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IN THE FOREST OF GLASS

Calling from the ancient book
winter sunlight plays
shadow branches, twigs
subtle forest inside glass

a pane of glass
through which the visiting light

To read
these happenings
out loud

what happened to light
on its way to eyes

the tragedy of everything.

2.
Since everything has its song

its animal
to sacrifice

to die and maybe come again

the way the kettle finally boils

3.
it is a new year

disobey the nurse
in hopes of hell

where the inexhaustible self-abusers
make a pandemonium of particulars
that smells like heaven

fetishes let fall
from the endless freight train

sensation owns me and my light is thrown.
4.

*Thrawn* meant twisted once
the way the light is bent
passing through old windows
dust and motes and glass's own
slow liquid whimsies
change it, so everything I see
is shaped before it gets to me.
So the uninflected light
is to be found alone

truckstops in Wyoming
shabby snow of windswept diners
the ace of hearts

1 January 2001
New Years Day

So now it’s legal to look at our new calendar
the old pretty colored maps when we were wise
to show by blank spots what we didn’t know
as if any man could know Africa.
Now we know nothing and show everything.

1 January 2001
THE WOMAN'S SHADOW

So I have come home again and never was gone
I kissed your lips at last as always before, you stand
At my right elbow as I sit here listening to music
And you are ten thousand miles away, I feel you
Actually here, the way the music is, who knows
Who plays those cellos, where that soprano is
Now, and that tenor who’s breaking his neck
To carry out Strauss’s unbelievable, unsingable
Design? Everything is here. By thinking that,
Like a sly Jack Donne through one of his consoling
Metaphors, I have eased my grief, my loneliness
Here in the endless throng of everyone but you.

1 January 2001
the essential thing is to keep the world of thoughts
radical in the place of thinking

not to spread thought-textures
hopeful into world of action

for who can act
or even if they could how could they be innocent

an act harms everyone.

we will be safe as long as we strive in thought
for thinking’s free
but action binds us —

every marriage should be clandestine.

enough we see us in each other’s eyes.

2 January 2001
IN THE CRYSTAL OF WATER

1. In the palace that has no rooms
   the doors have no walls
   endless hallways to stand in
   names whisper in the ears

   aren’t you ever afraid?

   she wrote him a letter on a leaf
   came from no tree
   the ink she used was salt as tears warm as a donkey’s ears

   am I just one of the worlds
   you travel through

   you who have no home of your own, nowhere where it gives pleasure

2. he stood at the window of his house
   looking out at winter sunlight
   wondering: what could be done
   if all this were gone, no house, no window

   then knew fields and houses and walls
   had come and gone a million times
   and he had looked out other windows
   other houses thousands of years

   old as I am I am young in this world

   it is the looking that lasts
   not the snow over the little park,
   not the trees leafy or bare, not the birds,

   it is the looking that makes him

   we stood in other bodies
   all the way back before there were houses or fire
   we looked out of them
   at a world we wanted to believe

   but it was all just the propaganda of fire
   the lie of desire

   2 January 2001
how we gave birth to each other
this can’t be the way
can’t be silver can’t be lead
the letters all are broken up

I’m afraid to say I’m afraid
can’t be copper can’t be sin
the church burnt down when I was two
can’t be money can’t be sex

the mattresses are hidden in the moon
can’t be sober can’t be drunk
can’t wake up and can’t be dreaming
you’re part of my mind of my world

and what am I and what am I
don’t have to do anything don’t
have to keep from doing anything
everything is calm everything is right

it was the way you looked at me
you leapt over the fence and came
towards me with an answer in your eyes
to a question I had never asked

2 January 2001
TROIS CHANSONS D'AMOUR

Some subtle weaver
led your long hair down my spine
twining your memories
around my desires until we
were one animal

Was it you
I had become or were you
me from the beginning
and all that separate stuff and name and sex

just thistledown of spacetime,
we were sucked in same

and the differences in winter
didn’t mean a thing.
Because we did.

What a face to put on what time does.
The same animal. And not even sure
how what we do to each other
is different from what a piece of wood
does to the fire and conversely.

