

7-2000

## juLB2000

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## THE FOURTH OF JULY

The Fourth of July is a woman in a red dress  
hurrying to take it off before the sun sets

independence comes just before decadence  
how long do we have o pioneers

we have tunneled through the dark sky  
to find planets islanded in emptiness

more barren than this rock archipelago of  
consciousness moment on and moment off

seapeaks of Ordinary Mind breaking loose  
out of the turbulence of mental reactions

o to be truly dependent again for a day  
on the man next door and the girl across the street

to be dependent on place on all places  
this city and all who do their traffic here

to be dependent without reaction  
that would be liberty at last.

4 July 2000

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Being tired or arrived  
being Arab or under  
being peninsula  
being athwart or over or begun  
being another one

before being first  
before being one  
before being before  
a wave touched  
a shore before before

a sure as doubt  
as sure assure  
before any out  
being pure pure  
as I want

a formula every  
a saying that is common

will it rain soon  
mow your lawn.

4 July 2000

## BEDDOES IN BASEL

There is a part of every day that feels like Sunday  
this is a pop song you understand not philosophy  
like those girls he hired to dance his *Bridges in the Sky*  
or from the sky their bodies are not actual their bodies  
are moves and moves are scheduled are mathematics  
they can't be as near as you can be a sphinx browsing  
on my skin the wind scouring raspberry canes vexing  
a wind lifts me someone is coming chemicals are true  
I think I have almost finished dying now. This  
is my final stratagem I breached the Great Wall  
I drank dry the inland sea suddenly I am certain  
I know everyone who ever lived I am explained.

4 July 2000

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Too many to think about.  
Be a peach and advertise  
Teach the masses to amass  
The downtrodden to tread up

It can't be done. Take off  
Your uniform, the war's over  
Try to mingle with your victims  
You still don't think you did anything wrong.

4 July 2000

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What am I thinking about now  
Is a question I want you to answer  
Since you're the only one who knows  
How to hear the inside of my head

Inside the body of the word.

4 July 2000

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Mediators wait for quarrels —

What do lovers need  
To send them to work?

Hard rocks of cold beaches  
Or anything at all.

4 July 2000

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Near enough to be a remembering place  
— crow step on mown now —  
because you held here  
in woolen coating fashions awry

an epitome of all your striving  
all your flower wars and she is here  
now, alkahest and mercury at once  
she dissolves you into her gold

this is the Lost Silver Process of the ancients  
— ship bounding on wave eagle in heaven —  
you have these things and gold  
came late but came true your weird wedding

when you come to write this down  
be sure to use an Arab pen  
infantry of those marching waves letters  
moving unfaltering to the left

the way the Sun does our Master from Iran.

5 July 2000



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Mostly for the slain  
we wield this book  
a Faerie Queene  
against the principles  
of unexamined life

everything's got to be a  
fucking battle  
or else you're dead  
a sparrow  
falls from the argument  
God is a hard-hearted man

The thing about alcohol is this  
everybody is drunk at the very same hour  
Li Po and last night the same  
a drunk has no history  
oracle of the empty

bottle the empty book  
the drunk mind has to fill  
we write so much to keep alive  
the memory of all who ever lived  
and some live still

each one was the mother of a word

a word we have to speak.

5 July 2000

## ORACION AL SANTA BARBARA

Saint Barbara with your cup and sword  
Barbara with your body on fire  
You are Shango, god of war.

You make the little babies roar  
Under the shelter of big trees,  
You teach us to hear their cries

As instantaneous poetry  
We can't help but say with our own lips.  
Teach us to use what is at hand

And have no patience with eternities.

5 July 2000

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There are places in places where we yearn  
and then the faltering cornet player snarls  
Will Weary's Tune (my ruine) and all  
the Cadillacs overheat on mountain roads  
but gleam just as pretty in the sun.

Maybe more so. We get what we pay for  
and what we want is Christine slipping  
from the throne and into a monastery  
— an inner life is realm enough and then some—  
or Jakob bothering that angel (sickness  
blesses us) dry sunlight on an old bridge  
over the Po plain. A silly name and the horn

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howls again, sometimes the breath  
runs out of music but the *will to sound's*  
important mouth wolfs up the world

5 July 2000

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Picture this, a lonesome gladness  
operating on a dime. I'll build you  
sphinxes all you want, a plenty  
of corn-stuffed kine, water even  
to shunt along your lap, water  
on its way to heaven. Be near my east  
and I'll take care, your hap of jungle  
spills my reed sea, be my pyramid  
and you my kiss me, miner.  
Break my seal is all I ask, soror,  
uxor, fund of the lake and yellow  
miracle bereft of sunset  
so now you know. You always know.

7 July 2000  
*[first poem composed on new Vaio]*

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Chine sorrow surer upon axon,  
a keen disaster, will you, and be home.  
Dvorak listened to our sorry prose  
and harped it — is that  
what you think made the cycle spin,  
European beauty music?

Be after! There is no polity  
that does not listen its way  
snug in our skin, *that's* the devious  
melody you can't get out of your  
and so forth, backbone of an ape  
and the jawbone of an angel

or does the animal do our high palavering,  
poesy and starnosed rhetoric  
burrowing through the stodge  
that passes for human thinking?

