

12-2011

## decG2011

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## ARA

To honor the after all  
squirm in the dark  
a silver person says I bow down

and then there is a tower that goes straight down

ten minutes below the ground  
beings manufacture dark—  
night itself is an export from below

we went down to see them  
but as usual we were more interested in ourselves  
self-image of pilgrims flattering self-image of exiles

so the tower went down  
the dark came up to touch us

it was negative sunshine and we found it very good.

2.

*Ara*, the altar. We stood.

A man is, a woman is,  
but they are.

A man is, a man is,  
but they are.

A woman is, a woman is,  
but they are.

They are altar.

They are the unhewn stone  
set up beyond Yordan,  
the river of earth.

3.

All the words come from the same mouth.

All the words are altar  
and each word is an altar.

Heaven has no need of altars,  
all the altars are on earth  
for us. Earth is for us

among them all.

4.

It was seen in the Potala in the old days  
the altar of Tara swarming with mice  
who thrived on the grease spilled from the butterlamps,  
thousands of flames in the dark of the high house.  
Thousands of mice, and no one would kill them,  
how could they, here on the shrine of the compassionate virgin

mother of wisdom, mother of all the Buddhas,  
feeding the mice not different from feeding the light.

5.

Learn this new language sing.  
Seek in the closet the way down.  
Go down singing the name you're seeking.  
The closet sinks through years and wishes  
into the quiet where it stops.

She who bore you will raise you.  
This is the secret of the whole earth too—  
sink down and understand the mothers.  
I swear to you everything you see is your mother.  
The bare blonde trees leap up to overcome the air.

6.

It was Ariadne after all,  
the one who chose god—  
a god and a woman, an altar.  
A man and a fallen tree, an altar.  
All my Brooklyn druids  
howl in the violet shadows of Sheepshead Bay  
by the Uzbek restaurant, the fishing boats  
lordly with fluke at evening  
when all the uncles of the world  
come home with dinner

wrapped in the day's paper,  
peel me from memory,  
a man and a tree  
& now mem'ry,  
she walks through Brooklyn  
how tenderly she wears  
her pain and lets me  
will you give me everything I ask?  
I will ask for no more than I need.

7.

So that's it, need,  
need is the altar,  
maybe the only one.

Why we put food and wine on it  
why we offer on so many altars  
the food we need, the things  
we need, why we kneel  
in front of it as we should  
kneel in front of each other,  
praying the peace of your being  
to be me too.

26 December 2011

## CONTRA MEMORIAM

Most see on memory's altars  
strangely familiar putrescent meat  
glistening from cadaverine  
and noisy with flies.

Burn down that false temple—  
remember nothing.  
Nothing happened. There was nothing  
before this moment.

Lot's wife looked back and froze.  
There is no past.  
All that matters is  
whatever I make up now.

26 December 2011

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A crow flies up  
something bright  
in its beak.  
I am forgiven.

27 December 2011

= = = = =

Open heart  
surgery erosion  
till the hard  
matter speaks.

26 December 2011



= = = = =

When I should on this day 8-Ahau feel like the lord of life  
a speaker before the silent trees  
I feel instead—till a moment  
back when the crow came by—bruised by apathy.  
almost frightened at the emptiness of things  
Now I take comfort in what I have been given,  
my friends the grey clouds, the tender sky.

27 December 2011

= = = = =

Ghost walking in the rain.

To that white house  
empty just a week  
they come back  
who never left, never  
were even there.

A ghost is everywhere at once,  
why we so seldom see one  
in some single space our eyes  
decide. I see it now,  
grey in grey light, early  
winter twilight, shimmer  
of shape, grey  
figure on glistening blacktop  
moving due north  
where the old white house is.  
Where ghosts go.

Every house is full of them—  
even your own home when you're out  
for the evening, movie,  
talking with friends, the ghosts  
move in, all of them, they too

are your friends, they're waiting  
for you to come be at home.  
Mostly they have to flee  
the minute you open the door  
and the *live- light* comes pouring in.  
Sometimes one or two of them stay on  
to comfort you or long after  
midnight try to explain.

27 December 201

= = = = =

I woke up and was a priest  
at last, my hands told me  
handling the tea offering  
handling the kettle.  
Thirty years it took to admit  
that now I have a function  
born to my identity.  
As Dante would say,  
knowing at last full well  
we live for another.

28 December 2011

= = = = =

Sandstorm sudden  
a different shape  
to what is there,

a break

in the mind's fabric  
to let light in



the gap

where everything is new and nothing is.

Fresh wind blowing in  
clean from nowhere,

freshness,

the miracle inside the between.

Let me give that love you instead—  
a white car sleeping in the woods.

