

7-2003

## juID2003

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## IDENTITIES

1

What should the faltering be  
if not what the man is wearing in his hat  
between his scalp and its crown  
a letter from the lazy lady  
we all get mail from on this kind of day

who are those people bothering the ground?  
The inspector of skies is standing around

2

it's time for me to change my clothes,  
I am a card in your deck, just one,  
but you can't play any game without me,

king of hearts or two of clubs, you need me.  
I change the look of every hand I'm in —

and sometimes in the night I slip  
from one card to another, my face changes,  
my change becomes your chance

3

my face is opportunity,  
you win money,

you pick me at random you suppose  
and I tell your future. I tell it right.

I am the only one who knows.  
Grip me tight.

Hold me close to your mouth,  
tapping me against your lip

breathe on me and try to think.

4  
what if we all are just  
court cards in each other's deck

all answers and no questions  
crown of water cup of fire.

16 July 2003

## TRYING TO REACT NOT TO REACT

Trying to react not to react  
trying to crease the paper so it flies  
trying not to be ten years old forever

and touching her. But the bus  
never comes, you're never  
one of them. No chevereh, no karass,  
no gang. *We played*, you say  
*ringaleavio* maybe  
but it was never we  
it was them and you, you liked the game  
where you hid or fled or worked  
against them from some secret place,  
a game that made you more yourself  
and made them even further,

the game where you were *it*.  
First dance of duality  
song of ignorance, be polite, call it nescience,  
you sang it, you sing it  
still, show the driver  
your little yellow pass  
in plastic envelope,  
he understands such things  
he works for the City  
the place where all the truth gets made.

17 July 2003

## **PEN**

Could you be leaving me  
brand new gel pen  
leaving me to pale lettering  
desperate pressures  
white page? Mark better  
come back to life  
pale ink, stop doubting  
your capacity to inscribe.

We have forever  
to get this done  
but I have just today  
this quiet hour  
wedged firm  
between one thing and another,  
don't fail me now  
when now's  
the only time there is.

17 July 2003

## OMEN

Look at that  
and take heart  
a big white cloud  
sailing fast  
over the locust grove  
from the north  
a northwind  
up there cool here  
a traveler  
coming, a friend.

17 July 2003

## **PILGRIM**

I was happier when I knew a little less  
now to be happy again  
I'll have to know much more

I'll have to pay attention to my dreams  
and send letters to old friends

roll up my pretty maps  
and set out on the blue road

I have to find my family again.

17 July 2003

## **SPICA**

Spica soon  
and the long afternoon  
gives way  
to our turn  
but not yet

we live inside the gaps  
of an ancient message

inside the old wormy scroll  
marginalia to its meanings,  
glosses, pictures, tables,  
graphs.

I am a symbol  
scrawled by a mad lover  
on the monastery wall  
he chose to hide behind  
forever. Or never.

Did he flee or is he still  
sinning, winning,  
fleeing, she-ing,  
is he the animal I dream inside  
when I trot through the night  
hooting and saluting?

All I know  
are the twisted lines  
I read in the mirror



complex radicals  
somebody scribbled  
in the ancient style  
called *Grass blowing*  
*in the breeze a drunken*  
*man remembers*  
*later*

and I have  
to live every dot and  
squiggle of it  
all the way to  
the glory I knew  
I trusted  
waiting for me  
red sunrise in the windows  
of vast apartment houses  
I saw as a child  
the walls of heaven  
lit with the light that told me  
come to me I am waiting  
I will wait for you  
your whole life  
just enough to find me.

18 July 2003

## THE APARTMENT HOUSES OF HEAVEN

When I think of them  
somehow it's raining  
I look down at the speckled wood  
rain drops here and there  
on my porch my wood my nowtime

a pencil falls from the sky  
hammock under linden tree  
how many more are waiting  
blue envious  
the leaves don't move

all my life I have been waiting for this moment  
but still I think I know what heaven's like,  
a city of transients waiting for their visas  
parks and busses rain every other day  
to keep the balance, marble staircases  
and you never know the people next door  
how long they'll be staying,  
they miss their little dog you miss your cat

but there are so many birds  
on the roof and in the rafters  
even, swallows swifts jays doves crows  
and falcons nesting in the towers  
of empty cathedrals

no Mass in heaven  
needed, no mosque no Sabbath

it's all Sabbath  
and all the prayers have been said

peace now, it's all  
more like adult education  
walking in the park, trips to the zoo,  
all writing and no reading

it is said there's a public library  
in every neighborhood but no one  
seems to have the stamina to find it  
what we used to call the vim  
in the slang of the 1940s  
accusative singular Latin noun for force.

