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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
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
easy 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 skeel 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
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
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