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NOMINA IANUA

as in a different town
the tree-named streets
mean different economies
miseries religions

a name — that gate —
is in a place.

Names are doorways,
doors live in walls.

What is the wall
that naming pierces?

And are we inside or out of it?

Or does the wall go with us,
before us, like some miracle from the Bible,
wherever we go?

1 January 2004

The gates of January
most of the snow is melted
I walk outside the house
and remember.

1 January 2004

HAPPY WHEN HE WOKE

but then he read his mail
disguised as cartoons in *The New Yorker*
and knew for certain that Brooklyn
was still talking to him. And in him,
father of mutters, commissar
of complaint, everything that comes
comes to him and is about him,
everything that comes in mail.

A man would have to be insane
to give up paranoia, that delicate
but sturdy meshwork of the world
that makes all things relevant.
Para, next to. Noia, thinking.
The thought that stands beside the mind,
outside it, coming from elsewhere,
coming — now he knows — from the
other, coming to him here.

1 January 2004

The most delicate transforms
cider and cinnamon, a mouse turd
on the clean stove, a Portuguese copper mug,
a finch at some thistle seed outside.

Which one is true. Which one
is really talking to you? Credo
that if I touch one tiny animal
lightly with my fingertip

I change the world.

My hand on your skin means
immensities to both of us

no matter how different to each.

Nothing is nowhere.

Here is the circumference of everywhere.

1 January 2004

COLORS

red:

elegance is another
kind of animal but you

green:

children wait for it
but still it keeps growing

plum:

father of mutters
mother of furthers
allons-y!

blue:

but the beginning
is caught in fire

and the ending
is stuck in the flute

brown:

I tried but I was tired
you tried and I why'd
then the beginning
gave milk and the ending sang

1 January 2004

And if we were all in our places
something remarkable would begin.

2.I.04

LES CLERCS

Thirty five years schoolboys ruled the world with what their aged teachers taught them. They had learned that the only thing humans can make is war. Philosophy is one more mask of murder. Trauermusik. Hegel, Nietzsche, Althusser, Foucault, children shivering by the campfires sharpening their bayonets. Age after age bishops bless war. That is bishop work, the *raison* – which is always *trahison* – *des clerics*. Gott mit uns. And these were our sad bishops, the garrulous noblemen of '68, and still the voices of the clerics rise to sanctify assassination, usually safely in the middle distance of somebody else's war. Chomsky, Tariq Ali, the fleet of bleating animists. Other people's blood improves the glisten of their ink.

2 January 2004

BE SOMETHING SPIRIT

A gourd or pumpkin
with a face cut into it,
candle inside.

Not Halloween.

Skull of a god
whose eyes
talk to us in the dark.

That is all we understand
in the way of theology,
what a skull we made
jibbers at us wordless in the night.

Traumdeutung. Who we really are.

Who is my hand
when I touch you?

Who carved this word
out of the slimy fibers
of tropical fruit
using what knife?

I can believe nothing at all
except what you tell me.

2 January 2004

OMEN OF THE NEW YEAR

On the first day of the year
a cock pheasant
took off at our feet and flew.
Wheeze of his word,
clatter of his wings.
He settled in the tall grass by the wood.
Old friend. Once they were
common as woodchucks in these fields.
Now in ten years I've seen two.
A few minutes earlier
still looking west we saw
a hawk handling the sky.
We live by signs.

2 January 2004

M'S SNOWMAN

Once it snowed in Florence
and the rich men had their servants
sweep the snow together in a mound
for Michelangelo
to make snow sculpture from.
I suppose it's written somewhere,
Vasari or the like, what
actually the Master fashioned there.
What is known is that he did it,
complied with the patron's orders
and with the plastic properties of snow.

I see a vast head, a head
on no shoulders but the earth,
a head with fierce open mouth,
it is our work to speak,
angry eyes and nostrils flaring
and eyebrows that sneer at heaven.

A man's head, a self
portrait it may be, this
is me and I will melt away

leaving nothing but the stone.

2 January 2004

CYCLES OF BIRD

at the spilled seed.

Blue jays. Then cardinals
come. Then half a dozen
mourning doves. Then jays
again. How well Time
fits into the world
as if they were made
for each other.

Sparrows come last,
stay longest.

Empire of small.

2 January 2004

CREPUSCULE

So late that by the shrineroom window
a monk eats light. That too
is appetite, or even greed,
to take the last light and somehow
suspend yourself in it,
you and the red sun and the mountain
fixed for a few minutes
in that lover's triangle of light.
Never letting go. The sin of light.
And then the mountain wins.
A little bit ashamed
he turns back to the little gleams
here and there among the offered lamps.

3 January 2004

GUILTWORK

(Remorse is actual, remorse is your heart's horror at what you've done. Remorse is something we learn by ourselves. Our feelings teach us. Our sense of the world and our place in it, they teach us remorse when it's needed.)

But Guilt is very different.

Guilt is given.

Guilt is never yours.

Guilt is always an imposition
someone works on you, projects on you,
tricks you into feeling.

Grief is taught.

Grief is inheritance,
an educated sorrow
meant to punish you
for being, and for being you.

The guilt you feel is *always* the shadow of someone else
manipulating you.

To deal with guilt, study your earliest Instructors,
the ones who made you feel guilty, 'made you wrong,'

this guilt that impoverishes the soul.

If you recognize that guilt is *always from the other*
then you know you have something to do.

Investigation is the cure for guilt.

Dismember it

among the radiant actual,

guilt is cured by your analysis

in the context of the bright

things that are now,

the around you, the living others.

No one has the right to make you feel.

Guilt is always a seduction,

a hand laid on you firmly,

hard to shake off,

a hand that doesn't bring you closer

but a hand that will not let you go.

This hand you must dislodge
by looking up along the arm
and seeing the face
of the one who holds you in guilt,

the one who taught you to be there.

3 January 2004

As under the wind
a stillness waits
– we crouch
to touch it,
the earth holds –
silence also
– “mute hypostasis”
murmurs in my head
from what pedantic dream –
silence
is a sturdy text

a place to stand.

3 January 2004

LIGHTS

Allow each animal its weather
things wait there
for the feel of the air to be right

ech = horse

Vieh = cattle

heatcold movestill wetsy
these are inscriptions
all around them. Around us.

To move through movements.
To feel the yielding or resistance
of the air as text.

In a dark room. The lover
is always alone.

The life is towards,

it happens through.

The lover rides
through what is there

to read, finds

what is needed, breath
breathing inside breath.

4 January 2004

UNDERLINE THE WORDS THAT MEAN YOU

There is a funny feeling in my knee.
The chuchkajau said: that is lightning.
It doesn't have a meaning yet. Wait.

A friend is coming. An argument.
Another flavor of weather.
Animals hiding in the woods.

A flower blossoms
on your window ledge
but I won't listen.

4 January 2004

Chuchkajau, "motherfather," is a day-priest of the Highland Maya.

LIEBESLIED

The formality of your name
appeals to me. The titles, the literal
afterthoughts, the Ph.D.

When we're in bed
can I call you doctor?

Can I whisper your middle
initial into your navel
so deep inside yourself
you'll know my voice is really you,
you, among all the letters,
lovers, contradictions,
theories. Forget about me.

I just exist to say your name.

4 January 2004