1-2011

janD2011

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First the sky loses color
then the earth does

then we turn on something
that we call light

a bluish or yellowish permission
to see across the room

someone who’s not looking at you.
And maybe never will.

14 January 2011
The notes come so quickly—
too many, I want to digest
the spaces between them,

I’ve got rhythm of my own
I need music for its absences
the lush vitality of its ‘rests,’

the betweenness of its compromises,
it sounds, it silences,
it sounds again. Leave me

in that betweenland
that I love, amateur of overtones,
pilgrim follow note into none.

14 January 2011
mind empty of local event
a far hum
always happening
quiet    stupid    snow
has its own reasons

15 January 2011
Well-postured the big icicle is still there
not much bigger
after last night’s deep cold.
I want to know where we are weary
to begin again. And then
my next song, a snake
in a saxophone, a postcard
from the government, a boy staring at the wall. This
is the most dangerous of all.
So the sky turns out
(what we see of it, our sky
turns out to be pure upholstery
over a hard cold fact—

the Abrahamic religions
grovel gladly in its dust
because someone told them—
something, who knows what,
a voice on a mountain, a voice
calling into the door of the tomb
a voice from an angel’s wing
to listen and recite. Why not?
They heard and took to hear
what they heard the voice to say.

*A voice belongs to the one who hears it*

so what we have heard
becomes also mind,
thus have I heard

*I go to church in what I hear.*

Mostly we listen to the silence,
the voice can’t bring us all the way
but would lead you to the brink
of silence, as Dance once took me
to where the rose knows silently itself.

15 January 2011
No quiet for the mind to pray.
Public worship in the blue hour
stanchions rolled out
to channel foot traffic
the prisoners of imagery
assemble in anxious joy
they need to be near
they need to touch
the image that led them here
the shadow of it
on all their minds.
Pilgrimage. Throng.
θιασος. The god too
comes with retinue—
whole earth choked with religion.

15 January 2011
At first people must have found
the Eiffel Tower hideous—
iron scrap where should be stone
spires heavenward heaved but here
the coatless skeleton of something
mechanical, commercial, very big.
It dwarfed the sky.

How long did it take before
Parisians saw it with affection,
first class tourist attraction,
sign of the city? Or till
they smile and don’t see it at all
except maybe when a glass door
swings open or shut now and then
in Jacques Tati’s last film
and glows a glimpse of it
reflected far away?

15 January 2011
Walk there in deep snow?
Prints of a man. But even his words.
We are punctuations only
in the long, long speech of Earth
in some old master’s play.

15 January 2011
In the crowded party
women camped in the kitchen
I hurry over miles of living room
to find them there.
And there they are,
true as ever, leaning
on counters, perched
on stools, propped
against the sink—
the earth itself is not
strong enough to hold
even the slimmest woman
just standing on her feet,
the world needs her
to rest her tiny weight
on some manufactured
thing. A human thing.

15 January 2011
The ornament of earth is why.

Tracks in the snow lead
to more snow. Something stopped here.
Cæsura. Doorway to the sky.

They worked a sly miracle here,
a five-millennium-plan design
that leads to this moment now, this
is the telos of all time
if only we knew what this is
or how to hold it in our hands.
Or it is our hands. Be ready always
more or less sober and keep watch
but what makes me think these hands are mine.

16 January 2011
A piece of ordinary worry
things about checkbooks and cars
and why there are so many shadows
and why the tree’s shadow moves
all day when the tree does not.
Easy stuff, but scary if you think.
And thinking is one more terror,
frantic animal locked in your house.

16 January 2011
DRÖMSPEL

The stone house has no walls
its window look out over a plush, mowed lawn
that no one ever mows.
It is moonless midnight but we see.

