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We promised to be near  
enough to the truth  
to smell each other's breath

the smell of a mouth  
tells the truth  
no matter what the words

and worse than lies  
are small talk  
and the blue apartment house

and interest rates and  
human rights  
there are no rights

anywhere but here  
in your mouth  
I taste your mind

maybe you and I  
are the last humans  
I touch you at last

cocktail time  
on a doomed planet  
I like those movies

no brand names  
empty envelopes  
a crisis in Japan

and you and me  
looking at us warily  
I love you too

doubt is forever  
I know how it is  
I used to be you myself.

23 December 2001

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One thing pornography teaches is deft grammar  
otherwise the streets are full of baby carriages  
from here to the Place des Vosges crammed with them  
and all the newborn mothers reading Proust.

We can't have that. Pregnancy's the death of conversation  
have you ever noticed, with the ruby glass votive lamps  
hissing in her eyes whenever you dare to disagree  
with holy mother church I lost my heart in Byzantine

a beadle was a boy who ruled class while nun was gone  
he didn't wear skirts or have long rosaries but still.  
Why did you do it? Why did you sit under the apple tree  
with anybody else but snake? Snake was safe,

good talk, fresh ideas, long views. Why did you get  
your baby husband (he could have been your brother too)  
involved in the action, eating, sexing, guilt and exile?  
One minute the garden of philosophy, the next The Gap.

The question must remain rhetorical, id est, historical  
since you left Eden long ago to become my mother.  
Just think of all the things we might have done  
together if it weren't for this snare of being born.

What kind of music is life anyway, some tired  
show tune you can't get out of your head.

23 December 2001

## READING LACAN

Not *le nom du père* — it's *le père du père*, the one a father calls father — that is a father. So look for the generation before, the generator of your generator, to hear what the father says about his father, thus defining father, thus saying the word. Because it is only the father who knows the father, and who can say the word of the father. Which too often is his father's name.

But *le nom* is more often the sentence, the verdict (*Urteil*). So it is to the grandfather (“always already dead” anyhow in my own case), perhaps grandfathers that we should go. For the mother also has a father, and speaks his name. Strange accent, the woman speaking the father's name, but the child hears. Maybe it takes more than the father to say the father's name. Maybe then the true father is that composite person[a], the Father of the Mother and the Father, and that persona is the mask who speaks at last the final *nom du père*. That is why not every child without father grows up psychotic, that is why *le nom du père* is such a good name for ‘it’ — it is the one-who-is-named-father by the mouth of the father, the mouth of the mother.

And what of those women, once perhaps more common than today, who call their husbands ‘your father’ in speaking to the child, and perhaps later, after the child is grown or gone, go on naming that name with its fearful accuracy,

saying and even calling him just ‘father?’ They may in fact annihilate their own fathers into this new, present composite, the father-in-the-mouth-of-the-mother.

Who are all these people each child must master, in more ways than one, compressing them all into a single word, name, he can honor most by transgressing?

24 December 2001  
Boston

## THE AGITATION ANIMAL

The agitation animal  
Spoke me awake  
He said the president  
Is wrong He always is  
I said why wake me  
To tell me what I always  
Knew You have to do  
Something about it  
What could I possibly  
Achieve You could take  
An ad in the paper and say  
Nothing but the blank  
Pulp of the ruined  
Forest paper could be  
What god calls  
True Is god wrong too  
Are they all wrong  
But this animal  
All asky and dreaming  
Death's uniforms  
Is it all always  
About revenge  
Like an opera that never  
Ends and brother  
Always killing  
Brother how else  
He answered could  
They ever know  
Who they are  
Language belongs  
To the survivor alone.

24 December 2001  
Boston

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I don't want to wake up thinking about governments  
pursuing murderous idealists through gaunt sierras.  
Only forgiveness does any good. And changing  
the evil imperial American into something decent.  
Can we still reach it? Are we dead in the same desert?

24 December 2001  
Boston



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Green arch out  
from in your lap  
writhing there till  
in and up and in  
your do I there  
you expand  
to understand  
me. You expound.

Something wrong  
as if I came  
to the wrong room  
or the right one  
before you moved  
in a girl comes  
to the door too  
but I'm not home

give me everything  
you need. I am the old  
spider caught  
in my inferior design.

24 December 2001  
Boston

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To this day I am stuck on a Pitkin Avenue (B-14)  
bus trying to get out at Hopkinson Avenue  
to go to the movies where they show Russian films  
and not getting out because there's this girl in front of me  
something written on her right hip pocket The End  
it says or *konets* it should say what I'll see in three  
hours after the two Eisenstein movies ("Alexander Nevsky,"  
"Potemkin") are finished I'll never see them  
I stare at her jeans her hips are not moving she  
stands in the stairwell of the bus to get out the bus  
stops and stands still for her to dismount I will get off  
behind her I will never see her again I am still there  
I have never stopped seeing her no face just brown  
Hair white shirt blue jeans she's not getting off we are here  
forever because this was a moment in which you can stay  
this was a moment that people can live in busy as books  
in a library as rabbis praying in the synagogue just  
on the other side of the doors that don't open or they open  
and she doesn't get out she is here forever I am behind her  
we are an ordered pair a function of some eternal  
mathematics I paid no attention in school I'm caught  
behind her stare well stare well the dark hair the white  
shirt the unmoving unfaltering fact of what just happens

and catches me in its move when you're caught  
in a move you can't move you are part of the other forever,  
to live a whole life with her, in summer, with bibles,  
with people waiting for her and waiting for me,  
the terrible smiles of people walking by in the street  
and nothing ever changes but the weather I reach out  
to touch her to push her gently maybe I can wake her  
maybe she can step down and out of the vehicle holds us  
I need to be under a sky to have a cigarette to stub it out  
to look at a tree and think about whatever comes to mind  
not her not this not here not the end of the end  
the driver is dead the bus is empty of everyone but us  
anything I ever hope to do I'll have to do right here  
with her and nobody but her and she wont turn around.

