

9-2003

## sepC2003

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## ELONGATIONS

What lies closest to your hand  
begins. Distance is the first lie,

forgetting is the other. We are subsumed  
in the orderly, cases  
of one noun. They call it desinence.

Variation becomes us, jealousy  
is green because so fertile,  
full of hope.

I told you  
distance wouldn't matter, the mind  
goes on praying when the lips  
have other lips to mumble.

Molecules mingle as much as they can  
— no more. The rule  
is built into our matter.  
You fall into me, dissolve  
into the thing I also am becoming.  
Two makes none. None begins  
and comes again. The blue rule.

That said, consider sorrow.  
Consider a faint star now on the horizon,  
now set. What is the difference?  
I am. The tree you marked it by  
is there next year. You are.  
Is that an answer or evasion.

Consider sun sheen on distant highways  
yes, things can be elsewhere, can be far.  
Only people can't recede, caught  
as we are at the exact crossing point,  
each intersection between us, of us,  
is the target of a simple god,  
we whimper while he plays

but his wit wends us through the world  
old fashioned haters on the brink of love  
always and never together.

Consider god a brutal consolation  
something the salt desert taught us  
love without a medium, nothing but law,  
that casual remark of the rocks.

8 September 2003

## **ASKED TO TALK ABOUT THE EARTH**

Elegy elected, he mourns  
a cackhanded government,  
he doubts the American angel.

Somewhere when this  
was Amsterdam  
something went into hiding

in the shale, caverns, hemlock,  
something still here.  
It ruled the so-called Indians,

it urges us. Listen.  
From the social character  
of a place discern the deities,

local landlords of just  
beneath the ground,  
owners of trees.

Valleys are dangerous,  
streams carry so much away  
and leave a little gold behind.

Find the gold  
and make offerings,  
naked among perilous ivies.

8 September 2003

## GIVING

Always trying to give something to you  
I try one thing then another, a drum  
with a blood stain on its skin,  
an amber bead to wear in the hollow  
of your throat, a bracelet of young garnets,

maybe just a maple leaf, how about that,  
a playful slap, a message on the phone  
mostly murmuring obvious endearments  
because you know the rest. Nothing  
doesn't belong to you in the first place.

My job is running through the world  
saying the names of things that are yours  
on the unlikely chance that you forgot them.

8 September 2003

## **AFTER READING NAMMALVAR**

Tamil bhakti tells me true  
a love song's *you* finds its lover

alas the sincerest arrow is  
the one that finds the target's heart.

8.IX.03

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If I had something to say to you  
it would be your body

but you have that already, haven't you?  
Just in case, here is your hand.

8.IX.03

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Finches gold at nyjer seed  
symmetrically disposed they are  
on the thistle seed tubular feeder  
sunlight milky in the lucite shaft.

8.IX.03



## LESS NEED TO ANSWER BUT

“beingness, the truth  
of you” the New  
Age lady says,  
channeling P’taah. I guess that’s Ptah  
old artificer, anyhow  
she listens hard to hear such stuff

and haven’t others olders written *you* and *truth*  
and *of* and other dubious relations?

even the shortest words no proof against error  
how can a word be cleaner than my mouth?

Answer: *your* ears, hearing.

9 September 2003

## MESA

Table land. Travel  
too much the same  
roads. How should  
a road look? New.

Every mile a different  
mirage. There  
at the end of wanting  
another shimmer

past alfalfa, past  
salt past sand,  
the mountain where  
the prophetesses dance.

9 September 2003

## **CROSSING**

It's thirty years since I drove straight across America. It still seems to be happening. For all the rain of sudden green Ohio, that journey is still going on. A highway never actually ends. After the twentieth motel, every place you sleep ever after is a rented bed, every breakfast a farewell vista. Curious pretty town. I know I'll never see this time and place again.

You don't have to make the changes, you know, change is with you all the time. The car is just your little memory. The road runs by itself.

9 September 2003

## **CONTROL**

When you say bicycle five times fast  
does it start rhyming with Michael  
and end up with sickle? I am the Goddess  
with Pale Hands, reddened  
from your meat. In Norway  
they paint their wooden houses  
with the blood of slaughtered cattle.  
Dark red. White is too costly, white is rare.  
I look at the autumn sunlight  
desperate to control. Belong to me,  
distances! A parade of old cars  
comes chanting up the highway  
from the fairgrounds to meet me.  
Ask, ask, meek bicycle, no wonder.  
Each spoke points away from the truth.

9 September 2003

## **OPERA**

The only opera my father ever told me about seeing  
was Massenet's *The Juggler of Our Lady*.

Isn't it strange that I've never even heard it?

Something is waiting for me there, a miracle, a powerful mistake.

9 September 2003

## **MALEVICH**

Can I paint with milk the memory  
of before there was anything to remember?

9.IX.03

## FULL MOON

but what about you  
are you a farmer?  
I've seen you plow  
the waves and rake  
your fingers down  
the smooth of your  
own thigh in the sign  
called Ripeness  
I've seen you take  
seed from the wind  
to bury shallow  
I've seen you let  
sun spores come.  
What do I know  
of all this country stuff  
planting or reaping?  
I've seen your eyes  
study me languid  
over the stockade  
of dreams. It should be  
you who tells me  
what the weather means  
or what god is dreaming  
up behind the clouds.

10 September 2003

## Die unbekannte Wissenschaft

There are some with whom no relax  
avails, all words come out crooked  
from my lips, as if their presence  
in the wet chamber of my mouth  
make me disclose too much,  
make me act out some desperate need  
for an attachment I don't want,  
spun by the situation itself. The changing  
place. Bad chemistry they say  
and say no more about it, yet this  
is the founding science of the world  
the one we are too shy to study, scared  
to know the machinery of how we love,  
hate, yawn, get on with one another.  
What could be more urgent than that,  
a secret science still. Not how to get  
what we want (alchemy, magic, war)  
but why we want it. We have no name  
yet for desire's own desire.

10 September 2003



## **SPEM IN ALIUM**

Having a chance to get what we came for

I will not put

my hope there

my heart in another.

The heart belongs only to the heart committed.

The vine does not support the tree.

Libera me!

## THE SAMENESS

Why a man  
wakes out of dream  
his arms aching

generous in leaves  
from a city street  
under plane trees

ginkgo trees  
sumac under fences  
lepering the sidewalk

under ailanthus  
crushed seeds mush  
the country

pervades the city  
no place without  
mold, rat, bat

hawk. We only think  
a difference  
it all is material,

silva, hyle,  
it's all the style  
of things, matter

is a forest  
to begin with  
alas alas

we are the elves  
of it, we are  
what's left of magic.

11 September 2003

## MIDNIGHT

Be sure. A sail  
on the corner of the sea

dark sail is it wet  
or is it color

how can you tell  
but what you see?

Throw yourself down  
from the headland

drown in it,  
the ship is coming

to kill you  
all the stories

converge in you  
and take your own away.

11 September 2003