We’re inside it, three women, a learned ghost, and me.
The house is big and brown
brownstone is what the no-walls are made from
and windows full of books
that let the light in or maybe make the light themselves
and give it to us
so we can move around and see each other well
we take turns being visible
being young being old
we pose against the light
or pretend we have something to say.
But we do have something,
each of us has something,
something that comes from the Himalayas
the mountain itself
where Shiva embraces Parvati and Cakrasamvara embraces Vajravarahi
but none of us come from there
just as none of us is really here
am I? are you?
you led me in and sat me down
on the windowsill where you know I like to throne it.
We all take turns at being.
How simple I want our words to be.
Our little needs, skin,
and being seen, and people love us.
No moon. When we stand
right in the middle of the stone floor
and the room is very big
big from the beginning
we sometimes hear liturgies of other practices,
those weird bundles of mistakes called ‘faiths.’
Now and then a cat trots across the floor.
One woman sits firmly on her haunches
and she is the middle of everything
I think she’s the reason we’re here,
one woman draws words neatly on the walls
we walk along the walls to read
and every word seems far apart from every other
but they all link to say a darkling poem
that takes place only in us, alive only in us,
one woman is holy—sometimes she seems to be on the lawn
sometimes to be part of the house
we lean against her then
or sometimes she floats in a dream
of which we can see only the shadow
and it smells like eaglewood.
The ghost hovers through space reciting
passages I think from Longchenpa
and I just watch the women
watching women is the most instructive thing
if I knew anything at all
it would come from having watched women
but in this house I haven’t
watched women long enough to know anything.
The woman seated firmly on the ground
says to no one in particular
“This is a place of oblation”
and my eyes (I seem to have eyes)
fill with tears
as I remember all the offerings I have made
of myself and my things and my loves and my desires,
and I even was an oblate once
back when I knew what such words meant
no wait, I do know what they mean,
they mean me, utterly.
They mean you.
And so we live in this house and meditate
until we are swept up by our thoughts
or by the lucid place beyond all thinking
shows round the edges of our thoughts
those poor things those little broken stories
and all the light beyond
sweeps us up and offers us, oblations, to some passing god.
I think we take turns at being gods, too.
That’s not certain—how little I know!
going younger getting older
touching and being touched
how is it different and how is it the same,
is anything the same?
What else is there but a lot of names?
if there were a name for what we do
I imagine it would be easier
the way rain is easy or lying on a bed is easy.
after you’ve taken off your shoes and lain down.
But in this house there is no eating,
maybe we don’t have bodies enough to eat with
that’s one more thing not certain.
But the woman gets up and gives me a book
it is the same one I brought back from France
on a ship when I was eighteen years old
and the book was the moral and philosophical
writings of Descartes
who died in Sweden of the cold
on an icy rainy day just like now and here
here and now on the other side of the dream
thousands of days later or before
and when I open the book
she takes it from me and pours out from its pages
an austere acerbic white wine,
she gives me some but I don’t drink,
that is my secret
a deranged sobriety
studying the skin of things
near and far.
The house though has no skin
its windows have no glass
and the woman sit and stand around
making the words turn flesh,
if this is flesh we are,
we are certainly there
but there like the walls of this houseless house
where there and not there mean the same,
but is anything the same,
shades of light or shadows of someone thinking,
you, out there, hungry with sleep, waking me now?

16 January 2011
The simple of it
a kite over the little hill
between Lasalle St. and the river
where they come on weekends
from Chinatown to tourney
paper dragons on the sky sward.
I almost rented an apartment there,
it would have changed
my life entirely
though I still miss the pretty kites—
who would I be now
and who would be my dragons?

17 January 2011
STANZE. STUBEN. STOVES.

The only muscle for art enlightens or tries us a word we never heard is spoken that is why apt over the horizon to embrace the distance itself as the sky embraces earth the questionable miracle of desire organic evidence of a star is still alive the sentience surpasses our meek boundaries girl an event all over a thought is wall enough to shape what happens installation art is you has to be you always at the center this cup is just for you into it the light pours the sound welcomes if only your heart beat if only you hear Socrates is a midwife therefore birth art art birth the answer no question needed luminous word healed of religion all the fish freed into the sea art is liberation of the next half-mile
step by step building a jungle to hack our way through
one time a sunflower grew from such seed
now a cloud releases sleet anxiety a philosophy of

nature needs revelation else we’re stuck
with our senses Hermia leads us to sleep
anteaters are designed to eat ants why must ants be eaten

is our whole being too shaped by appetites baser than geometry
no thank god we are too awkward in our bodies
to go wrong bless us with turning inside out

ribcage of fasting Shakyamuni the sky
was a stone once began to think the food
was so good it had no taste but lived us.

18 January 2011