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DAY OF SLATE

What can be said
that knows itself
better than to say

Facing the twist
left in the snow
by melt freeze melt
wind scour renew

I say this is muscle
is meant for you
to hold to the fact
as if there were one
or I knew

Carve a seal
killer whale
the tusk of mud
by time
that's all it took
pressed sharp

into the south
of a country
not where wine
but a sleep
all afternoon
woke just
the light was leaving

I keep bringing
you things
you have no need for

songs you've heard
before, small
animals who run away

leave their paw prints
until the weather
reads them away

Don't tell me
we carved a sign
to mean I own
this thing

the sign meant
still means
read me
tell me who I am

12 Nivose CCXI

2 January 2003

[COLORS OF DREAM]

the blue we see in Gothic windows, the blue in Russian frescoes, the red in Van Eyck's robe, the end of something, no technique, no *technê*, led to the production of such visions,

for us to see them, they had to be suggested, projected, verbally or musically or directly from mind to mind, and the hearer had to become the beholder through the work of imagining,

it is up to us

**Head work
all the bright colors
lithographed in your lap.**

3 January 2003

[dreamed]

SNOW

The squirrel upside down
clutches onto the bird feeder
doesn't flinch when I come close,
looks straight back over his shoulder
at me, and goes on eating.

His fur is coated with snow,
dazzled with wet crystals.
Bold and desperate thief,
he knows the policy
correct for days like this.

Like ours.
And they say another foot
of snow is coming tonight

winds and the broken
branches cleared away
whirling crystals around your skin
around our bones we walked outside
crunch of old snow beneath the new

Squirrel feeding.
Feeding squirrels.
Writer writing.
Any being
is free to turn
away from skill,
there's no law that makes us write.

(Though H.D. once heard her Muse say “Write, write or die.”)

The world needs such sincerity and clarity as we know how summon from the things we see, or that summon us. To say.

In writing, discrepancies of age, situation, involvements with other people, metabolism, desire, economics, career, all are erased and we are equals.

3 January 2003

WINTER SPIDERS.

Poetry messengers.

Little bites you wake with,
something about them,
sly and waiting
in the most intimate.
Forgive their little bites.

Name for a poetry magazine:

L'araignée d'hiver
— the secrecy of poetry,
subtle toxins,
sly itch of reminding,

its quiet ability to leave a mark
on even the toughest hide,
to dwell secretly in bed and
shadow and intimate places,
to do its work in the night,
in sleep, in dream.

3 January 2003

TEA

Alone with my cup of tea.

—Christ, what role are you playing at now?

Not a role. I am alone, it is a c. of t.

— I see that, but why say so?

It's true.

— But saying so, that's what makes it a role, and you someone playing it.

Should I just be quiet?

— Speaking implies audience.

You.

— I'm here, I see you, I see the cup of tea. And since I'm here, I know that alone is not exactly true. And so it's a role, et cetera.

What if I just like the sound of words?

— Then they're not words. Other people hearing them is what makes them words. Otherwise they're just sounds. You love the sound of sounds.

3 January 2003

BEING RECALCITRANT

being recalcitrant
is not the same as being in control

there is a shape
to saying no

smells like fish and chips
or ginger ale at your aunt's house

everybody's a Methodist
and God is watching

there is so much to discover
my eyes hurt from the snow

the no sleep the thick book
the alphabet hurts me

2.

there is a woman on the stairs
a girl behind me

what can a young man do
at any age

the treads are measured
seven inch risers

my eyes forget all their numbers
the snow remembers

the exercise we are giving to a friend
stands naked to the snow

the weather is our only news
the rest is dreamwork

the anger of our stars inside
the comfort of your fantasy

every item that I notice
is good for you to know

the lunatic details of everyday
made up of birds

cataloguing seed in the feeder
relax we all have preferences

this kind of wren likes Mahler
and blue jays are absolute Stravinsky

cherubim keep you waiting
seraphim scorch your collar

love makes you wet your pants
that's what any child knows

the body's always up to something
and the drunken innkeeper seldom knows

what antic escapades
fizzle in his rear bedrooms

3.