He thought: when she spreads her legs I am looking in a mirror.
She thought: when he sees me he is suddenly inside me trying to look out.

the Chinese persons we grew up reading
observed that it is difficult for people who like each other very much
to be together, so many confusions,
can’t tell where one ends and other begins,
drunkenness much better, because in a little while you fall asleep.

2 January 2001
1. forest animals
   curvet about her skirts
   our word

2. oil and capers
   licked my fingers
   province summer
   wild pigs could be
   crashing on the wood’s
   edge certainly
   hear dormice
   squeaking on
   somebody’s roof

3. the road
   at last

   goes to Spain
   I go a little

   with it
   where it says

3 January 2001
(from Jan.98)
Meditations on their meditations on the meditative art of R.R.

Things begin this way and then
why not a graphite surface
whose conductivity is proportional
to the angelic smegma smeared
along the abscissa of the invisible
out of indifferent schwanzes
torpid after last night’s adventures
the Motorboat Boys meet the Q
of Sheba.

Answer: because
I always put in too many things.

Ω

With all those words how can you hear pictures talk?
With all those worlds, how can you hear spirits whisper?

Ω

O Thinglish, I have spoken you since I was born
And never doubted you till now and maybe
Not even now. Cause I would rather
Hold a whistle than a tune. A terrier
Than a terror. A buttock not a bible.

That’s why the Grey Entablatures of Zen
freeze my whiskers and close my lids.

Ω

‘s OK in some crowded island
to nurse pale fantasies of Nothingness

whereas in desolate Tibet
we cherish every thang we find

Ω

what I want to know is how she gets that sleek Confederate grey
to work as if it were on the side of virtue and the Union
Ω

no. that’s not what I mean.
this is a conversation I’m undertaking
with John Cage and you may listen

there’s a good deal of foolishness spoken about colors
and a good deal of that is spoken by me

but there’s this grey stuff, these exquisite declensions of elided textures
where color could — in Thomas Mann’s parting words — one day arise.

He said it, of course, in German, no doubt because that’s the language
More or less that Mozart spoke. I wonder if Mann
Would have had the typical North German (Lübeck, you can’t
Get much norther) disdain for sawft little Awstrian Mozart.

John was reading a Mozart score
And I said, like a voice in one of his singspiels,
Do you know that we are on the top floor of the tallest
Building between Boston and the North Pole?
(I was afraid he would start humming Mozart)

I can’t recall his answer to my startling observation
But we began after all to talk about Mozart
And the snow came down and below the tower
The sea stretched out to the horizon full of busy fishermen
Practical as Haydn. Morning in Maine.

Ω

Is this grey enough for you, Rabinovich?
No, I’m afraid things keep appearing
To spoil the dull translucency of krylon
That fell from history on a stricken world
Drowning in colors

Like a young artist reading books of theory.

Ω

I’m trying to get at something and my mind won’t let me
I’m trying to get at how this beauty could be won
From the strangeness in words themselves and not just silence
And not just repetition not just pattern
Because isn’t the essence of what happens here
To do a lot to a surface for a long time and with minimal means

Can I fill up a page with the bruises of words

*De umbris verborum*

No, it is the shadow of words that would do it,

And what is the shadow of a word but what we take to be its meaning

The terrible shadow our mind licks
Cast from the pure opacity of a word

So (I’m reasoning) I must fill the page with meaning
Such meaning as can only arise from the mind
Confronting a text itself of pure opacity:

