

11-2000

**novA2000**

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I come from another planet  
The one called Childhood  
In the Silence galaxy.

Many moons circle round my home  
Some green some blue but most  
Are white like earth's lonely lady

And in their light we have no need for words  
Because each kind of light reveals  
A separate phase of us, so all of them

Show all we are. No need to talk.  
No need to answer the terrible *waiting*  
Looks on people's faces here

That makes you babble, scribble,  
Carve some answer on the hardest rock  
To swear your presence in an absence world.

So language is hard for me  
Forgive my formalities of speech  
None of this is natural, language

Is the human mind's unique disease.  
Or maybe it healed in you when I was young  
And you're immune. But all this

Seems like agony to me  
Even if there's a kind of glory to it  
a long smouldering sunset with no night

leaving me homesick for silence still.

1 November 2000

## AND IF THE PLANETS TOO HAD HERALDRY

Find in the simple mark  
an old tree sunk and resurrected  
amber a waxy piece of time

from the shtetl under the sea  
where lovers hide in stables  
and sunlight is a kind of gasoline

soaks through the old wood  
we breathe and go. The smell of it,  
all the underneath, the gaunt  
coral, the opulent anemones,

a thought is like a place to which we come again.

2.

I feel you near me, waiting for me as if in bed,  
to join you the way leaves shake hands with shadows  
and no dogs bark.

It has to be said but am I the man  
to say it? I am created by your listening to me.

3.

You're asleep now, I feel it, so many rooms  
between us, from exile to exile.  
Why do I have to be a foreigner,  
why am I never home?

4.

What I wanted to say

was whatever wanted to be said  
right now,

no matter that I kept you waiting,  
it has happened before,  
as everything has.

The Taj Mahal gleamed in moonlight  
even before there was a moon.

then we guessed again  
and the sun rose.

5.  
I want to fold my arms around you  
eternal conversation

most of the words are yours  
and all the meanings

only the arms are mine.

6.  
Every night we are given three questions  
and wake with them, to work with all day long  
  
to share with you, you share with me.  
And these questions are the only things that are really ours  
  
in all the world, these things we ask.  
And even they have spilled into us from sleep.

I belong to you because you ask me and I answer,  
I will always answer

But not even an answer silences such a question.

1 November 2000

# QUESTIONS

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To know by color  
what things are

there is a medium  
no one knows

I love the particular  
“...to look at earthworms”

a diagram  
of where there is to go and how to get there

and how many chromosomes do we share with that  
single-minded tunneling

the lover on his dirty way to love  
swallowing every obstacle every humiliation

The Importunity  
call it

to have asked the world  
for the world.

2 November 2000

*... yellow lights of absent arms veiled in thorns of shingle ...*

while from the sea had just come onto  
these acuminate pebbles the shadow which was all he could bring in his fingers  
from down there

where sound carries so well but the voice is lost

in the sea the sun is rain    the sun is raining

parallel lines of light that stab the last privacy of water

2 November 2000



## OLD MAN COMES HOME YOUNG

tell me where I went wrong  
the animal I rode  
down the wrong street  
into the secret palace  
everybody else thought was just a house

whereas this house (any house)  
is endless, its rooms (all rooms)  
stretch to the end of the world

or would if the world had an end  
(if we knew where the world was)  
and there I was going from room to room and never came to a wall

everything was doors

and such is the insanity of poetry  
that all these doors open into your room  
and you are different in all of them  
but in each one you are you

we only invented three things: doors and mirrors and wheels.

3 November 2000

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Arrogant energies of the never young  
beating on the bronze of the art doors  
the brass of the god doors the gold  
of the dream floors the silver satin *fesses*  
of the rapturous priestesses of *gai savoir*

—this is what burns up to write a poem  
to break the sky with lanceheads of pure word  
and still keep body steeped in flesh  
the sweet entitlements of witchcraft,  
the sciences of now if ever, of now forever

young poets are the oldest scientists of all.

4 November 2000

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Not be death the actual

muse of poetry

four days I have been singing  
the prose  
    of how it is to be

me or thee

o I feel drunk on the sugar of saying

everything and everything  
words thick in my mouth  
peanut butter liverwurst

to want to tell you

but do I want to  
do I dare examine  
the basement room where these wants of mine,

these wants I think are mine

that make me who I think I am

I am my desires

down there where the wants are  
o moth and silverfish and rat

*the wind lives in the cellar*

there are low pine forests of pure dust down here  
pure sunbeams through the smeary little windows  
haven't been opened in years  
leaf fall and all junk of weather

but the sun comes in  
and dust dances in sunrays

sun words,  
wind in the cellar,

and it is so dry here, borax,  
Utah,  
plaster and wood dry,

and I hear them walking upstairs  
all the people I've never known  
people I want  
want to walk with want to do everything with

is that you  
I hear

up there, you who makes the floorboards shiver  
faintly, far away rumor of your coming,

I've got to find it down there  
and bring it up the rickety stairs  
don't bother with the light  
my legs will find the way

and now I hear the music someone's playing in the living room  
is it you, a cello sonata, heavy with piano,  
I dance to it, awkward, mostly back and shoulders,  
mostly hips, mostly elbows now,  
boogie up the stairs to Beethoven,  
kick the door open at the top,

my arms full of nothing  
but I know what I want now,  
it's what I always wanted,  
now I know who I always was,

want to tell you the smallest detail of every minute  
and make that be the proof I love you  
and that love avails, love makes it happen,

really, love, love does, not all the rest  
of the terrible real estate section and business pages

just this, the thing we reach down and get  
and bring up from where it hides in us,  
always the same things, hallelujah,

hallelujah, I have brought you everything amen.

