

10-2000

## octD2000

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HAWK

To kill from the air  
but it is not air

not Gabalis's sylphs, not UFOs  
but an angry gravity  
    that fights itself on wings  
then tears those small  
accomplices of gravity below,

walkers and creepers.  
As if murder were a kind of restitution.

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O failure of birds  
To lift the whole planet  
From the planet

20 October 2000

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Green answers you think?  
We have corn a-plenty  
What we need is decent wheat.

20 October 2000

## COMMON FRACTIONS

If I follow the lines of cleavage between us

(tragedy of any you and any me)

I see a several dark,

some chasm mathematick'd through our meat,

fess, crotch, maw —

curious vocabulary of our openings

which gods try to tell us are meant for joining

but only fill us with anxiety

like a man walking through a narrow valley

dreading downpour, flood,

slit canyons of the canyon lands

in summer rain. Everything kills us.

20 October 2000

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Outside the autumn window passes  
midsize truck full of potato chips  
several of them painted god-size on its side

chips as big as rubber tires, Achilles shield,  
my ego on an autumn morning.

All the salt has come off the weather,  
only the pale urinous yellow's left

afterglow of grease. The truck is gone  
but the image lingers, o cruel art

like the sad obsession men call 'music'

for which one part of me even now must be fitting  
blue notes and brass flugelhorns and Irish songs.

20 October 2000

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**SEEING IS DECEIVING**

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20 X 2000

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I want to know the *early bruises*  
I want to know the veins  
I want my fingers to be Saturday night  
    hearing the confessions of the whole city

but the bruises want to be your bruises  
the veins want to run from your fingers  
up the long muscles of your arm to the round  
    palaces of your body

the confessions want to be victory odes  
chanted into the sunstroke afternoon of virgins

the city wants to be a cat curled up in your lap.

21 October 2000

*sadhana*

the daily practice of the highest that you know

where *the highest you know*  
is the apex of a pyramid  
within whose ever-widening walls  
your whole life forms

and the higher the apex  
the more terrain of life and knowing, feeling and doing,  
gets included within the structure of the pyramid

which is to say, the structure of your life.

The daily practice of *the highest you know*  
constantly enlarges the scope of your life  
and your being in it.

The only *decent* form of unselfishness:

To practice being the god you are  
makes everybody else god too

21 October 2000



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To practice the serenity of poetry  
Serenity = composition

## **To write the poem**

however ardent tumultuous deranged the images the fable the propositions  
may be

**is composition in serenity**

21 October 2000

## Human sacrifice is still practiced in America

*Here we are in the room of the moon.*

The human sacrifice practiced by the Incas

involved a long journey on foot

their own children our own  
children sacrificed to the gods

not just the first born

all of them

all of them are offered to the gods los dioses

why do the gods want the deaths of men?

it involved a long journey on foot  
mile after mile, often in winter,  
often into the high mountains

freezing and scorching  
finally getting there

and at the end of the journey one reaches  
the Place where the Offering is Made

and all of us are offered there  
offered to the gods

and this place and what happens there is called Death  
and it is said also that Death is a person, a woman or man  
who comes out of your life at that moment and takes your life  
away from you and gives it to the gods

tears your life out of your body  
and gives it to the gods  
on a high cold sometimes invisible altar

I am telling you what I heard as I listened in the Room of the Moon:

Human sacrifice is still practiced in the world.  
Every one of us is a victim on his or her way to the altar

Way to the knife

Death (that seems so normal to us) is this strange barbaric sacrifice  
in an unknown religion to unknown gods

still practiced on us, by us,  
and we still don't know the high priests of that ritual.

21 October 2000

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It is a way of coughing  
such that a man  
no longer sober  
would support himself  
against a passing tree  
against the spasm  
trying so hard to talk  
something out of him  
he has spent the evening  
trying not to speak.

21 October 2000

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if the piano I hear somebody  
wrote the words for two hundred  
years ago purls in my ear now  
a brook of ivory water running

past what I take to be my hearing  
can I take my stand in music?  
Can I last while it disperses  
tone past tone into bruised silence?

22 October 2000  
(sonata #9)

## THE YOKE

There was a man who began to invent hour by hour the lineaments, shadows, details of another world. It began as a what-if kind of fantasy, but little by little he found himself spending more and more of his mental time in that imaginal reality. As he built that world, of course (this is a folk tale, so it has to endorse the family values) his purchase on this world we share with him began to slip. Or not so much slip as to seem first relative, then arbitrary, finally indifferent. Though he had never been interested in economics or politics, in that other world (that *World of Mine* he called it for a long time, before he discovered its proper name) he took great pains to be in constant surveillance of market trends, banking systems, the structures of power. Our man began to lose interest in this shared world of ours. Nothing bad happened to him — he could still drive a car, stop at red lights, cash his paycheck, get to work more or less on time. But the veil was trembling all the time, and the wind from elsewhere drove him. It drove him gently, always gently, deeper into reality, that reality, the interest rates, hydroelectric projects, space program, postage stamps, cathedrals of his world. He composed its dictionaries, outlined its history, saw from the hilltop of his mind the bloodiest of its ancient battles, the triumphs of its modern technology, its more than modern justice, social equity, compassion.

