

1-2005

## janH2005

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=====

Expect nothing keep listening.  
This is another alphabet. The radio  
is talking to you again, the one  
you never have to hear,

the one that is there, there—  
midnight in the fold of your mind  
right in the middle where the sun  
rises, they all see you coming

light gushing out of your clothes.  
It is romantic. Nieman-Marcus  
expense account, niemand merkt uns  
we slip unseen through the flames  
the ones we grow around us  
shopping our hearts out in the biggest store.

I will give you everything I can think of.  
Even your own body will I give back  
bent from the fulcrum of my wish  
and pried asunder – how else  
would the light get in? And out?  
Light walks only from pain  
the way gamblers hurry to the desert  
to blend emptiness with emptiness.

No, I'm not a radio anymore. A root  
growing inside you. A pressure,  
a slim green blade of grass  
to penetrate the murk of human will  
where everything is made

19 January 2005

=====

Not say simple say  
hand a horse  
doesn't have one  
he stands up on his middle  
finger all men are lonely  
some cave is full of fire

a hand brushes snow  
off my face we call it wind  
how long before we weave

a pattern for your carpet  
lie on the floor and smell the dust the wool  
the hand feels the soft raised pile  
the colors have no feel yet  
the hand is blind

the hand loves everyone in what it feels  
the touch the hand calls you

there is no old word for this relation  
*a hand stroking another hand*  
while people think whatever people think

nothing can be imagined beyond this  
situation, a hand imagining a hand

imagining something before rock or fire  
something that wanted to touch  
and imagined a way of touching  
so as to be near and far and near-far together  
to be a mind in a hand here.

20 January 2005

## WHAT CAN BE SAID

Another world.

When the despairing prisoners “had hanged themselves ... the officers of the Erkennungsdienst hurried to the place and photographed the body from all angles.” (*Guardian*, today, an 87 year old photographer remembers Auschwitz.)

What can be said  
to see the *blessed thing*  
defiled by the amazing absence  
death is

to see people do that to other people  
that is what I couldn't bear, I was nine  
when I saw the pictures, the living  
corpses stagger towards

the camera I have been ever since.  
I will not be a man if men do that.

The blessed thing  
the body.

All we have.  
And by old French philosophy, all we are.

The dignity of meat. The living thing  
hyj, we still say that,  
twyj, *chayyoth*, the living things Ezekiel saw—

what spoke to me from the fire?

What is the word for fire?  
What is the word for mouth?  
What is the word for hand touching hand?

The Greeks had no word for body,  
just *man* or *woman* or the name of  
the one who moves towards me or away,

no word for body,  
only for corpse,  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ ,

what is the word for what we are?

What is skin?

What is the word for talk to me?  
What is the word for stone?  
What is the word for water?

In my language there is no word for sun.  
We have to say it sideways: the right eye of the sky.

And you, how can I bear  
what I have seen,

how can I bear  
knowing I will never know you  
all the ways you can be known,

what is the word for silence?

What is the word for road?

Bearing what we have seen  
and bearing what we feel,

those are what we have to carry.  
And the photographer after he was rescued  
never “raised a camera to his eye again.”

We have seen the living things  
destroyed, we have seen their images  
go on living in the caverns of the mind,

all fear is a fear of something to be seen.

Close your eyes now in the dark  
away from the dictionary,  
tell me the word for sound.

Splashing sound of water  
round and round  
sound of small electric motor  
moving small things round,

what is the word for sound?  
for market, for tell me, for now?

Will there ever be a word for now?

We need old Egyptian signs  
incomprehensible, sensible, full  
of living things and jars and reeds,  
we need signs that say  
nothing but old earth language,  
say to the eye what words say  
to the smoky breath-life inside your chest

θυμος

the one that makes you gasp in love  
or sob with the sudden light

a little boat far out on the lake.

20 January 2005, Kingston

=====  
a knitted flute

a sign

a sign is always a threat

the terrible word  
you find written on a piece  
of paper god knows how  
long you had it in your pocket  
and now

if you knitted a flute  
image the sound it would make

what a mystery cloth is  
the first thing we made

I see the models on the runway  
halfway to the sky  
I marvel at the little fabric  
that shapes them

they hold the gaze  
and carry it away

where am I when I have lost my gaze

(sound of a woollen flute  
playing over the hill)

20 January 2005



=====  
Two a.m. A bright  
green star over the hill.  
And Orion on fire.  
Orion is a wedding party

and I am his drunken guest  
all my life at that revel  
and one day soon I'll  
kiss the bride again

and swoon and wake  
to find myself dancing.  
O the moon set long ago  
there's only us now

my hand on the waist of the sky.

20 January 2005

=====

Be blue with me  
and let things follow  
as they should  
b flat minor

A# slice careful  
between the measures  
dance queen  
downtown LA

so many rich people  
prominent in cemeteries.  
I walked through Forest Lawn  
and thought: the poor must live forever.

