

12-2002

## decG2002

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## **DAWN**

Watching dawn come up above the candle flame  
one candle and five flames, reflections, windows  
double-glazed, nature of a house

a house is a telephone, someone calls.

Dawn now. Stick figures of the winter trees  
oldest alphabet. Paper sky. Pale, pale  
a kind of white that dreams about being blue.

Observation is either description or permission.  
Permission lets you dream on from what you see.  
Permission becomes inscription, it is a case  
of somebody finally answering the phone.

27 December 2002

## OMINOUS

My Viennese pen skips for the first time. Why?  
Is a dear friend in Vienna dying? Dawn  
here in Omendale. But there, in Praterstan,  
what shivering lovers make out by the duck pond?  
Is anybody still alive? Maybe when I grow up  
I'll buy a pickup truck with a plow for a snout,  
put chains on and go everywhere I want.

27 December 2002

## **FREE DEATH**

Tell me a new color for it to be  
a fluency of sense impressions  
like a fisherman at dawn planning suicide  
the way they do when the boat's calm on the inlet  
and the sky is that luminous way you know  
the sun doesn't care if you live or die.  
Or you think you know that. So many days  
something happens to distract you from dying.

27 December 2002

## **FLAME**

*Flamme bin ich sicherlich*

The candle flame  
explains

the roots  
are roofs  
of something else

a canny place  
dove among sparrows  
harmlessly feed

the birds  
have caught  
up with me now

every energy  
bent on being

there are cannibals  
among the trees  
shadows and snowplows  
I smell the coffee

but I was here  
before the world

breath enough  
to nourish you  
forever if  
you share my  
last mistake  
and think I'm me.

27 December 2002

## A MAP OF IT

Birdsong and number system  
stilt avocet oystercatcher snipe

songless, surds. I know  
more words than things

more things than words, more cities  
than rivers, more sky

than anything at all.  
I will believe the obvious

lacking the subtlety to unsee it.  
So in Spicer's words I will believe the birds.

But what would that be in my language  
the voice that once o'er Omendale

came down like snow, went up like incense,  
touched everybody and felt some of them up?

Prepositions are to sex as birds are to sky.  
Sleep for me, sleep along me, sleep in me tonight.

27 December 2002

## HOMAGE

Patches of Portugal  
show through the trees  
old men in shirt sleeves  
numbering documents

Everybody came before me  
even you who are almost  
my daughter, almost my son

you taught me everything I know  
just by making me wait for you so long

I am the last born, and my mother is yet to come.  
All round me the future shouts its sermons and its lecture notes,  
the future is half-deaf too, and speaks with a Russian accent  
like a man who learned to talk from listening to trees.

27 December 2002



## **THE SKILL**

So many perishable sings  
the sky's pale ink  
takes down the minutes of our meeting

We discuss your body  
its aptitude for skating grace  
meanwhile the cross country skis  
are warping in the tool shed

and I wonder about appetite  
not for the first time why  
I have so much and so many  
and why my only talent is desire.

27 December 2002

## **LAWS OF OPTICS**

All objects are closer than they are.

Mirrors are only spies, the conspiracies  
they reveal are plausible,  
things turn inside out before your eyes,

nothing is safe from interpretation.

So call me up tonight let's talk about our feet  
our podiatric problems, exchange  
names of advisable specialists.

The idiom of honesty gets the best of us.

Look deep in the mirror and remember.

27 December 2002

*SEMA TES HEMERES*

The woodpecker's attack  
muffled in the snow  
sounds like fast snoring,  
someone sleeping in a hurry

the attack is regular  
a tide, a breathing.

28 December 2002

## JEALOUSIES

Alveolar shapings of the held breath,  
her tongue holds in what happened.  
Deny the obvious, darling, that's  
what language is for. Jealousy  
is hard to nourish without words,  
vocabulary of times and places,  
the unforgettable unforgivable remarks.  
Mostly jealousy is overhearing.  
You wake up and know it's rained.  
Snowed. Your daffodils are dead  
you hoped would trump Croesus on your lawn.  
And lastly jealousy delights in epitaphs.

