

7-1995

## JulB1995

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And I can't begin, can't do  
anything with the ladders, o grace  
at last it's raining, and

where do ladders go? Glass.  
What does glass see?  
Someone I don't want to be.

And the leaves along the way.  
Thorns of the catechism tree  
— I am berry, you baptize me —

and the rain-song fills me with despair.  
A hammer, what is a hammer?  
Or a hook? In the hamlet

a bachelor grieves for all his wives  
— the crucifix is humming on the wall —  
and my night is on me.

11 July 1995

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Suddenly I don't have two months left. Have less.  
Deux mois. Two me's waiting for one train.  
The train's time, her seats are free,  
the destination writ in smoke above the engine  
soon disperses in the summer haze. But we read fast,  
  
we knew the answer. Suddenly the summer is utterly come.

12 July 1995

## TRUTH

truth is nowhere a man in a boat could get to it,  
mud flats of Malden —it doesn't have to rain —  
this instrument so oft displayed the Wind  
inside the shutters the breath of mind —

and we have waited for her courses  
like a sword for morning. Over the fire we offered  
and not to tell. A virtue like water.  
Something wrong with this cactus, is it syntax?

Do we need for segue for our ease,  
or is one thing (as I assert) the same as another  
and our thought is gapped succession only,  
and logic just superstition, an insidious

music that tries to cover up the interlude.

12 July 1995

PAS DE FEUX

So here I have hidden myself  
inside a bad body, in a bad name,  
and it's taken me half a century to find me.

13 July 1995

*for Electra*

To get married is to take a horn  
and blow it. The whole  
neighborhood hears.  
The woman drawing water from the well  
is startled by the huge sound  
and spills it all into her apron.

To get married to to string a bow  
and draw it, arrowless and free  
and let it snap, to hear the twang  
of it louder than sunshine.  
The steeplejack hears the sound and falls,  
is saved by his rope, swings back and forth  
in front of the bell tower  
like the hands of a clock gone mad.

To get married is to find a meadow and mow it.  
Rabbits and hedgehogs run away, partridges  
rumble up into the relativity. Snakes  
hide in the furrows below the blade.  
Around and around the mower trudges,  
drunker at every pass, belting red whiskey  
from a canteen slung from his waist  
till it's empty and he passes out along the smooth grass  
and dreams about a blue ship with green sails  
sailing away on a bright ocean, he's on it,  
you're on it, everybody's in white, he's far  
from anything he ever knew, a coast  
like Africa's in front of him, hurry,

run away with your love before he wakes up.

13 July 1995

## A WOMAN WE ALL KNOW THOUGH NOT WELL

If she could pick her own pocket what would she find?  
Not the twine and rubber bands and knife in mine.

She'd find some darkness and loop it round her neck.  
She'd find a snapshot of herself she's never seen

then study it and study it. She'd find a little bell,  
the kind a cat would wear but she's no animal.

We hear it ringing feebly in her hand.

But all the while she's groping and we're watching,  
someone is thinking — a thought

begins in her hand and travels shape-shifting  
up the somber canals of her forearm

to the metropolis above where switches  
crackle, flags flap in a strong sea breeze

and she suddenly knows: There is nothing  
where I thought was something.

I study just pictures and they fall from me.

14 July 1995

## THE FACES

Lined up at the check-out for our inspection  
like all the other commodities: faces, all the faces  
of who we think we are or choose to be.  
Purchase is our act of faith. No one knows  
the secret identity of the other, even the other  
who stands beside me checking magazines.  
I am Claudia. You are Sylvester. We are Kennedy.

14 July 1995



## THE SECOND OPINION

Since your call I have been working with you  
on the obsidian half of my head. Dark, hard,  
sharp fracturing, almost opaque. But not.  
Your case is interesting in a tribal sense,  
how much God can you lose and still live?  
A fleck of me is under your right thigh  
where even at this distance you can feel me  
thinking, not near anywhere in particular,  
just hot thinking. Feel me with your finger:  
your body is the same as mine. We are identical  
and from the same afar. The operation  
depends on grace, intelligence, flow of traffic,  
a bird perched on my attention now pecks  
at your simple skin. Live by thinking alone.

15 July 1995

## *Περσεφωνη*

It happens to every woman  
she finds herself enthroned beside some man  
even the unlikeliest

They are examining flowers, roots, grains,  
fruits. They evaluate. They look  
into the remotenesses

where things repeat themselves into a world  
thereby made. They sit  
in anxious peace almost believing.

15 July 1995

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I felt at once the actual lunar passion  
beneath our common greeting—  
as underneath the daylight busybody earth  
a blue pearl moon is working.

Suddenly our eyes were singular.  
It was the moment books prepare  
when the glance of power knew us,  
scream of a hawk from the tip of a tower.

15 July 1995

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Mind now is a vagrant suitor  
and a saint. In the twin  
lands of exile (America, Australia)  
mind comes to its own

unlulled by civil polity and island grace.  
In Barbaria it is known  
because alone. Unconflated  
with its products or its history,

just mind, bleaked out, unfated, free.

16 July 1995

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A digression on passion. A moon  
in the house. A glass.  
No need no more.

Highway  
in moonlight. Nobody coming.  
Far dog barks off. Summer.  
No more to know.

Alone  
with the unknowable.  
Outside inside so little difference—  
less than between a voice and silence.