20 January 2005

=====  
The politics of drunkenness  
the Ulsterman tottering home  
the dance still in his head

there was no dance, the tunes of it  
bark at him, dogs of memory  
and their shallow pups, a snatch  
of the Snowy Breasted Pearl  
and Larry Won't Ye Come Home  
a jig or reel, like Hasids  
through the Brooklyn street,  
alone, alone though,  
the jig is fast, the notes of it  
tossed dazzling quick between  
fiddle and flute and pipe and whistle

and he can't read the letters on the ground  
his shadow spells with all these street lights

no light in the world brighter  
crueler than the glaring windows  
of closed stores, lit up to vex  
the eyes with unfulfillable desires  
lie down and die, but here  
the sidewalk is too far away

nothing stands between the mind and itself—  
sinner in the hands of an angry God.

21 January 2005

## THALIENSTRASSE

Could this trolley car  
understand me. Not drunk,  
I don't speak German.  
The woman beside me  
is nobody's wife, I love  
museums, could it?

This is one long street  
we ride it to the end.  
Sit in our seats watch the rain  
and ride back home again.  
An old drunk keeps losing  
his brown paper parcels  
rearranging, dozing,  
losing, waking, fixing.

He is trying to speak  
a sentence coherent  
in an unknown language  
but words slop around,  
he is trying to be daytime,  
ordinary, shopping,  
he is trying to be people.  
What can we do  
to help a drunk old man?

Paper and crumple and fall  
and slip from the fingers,  
what do we do with a language  
nobody speaks?

Earlier today I kissed  
the rough stone column

of the opera house  
to make a point. Something  
about music, love, me.  
Music is how I love me best,  
listen. Or I meant to say  
love is like a stone  
as Dante tells us that falls  
and gets lost in the grass.

Our old man drops all  
his parcels yet again  
but still keeps trying,  
sleeping, muttering  
to hold all things together.

Outside I hope the rain.  
I like rain. Sometimes I  
almost understand what it says.

21 January 2005

=====

I'm still holding it  
a leaf from no tree

fell at no time  
and I'm holding it tight

in no hand.  
Who is my wife?

21 January 2005

## CAMEO

With a profile, whose  
I cannot say,  
I haven't read  
a history of this city.

There's a crown  
on this young head,  
the faces looks west  
where I come from,

I feel good when I look  
at this face – somebody  
long ago knew me,  
was waiting for me.

21 January 2005

=====  
But the music  
sounds like fire.  
Schönberg's *Gurrelieder*.  
Outside it is six below zero.  
"Sonnenschein!" he sings  
with an exclamation point  
that sounds like spring  
come already  
into a new world  
long ago forgotten.

Now is so hopeless,  
now is so lame.

21 January 2005



## USES OF THE DAY

Today is a day  
for sleepwalking

for taking out of line  
for following footprints of unknown animals  
deep into the woods

the runes that fox feet leave  
or possum, coon, squirrel, crow.

Birds walk here too.  
There are things they can know  
only by walking.

It is amazing. the fall of grace  
like the blizzard we're supposed to get,  
much snow, wild wind, sub-zero temperatures they say.

Today's a day for believing what they say  
all the way into the woods.

The woods are everywhere,  
roads are just breathing spaces,  
houses just punctuation in that green text.  
But what does it say?

It says: Be lyrical  
while you can,  
the snow is coming

today is a day for believing  
anything that comes.

22 January 2005

=====  
Why don't they feed me the titles of poems  
I wrote fifty years ago and see  
what I could do with them now.  
Smarter, tougher, sadder, weaker?  
Probably none of these. Different  
as all a man's me's. A man's name  
stays the same but his signature  
keeps changing. That's the point.  
That's all we need to remember.

But what is my signature?  
This? Or this?

I am a king whose reign is lost  
somewhere between Charlemagne and Frederick,  
somewhere in there, my castle and my decades  
vanished. Only my haughty insolent forgiving nature  
shows what I was.

Pride goeth before oblivion.  
A squirrel is eating millet *faute de mieux*  
from our feeder, and who remembers  
this one in particular from all  
the regiment of squirrels  
hurrying over the snows of this endless Russian planet?

22 January 2005

[Transcriptions from old scraps of paper found today]

I'm sitting here in the food court at Price Chopper  
drinking my hot weak coffee and  
wondering why it all seems familiar.  
It is the agora the suq the bazaar  
the kermesse the Sonnabendmarkt  
the weekly market in Thonon  
it's all the market fairs of England and the knife  
market in Darjeeling and no matter how few roofs  
this place has or how much middle management  
and corporate iniquity behind the wall this  
is the market still. We come here to find ourselves.

1994

\*

A year's an old ferry  
waddling through mist  
bringing us the well-  
meaning and well-meant  
all together to the far shore.

\*

Troubles enter of four feet.  
Waves don't drown a man,  
his lungs do. The greed  
of taking in. The heart  
has pulse enough for centuries  
but then a message comes  
from fire or from water  
and his earth is still.

\*

The sound of rain  
has distant violet mountains in it.

[22 January 2005]

=====

With all these catastrophes  
what is the world trying to tell us?

It's trying to tell us it has nothing to tell us.  
We tell ourselves this story.

Human anger makes the ocean boil.

22 January 2005