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## marC1995

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Two mourning doves waddle determinedly down  
to seed newly spilled from their feeder by purple  
finches and a red polled —hence macho— hairy  
woodpecker. All over Poland snow is not falling.  
We have come back to our language — *zhena* —  
which changes like our wife's expression  
in all the radiant differings of what she means  
now. Language is now. Is seed. Is seen to be spoken.  
A squirrel has joined them, color of whereon he feeds.

18 March 1995

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No exceptions will be made. They all are there already,  
built into the breakable of things. Last night, this  
eleven a.m. hard sunlight gentle. Snowdrops  
have come up. The coordinates. The report is endless.  
And music: last night one brought home  
a hired companion and after making love  
one heard that lover mouthing childhood prayers—  
o how sincere this meretricious is! The voice  
(Dawn Upshaw, Gorecki's 3rd, the radio, a little  
static to remind me of myself in all this  
listening to itself) reaches out to God  
but a God no further away than our little sleep.

18 March 1995

## AT THE END, THE CITY

I am now where it has all been from.  
Undaunted, the paladins come over the Gora,  
shuffling down masterless and with swords  
deep and silent in the sunless valleys

until they have filled the city with their prowess  
and football players drift uneasy  
from the muddy maidan in middle park.  
No point in confronting them,

they win by silence. Our eagerness to explain  
strangles us. We even try to justify  
why we laid our houses out on streets —  
why not cabins hidden under trees,

a whole city made of forest and ourselves  
silent as foxes? Silent as they are,  
these powerful ones from the other side.  
And each them pretends to be alone,

knows nothing of the other. Each of them  
is “I,” and we’re all deep entangled in our “We.”  
Everything we’ve ever done needs explaining.  
They’re not interested at all, I think,

but they listen. Christ, how they listen!  
As if we were birds or the wind in trees,  
they smile at us and nod their heads  
and keep on walking through our streets,

waiting patiently for us to be gone.

19 March 1995

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We have kept so many measures near us,  
To be sure we know our own when it comes close—  
Hand, anklebone, sleek turn of throat, a dream.

19 March 1995

P A R T Y

Someone you thought was nobody  
turns out to be somebody.  
But who are you?

19 March 1995

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It is a smallness in me to forget your birthday,  
though I mentioned it out loud a few times  
at the back of my mind — alas, we never entirely  
forget — I had nothing to say about you the world  
could overhear, the world, your amateur, lover  
that I am I have forgotten all your joining arts, the deft  
mortise and tenon work that held a spiritual meaning  
(I'm being honest) firm in a physical world. No wonder  
you're like a tune on the outskirts of the mind  
breezing by on its way to the sea, I set a place for you.  
Yesterday I found some china in the storeroom, cups and saucers  
green as Germinial, leaf green, the wizard's chemicals  
at work to make us think the world still worships us.  
When it's you all the time, you I let slip my mind,  
once loved is never loved, it must all come back again,  
suffer freshets of jealousy, walk among thorns,  
flee into Egypt, even die before the opera is done.  
In quietness and beauty and delight you spent your life  
perfecting the instruments of martyrdom. On such art  
lifted up the Savior dies, and love makes it seem  
(or is it springtime?) suddenly right and accurate and just.

20 March 1995

## GERMINAL

As elegant as energy — be me a steersman,  
Lovewise — slip me through the stream of them,  
Place-seekers, fondling the morning, options  
Tingling in their reach — and I am fill of  
Suffered wisehead, offered sacrifices, burnt  
Wood smell as I step out, I am blink  
The cameraman and bleak the bailer  
And blue the bleeder and bim the snailer.  
All false professions delight me with their Other!

21 March 1995



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There is time now.  
(Is there time then?)  
In Greek-pale summer clothes,  
in espadrilles they walk  
along a sing-song ocean.

She stands on her right foot and raises her left straight out.  
He stands on his left foot and raises his right straight out.  
Their bare feet touch, sole to sole they stand  
trying to be firm, it is, it is a relationship, they totter  
the way people do together, are they afraid to commit?  
Her left foot and his right foot sole to sole  
try to walk up each other, excelsior,  
lead us on, but they only keep tottering.  
After a while he feels only the warmth of her foot and thinks:  
This is her, her foot is actual, we are here  
or here we are, there is time now  
for this and for that. She feels the same.  
An angel hovers over them in blue, weeping—  
*To come together (says the angel) you have to come apart.*  
*Foot let foot go, walk alone alone,*  
*then take each of you*  
*one step towards the other and you'll be together.*

In time to come we'll see if so they do.

22 March 1995

## WHERE WE ARE NOW

To impose an story on the stars the way some Greeks  
found a bear or a huntsman, to build a house on the hill  
and fall in love with a neighbor woman, to find a dollar  
lying in the street, hear God talking in your pillow,

these are the forgeries of the senses, the stricken veldt  
gasping with drought and a million hoofed animals  
streaking across it from morning to night, the endless  
plain inside. In pain we have come to the dark land.

22 March 1995

## MARCH DAY

All the things we guessed  
stand dove-puffy strutting  
stumbling on the lawn  
and the lawn is hardly  
there yet, a ruddy drench  
with scrim of green,

Lent now  
and the thoughts  
are dead thoughts, gravel  
calling, tharrap on coffin  
lid the clods and little  
clutter falling,

only blackbirds understand.  
I smell the rose of a  
waning moon, the iris  
of a broken cloud  
and even I am somewhere  
in all this, sorting

the seeds, stones, seems,  
seams, sads, scars, still  
stale stultifying senses  
that tell me again and  
again I want I need I feel  
when there is no feeling

only the accurate dispersion  
of impressions  
on whatever it is I am you are  
that bears such notice.  
Whoever we are you are  
I am written.