24 December 2001  
Boston

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

Girl in doorway  
cars line sidewalk  
quiet suburb street  
girl in doorway  
lights all over house  
her mother turns  
back to the car  
to get something  
her brother in tee-shirt  
December girl  
in doorway wide  
double blonde wood  
doors are open  
every window  
in the house  
piled up with lights  
girl in doorway  
lights around her  
lights in every bush  
her body outlined  
against the different  
quality of light  
inside girl in doorway  
Christmas tree inside  
all the lights  
outside are white  
girl in doorway  
maybe sixteen  
slacks and sweater  
in doorway standing  
a moment in the  
doorway girl in  
doorway the blond  
doors are moving  
she turns looks  
back into the street

sees her mother her  
brother maybe me  
across the street  
girl in doorway  
turns in profile  
now her body turns  
to the right the dark  
inside the  
lights of all the  
house a girl  
in the doorway the  
doors are moving  
she is moving a girl  
the door the girl  
the other door the  
girl the girl going  
inside the girl going  
the slim snug  
dark of her body  
disappearing  
into the light  
infested dark  
inside inside  
the girl the door  
the door the girl  
the door closing  
the door the door.

24 December 2001  
Boston

## SECRET ACTS

technical term                    ‘nocturnal adoration’  
secret republic beneath the known

*conspiracy of texts to hide the word*  
— hide a leaf in the forest —

shape in a doorway, hide a hope  
in happening  
                                 *hide a shape in light*  
too bright too bright

*the moon of it*  
*turns into the sun*

                                 the rain itself  
melts silver  
                                 we hurried through  
the diamond merchants their glittering  
hands

                                 negotiation  
                                 money  
has a healing power, it takes  
a curse off someone else’s things  
becoming mine

                                 transaction  
touch.

                                 The lingering resentments  
of midnight mass — who are  
these languages the shadows spoke

cold courtyard empathy, a voice?

And you? I am she. The one  
you remembered, a cat  
walks behind me, you sit down.

25 December 2001, Boston

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Christmas day to be at home at home the  
door consents to open the blue hour no longer  
a fabulous artificial perfume from the early  
days of being someone else when Time itself  
is an alias for space I ask you I ask you  
let me spend the night worshipping in you

a god who impersonates you night by night  
and stretches out across my mind most  
intimate and small, all the skies in the world  
snug inside your eyes, the parallax between  
is another story one that lets you find me  
on the other side of the optic chasm who am I

when you are gone behind the waking door?

25 December 2001

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All kinds of miracles maybe  
your heart on my sleeve  
Saint Exupéry found in the desert  
translating Baudelaire into Berber  
and no news anywhere on tv

nothing in the market but bread and meat  
long stemmed brussel sprouts  
and girls who milk their goats for you

everything for you. I was a child once  
and knew every song, the want, the wish,  
the wait, the soft velleity  
to touch the cushioning flesh around the bone

because we are born knowing bone,  
right? It's not just surrealism or despair,  
there really is an afterlife and this is it

the long morning after I stagger from your couch  
you, you who'll never have any other name but you.

26 December 2001



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In Piero della Francesca's *Risen Christ*  
the drapery of shroud writes a letter round the Man  
that keeps his modesty and lets his glory through,

that angry almost disappointed face  
like a householder roused at night to challenge thieves  
— by being in the flesh we have broken into his house.

We stand in our shimmering loincloths just out of sight  
trembling. What will he do? Nothing. He stares at us.  
We have no right to be where we are,

but pity is easy for those who have passed through death.  
There is no police he can summon, no other place  
to which he could exile us, he is stuck with us here,

for lewd characters like us all his sufferings  
were taken on. Were we worth it? We shiver  
with self-esteem. Of course we are, we're beautiful

in our disarray, meat on our bones and gaudy dreams  
cycling through our heads, he should love us, he should.  
He lets us be. Presently we come to worship him.

Every minute he lets us go on living seems  
like a forgiveness. Sacrament of being in the world.  
The rising sun. The feel of cloth against my skin.

26 December 2001

*MELANIE*

So I dreamt another book by Proust.  
Long as *Jean Santeuil*, not a part  
Of *Searching for Lost Time*, a whole new book.

A heroine it had. This time Marcel  
Was a woman, and a woman's dignity  
understood the fragile circumstance of time.

26 December 2001

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All the silences recall me now  
Dreams of a river without poisons  
And swans with upright necks, heads  
Balanced proud as horizons.

27 December 2001

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Penetrate sunlight  
to find the dark inside.

This is the real  
transgression.  
(Lawrence's black sun  
behind the sun we almost see)

it's in the dark too  
but at night it's not black  
beyond the dark, it is a strange  
dark amber light, not radiant,  
a swallowing ingrown sort of light  
that takes more darkness in,  
glows inward, a hungry light  
like brown orange garnet, like hessonite,  
the only thing darker than the dark.

Rahu, my star. Black sun,  
you are the only one.

27 December 2001