Then our company stands out from the dock  
and hoists a philosophic gonfalon  
spanked by a hard wet breeze  
and doesn't really care what meaning  
comes to operate its singular address.  
Luck is better any day than skill —  
That's true because it used to be in French.

7 July 2000

*a fragment from Berlioz's song for Margu rite:*

D'amour l'ardente flamme,

Love's fierce flaming

Devours my happy days

Consume mes beaux jours.

my peace of mind

is gone forever

Ah! la paix de mon  me

A donc fui pour toujours!

Son d part, son absence

he abandons me (it  
abandoned me),

I lost my soul in him, in his leaving,

Sont pour moi le cercueil,

his absence makes the prison cell I'm in

And so far from his presence

Et loin de sa pr sence,

everything does me wrong,

everything hurts me

Tout me para t en deuil.

Alors ma pauvre t te

my poor head's

Se d range bient t,

totally fucked up

Mon faible coeur s'arr te —

my weak heart stumbles —

7 July 2000

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1602/2000

Is it there now? Is it the Indian island  
at last again,

    Caliban with a clam,  
Gosnold gazing out on Buzzards Bay

wondering Which way?

    Still we wonder,  
    still cluelessly wonderful  
we are, we immigrants.

All the certainties  
    are numb with wonder,  
    are full of numbers,

and no one knows  
why such distances  
are given,

    glory, glory,  
    the heart has no longitude  
we go by periplus

always in sight of land, landfall, port of call,

and why did we come?

    We came from reality  
    to find reality, found a luscious desert  
    it will take a thousand years  
to make as ordinary as we are.  
Poor Albion is magic still.

8 July 2000

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Can we appease ever  
the multiplying principle  
lord of cannons count  
of commentaries?  
My only treatise will be  
*Against Survival.*

8 July 2000



FOOTNOTE TO *DEATH'S JEST BOOK*

*for Thomas Lovell Beddoes*

Imagine Death – you see a skeleton  
in moldy bedsheets swingeing  
a rusty scythe with sad bright edge —  
as ashen mage.

But try to imagine Life  
and no picture comes to mind,  
Life is invisible and all around at once,  
the imageless sum of all images.

Which proves that Death is just  
a character in life, like Lust  
or Santa Claus, just one more actor.

Not an opposite, not an answer  
and least of all a curtain falling.  
He bustles you brutally or tenderly  
out of the room. You change  
into another costume, you hang out  
in another room, smoking, reading,  
biding your time.

But poor Death  
never gets to leave the stage. Maybe  
after all he is the hero of our play.

8 July 2000

## PHOENIXES

Walk on the high desert  
two of us alone on the mesa  
staring out at the yellow emptiness  
that is so full, that lives so long  
there, always just out of reach

and nobody around but us  
or not even us, we're holding hands  
as if we were people, ordinary  
people, as if we had bodies

I think of you beside me  
I think: she is a bird  
of another kind, sometimes water  
sometimes fire, you think of me too  
but I'll never know how

what kind of tracks do I leave in your sky  
wake in your water

sometimes I think I am the ash  
left when you look at me  
the unreliable evidence

you leave a furrow in me  
at least I have the sense to follow  
how we lead to each other

I look out at the document spread  
in front of us: a desert  
sunset and colors, I think  
this is a snapshot of you.  
The world is what is standing beside us.  
The world is what holds us by the hand.

9 July 2000

## PHOENIXES, 2

And then the fire comes and we  
persist in flying  
trying deep into the core of it  
you because you're young I because I'm old  
you are refined like gold being feirced into purity  
I am renewed like old pennies  
fused again to living copper  
(it takes a lot of copper to approach  
even a little bit of gold)

and now in the core of the burning  
which is not different from sunset  
released from the sun, released from the earth,

a pure burning is set free, a bird of fire  
we are pleased to call it,  
this upward writhing in us, of us,  
not unlike lovers in their occasions

but this is fire  
and asks so much of us  
we hardly remember our names,

just trying to stay with its tune

and it leaves us in the sky  
and there's not much to say about the sky

we have to do it, make it,  
beat it with the whips of our wings

we have to churn the sky  
using the insolent milk of poetry

(fantasy) all  
we imagine to be true

to be true.

9 July 2000

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Tell the truth you  
Stretch out on the bed  
Because the sky  
Is too far away

You listen to the clock  
Because of all the works  
Of humankind it  
Alone can tell the truth.

10 July 2000

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Can you admit how every word you read  
Happens first inside you? You write it there  
Then pour the words that shape the thought  
Down onto the enchanted page. Everything  
Is mystery. A poet lies asleep in Mexique sun.

10 July 2000

POSTCARD OF A DAHLIA FROM VENEZIA

Being tired or attempting or  
Way's man sails the blue departure  
Canvasless in narrow water  
Such nutriment the flower has  
Be decorous and true, alarm me so  
With neophrastic gazetteers, my life  
For you, enchanted one, blue silver  
Murano pebbles in Rialto windows  
To woo deutschmarks from hot pockets.  
Going under that bridge is better than living.

10 July 2000