5 November 2000

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*to a young poet*

you're mad enough to be Sylvia Plath  
and your anger might get you all the way  
especially the way you suppress it  
and stuff it down, there,  
where the devils who are muses can use it

and you may get to be famous and fierce  
but you'd have to die as she did  
to be really famous, is it worth it,  
all that anger, all that fury, all that fame  
but no more pussy willows in the spring?

6 November 2000

## SMALL OF THE BACK

It is hard to think of it even  
la chute des reins not where the queens  
young and fair fade from the  
but the slope of simplicity  
by which the body comes to its widest  
place, knowledge of the root

where we are most at home.  
The bed in the body's there  
and the necessary door.  
When the philosophers speak of Space  
they mean here — here is Room.

The small is to the large  
as the catastrophe is to paradise —  
a beginning, a foreplay,  
an unsingably simple song.

6 November 2000

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I am not allowed to mention your body  
Since I belong to the wrong party on the planet  
And too much sun comes through the organdy  
You can see Christians and cars moving out in the street  
And the wind makes the shadows of leaves move  
Silently on these pale curtains. I am not allowed  
To talk of your body, the way you break the light  
And silence it into discrete particulars  
Subordinate to a unifying *rhythmos* — pattern or  
Shape. If I were allowed to do so I would name  
Every part of you and call that my Britannica  
And study in it till the light got tired of the sky  
And the sky got tired of the stars and I could sleep.

6 November 2000



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And what if the old pen  
should write again?  
Paragon of spokesmen, herald,  
the green leaves making their own case,  
miracle, a tree of words.

I am translating this  
from the Arab that lives in my head  
and writing down his chant  
with an old Japanese fountain pen  
that has no ink,

and I have nothing to say, and my hands  
are empty, and I looked at you  
and I subsided quietly into the intensity of your beauty

but that was all knowing,  
all wanting,

and the pen still  
has no ink,  
and the words are still green —

l      leaf through the dictionary  
         and find who I am.

7 November 2000

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(Song)

no ink in the pen but  
lots of ink in the world  
we meet in a long  
difficult word we  
pronounce it together  
darkness and storm  
I never had a grandmother  
but still know how to lie

7 November 2000

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It has to be my understanding  
that I don't know I don't know  
I can't conceive why people do  
think the way they do, the killing  
for instance, the endless delight  
in taking life. maybe it's the only  
sign they have of being alive,  
to kill the other. To grieve  
over an empty hole in the ground.

Election Night 2000

ROSE PETAL JAM FROM BROOKLYN

*for Kim and Mitch*

Angleworms of summer surely remember  
Reading Cardinal Newman in previous lifetimes  
Before some catastrophe of moral deviance  
Turned their minds (we all have minds)  
To more organic avenues, sparse wine,  
Hard-fought erections, bleak Gowanuses of lust.

Because an animal has no need for politics,  
Not even asses or elephants, let alone the blue  
Armenian chimera Mr Nader rides stonewitted  
Into the meaningless fray. I eat your sugar, dears,  
And think about Islam, submission itself  
To all that is beautiful — we don't need laws,  
We have eyes. We don't need music, we have ears.

Poetry used to be about all sorts of stuff  
When it should be just about twilight and how  
Did I get here and won't you be here with me too?  
There was a philosophy behind the education  
We received, just as every bank robber must  
Have had a mother. Not to mention banks.

7 November 2000

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armed against silver truncheoned with spite  
the awful poets who run the banks  
spin out their rhymes *you have heard this*  
*before — the world is safe — nothing new*

*to scare you* they spread some new words out  
disguised as euros, take these home  
and spend them, this is called *reading the world*  
*by money*, you'll like it, poetry is awful

if you can't buy anything with it,  
go to Garmisch, Vegas, the Algarve  
and squirm on the black sand  
like starfish with trust funds —

that is true poetry. Listen to the whisper  
of the violin, it is the clam  
come for you again, to close  
the smooth doors of your attention

against the trivializing light of day.

8 November 2000

## OF COURSE

Wings of a book  
Vain against waves  
Wavering down in  
Carrying man doom

To drown some father  
And the son does not  
Dare answer the phone  
Only foam hears him

And the flying woman  
Who is pure relation  
Rides no vehicle  
But the sight of the sea

There, under me,  
Wet with appetite  
Reaching up to know  
Shadowflesh her sun

Beyond the sun.

8 November 2000

**[Two from October, at the Sheep Fair]**

Take a look at  
Inside the feel of  
Wool. Live  
On the back of  
Someone you touch.

.....

So many guesses  
Medusa  
Has just hairs  
In her eyes

I am trying  
To hold last night  
Against my skin  
Not even my own

Transcribed 8 November 2000