Imagine a road that tells the truth!

16 July 1995

## PROSODY

Count all my syllables.  
Turn them into money.  
I am a Mediterranean  
man set to dance  
between a horn and a hoof,  
given time to eat  
and shadows to drink.

16 July 1995

## THE QUERN

Examine the quern as guide—  
the way a god decides  
to offer his best wishes to a fugitive  
as a pretty emblem of  
the necessary Dying that comes after,  
grief after grief.

Examine the grain  
ground in it by women working,  
always women, men are too grand  
and frightened to behold  
the consequence of human labor,

the lay of our land or karma,  
so men watch a woman work.  
How happy they are, examining the soft  
jiggle of her breasts and hips.  
How soon they die. And it is all  
happening in the quern.

Grind,  
grind the past into the perishable present,  
the hands' palms squeeze engulfs the stone,  
pestle, pizzle, we are all  
born from this grinding, born, born black  
and blue from churning.

Silhouette  
of a madwoman over the bobbing  
ice cubes in a glas of water is it,  
weak tea, dilute Glenlivet, brine  
from an old Martian ocean trapped  
in the Hypothalamic 3-D Xerox  
and poured out here. Madonna  
of nonchalance, flesh of our maybe.

Woodstock, 17 July 1995

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Any given word is just a Wonder  
offered, oral, a Grail Dinner  
spread out on your brass plate.

Wink my eye, crack my knuckles,  
I patrol your street.

O superquestion for whom all our answers, all  
our individual answers are neither  
adequate nor interesting,

all right, be irrelevant.  
I know where you live  
or the little path that sneaks  
behind where the hill-ponies are kept

into the old lower town  
and the dogs are barking everywhere  
but all their impulsive effrontery

won't keep me from going down.

Woodstock, 17 July 1995



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On the utility of pretense, a power pole  
bringing unknown energy  
into your house. Subdue your fever,  
we are near the barrier.

Women work as linemen now,  
and I delight to think of one  
perched on her pole, earphones on,  
listening to my phone conversation,

she hears everything I say! It is art,  
I communicate without the least effort  
and express myself fully  
without any sense of a self,

she sits in the sky and hears everything I say,  
unknown audience, the muse who is sheer  
listening, she lives where the rain comes from,  
we forget ourselves and both are free.

18 July 1995

## MORMELING

Mormeling, like a Baltic marmot  
burrowing in sea foam — the evanescent  
is eternity enough for me, o ting  
ting of little bells, o shadows of lovers

brief on hair-swept sand. Walt wet  
into free futures this now unpacks  
you think. Mormeling: the sound a soul  
makes in chest, throat, nose, before

anything is spoken or barked. A hum  
before habit, just being alive.  
Maybe a kind of warning that I'm me.  
Maybe a reindeer stumbles in with ice in his horns.

18 July 1995

## THE SPIN

The dark things  
turn bright enough  
to see the wind  
coming.

Maybe fear  
is an adequate  
encyclopaedia  
and there are children

listening.

They pay  
attention to everything,  
we sell them the world  
they have to inhabit.

Center of a ring of oaks  
heartwood of one  
—oldest— of them  
sympathy is nucleus

there is a hope I mean  
in weather that we don't  
allow in any other  
simplicity.

The naivety  
of heat! The brash  
callowness of cold, the sex  
of rain. Even so,

even though we know  
nothing, have only  
opinions, we use them  
for what they're worth

and the thing

tries to answer me  
like a woodchuck sleeping.  
Your character

is my fate.  
That is the difference  
after two  
thousand years

the grief called romance  
in the dark called time.  
A child carries  
a pinwheel

through the zoo,  
the child runs,  
the running makes  
the pinwheel spin.

We are the only  
wind there is.

18 July 1995

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Taste the touch of an eye looking  
and you'll hear what I mean.  
All senses fuse. We are poured  
together in the year of the world,  
this mute goddess holds one firm.

Sin street, a flute of information,  
sin flute, the spell you spill me,  
shadows sink into grass like rain and are swallowed.

19 July 1995

*Kelly*

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Can't quite get the shape of your shell —  
is it is? In it thin? Does it turn  
down into the dark or screw pink  
nacre up into eyezone? Nautiloid?  
Ammonitish? Are you a kind  
of fluent rock, a hidey-hole that swims,  
are you Twins? An inward and an out,  
forked path and corkscrew turn?  
Here I am, wearing strange shoes  
from some Asian country where colors  
have a different meaning, cowrie and aren't,  
aren't all pink and brown like us,  
there is a measure to their foolishness  
called song. The million verses  
of the Manas epic among the Kyrgyz people  
(that would be forty volumes of our kind,  
each 500 pages long) come to console me  
for my spendthrift verse. His name  
means *Mind* in our languages, who knows  
what a man means in his own house  
though, a hero, a heap of stones. Cairn,  
are you a shell of air? Cloud, clam,  
claim, clone, clear — the socket of reality  
fits many a prong. We came, and come again  
—that is our certainty. But the shell  
will never tell. It is a ribbon tightmost curled,  
a Christmas tree from Mars, a worm in marble,  
a smoke-signal frozen to the sky sent up  
from some banshee tribe a little civiller  
than my own, a curl of eyebrow  
on an absent face, a grace. As any object is,  
allow me to caress your particulars,  
the mystery so long asleep beneath your sheets.

20 July 1995

