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TO THE VIRGIN POWER

You, Artemis, your leaves  
will soon be blazing,

dry summers fashion early colors,  
scarlet coming,

whenever a tree turns red  
it praises

you, Artemis, god of chase  
for whom the still things

bleed as best they can  
in homage, blood

of leaf and blood of beast,  
and those you strike you teach

to live again, the slain deer  
will stagger to its feet

again and next year too  
will green

this fiery euonymus.

19 August 1995

## THE OPPORTUNITY

*Asperges me* the flutter of some branches  
hold water long enough to sprinkle,  
love you, a lord loving a lady isn't in it

when it comes to loving as I love you,  
a tent by the berm of the highway,  
who would camp so close to leaving?

Always leaving. Dredging the river,  
merging current of old blue people,  
their names are on me, you find me out,

scatter of dew sprinkle, the morning  
gives us all new names. Recur  
in power. A tree is an absolute,

the clouds are admirable, inedible, far.  
To learn the bluest recension of the day,  
the old manuscript scraped clean,

o lord of white paper give me white paper,  
o lady of black ink  
instruct me with the sinews of your line.

And the ones who give the great instruction  
—no staff, no belongings — beg your way along —  
know that they will not long be honored

but need to be heard again in every generation.  
It is sad for those who say “There are exceptions,  
there must be exceptions,” and sadder “I am one.”

But the great instructions will still be given  
in some lifetime again if not in this,

if you don't mind wading through all that future pain

to hear again what speaks so clearly now,  
it's up to me. No shoes, no big ideas,  
and feed the ducks that waddle at my feet.

22 August 1995

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Spillway, albatross,  
I chose my girlfriends  
from the lexicon,  
riveting, ever changing.  
The fickleness  
of syntax, the hot  
availability of  
saying anything at all.

22 August 1995

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When the Dutch say  
een vreemde eend in de bijt  
they mean a stranger's here,  
'a strange duck in the waterhole.'

That's what the dictionary says,  
and it's a pretty odd  
animal itself, full of words  
I never listen to,

but somehow always there.  
And what does that make me?  
I think of the frozen fields of  
Overijssel, the ducks stepping,

the children skating,  
Charlotte and I on our way,  
what difference which way,  
we have seen the clean

grey sky the endless earth.

22 August 1995  
[27 August 1995]

IN SUMMERREST

*as for Webern*

Patchwork mind  
a cure-lick lozenge,

mid feathers' furor  
an old queen's young

chamberlady pouts.  
Will darkest never

come. Willed stars  
slow shine. Alors,

the galaxy's mine  
to give her hair

lust-glistening show  
words with us

to attend. Wings  
beat in cool wind,

mind hovers over's pool.

22 August 1995

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Who knows what might be waiting  
inside a piece of bread?

The sun  
by inference is always shining  
beyond our preoccupations.

Strangest bird cry at midnight,  
a girl in trouble? A home  
a horror. But still a bird, we knew  
it was a bird, nearby, but the cry  
brought other things to mind  
and our blood reacted to that  
interpretation. All we are  
is listening. And the bird kept crying.

23 August 1995

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Try to be brilliant today.  
In the shade of a rhododendron  
Method: remember the gleam of one  
particular gem. Bien, your mother's  
far-glinting blue diamond engagement ring.  
Hold that color in its quickness  
firm in mind. Now shift  
the color, only the color, *to your hand*.  
Hold it, still gleaming, now give it.  
Give it to someone near or far.  
Where is the light now? Where is the stone?

23 August 1995

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In dark green bush shadows two white large  
ducks doze. Wheat has been given, has been eaten.  
Now and then trucks pass, noisily. My business  
is to take note of this and nothing else. I call this  
Inscribing the Matter. It is the way. Things  
translate us steadily into their tremendous language.

23 August 1995

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My face sunk into my robe's collar  
I inhale the clean unsoapy smell of myself.  
Like an idiot I think: this is me.  
Whereas myself is out there, not too near.  
I begin just past those pine trees, there.

23 August 1995

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*le Réverend Père Marius Lejeune, in memoriam*

I try never to argue with priests.  
They have an obscure —to them as well as to me—  
link with reality. I envy it. As if  
by giving it up they are closer to it, it all,  
or the real is less frightened of them,  
knowing their vows keep them from grabbing too  
much or too hard. Once on a ship  
a priest slept in the next berth,  
an old man, always gone by the time I woke  
crapulous and with sore teeth from the wine.  
I would find him later alone with the sea.