In our world, he had stopped going to work, stopped staying in his house. He began to move along the roads, walking, sleeping here and there, eating what he found. Such a life, though rough and occasionally subject to bewildering affronts from subjects who did not seem to recognize him, pleased him. He was the sort of king who was not haughty; he roamed like Aaron the Just through Baghdad incognito, seeing how the Law was maintained. He was the sort of king who held the Law above all other things, grew it in his heart, spread it out from his empty hands as he walked the roads of our silly, half-baked world. It was important for him to arrange for the continuation of his just rule, the installation of a dynasty founded on truth and justice. He had just welcomed his first-born son's maturity in that world, had just presided over the solemn conclave in which all the nobles, heiresses, witches and cardinals of his realm had participated, swearing oaths of fealty to his son and presumptive heir. So it was with satisfaction and contentment that, at the same hour, he accepted the solicitations of death in this world. He died in a gully beside the highway outside Albany pondering the rich fulfillment of his life's work.

Thinking of this man's instructive life and death, I realize that the dream I am currently sharing with you, and the terrain — language, book, chair, table, landscape, sacred incident light — we share that makes all our other sharings possible, is of course only one among many dreams. Our successes in this life are achieved at the expense of our selves in some other life. I urge you not to forget, not even for a day, these other selves of ours. In like manner I must keep in mind the one of me who even now, as I am looking with satisfaction at the shapely completion of this paragraph, is dying poor and shivering but content in a world not so far away, and in fact has just this instant died.

22 October 2000

## *rjes snang*

appearances in the post-meditative state

the face of now  
after we have been so intensely *here*

that here feels for a moment like there

but what are feelings?

They look like everything  
and sound like this.

22 October 2000



## **OBJECTS**

Things that still talk to us  
Even though we have nothing to say.

22 October 2000  
*An Essay on Imagism*

## STRIVER

Know the knowledge  
loose in the arm  
that lets him do

or from a touch determine  
the geography of need  
to rule where he can't suffer

blue trees at one's knees  
humiliated by prayer?  
Blue windows of the virgin

chapel apse wall  
resident in stone  
come home and let him be.

22 October 2000

## THE RING

And at least examine it  
the bezel round the ruby

meant to exclude the two lights:  
the common one that falls on us

and that rare restricted lucency  
lives inside some stones

last echo of earth's core fires  
still bright enough to break the heart.

(A bezel's like the band  
society winds around the mind.)

22 October 2000

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As if to come close  
against the departing  
animal — you know its name,  
it was in the red montanas of Turkey before you,  
you saw it wriggling its flanks way down there  
where the Nile tries to swallow the sea

and then you drew a picture of it, it and her,  
the woman with one arm red and one arm blue  
pouring milk and blood from two ewers into a basin  
and she was the basin herself — look up pelvis  
if you don't believe me, mixing bowl —

a body mingling all its rivers in one sea  
and giving the sea to you

because that's what a picture is,  
a promise that the world is really there  
even after you close your eyes and try to sleep

and it is not dream, not at all,  
that curious country I made the mistake  
of exiling myself from one day  
and they never let me back,

but the images are there, I whisper them  
while you try to sleep, you shout them and I wake.

22 October 2000

## THE TIGHT-ROPE WALKER

The sea lens all ready, freedom's desperado  
With more than a simple leap upon the rope  
Watches his footsteps' imminent collapse  
Down marbled surf with not much meaning.

Over triumphant granaries he spills  
Hieroglyphics of exultant wheat  
Spelt in winged grains of his fatal meat  
To coax the armoire of the sky to open

And let out bird or ordinary cat or flower  
In master mummery of some human season  
Born in the sexy squalor of that dream

Golden witches pray to their dull god.  
For dream is liturgy — and this the holy moon  
Ill-silenced by the dawn itself will prophesy.

23 October 2000

(a defilement of Mallarmé's great sonnet found on a poster advertising Ed Foster's lecture)

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Caterwaul for a change the pure

root whining of a poem's tower  
as the hard hawks hit the air —

what plummets if not docility  
the virgin daughter of our aged fear —

be blank, my darling, and let me write  
my nature in your vastness, then you

will be both of us and thrive, outside  
the jade-green company of hydrogen

---

*the drops mingle in the resin*

and who can answer them  
when they fall so close to time  
itself twisting the thick juices

jar closed round something alive  
as if someone wanted to keep  
the thought of someone else

accurate and ethical, safe  
even from the dust that knows  
all things and comes to touch

the least of us, because dust  
is oil of time, is the lubricant  
of our going down. Not just a thought

but she (like a bird waking  
in the morning and lifting  
its eye already wary

of the lovely light) might  
at that moment smile —  
a smile is friction and that

too one would hold in  
that tawdry, wanty forever  
mind of ours, old amber.

24 October 2000