

1-2001

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*for Susan's birthday 2001*

The fact that time passes  
Is not even a fact

It is time that stands still

**Time is a stone**

And we roll past it or slither past it  
Rush down the hill crash through the rail  
Swim beyond the reach of the slacker eyes of the lifeguard  
Walk down the wrong street with a lily in the hand

We are the ones who hurry  
Away from the 'sweet encounter' *(Juan de la Cruz)*  
However we do it,

How do you do?

So I suppose the main reason to put up with George  
Is that he knows how to balance one stone atop another atop another  
Big on top of little thus  
Making time move and us stand still

To make the stone stand  
Makes time fly

Leaving us intact and still, staring it may be out at the snow field  
Wondering that there are so many lovers in the world  
So many cups left  
To spill emptiness from  
Into the meek awareness  
That is all you need

So that you live forever.

That is the plan.

7 January 2001

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What trees tell  
Is everything  
About which nothing  
Can be said

He looked over  
The border into Croatia  
He thought canals  
Have eels there too

Looked back  
At this larch  
Everything becomes amber  
Or number  
It melts all over his hands

8 January 2001

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Just as I woke to a sudden  
desire walking up the stairs  
entering the Heaven Realm  
of this starlight beast boat  
nightly moved to the harp I hold

there was a sleep attack  
north of my alertness — green sky  
shot full of comets

I glimpsed a king riding on a dog  
trotting out of the dawn, dry skin  
furled over the known universe  
along half a mile of dirt road  
ending in a grove where we played a game  
none of us had ever played before.  
Roses were in it, and fingertips, and spit.

8 January 2001

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cast for a cracked canteen  
webstrapped to a kid's leg  
and both wet, trouser and strap,  
with the spill of an ill-screwed  
chain-linked cap a summer  
must have happened to sleep  
a whaleport in sloppy snow

8 January 2001

## INTERVIEW WITH THE NIGHT MERCHANT

But where is it going, the sandman asked, all this sleep  
I give you between your Austrian novel and the wake-up phone?  
What will do when the Night Angels demand a reckoning,  
All the hours you've piled up in their dingy café  
While you fantasize compulsively about this and that  
And don't even know it. You are far away from yourself.

He said. Every day a new word to look up — is that an answer?  
He didn't think so. So daytime is writing the letter, going  
To sleep is the envelope, dream licks a stamp and sticks it on,  
Is that it? He didn't think that was it either. How about snow?  
No. I had to come up with something better, Danish, arduous,  
Like those frowning nudists we call philosophers. Wrong.

He rephrased his question: what have you done with all  
The precious sleep I sifted in your eyes, the radiant dreams  
That stood before you or whirled you around the dance-floor  
Even kissed you sometimes and made you wake up  
Gasping for more. What have you done with all that?  
Is your sorry waking life a destination worthy of that amazing  
journey?

9 January 2001

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VARIATION, AFTER D.G.

Each recitation melodrama gave a sermon  
no one wanted to hear - the banana in snow,  
the dull Le Monde soaked through with  
politics in which two cormorants  
fought for dead fish - all this  
varicose imagination not for the life of me.

9 January 2001

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Birthdays manage. The horn goat  
Honks beyond the snow.  
Honk hoom hon hoon the breathing  
Is bereshith, another world created

Out of sound. Nada. Ultimately  
You are a candle. Something about lasting  
A long time makes me want to dance  
The long slow sexy contours of eternity

And what people give is finally geography  
Not just geology to each other, uses  
Of their land, the economic consequences  
Of skin. The way you use me.

9 January 2001

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I'm dying now and this picture is still in front of my eyes

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Reverence in it old hotel on the coast  
Rupestral carvings rugosa everywhere  
Flowers grow themselves. Against causality  
I have marched up endless dark corridors  
Leading to a single window glaring at the end  
And a girl taking a blind woman by the hand

No one is ready for the house they live in  
A house is made of habit a habit  
Has to be made insouciant Rabbi  
Charming legs off the table by sheer  
Tradition is there any point in all this love  
The mortal doctrine of do it do it to me.

10 January 2001

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what comes of this?  
what goes?

I wait for the turn of the music  
when its colors change

10 January 2001

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so many circumstances guilt me of a city  
barracked with philosophers blue by book

and the river culls the shore of our poor things

and there so many of them, the little bees  
who cluster round the garbage cans

but know what to call them, listen to my chest  
and find a sound there they'll understand  
if I whisper it in their direction

pizza scraps and cans of Coke, they buzz  
for the meager beauty of being, got to eat,

the Freemasons have their temple, these  
guys have the light. The sugar of neglect

10 January 2001

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Sometimes salt is all we need  
those bitter nights  
when I think that I alone am mercury

11 January 2001

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Imagine a teacher at the front of the room

slowly undressing  
— common fantasy among schoolchildren —

but when the cloth is gone  
the body's missing too

so when the last garment's thrown joyously away  
that end of the room is empty

just sunlight, chalk dust, a new  
vocabulary item on the blackboard.