23 August 1995

## WHAT THE HOLE IS FOR

Well I wonder  
the counsel  
of honest living

a boy thing  
this dance between the lines

so much so poetry

lots of old religions, the penman's grace  
cork of a lusty tree, to write it on bark  
then pray to what happens in your head

but there is something more  
(nothing more than mind)  
where a boy finds a girl between the lines

a love worn out with looking

altered perplexities resolved  
with two small golden rings exchanged  
like rhymes in rap  
if it comes fast enough you never worry

worry is only possible in time,  
worry is time

so I wonder will you  
have a berth for me in your Ark  
the numbers need

each word an Ark to carry  
vast living sentient meanings past

tides of disaster

hear this  
remember those  
all those  
who were alive  
before your sleep  
and looked like this  
and sounded so,

imaginably intimate

the easy thing is always hardest

“To remember this foul treason [Hengist’s, at Ambresbury, when he slew the British chieftains at the signal *Nimad covre seax* —Take your knives out!—and seized the kingdom from Vortigern], knives were long high seax among the English; but names alter as the world moves on, and men recall no more the meaning of the past. When the story of the seax was forgotten, men spoke again of their knives, and gave no further thought to the shame of their forefathers.” (Wace, *History of the English*, Everyman’s Library ed.,page 15)

the only disaster is oblivion

wet from Styx we slaked  
the long mind with easy momentness

and wet  
we forgot

raised

blood blur, conglomerate stone  
I hear the ducks’ burble-breath of sleep

a doze at noon

a dog barks far:  
how anything we are

the Wandering Jew I have always been  
—and you see it clearest when I come into a room

why is a cock crowing at ten a.m.?

restless sun

recovered land: the magicians Vortigern summoned to explain his tottering tower proposed a human sacrifice to stabilize his foundations — or not quite human: a lad with no father. Who, when found, confuted them, or so the story says. He was Merlin, and they couldn't answer him when he asked why the tower kept falling, could only prescribe the blood of a fatherless wight to make it stand. Save us from prescribers who cannot describe!

Merlin explained to the king the subterranean lakes, the glacial boulders down there, the scarlet dragon and the white dragon who waited, woke, battled, signified this and that.

It would do the king no good, all these interpretations. His death was waiting for him over the hill, where the legitimate heirs would burn his castle to the ground and him in it, with his few faithful villains and his beautiful Saxon wife, Rowena. Though some say (I say, I am someone, I count too) she escaped and is permanent among the English, to this day, a tall fair beauty for whom the kingdom is regularly bartered. She was from Saxony, Hengist's daughter, thus a mare of sorts, sea-haunched, quick, quite strong.

Saxony, from *seax*, the knife they carried. Knifeland.

Teutoburg forest. Arminius. Osnabrück on the Hase. Hanover, head-  
stead of the land. Hanoverians still rule the island of Britain,

after a fashion. Our people have different colors.

You can tell by looking.

White dragon red dragon.

We carry with us,  
close to the body,  
between cloth and skin  
the knife that wounds us into majesty

*Nimad covre seax*  
kill thanes, take place

Red Grooms, writing about the Latvian *art brut* visionary Edward Leedskalnin: “In a book he wrote about his beliefs, he left every other page blank so that if readers has better ideas than his they could write them in.” (*NYTBR*, 20 August 1995, page 18)

And that is what poetry ever is,  
and only the gap

silence at the end of every line—  
that’s *your* silence  
now,

for you to answer at whatever length  
whatever the late line let you think

feel

Phanes  
was a god of light  
or of appearing

who illuminates  
the spaces  
where you can speak

light is silence

to be heard to be believed.

24 August 1995

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Two ways of saying the same thing  
are bare of birds this morning,  
the earth, the ground, the pitiable  
certainties we stand on

choiceless in maple shadows.  
Or are they? One is close  
and we are far, the wind broom  
brings the room back to light.

Stationless we stand.  
For all of us a single  
paradox— comfort  
lays me low.

25 August 1995

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Goes to say itself.  
Stays. Says. Sleeps.  
A syllable inside  
some weather out  
side we hear on  
every news. Comes  
to live with us  
as long as we do.

25 August 1995

## AN ANCESTRY

This water gulped  
from Severn peed  
in Hudson. I am  
reincarnate  
in the actual  
rivers are notoriously one.

River is the actual one.  
East first. Delaware  
bare, then Hudson.  
Kinds of green  
or sun. The Seine.  
Charles. Thames.  
The no-name skinny  
streams of California.

25 August 1995

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The sky  
she dances in  
is me,

other is she  
and outside

but nowhere  
else to see

outside me  
is what I am  
and there she dances

the red dance of being inside a life

a life my own by fact of her  
(living systems;  
flesh; faces  
in the sky)

27 August 1995