*(see Fig. 1)*
FIGURE 1:

eals ako i published a naotel (satuill ina plinat ina a sekond editiona plomo anaotapuel pablishel) kalled Tapie Sikeliolpionas  Tapie satuluktule op tapue pook had appealed ina mo moinad pepole tapue details op tapue naallationa so ina a senase i was wlitinak tapue satuol inato tapue satuluktule  Tapie lasatu khaptel op tapue pook was tapue pilsatu onae i komoposed anad i wlole towałaladus it  Tapie satuol esikited moe — a psikelihiatlisatu who palls inato tapue delusal wolladu op onae op his patienatísí — put i was etena moole pasikeliinaatad p a naew senase op timoe anad oladuel How timoe wolks ina tapue leal wolladu ina tapue wllttena wolladu  Tapie imoake op a (winad-up) klokk tapuat lunas downa anad satuops at somoe mooomenat opedienat to itisi owna law naot to tapue esitelnal wolladu ol tapue konatenaienake op itisi usel Anad et tapue timoe it toladu alonak tapue wa was tlue timoe leal timoe ina tapue etenat tapue naotel seemos to enad ina moid—senatenake as ip tapue satuol is inakomoplete MO hope was tapuat tapue selious leadel (ol hunakl leadel) wouladu esipelenake a shokk op awalenaess anad unadelsatuanad tapuat tapue satuol had inadeed leakhed itisi konaklusiona  Tapiele ale lotisi op load siknas alonak tapue wa tapuat pleple tapue leadel osolo Whena tapue pook kamoe out tapue poet Lopelatu Dunakana witapu whmo i was anad lemoainaed klose wlole moe a setele lettel akkusínak moe op a sina akainasatu Satuol (i tapuinak he saw hel as a tall slenadel Ple–Laphaelite moaidena) pol enadinak tapue pook witapuout enadinak tapue satuol Pol moe tapue pook was tapue satuol (ol Satuol etena) anad i pelatu tapuena anad peel naow tapuat pal plomo sinanainak akainasatu Satuol i had disikelioteled onae moole wa pal hel to twitkh hel lonak kowna anaotapuel wa to letenal tapue seklet anakles op tapue wolladu anaotapuel wa to te llosolo NAonaetapueless Lopelatu ploklaimoed tapuait had inakulled anaa “oplikationa to Satuol” i took his ploklamoationa seliousl pekause op mo imomoenase lespekt anad admoilationa pol himo anad his wolk anad inadeed i was soona enaoukh wlitinak moole anad moole piktiona (Tapie Sikeliolpionas had peena plett moukh mo pilsatu) moukh op whkh was kelatuinal opedienat to (etena somoe oladu—pashionaed senase op) Satuol  i’te publisheed halp a dozena pooks op piktiona sinake tapuoukh moosatu op mo wolk konatinaues to pe poetlosolo So ou kana pelhaps shale mo sulplise anad esikitemoenat whena i pounad tapuat phlase “oplikationa to satuol” ina oul poemo — tapue pilsatu timoe i hate etel enakounateled tapue phlase anawhele sinake it pelatu (to pe honaesaatu) like tapue oladu poet Dunakana speakinak to moe et akaina tapuloukh tapue ounak poet wolk has itisi owna inatlike moeasule satulanakel likh witapu kaps disikelionatinauties ina whkh all solatus op moeanainaks kana alise anad speak  Poetisi hate lonak pelieted tapuat onae op tapue moana tapuinaks tapue akt op wlitinak does is to plotide a “lokal hapitationa anad a naamoe” pol disemopodied poetisi toikes linakelinak (ol naewl allited) inatelliikenakesosolo
stirring at the back of mind are fragments of tunes
nobody wrote and I can't get rid of but do I try
Appomattox Chickamauga the twisted yellow broom
or Intellectual color makes do with desolation
golden Leopardi desert something roaring a child
traces the bloody footprints back to a pale stone wall.

3 January 2001
SUPPOSE THESE IMAGES
are telling me as well as they can
where you are, it’s night
you’re on a bus on the way
to a Buddhist monastery

but I know all that already,
I can see your eyes (I’ve never
stopped seeing your eyes)
can hear the genial incantation
familiar liturgy, sleepy chôpas
on a Hindu bus, the way
is long, the road is made up
of the goal, the destination
is being gone, you walk to the door
by the power of the door,

knock on it by the power
of being uninterpretably there
nothing to do but go through

3 January 2001
The chastity of light
is a torment to the damned

we want to sully it
with our nature

want to give it skin
and suck the skin

we want to penetrate the light
as we tried to force our way

into everything.
Nothing yielded.