\* \* \*

I woke annoyed with leftover images from *Time Code*, which we finally saw last night. Its technologic richness is won at the cost of simplistic narrative arrangements, especially the operatic jealousy between careering Rose and coke-crazed Lauren. Would that the technical could foster complexities of telling and understanding, rather than depend on the opposite. But thinking like this, I recall that *The Great Train Robbery* was no Oresteia.

Query: what was the earliest technically complex film which is also emotionally, aesthetically, complex? I want to say *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, but then I remember that the villains are caricatures. Maybe it hasn't happened yet, a film that lays itself open to *Gelassenheit*, nuance, forgiveness. *Mother and Son* — maybe that, at last. But is an audience ready for a film that is all telling, and no plot? Yet why am I asking more of film than I do of that other music, opera?

28 December 2002

~vw dy

What is the name of the large red bird  
that flies out of the eye of the dream  
and hovers wide away before the window

and why? Slow habit of making  
anything your own. Marks made on paper.  
Think on the history of a piece of paper  
from the tree to the canceling fire,  
how many messages, or none,  
gone virgin into nescience  
or palimpsested with a dozen lovers,  
a paper can endure erasures

and then the ash of it sifts  
off on a bare breeze  
to scar a snowfield  
there where only ashes  
teach us to listen  
and require us to speak

I see the bird less when I close my eyes  
but he's still there  
a pain impaled on maple saplings  
birch trees  
the sun rising.

28 December 2002

## TATIANA'S ASH

You burned your notes,  
Stavrogin, Smerdyakov, Tarkovsky,  
they all went into the sky,

names of villainies and sanctities,  
names of understanders and the great  
unrelenting resenters,

the judas flowers, the doubting priests  
all unified now in common ash,  
purified, *unidentified*

at last. Into a cup you sift the ashes  
and pour some green oil on  
warm from the fire that left the ash

mix these with your inky fingertips  
into chrism, then seal your forehead  
with a smear, sign of the strange cross,

and smear my forehead too  
and everyone's, we are sealed  
with the ashes of forgiveness.

You forgive me now,  
you did not know me,  
you forgive yourself years from now

for not knowing me.

we share ashes.

To read a book, I think

is to burn and be burned with it,

auto-da-fe, the text and I

become a common fire,

leave the same ash.

As once on a winter day in Moscow

Quirinus burned at the stake

for writing poetry you could read too many ways.

28 December 2002

## **THE STRANGER**

Who is that old man  
I see in the mirror  
sometimes when I haven't  
readied myself to see  
what looks back at me?  
What is he doing to my face?

28 December 2002



## THE WEATHER

You call this weather?  
I've seen more weather in an hour glass.  
Who was I then? A deacon  
on a beacon, a girl in a pulpit,  
a contradiction in soft clothes,  
an editor of weeds, a liripipe  
cut from your cowl, no tail, no tail  
for you, a manyplies  
out of your old cow, a spade  
that never dug, a dog in love with a cat,  
I pranced around the parish like  
an I don't know what, you could have seen  
me midnight lurching from the pond  
my hair on fire and leeches on my knees,  
kiss kiss, smarter folk than you have tried  
to put me out in vain, in rain, I was  
a secret semaphore, a church steeple indoors,  
a parlor organ, a castaway, a seedmerchant  
with holes in his pants, a lighthouse, a rat.  
I sing exclusively from my experience of old  
and singing is my way of forgetting,  
everything I say makes me nobody now.  
And as for you, you're everyone.

29 December 2002

## CHANCERY POLITICS

I choose me, you choose you.

The game goes on forever.

Rome is waiting, all the time

in the world is locked up

in those unscrupulous silences.

Downstairs the typing pool prepares

contradictory versions of what happened/

They will be at it for years

as they grow older, have pregnancy leaves,

come back to work, keep inputting text,

turn old. Because nothing happened,

choices are never spoken out loud,

everybody knows, it's like candles,

when you're thinking of something else

the flame decides to go out.

Rome has spoken but nobody cares.

One day it's over without ever beginning.

29 December 2002

## **EDEN**

another subculture

split from

the garden

where

the blue girls

come from that

ate my night.

29 December 2002

## **EPITAPH**

People like me will always be remembered  
because we're so like everybody else  
only more so, you never knew it was so simple  
to be on the other side of ideas, where being is.

29 December 2002

