

10-2001

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## BORDERLAND

For all the certainties there are seas.  
Bridges, ocelots of rust across  
held in mid-leap above  
all those images of fire inside sleep.

We were packing for a journey. Boxes  
insisted on the angularity of things, a curve  
is something wasteful, merely natural,  
a wound on the economy, a peach.

Pack well — our luggage carries more of us  
than we bear in our bodies, we idle  
in airports lately, we survive.  
But where is the hard drive, the teapot, the Spode?

Seas created the original distances  
prairies compromised into roads.  
Deserts or grasslands the world can walk.  
But I was dreaming and I knew it, we were nobodies

on our way nowhere, no more than a poem,  
a tender negation, a Hallmark card from hell.  
Because when we wake there's all that staying  
left to do, the compromise called love,

the slow agony of caring for the other  
like maple leaves turning scarlet, yellow, then brown.  
The journey was all around us and I tried to wake,  
to know you're sleeping is not the same as waking,

knowledge, beauty, terror, tenderness, just stuff  
happening in dream, I screamed but the room  
was quiet, even the sound became a paltry shape  
stuffed in the hold of that cargo ship of images

bruising up the narrow rivers of  
we'll never know the country anyhow,  
earth is just a shadow of the sky  
we hold on for dear life a while then have to let go.

1 October 2001

## THIS IS THE EVENING OF THE PHOTO

This is the evening of the photo  
a triste documentation that answers  
Schuyler's pretty love song  
for so many, language itself  
turns out to be love lyrics  
from a sentimental musical.  
Soldiers say nothing but sailors sing  
— that's got to tell you something.  
It is the photo's turn to explain me  
to the world, maybe it will do  
a better job than I can, fearless  
as it is with pixels, chromes,  
values, resolution, all that virtue  
eludes the non-committal bard,  
this elusive swain. Life  
is a house, and there are rooms and rooms.  
*Pascho*, said the archangel on the rocks,  
'I suffer.' All suffering comes  
from trying to give away to lovers  
something you don't actually possess.  
Showed us the arts and métiers he meant  
us to inhabit, so we could share  
our carpentry and science projects  
love after love. When we talk  
about the Greeks we mean their syllables  
the fleshly measure of their highfalutin thought  
so we have some traction while we hurry  
over slippery marble in the Turkish bath.

1 October 2001

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As I sat by her deathbed it wasn't clear  
Which one of us exactly was dying.  
The things I said, I remember this  
Almost with shame, made it sound  
As if I were the one going away, the one  
Who had to give reassurances of a return.

Death turns out to be an occupation  
For us all, like a game I suppose  
And I always hated games, where we take  
Turns at being it. At closing our eyes  
And seeing what's there when we  
Start noticing anything again. If then.

2 October 2001

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things being natural again  
the walkways of northern Massachusetts  
below the Dogtown massif the endless  
profitable guesses at a meaning  
lurks in the scanty evidence of sense

I can't believe your whys — and the mood  
breaks the way the moon sets,  
just gone, nothing left  
of all our rapt surmises

the silliness of art sneaks in  
with all its greed for clamor and for cash  
Rumpelstiltskin postures in the mirror  
demanding the world recite his name

who am I who am I who am I

somebody must know.

2 October 2001

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Touch  
Is a litany  
Whereas the text  
Says.

A touch also is a word  
Spoken  
Into the audient body.

2 October 2001

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Liking less what the day says  
or liking less what lets me hear or no  
what I let in

a sour disposition and a blame  
I carry to propose

Grasses start to fade  
and I am distracted, start to worry about the trees.

2 October 2001

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a touch also is a word

and like it can be misunderstood  
or not understood at all  
reinterpreted translated

repeated to yourself in dream.  
it can be forgotten too

a word you know you know  
but can't bring to mind

remembrance  
of having a feeling  
but how did it feel?