18 July 2003

## GLOBE

as theatre,  
the mar-now  
the nest of beautiful denials  
that bunched words are,

clusters, youthful yarrow there  
in your small garden, redpurple topped  
with lace

how all your flowers  
tend to be red,

Globe  
with leather heels hammering the floorboards  
impersonating action  
(Percy Fler, *Shadow of a Gunman*, Provincetown Playhouse,  
maybe 1951)

the crime is in the attic,  
the polizei come pounding up the stairs

but no one dies [*Dies*]  
the moment of the need  
when I really need you  
is lost into that bright then,  
the specious spacious,  
dwarf salvia rocket red,  
verbena, heather,  
Hamlet, Hermione, Ford.

There are too few stories  
to go around  
so what we do  
when we are caught up in action  
(caught in the act)  
is sullied already, smirched  
with the fingerprints of all the previous  
occupants of this affair,  
all the Othellos before they get to me,  
all the Antigones.

So it wasn't just Globe  
or Epidaurus, it is telling  
itself that told us,  
a woman turns to a man  
and says Be here for me  
and already he's gone  
into the raptures of elsewhere,  
another king on another throne  
and all the lizarding adulterers  
are crooning in their chains.

19 July 2003

## **AT THE GATES OF TROY**

Come closer to fight around the wall  
write with wet hands say shibboleth  
and let the bible fall

                                slump in the corner of the tent  
with Judith, this time teach her not to kill  
strangers are for loving

                                strangers come along,  
enemies fulfil the Law — you'll never know  
what the bible really means  
till you kiss a heathen,

hear the steel drums' rococo  
and map it with your body  
moving,

                                moving hard  
among the mosquitoes  
that pour in through the broken circle  
buzzing in from out there where God is.

20 July 2003

## DUENNA

The earth is a guardian of sorts  
for those who live on it or nearby

gravity makes this plain to me  
earth's apron strings securing us

but our own comedy enacts itself  
a foot or two or ten above the ground

in the weird light of the anthroposphere  
where tail lights move and Congress is in session

and judges drive drunk Lexuses off the road  
not to mention the high scandalarium of you and me

my hands in your clothes  
my money in your bank

literature symphonies skateboards "the horror,  
the horror" as the book said

but just behind all that  
and all above it everywhere the Earth attends

permanently critical  
a lesson plan alive

a classroom made exclusively of windows  
a textbook built of rock and salt and light.

20 July 2003

## PLANCTUS

Could I possibly be complaining  
when everything is so beautiful?

If you dig down in the earth  
you get earth under your fingernails

This dirt is my vocabulary  
dark words

proof of where I've been  
and how I come to tell you now

all the substances I found  
down there, what my hand grasped

in the lost places and bring to you  
smelling more of my sweat than their source.

20 July 2003



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My sleep happens to someone else

or when sleep comes

I go

and don't know where

and a stranger does

my sleep for me

wake now

and let me home

20 July 2003

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All the mysterious chemicals  
analyze themselves in my womb  
the result is Jesus every time  
so many planets we've been doing this.

20 July 2003

For men have wombs too  
they try to fill all their strange lives  
all the empty hours  
they never understand,

the man's womb is a windy place  
the shaman climbs inside himself and knows

24 July 2003

## ANTS

Ants walk on wood

I understand

it is all one to them

places to go

they are their own road

birdwise in small earth

21 July 2003

## **TIME**

I was eighteen when Stalin died  
I hardly can believe it even now  
he seemed a permanent part of the world  
like smallpox or Australia

I was eighteen when Stalin died  
I seemed older  
that's when the contemporary began  
Prokofiev died the same day

how can it be fifty years ago  
we were so close  
like everyone  
Hitler the old Pope Roosevelt

this morning.

21 July 2003

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Let the light sink in  
from its hidden sources  
and soak through me  
in this strong dark

after midnight power failure hours now the dark

when the kind of animal I am  
can't see to go  
my body only knows itself so far  
and a tree is a horn  
lifted against me

and what will my dream be  
what can I bring to longhouse mornings?  
I belong to the tribe  
that discusses everything

wolf cry and palavering  
I am born again  
when explanation starts.

21 July 2003