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These instruments I carried with me:  
a lake full of ducks, a lion  
looking in at the window—

and another lake, they told me it was full of milk  
and made me remember  
what it was like to be there

in a pearly timelessness that suddenly  
turned into time  
and I was here

here where their words can reach me,  
where language rules  
the wordless images and lights of mind.

26 November 1994

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Be careful— this is a day.  
In the dream, she looked at my hand  
the pores' reticulations and  
aren't you worried? This is allantoin  
shine

she said (shine like something Greek  
in something sky, an ancient slippery meaning  
turned into a god)

a star-cluster  
divvying up the dark  
and telling, always telling

this same scary story. Aren't you worried?  
Isn't it cancer? It is skin, I thought,  
human, mine — and that means trouble enough  
already. It feels for me, it writes  
in delicate contours of confusion  
the fragile mapwork of my life.  
Unreadable. Unrememberable. There.  
All I am is where it's been.

She let go of my hand then,  
interested in alternative pathologies  
and left me to go on sleeping.  
And now it's morning  
and I'm free to analyze  
what I please,  
my gold wedding ring or its finger,  
the tautnesses and puffinesses of hands,  
the veiny alphabet that plays blue below my skin,  
all this language, really  
sleep ought to be a refuge from such grammar!

27 November 1994

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This is supposed to be in a box

This is also you

These are the authentic instances of what we need and then  
some more to bother us with painful Verities, o lady of slim  
solutions violently understood.

27 November 1994

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The insupportable magnitude, a newspaper  
flapping by, all these informations laid  
arrogant against a feather, and a feather  
weighs them down, a feather clanks the scale-pan  
hard on the sandstone floor. Millennia pass  
and I have come to you again, a notch  
between Overlook and the next one north,  
the wind comes down it hard all year long  
and tonight the first real snow, the sleet of it now  
hissing through the rhododendrons, listen to it,  
hissing of the wind out of a crack in the texture,  
womb-word, delphic spin. I think all that  
happened is this: for a long time I wasn't born  
then I was born in the space world: rivers,  
mountains, plains. The shape of all this  
is what I mean by thinking. My mind is only notice  
and notices this. A wind down the rock.  
Dark water birds scooping down into sunset.

27 November 1994



# WAITING FOR THE REPAIR MAN

*for Charlotte*

Snow and freezing rain and rain and now *es nieselt*  
over ordinary space, this magpie place of ours  
with spoons and fortresses. Now and again I wake up  
wanting to bring you some good news, nothing abstruse,  
not history except as cheese is, something  
that takes Time and includes it in itself  
and nurtures us. Maybe it's nothing more than breakfast,  
choices of juices, or a city has endured a siege,  
or skunk tracks (little fingers) make for the woodchuck's  
hole next door in snow. The snow. The occupations  
of ordinary space, the who and what and where  
but never why. Pointless as a rose,  
actions endure our scrutiny. Easy does it,  
the squirrel finds some food, the snow celebrates  
its temporary ewigkeit of sanctity, eternity,  
cars go to work and leave me not much to tell you.

28 November 1994

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*for Charlotte*

**There is a glory one under  
stands, there is a captain  
whose little ship is  
always ready to depart,**

**I love you,  
it is winter,  
the impossible roses  
are ready to fall**

**and an empty glass  
holds all we need  
of light—  
margins, margins.**

28 November 1994



## TWO MONTHS

1

Resisting the same war as before. Item:  
resistance is always in fashion. What is more:  
resistance makes the father riper, the mother more.

So by spectacular actions (“diseases,” the man said)  
the republic knows itself anew:

an act is glass.

Everybody who does anything  
at all we admire. Therefore we behold  
with mild delight the celebrated faces on TV,  
content to gaze on ourselves so reflected.

The body is a leather mirror.

(28 October 1994)

2

And now one moon has sunk into the earth  
playing that singular banjo she is  
all the way down

You and I have heard such plucked  
cloud,

the stream large today from snow melt,  
mercy, warm sun, trust me with your weather,

the moon (I was saying) is silent down there  
safe in all the entrances,



## HYMN TO PERSEPHONE

Scratching the old itch, the one  
the sheriff's posse took away, the one  
with horse hooves and salt on its tonsils,  
the one with sand,

we have come hard  
into the valley of the city. The comfortable  
despairs of learned men are our loveseats,  
no fear, fear is born of desire, no lust,  
lust is born of stars, the stars burnt up,  
we will do it again till we get it right.  
Heather. Sprawled over the delve, dew-drenched,  
little river with such murky swans,  
ferns. The smiling mosses. End of her year,  
Persephone, here in this glamorously dismal place,  
the moors of mind. Where everything that ever grew  
knew its name and kept me for its servant

to write its horses down. Keep track of pains.  
From the extracted wisdom teeth a green light glows,  
no, more pearly, no, more winter evening aqua  
like an early evening star without the star.  
From the amputated limb a sort of song.

Sings of omission. Valleys, waters, heather, heath.  
Swans, buds, beds, beads. Box, beaks. Books.  
Aga agate nobody's daughter. Smile at me,  
rivulets, you run free from a pain we share.  
No pain, pain is born of pleasure and I please you not  
except I would, I would be wonderful in this place,  
scratch your least itch, world, my tongue

delicate, not very wet, behind your warm ear.

Picked out in throne work as thin as  
made me easy her name  
made honest as we, paltry, helped to make either,  
what bother, gentiles of mountain, who

is bothering me now?

Sunrise as the surface of her body.

Fine faltering dry needles of the fern fall  
loose as scratches on the table under red roses,  
your birthday body, Paris, your charming buttes up there  
where the senators admired artificial mountains  
thousands of years later.

It goes well, sister.

God made water, only water. Who else would think of it?

30 November 1994

## THE CLASSIC OF CHANGES, 1

The extraordinary clamor the heart makes  
when it wants something bigger than its valves  
and then it's Wednesday (the god is hanging  
peaceful on the tree of his experience, hung there  
by his own will, the knot of his red silk tie  
from Turnbull & Asser knotted by his own hand,  
a middle god between the vast lucency of mind  
and these low habits disguised as my skin).

Heart? What a strange word for what we want.  
The Superior Person ever in his actions conceives  
hardly any abstract pattern to his deed. He does  
because the doing fits. And then the slim canoe  
plies down the squared-off water mile of Alu Waia  
past which les jeunes do baseball in January.  
It is all gold. It all is gold. The Superior  
Person writes his name on the wall, using shapes  
of the shadows of the yew trees outside  
tossed in by a winter sun not long for this world.  
The Superior Person agitates for a share of the copper  
mines so he can offer the smelted ruddy stuff

to some local and neglected deities. God again,  
they will keep coming in, they did not make the world  
but seem to be more at home in it than we. But we move.  
And meantime metal matters. The milk you pour  
directly on the crumb of earth, and after many years  
you teach it how to speak. Earth infant comes to terms.  
This is for certain.

Language is milk.

The Superior Person performs ceaseless benefactions.  
(Actions you see and do not notice.) Not even birds  
do. Or the weather. Or it is that whitish language  
Berlioz heard among the dead and copied down,  
strong syllable, few clusters, like a guttural  
and influent Hawaiian. They made him translate it

into French so the living could chant it.. The Superior Person translates nothing. Things are just as they are, beyond hope and despair. He is not even listening.

30 November 1994