3 October 2001

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der nachsommer nun

kommt nieder

wer?

fackelwaage

ernst vernunft

beinahe jubiläumsschrift

der eifersüchtige ehemann

neu entkukukt

weil niemand schlief

3 October 2001

*Near her my God to be*

And the ship sank  
into the shadow of the ice

we are witnesses of grief  
that also looks back at us

the measuring  
goes on

can we come  
close to knowing  
what word there is to say  
listen that says  
I am listening to you

3 October 2001

## COAL

I'm not sure it's there yet,  
the coal in the chute yet, here  
I mean, the leafy street  
east of Nostrand and the cellar  
gaping waiting for the barrels  
of anthracite to be tilted  
toppled so the coal runs down  
the long black iron slant and why  
don't we have that in our  
basement, a facility  
of entering, a penetration?

2.

later it was of course the coal bin  
I chose for my atelier  
when I was eleven  
when the furnace had been converted  
to the oil religion  
and left a nice space dry  
and dusty and half-walled  
suitable for silverfish and me

3.

but enough of me.  
Taking out of the ground  
what used to be trees  
and returning it to the cellars  
of our conspicuous apartnesses —  
that is delivering the coal.  
Coal is black and amber  
yellow and diamond  
practically no color at all.

4 October 2001

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Crows contending in the trees not near  
nor can I evaluate their contentions

but I know that crows for all their clamor  
never once tell lies, so I also know

being too far from what they're saying now  
I'm missing a valid cognition of some piece

of the action. The sounds are fading now  
and maybe really they meant to tell me only this.

4 October 2001

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Close, cries of children in the street.  
But there are no children and no streets.  
The world impersonates itself. These  
are sentences and we live them out.

4 October 2001

## RONDURES

But why even bother to say so.  
The place was full of your shadows,  
but that's because by now  
you live mostly at the edges of my mind,  
as shadows stand reverently apart  
a little from what they signify

and what makes them be. Thought  
can't busy itself directly with you  
because the hurt . . . what does the hurt do?  
Shadow means the one who stands beside me  
always, because the light is permanent,

beside me as if I were a little bit beside the point,  
had drifted from what my body means  
drifted even from the light that writes you  
so clearly at the corner of my eye  
sometimes. Seldom. Often. Always there,  
always hurt. All the unacknowledged pain  
seems more precious than the wordy calm  
a glimpse of you knows how to agitate.  
Mind at the margin, wanting you.

5 October 2001

## **Orthodox**

Jews walking on the mountain

repression yes on  
the other hand  
snug symmetry  
between the private  
sense of personal  
identity and their  
social roles

an enviable fit.

At the top of the mountain  
a lake  
sunken in shattered limestone  
the name means  
Lake inside the sky

Why were they so beautiful?

The men seemed busy, the boys  
quiet alert and active

girls slim and full of thought  
the women seemed like the presence of God.

I understood Shechinah and Friday night.

5 October 2001

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It seems to me I'm not really listening.  
Dreams about going through customs  
—what is this two-panel painting  
I'm bringing from where? A Van Eyck  
somehow legal to enter and three bags  
to be pawed over by the douaniers.  
How to get big bags in their little cages.  
And always the matter of getting the car.  
I suppose it is time to stay home again  
and let the war go on without me  
I who have missed so many turns to die.  
And the perils of staying are all around me  
when only the night is a nomad  
my frightened mind begins to count the leaves.

5 October 2001

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A curled leaf an animal  
a pen to write down  
the latest resemblances

and thou to read them  
astride me in the wilderness  
and wildness were the animal it always is

voices voices murmuring but are they words?

5 October 2001



and even if all books are one  
that book is never done

eternity of the book.

But he fled with his rain and his raptures

spill seed in deserts  
the way we do

and now it's actually raining  
and water forms notions of its own  
dissolving ink on paper

into mysterious apocalypse.

6 October 2001

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Catching up with yesterday is a dumb tongue  
Dust motes in sunlight might already be tomorrow

Who knows how many systems are at stake when anything moves  
Inside the pod the simple pea inside the pea a complex starch is scheming

How can all that pattern fit inside the world,  
The pattern of a hand fit in the hand?

7 October 2001

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Little triangle  
Down south  
Not much traffic  
Soft in sunlight  
Could this be  
Remembering?

7 October 2001

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Scatter.  
No fire.  
Worry  
All into  
The morning.  
Porch wood  
Grain in sun.  
Take me  
Out of what  
I've made.  
Shade happens,  
Infer cloud.  
Let me go.

7 October 2001