Waking near you
my face
pressed against your shoulderblades
soft in this humid morning
in the strange
bed that turns out to be our own

home
from the glacier to this
why does it seem so deep a valley
one continuous
not continuous a window
on the world
we carry with us

this love
is an instrument
to see

and what I have learned
from loving you
is not just love
and not just you

I'm trying to say we see, I see, things differently now. That the canonic variations of love, that insinuating melody, illuminate somehow the world perceived. Not somehow — we know how it is done. What rises as mind resolves as mind, and we are one.
And that doesn't say it
doesn't say us
the sweet morning of you
lasts till night

might understand
to speak.

15 July 1992
I could have thought about it but the bullet just came out
a word in some south Slavic dialect the kind trees understand
better than men
and clutch all their lives to a grey granite overhang
with the sea not far
/ the evidences
of our values spew all round us the sands of the syrtes the
immense Magellans
who categorize the waves into theirs and ours and the Pope
lifts his wounded hands over the oil of the world
dividing and dividing
/ and this gap
is a kind of blessing / Wynkyn
de Worde first English printing

punctuations of the Underived
/ the epic of men carried on
horseback
into the bloody heart of the rose
/ by tin
/ I chanced them / the flowers the flow-ers
and their hands looked up from the string of my throat and
gased music
they way it always is
/ wordkind over glaciers, elk browsing in the
cirque
and yellow snow buttercups immaculate up out of dingy ice /

alors Robert
the circulations
have been on my mind all week, the current
of continuous discourse,
the cathedral of all we ever remember.
Granite again and lift / blades of muscovite letting in delicious
light
the quick arguments of the Holy Spirit
/ over the endless forest.
16 July 1992 for Charlotte
for Charlotte

I don't know what it means to be anywhere. After a while people who are here are somewhere else. Or not. Or still are where they were or die along the way to being where they are.

16 July 1992
as a species of river, the foundry beset by avenues of air searching into the heart of bronze. This absence is more devastating than any intrusive substance. Forms blow apart, shapes break — enough. I waited for the world of sinners meant for me to tame. To bend malevolence beautifully to a kindly form. As a curve might, in bronze or ebony or even flesh say, stroke me. The form, Fratres, is more than an assortment or happy package of contours. A motorboat loud bounces by. Sun's rays pursue the earth, slice through some powder blue-grey cloud and light on Kingston. Illumined like a Nineteenth Century allegorical painting, the far shore is full of stately hardwood trees dark against the receding hills. Westering sun, and now a glory tells on the broad river, just as on the near shore the first ripples of the motorboat's wake noisily arrive. Water slap. A sailboat moves from shade to sun. Mind's ear hears the sail slap against the breeze.

Any sermon like this is a delicate mistake, served by a scholar to a herdsman. My notebook rests on the old concrete wall, a tired brown bee sits down near it, preens, lifts off. Mosquitoes prowl, because it is a river and the train is late, everything knows
about us. It is a river, vivid, even livid now at this sweet evey hour blue. Some rain over there, the train from Montreal rests in the station. The train from New York may breast it here. Everything knows and we wait. The human race is mostly waiting. Everything else is perfectly punctual.

16 July 1992 Rhinecliff

for Charlotte
back
among the birds

finches and sparrows
rattling on our roof

waxwing & a chickadee
squirrels the tumult
of seed

no translate this
virgula into another
language another
species of tuneful obscuration

this list of birds
translate
the song of them
gets lost in the dictionary
they all mean
concelebrating the mass of seed

and into their quick sentences now
the blue jay dives

and you know who he is.

17 July 1992
for Charlotte

The cardinal and his cardinaless
arrive, a shine to them
more hueful than the purple finches

Square yard of scattered sunflower seed
is mostly hulls. It takes time to live.
We angels of the instantaneous
are clever as squirrels. And with no more sense.

17 July 1992
THE VOICE

for Charlotte

Song to let no one speak
no odyssey, and no one is
and is the only one to interest
us who have been too many
numbers in the sun.
Cool sky nobody home
you hear singing constantly.

17 July 1992
In the deep sky that only the birds know
There is a wing so vast that all the
Animals and their humans dwell
Tearless painless safe beneath its shade.

That is the right wing of one great bird
And no one can tell what manner of thing
The other wing of that one creature is.

17 July 1992
(after the French of Antoine des Galapagues)
LAVENDER

In between the lavender and the violet grosgrain ribbon holds the stalks tight in a tied magic bundle of shaman smells passes right through the city, the dry warm resonance of summer, I heard this say:

Be empty a while. The bowling alley and the skating rink are far, the diner with its raspberry tarts and its muffins sprawls dark before sunrise. Be alone a while. The kingdom is always waiting, the newspaper is full of generous lies. Think it away. Be empty, be alone, be wise.

17 July 1992
for Charlotte