

Nativity Ode

Doug Barrett

Christmas Eve

snow flurries creeping down the mountains
almost caressing cozy houses, bright-lit stores.
Something like sanctity sits upon the many-breasted hills.

White trail across the canyon
worms into the hollows, disappears.

Metamorphic witchery of winter wild—

frost enveloping car windows
fingers cold, but not too cold to write.
Cottontail scampers through the snow.

Getting dark, magpies long gone
jackrabbit limps along a ditch.

Where does that feeling come from—

the lamb-like winter world? Winter is savage here.
Snow and wind can kill you. Snow, like earth,
is part of nature, nature part of God
unless a whore, veiled in bridal white—
purity lie hiding another lie.

Hidden in earth the dragonbody lies.

Prodded by mile-long needles it writhes
and Christmas lights flicker worldwide. It is energy,
diamond mind, fossilized lust, riches of the deep,
sacred river, pressurized power
ejaculating in a mighty fountain

black fiery plumes. Its plastic skin blankets ocean beds.

From Babylonian sands extrude
its innumerable talking heads

expounding the latest prophecies of war
destined to reveal millennial jewel
and ratify the right to rule.

Jesus, do you acknowledge your bastard children?

The temples that you cleansed are full of them:
little gray men naturally warring on nature,
on light, and on each other. Let them play. It's always been this way.
We reverence you, baby Jesus,
not for your omnipotence but for your impotence.

Why do the nations rage? "Let us break his bonds asunder."

The world gathers together to fight against the Tao
against Allah, against Dharma, against Jah
against Nature, against Law, against the Lamb
against the Perennial Philosophy, against all that is Wakan
against the Everlasting Gospel.

Somewhere seabirds ride the lifeless ocean
or lie inert on land, dioxin-blooded.

Survivors call their fellows
across the waters, across continents
"Come together to the supper of the great God!
Maggot-pies, gulls, vultures, crows, feast on human flesh."

Yes, nature can kill you. Yet even at this moment
perhaps it's not impossible to discern
surrounding centrally-heated pleasure domes
the music and the silences
percussion of fir cones
crescendo of wind in pine needles

or maybe even elephants on unfathomably low frequency
whale call thousand-mile sound channel
mythical spheres in harmony

cosmic chant aum-amen

Messiaen's birdsong, mélange of desert languages
insect voices only Bartók heard.

Tomorrow sparrows will forage in these hills

flickers and jays in pinyons imitate
hawks, imitate each other

snowmelt chatter of juncos and finches
each oracle disclosing
the song of the supreme source:

"Come up! This is the marriage supper of the Lamb!

Blessed are those called to it!" Emptiness echoes
out of salt and sage flats, across exhausted ridges
twittering with the unborn light that saves
yet kills you if you never give it birth
or if you do. Haven't you heard it yet:

unlooked-for sound, unheard-of multicolored lights
emanations of the crucified dragonbody
hidden within the cradle of your mind
and sage and snow and pine?

Let it kill you, then go in vain to save the world
with archaic song unending

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