who is it in me
that makes the light come on

answer the phone for bird's sake
impenetrable music of causality

you studied it every Saturday night
preparing for Holy Communion

I believed everything I still do
I look into the rubble of my feelings

deciding which is good and which is stuff
I should report to a higher authority

I keep a book of it
in case I meet her someday

the testament of truth
with photos pasted in

no myth misses me
keeping the holy at bay

4.

say all writ is holy

say figure this out

say I'm too busy to know what I'm saying

say I can never tell what you're thinking

say I can't ever know what you're hearing

say nobody gives me a right to say

say whatever comes into my head

say this isn't about you

say this isn't about me

say this isn't about us

say this is about heads and what comes into them

say weren't you listening

say that's not my job

say my job is shaping the flow so it looks like your body

say my job is making it touch you

say my job is making it let go

say I have a fireman's thick hose

say I douse the fires of silence

say there's always more where this comes from

say when you're at the boundaries of language you turn a new leaf.

4 January 2003

HYMN TO USE

Using someone else's
using their object
given to you or allowed

or using their way of using
something object or procedure
using someone else's using

someone using someone else
using something even small
it warms the mind in using

or touch this thing
makes someone else
so close makes someone

someone else you touch
in touching in using this object
or procedure someone

else cannot object
to using someone something
given or allowed

using someone else's
someone else to touch
someone's else

someone's other way or place
they are themselves
you are their else

to touch or borrow or allow.

This way things carry their people out into the world of other people and no one sleeps.
This way the thing is ensouled and learns how to talk, as we do, one situation at a time.
Everything is its mother. Later on, the thing becomes a nurse that comforts us.

5 January 2003

HYMN FOR A NOVENA TO CHARLES FOURIER

But can it speak when I listen
can the glorious Revolution
understand itself without a wheel?

No blade and no guillotine
a party of like-minded revelers
lunching naked on the lawn

while the king is out of town on other business.
Who tracks desire?
Are you waiting?

Where did the color go
when the flower died?
Any child knows enough to ask you that

and nobody expects an answer,
no more than the grass, no more than the ants
who walk out slowly just to watch the clouds go past.

5 January 2003

AN EXPLANATION

Why understanding isn't empathy
has to do with the rulership of signs.
Understanding is Saturn, empathy
is Venus, they are not friends
in our local sky, though there are planets,
I come from one, where they sleep
together every night and Mars is dead.

So be clear about the signs. You,
you be a sign of me. You
with your ordinary eyes,
the hoofbeat in my chest
that tells me to be honest, tells me
every bell is a piece of the sky
that rings my funeral, I am dead
to heaven and born to here,

a heartbeat does it, a heartbeat
tells it, life is where the honesty
happens, deep drowned in the cloaca
where such as we can live.

5 January 2003

LACVNA

something missing from the alphabet

what peak of departure

rapture

of indecision, who

makes up new letters

who says new things

a sound that has meaning bloody inside it

phonemic alphabet

in Zion they made us write with silent sounds

a leftover word

broken cabbages smashed beet roots in a farmers' strike

only the rot will let our answer through

a new word left over from now

a sense of men arrayed against the enemy

sun glare and broken glass

a mirror set up in the desert

the war

the word waiting

from before we learned to speak

and nothing left to be.

5 January 2003

THE RETURN

Can some come back or something be waiting?

his beard grows through the table
stone only looks like stone

it is a slow song
of something keeping still

it hides its movement

and any moment can be interrupted
by the silence of long systems

the king stands up again
and from the lake Lord Lotus rises

but we must be silent so they come
and her long hair blows out among the stars now
and seems no more personal than the weather

but when we wake
and all the molecular music stops
we will be her arms again
and reach all things together

I am my father, I still see justice
as something I can do or make or help

persuaded as I am that sunrise
also needs some help from me
because we all have sing silence together.

6 January 2003