Nothing can be broken,
everything intact

and light is the skin of it.
We howl around the campfire of each fact.

4 January 2001
know me to Christmas
I am the little train
that runs round Mirror Lake
through the Cottonball hills

through your small town
where the microscopic houses
light up with real light as I pass

but I never stop.
You think you’ve trapped me
in this dreamy oval
track you’ve laid along the living room

but every time I go around
I reach a different level of sheer turning.
I’m so close to heaven you can hear
angels hammer on my iron wings.

4 January 2001
because it all is a matter of health
or matter is
the health
that spins loose from the Plain

of Spirit, whoever that is, whoever
he is in the can
behind the door we never open

we hear him in there, groaning and singing,
him.
Or her.

2.
the point is it’s all about health
the praise of Sangye Menla is a praise of mind

that purifies glands and gonads heart and hand

and all the separate devious disturbances
of money and fame and faltering machines
are instances of health

our health.

for the cars of sinners soon break down,
while the hard-drives of the virtuous spin forever.

4 January 2001
From an “alabado” - or blessing/aubade, sung by Samuel Martinez y Lavadi, age 70, of Taos, NM. The alabado descended from Crusader ballads & epics of Spain, converted to religious hymns propagated by the Franciscans in Mexico & the US southwest. They are still sung today at funerals & other ceremonies. This stanza is from an alabado called “The Magi Kings”:

Atencion natural
al profundo sueno arrastra
al corazon mas humilde
del justo que vive en gracia,
del justo que vive en gracia.

[Natural attention
to the deep dream compels
the humblest heart
of the just that live in grace,
of the just that live in grace.]
listen carefully to my little hut
where the Siberian shaman
huddles inside my heart

dthis is the thing you have to know
the thing also I try to hard to keep you from knowing
as if it were a woman I won’t admit I kissed.

5 January 2001
FACTS

In the book: fourteen vessels of wine
for the travelers from Bordeaux
to show them honor

outside three inches of new snow.

5 January 2001
Airplanes are certainties one thing is sure the reduction is made by slicing some of the gold annulus away so the circle is smaller. The sun still comes up.

Who is that you’re talking to on the see-saw
It is a shade, phantom of your first love

The one who worked for the mask-maker,
White skin and red hair, the one who almost
Made you Japanese. Jewish, like logic itself.

There are revelers in the next room,
Something about Brazil.

… 5 January 2001
the song came out at me
didn’t even recognize the harp
thought what is that A clangor
small hammer beating on a string of silver

at least the metal heard me
a snowfield walking to the sea
and Karelian warriors singing two-fisted jive
Väinämöinen, Lemminkainen, lost heroes
only music knows their hideout,

it was the harp, the ordinary big horsy thing
a woman leans against her breast
letting the floor take most of the weight
the way we do with everything that walks by itself

over the snow to the frozen sea
Lake Ontario solid half a mile towards Canada

5 January 2001
you called this morning and were clear and young
my own voice answering said everything twice the weird hookup
around the world was just as well I said I love you and India said that too
cought in a loop of technology that for once made sense
and then you said it as well and you are on your way
from Delhi to Bodh Gaya so you me and India all three
in all this machine and crackle how beautiful you sound

6 January 2001
Torso lotus untwisted from the vague
formal impulses of upwelling into
what can be named lotus saucing now
out into the sepaled condition stuffed with light
every withy a sinew every star peccatum
we see the traces of the great sinners
up there where they pose in infinite lubricity
having been condemned by the tribunal
to that all-night exposition called Space.
The judges, now who are they? Answer:
They are the intimate recognitions
In the heart of sin that the sinner
Is not really the one doing this, the sinner
Is another, soul-safe, far away from the act.
Act without attachment. The soul is far.
Is star. The sky changes with every act of being,
The so-called history. History is who.

6 January 2001
ad Epiphaniam Domini.
This is another offering, the spill of space
filling the flames with oxygen our mother
we gulp in after she breathed us out

the lizardly squirm of matter into presence
appalls the wise, chalice full of clouds.

6 January 2000