23 March 1995

## PURITY

When you find the opening in the mountain  
The tiny crack turns out to be a road.  
You are water. Rain left you here. Or from a secret  
Spring you found yourself suddenly in light.

These are measures. They intrude  
On ordinariness and say: Not accurate  
Enough, your morning and your vespers,  
You need sleeker numbers, you need birds.

The measures have at us. Until we score  
Notches on the willow twig and grow to match,  
Until we know our size. Then a smile  
Happens to water. Then the mountainside

A mother flank. Then a tank of pilgrims  
Bathing noisily. Then a sky. If you have listened  
To the rain, it will work out. It will  
Though it may take a long time. Things do.

23 March 1995

JULY 1954

A mouth on the window.  
All senses  
pry. Gastanks  
seen far out at sea,

signifying urban needs.  
*Mehr Licht*, the dying  
man demanded or proclaimed,  
what can we tell

except along the taffrail  
clustered we stand  
gazing at the land  
we come home to.

There is a pair of sensuous  
pale lips open gently  
but irresistibly  
in the sky itself.

There is no way  
not to listen. Not to kiss.  
Kissed, told, claimed,  
tamed, we do

and we are told.

24 March 1995

## BLUE LEGACY

So high this sky of asking  
all I want to tell is what you'll always have,  
the moon the tree the afternoon

and this Gypsy standing by a sycamore  
looking funny,  
the water running,  
this gold fleck on my hand from where the curtains fail

and I will give you the high priest  
and the little mouse that eats the offerings  
and the concert where they sing in silver shirts  
but I won't give you the sea or the gull

because the Gypsy is laughing at me  
I won't give you the little stream,  
streams can dry up, Gypsies finally  
go to a secret place inside the woods  
put on their silver shirts and die

but all I want to tell you is what you'll always have,  
the moon whoever walks on it, the tree  
and here are crows to wake you in it  
and the afternoon when all this will be quiet

and you'll look at the sunlight on your hands  
and be happy with all I've given you  
and for a moment you will know  
exactly who you love  
and then you'll smile and forget  
what even the little stream remembers.

25 March 1995

## ACROSS THE STREAM

When there's a car in the woods  
what can I do? Imagine the midnight  
drunkard driving too far.

The car is peaceful in the soft  
woodchuck brown of no green yet,  
the woods, what color are things  
before the leaves' manifesto?

A metal grey thing in the woods,  
on a hillside, peace, peace,  
egg on an Easter lawn. Never find.

25 March 1995

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Children come from their piano lessons  
and the sky is still blue. No number  
of wrong notes untunes the day  
despite what old Chinese used to say.

Or if there is a tune that untunes  
the rest, this little boy and girl  
don't know it yet. Toccata.  
It will come later, when every  
touch betrays us, and we hear.

25 March 1995



## A CATALOGUE OF PROPS

We build things, carpenters, to  
take their pictures  
("shoot them"), then take them  
apart, burn them,  
disperse. Thirty-six winds  
and seven seas and where is it now?

We should keep, programmers,  
a catalogue of every artful thing  
for actors to dissemble living in  
and cameras to behold, mumbling  
sensuous Magyar technicolor  
over the common properties of things.

We need a catalogue, lovers, of every  
thing that's ever been, Notre Dame  
and Winter Palace, sultan's harem and the car  
Hippolytus drove into the sea,  
Aston-Martin was it, burbling about  
Johann Sebastian Bach (rhyming it with 'dock')

while Phædra grieved along the hard corniches.

25 March 1995

## BOY WITH NOTHING TO DECLARE

Silence comes by inclination wild

to put something inside  
something else — call that Something said  
and not be shy any more in front of the house  
when the people step by “passing  
the time of day” they hope with me

and I am mute as a cormorant  
with the low wind, at night, at sea,  
my brain full of salt

and what do they want of me?  
Can't they see I am young and quiet  
and sitting on an adirondack chair  
with a glass on the arm and a book on my knee?  
Can't they see the chair?

I am seventeen and don't want to talk  
not to anyone until it is her  
until it is she and I keep finding her name  
in all the Greek grammars and the old poems  
I get no closer to her than slippery declensions.

Or look at the weave of my shirt, my chesty hairs,  
my map of Greece, my enthusiasm  
for unread poets, for dying outside of battle,  
for windows, hedges, closets, watercourses,  
salt marshes, debates carried on in foreign languages,  
doesn't matter who wins, they're all wrong,  
only language is right, and it's too holy to use  
for anything but talking to her and she's not here,  
here in all the bread and water of daily life,

I said a chair and I mean a chair.  
Uncounted, cars and city buses pass.

Two esses. Perhaps some friendly old Italian  
in a two-tone sportscoat, with a black cigar  
is still waiting for my answer

what did you ask, what did you say,  
why did you speak, have you news  
of her, where she is now, when  
she will be coming?

Are you Dante, standing with one foot in the Adriatic  
absent-minded, trying to remember  
something he wanted to say?  
Maybe he can find a flower  
that will say it for him, and maybe not.  
It's the kind of evening when the sea  
actually a mile away smells very close.  
The kind of evening she might decide to pass,  
but I keep wanting to go  
go down there and walk through the empty  
marshes and look for her all over the sky.

25 March 1995