28 December 2011

= = = = =

Going where I'm knowing  
with a bird around my neck  
a live one busy fluttering  
and glad it seems to share the journey

We all are headed  
to a place we know  
but have never been,  
a place that makes sense  
of all the things  
we struggle to carry there—  
maybe the place called us,  
told up what to pick up and bring.

28 December 2011

= = = = =

Or where are they  
the beginners  
life-support  
from the first day  
first page of the Talmud  
is any one you open to  
have you ever read  
the whole of everything  
even this word  
from the beginning?  
That's why we are  
always beginners,  
nursery, nightlight on,  
a creature telling stories  
in the corner, a blue screen—  
we could be anywhere.

28 December 2011

## BEING NEAR THE ANYHOW

the green baffles of the yew hedge  
shred the light on its way

to thee, onc most personal  
now abstracted pronoun who  
presides above the most intimate

as if the closest skin were also  
always the furthest friend.

29 December 2011

*(I would sign this—in the manner of Chi Pai-shih's great scroll of living shrimp—'the hundred year old man wrote this with one sweep of the pen'.)*



## LEARNING SANSKRIT

How many vehicles  
have to know us?  
*gacchāmi*, I go.  
That is all I know

2.

But better because be  
a whole new alphabet  
every day its own  
new letter new love.

3.

Things are easy  
as long as you don't  
have to lift them  
up from where they lie.

4.

Gravity is Ahriman.  
Otherwise we would  
in one twinkling of an eye  
fly all the way home.

29 December 2011

## THE THINGS WE KNOW

1.

they fly before us, before  
men even wake and the street  
clatters in the phony dream  
a sleeper with his pillow,

there is no private space  
left among us.  
Everybody knows.

2.

Might as well be road  
as go. Or be sky  
as bird. Your distinctions  
are illusions. Enough  
that you think something  
or other. That at least  
will keep you busy.

3.

And when I say you  
I mean Grand Central Station

and the Gare du Nord,  
the steel rails stretching north  
I mean the escape from confusion  
into origin, the far side of,  
first side of, pleasure.  
*Arktos*. Where the bears come from,  
silver-furred in our blue dream.

30 December 2011

= = = = =

I passed a mirror  
and saw nothing there.  
No reflection.  
What is wrong with me?  
Or maybe right—  
that I could look through  
illusion and see the truth.

29 XII 11 / Kingston

30 December 2011

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In love with a drunken stranger—  
the mystic's predicament—

reach out and touch the stranger's skin  
sometimes it feels like glass.

(17.XII.11)

30 December 2011

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The trouble with idolatry  
(why Moses matters)  
the trouble with idolatry  
is once you have a fixed  
image of god you stop  
describing him.

We will never know god  
until we have said  
everything we can ever say.

(17.XII.11)

30 December 2011

= = = = =

Because the only  
is a star in the jaws  
of a cloud, alive,  
it spews a finicky  
influence upon us

we catch from so  
far to be here as  
once we were  
Moses and Gilgamesh  
and such, all  
the rivers full  
of rusted iron bars.

30 December 2011

## CALL

that's all  
the cage  
gives way.  
Just call

and in the calling flights of crows  
intelligent clouds, sky joggers,  
bees work miracles, names, names  
wake up from ancient sleep and come

help you in your singular work.  
You are human,  
you were made  
to make sense of all this.  
Even better, you are you.  
You know. At least you know  
how to call.

Even I at the bottom of my well  
can hear you. Even I can rise  
sometimes to your comfort.  
Call, just call.

31 December 2011



= = = = =

Careful what wish for  
everything answers

if she resists you now  
you'll be her next life

all experience is ambiguous  
inherently

                  what happens  
tries to make sense  
of what just happened.

Every stick points two ways at once.

Resist your own blandishments—

only the stranger helps.

31 December 2011

= = = = =

A stalk of grass  
a tree among mosses

we try to rise

serendipities  
of local gravity

this rock  
remaineth

something falling

have to crawl inside to find out

sunshine of the last day  
be beautiful outside my window

nothing falls

the air sustains everything  
the air is levity, lifts us.

Finally we rise.

31 December 2011

= = = = =

in rain the cars come  
their headlights on  
funeral procession  
what are they looking for  
in broad daylight,  
graveyards, God's acre,  
is death so hard to find?

31 December 2011

= = = = =

Last sunset of the year  
sudden from under  
the cloud bank (out of  
which sweet drizzle  
comes, fresh earth  
smell like spring rain)

a big red sun  
at the end of the world  
its rays teach treetops  
bare branches  
persuaded like us  
to be beautiful  
suddenly gold.

31 December 2011