11 January 2001

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Let this love that's always flowing out of me  
Find its river channel lake millrace sea

Let it do something let it make noise  
You learn with love to hear as words

Telling you the truth for a change  
No matter how many lies I love you with.

11 January 2001

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Let my breath unveil the world  
And everybody feel me  
Close, close  
As if I were the color in their skin.

11 January 2001

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all the facts  
waiting for me  
to forget them

like a daffodil  
(what is?)  
coming out of the snow

11 January 2001

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So suppose it was a dream, and some years passed,  
and then the dream began again, and it was never.

Caught between one dream and itself all over again  
what was left of what I had thought had been my life

between the dream and the dream? The rock  
beneath my feet keeps trying to tell me something:

*you have no right to dream, you have no right to wake,  
all you have a right to is in between.*

11 January 2001

## CHANSON

so much to tell you  
so much to ask  
so much to remember  
so much to forget

there are a hundred questions  
stored below your chair  
would we be happier  
if you left them there

so much to confess  
so much to demand  
so much to hold  
so much to let go

there are a thousand sparrows  
waiting on your lawn  
I sent them to shout at midnight  
So you would think it's dawn

would get up and come to me  
where I am not waiting  
and we would lie down together  
where the sea is dry

so much to dream about  
so much to explain  
so much to do with you  
so much to forgive

11 January 2001

## THE INSCRIPTION OVER THE GATE

I am what is.  
No one has ever penetrated  
Me, no one ever will.

I am pure being  
Beyond action  
Beyond perceiving

You hear me stirring  
Deep inside  
Impenetrable dark

This sense of something moving  
Is all that makes you sad  
Or makes you glad

It is all me  
I am the other  
Side of everything.

12 January 2001

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where do I go  
when I go to sleep

and who is there  
I am so eager to see

that every night  
I hurry towards

and who is there  
scares me so much

I put off sleeping  
till my eyes won't

look at anything  
that is not she?

12 January 2001

*some dried ferns*

must have been green  
when someone picked them

then faded  
on a drumhead table  
under the candle and the clock

or were they green still  
sifted through  
cool fingers in a cool  
winter fern brake

and green still  
carried home  
warm in some pocket

and green they slipped  
into an envelope  
and only there

did they turn brown  
dried out by some angry  
letter they were next to

from a lawyer or a liar  
and the ferns quietly  
fading

into all the mingled letters  
at the bottom of my file cabinet

little brown leaves leaflets  
among the dark words  
still delicate with kindness and hope?

12 January 2001

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every day  
is the hell or  
heaven we  
earn

afterlife of  
last night's dream  
we woke from  
like dying

12 January 2001

## BLACK MIRROR

So many places where a boy can get lost  
on his way to the city.

The worst  
is the glossy wet blackness of the asphalt  
you could stare at that all night  
and never come home.

That is home,  
the soft of it, the way it takes your eyes,  
the way it takes the red tail lights  
of cheap cars and makes them rubies  
streaking north from Washington Square

I have stared into that mirror fifty years  
do you understand

I was asleep then I was married

later the blue streets of afternoon  
turned wax at nightfall then the wet black happened

down where the Only People live and will not come out dancing

they make me go down among them  
and maybe not even then.

12 January 2001

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Something bitter in the taste  
remembering is a hard word  
for what is lost

the stone breaks  
and slithers out of it  
a lizard or a toad  
amazed to see the world still here  
after long thinking

Time takes too long

13 January 2001

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not back from the sailor  
fingertips bent up to play  
battered virginal  
somehow hitting hard  
though the note in fact  
is something to plucked  
or pulled held  
till it's tired of itself  
so music goes

this was the train  
dragged them east  
to a land where people talked  
like angry old men with no teeth

forest to forest  
one day passed

13 January 2001  
after *Shoah*

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rock heard spud fall  
could lick a catheter  
so gale with losing

hard man old soil  
hating the names of things

13 January 2001

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is it there yet the falconer  
or is it just sunshine  
that shyster  
outside the movie theater  
waiting for children

making them sign  
what isn't even their  
names yet to this contract

don't do it  
wait for the imaginary bird

kestrel on a penny stamp.

13 January 2001