

the map

i.

suspended above the curve of planet
the very idea of light hangs
just above blue of land-form so massive
it distances slowly as this flight speeds
fast as earth can turn the sun it seems to
hold still.

snow lies in the clear-cuts, and the dark of what forest remains
outlines the shape of what's out of reach,
the reach of every imagined idea of order.

through windows, distance and light reflect in pools
in the pools sometimes connected
patterns of memory
shimmer

in the hollows, in the land-
forms shaped by layers of winter
all before sun held still on the rim of horizon.

ii.

contours of longing emerge
in the shape of some far country
on the horizon of dream
where memories cluster as
configurations of light, turn

and return according to the certain formations
shifting at the edge of the visible.

lines emerge from the shadows.
currents bring from underground
memory of the ice-bound sea, of the way in dream
things break down in the face of fire.

fire begins
the narrative
horizon shifts and
we gather in time.

iii.

we gather in time on the threshold
of change, of understanding
what's past is lost

or loss, an image of
some hero, gives shape an idea
some future hero, come to piece together

a territory, a structure
a kind of grammar reflecting,
as the pools reflect the rule of sun,
the rule of stars, and all we have words for.

and all we have words for
becomes some half-held remembrance
an idea of some promise
stolen from the sun.

iv.

from below i have seen
the point of sunrise change.

i have drawn a line between
today and yesterday. there, on the ground
it is thought
there may be a linear flow to things.

from below i have noticed
the changing point of sunrise
stops from time to time.

from which i draw conclusions.
lines emerge. a pattern begins the idea
of tomorrow, the idea of
recurrence,
before and after, the idea of

having, and taking
some source of warmth and
light for the dark times.

v.

this is why this carved stone
marks the place
where a great force holds
still the sun three days;
there on the horizon

the beginning of fire. i saw in a dream
how a door to the sun opens

opens for you, the deliberate hero.
let me make you a map, let me
dance for you the steps to take,
more than one can tell
except by dancing.

vi.

here, too, is a drawing
showing how small the world was before
the idea of sequence set in motion

history like snow layered, compressed and
sliding the ancient valley
down the path of least resistance
now a river you can trace

on the map.

vii.

some of these inscriptions are songs
for chasing down the light
to make the sun move slowly
grow tired,
come back.

until a change in the way shadows fall
at dawn on the solstice
melts a tunnel beneath the ice
in the moment between past and present.

viii.

and at the beginning
time you step through it
an opening, opening in the sea ice.

little light.
you could die in the minutes.

alone in this difficult terrain
you will have to learn
the slow moves a hunter makes
creeping like rivers of ice toward
the promised, the foretold.

ix.

awake at dawn
speechless and without plan
in a place which holds
no memories, no
words you can remember

this map, these inscriptions.
each configuration of marks or stars
repeats the shape of the last message
seen in eclipse
in the flame of corona,
in the shapes of dancers at the door to the sun.

relic words fall together,
mark out the bed for
some streaming private metaphor

you can follow
the coursing water, the blue
of land-forms you recognize
drawn by fear of discovery,
thirst for revelation.

x.

find your bearing.
position a stone to mark the place
of emergence, for others to read
in the tumbled stones

one common word
chanted at a certain frequency
makes a magic to help you
take on the shape of dreams.

xi.

when you have come as far as the map can show
one last inscription tells you
how to make a mask
to transform your steps
into something like flight, wild

birds the light comes like
breath, brushing the wings
of circling birds

flight embedded in some inflection
of light, the way shadows fall and are caught

as birds the light falls around you breathing.

xii.

once in flight you will see the edge of sky
holds the shape of all the songs
thought lost.

what's called timeless; what's called eternal,
the slow shadow cast
on the ground tracked by
those who learned the grammar of the possible

and reconstruct
the small words
inscribing the tumbled stones.

memory marks the confluence.
the blood of memory
flows to the heart.

xiii.

and when it is time,
you will hear the old women sing.

listen. songs, the words for things songs
in themselves, set dancers circling
as birds in an updraft.

what words these are. the sounds by night come
clear, stories drawn
by pattern, by constellation, by these songs
each hollow fills with

light, gliding over the tongue
as stars smooth the sky
in places you can see
earth's curve, thin white line.