

Hushaby Mountain: Christmas Night

I.

The pendulum moves during the frail hours; the wind blows.
Home alone thru the white night
one fat red bayberry candle
left to burn.

This cold, wolf-like:
teeth dug into the mountain.
Wind barking like a saw.
What faded were men and women eating. Bursting buckles. Gravy and wine.

I drove home to see a valley
like earth's last waystation:
handful of lights burning on. Kilowatts. Ikons.
We'll have "selected scarcity" for the rest of our lifetimes,

news came
a beacon from a lighthouse.
A Breughel valley shone, Northern Renaissance,
or like the steppes of Russia:

wide as an ocean
with dots of crimson, houselights cupped in bare trees.
I drew my knees to my chest with the cold:
Patience, our hardest gift from the gods, came to hand.

II.

This subzero water.
This marbled wind.
This ashy, unending waste of time.
Cock-Robin. Jenny-Wren. Hushaby Mountain.

Stilling dread,
deformity's twin,
shrift, law of confession
was written up for the hawk and the grey nesting-dove.

(Continued on page 2)

The radical, sensible light
returns
while far in the distance
my house shines, burnished.

Boxing Day tomorrow
when in Old England
leftovers were boxed for the poor.
Nativity. Native Land, what shall we box?

This brittle light? the wind?
the desert-love, guarded so by patience, nearly withdrawn?
the telling how, amid selected scarcity, we live on
while life grows richer, narrow to the bone.

III.

We all have fairest ones.
Nothing
will bring her back
the dove, not handsome by half as my own. Barbarian.

Again as when a child
the tongue turns
to cotton
in my mouth. Words won't come.

Again in the hovel of the heart:
four chambers
black windows
red walls. Mine is neither the voice which answers nor calls.

Out of the car
to brave cold
as miners do
the dark.

We are nailed, rooted in this waystation: earth.
The seasons shoulder our grief, like planets.
The dolor's kissed away by wind as if Christ
dared this wolf-cold tonight, deigned to descend.