

MIDWINTER DAY
(December 21, 2008)

Always Hazel laughed
in her sleep

but my dreams were dreams of power
and power badly
used

I am being humble in the face of things
casting, in this America, my eyes down
for the re-enactment.

But last night was a night with no opening dream
no love
no poets
no company
no birds & so

as the first part is always missing:
“nissan kia Toyota ford chevy Honda Cadillac”

some cars.

What we live behind is a used car lot
and a tall fence and a short yard
though sometimes I say
“Which shall we steal?”
Hazel says “the silver.”

“Okay you go first”
and then to the dumpster
but the sign says:

DO NOT TAKE OUR TRASH.

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I get my information from poetry
so what do I know?

hysteria and many pleasant anachronisms,
how we slip through the fence
for our walk and step on the concrete
stone someone made
for those of us who cut through
where the thick-necked men
in neck ties are seen tossing
a nerf football at dusk

I am sorry
this could be sentimental --
how what I once wanted
was furniture and drawers.

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“No, it’s morning winter day” Hazel says who also says “how do you thread a needle?” and though we cannot make ham or parker house rolls or evergreen trees from old sweaters we have made two birds and a newborn owl and a poisoned cat with a scarf and a frowning cube.

This could be sentimental --
to be a mother or a daughter

like how the sight of children
makes Hazel tell me
children are the enemies of children--

but also how she says at K-mart, “that was a look of quiet sorrow”
about a passing stranger, also “could you tie a knot?”
because I am the only one here who can close --

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Hazel imagines systems
she tells me
I can never know

//

What I do not understand
getting our information
from poetry:
money

but I held you against my chest when you were new so that if you forgot to breathe my breathing would remind you.

This is like one of those soft thoughts
which like many soft thoughts
is a thought despised by the world of men --

and while there are so many things I do not understand when still a girl and understanding nothing I would still imagine a house made of mud full of nothing and that I had to fill using only scraps and sticks and bones

Emma Goldman her first
time in jail: "someone at least
bring me my sewing"

and from another room, "where's my needle" and under the bed, the dog, chewing a plastic cup.

You've got your white belly sticking out of your brown sweater. You've got your hands on your belly. You are saying, "we do this with no instruction" and when I come to find the book *Midwinter Day* everyone hollers

but what color is it?
Alex says "I think it is white"
But I think it is blue or gray.

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I hate to knot it and thread the needle but by the end I got pretty good. I'm not trying to copy, really. I got no pattern. This is just that. If I dreamed a dream at all last night it was a dream of how a form is a shoe. THE TRUE POEM IS A FOOT I SAID. Alex said one side is "what am I doing" and the other said "this is how you do it." Hazel said "dropped the needle." I said "I am writing." And one side is "what am I doing" and the other side is "do it like this."

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Robert J. Baumann we read a sentence in Proust.
Robert J. Baumann we think of you,
 in love not with the girls,
but with the way the light of the morning falls, for a moment, on their cheeks.
Robert J. Baumann this whole apartment
 loves you.

We made big plans to be gifters.

We were going to play tricks
We were a traveling tribe of ne'er-dowells
We made lists:

We should dream of magazines, write ballads, stuff pigs. If I dreamed at all last night it was of an enemy
making a book that was a satire of me

while the bourgeois mothers everywhere are hiding
their lustless
thinking.

They are worried about Disneyland.
They are worried about Bratz.
They are worried about mercury.
They are worried about fish.

I don't get paid again till February 15
so Alex makes us
pancakes from expired mix.

//

nowhere in the original
about stealing food from a buffet.

What do I do?

WHAT ARE WE
a blue and gray
society
re-enactor
in a minor way?

"lost my punk part"
Bernadette says

but here I was slipping
ham in my purse
from OLD COUNTRY BUFFET

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and here I am, thirty five, dreaming in the nuclear. He says "booty" because we like that word. He carries
a bowling bag and is so much younger, like Hazel says "he got you a bowling ball" and I say "Good

because I love bowling, I'm great at bowling" and Hazel says "no, I think you are better at literature" and he says "no no no no you're crushing the wire" and she says "what?" and there is so much gasping – "will I be in this?"

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There are plans for a new economy. There are plans for increased squalor. There are plans for the collapse of everything. There are plans to buy nothing till payday. There are plans to end the twentieth century. There are plans to eat the food.. There are plans to remake poetry

with a single institutional vision. I get an email from Judy about academic labor. Elizabeth says the GDP is cracked. Shanna says she wishes there were no such thing as money. A student says he understands about his grade. And Gary writes says Gary

a daughter of a poet has killed herself in Italy. Gary writes
I don't know what else to write

brightest sun that dies today lives again as blithe tomorrow but if we dark sons of sorrow set o then how long a night shuts the eyes of our short light. Hazel singing to the dog on the other side of the shut door. The cat is out in the cold. The heat kicks on just in time against the windows and for daughters I don't know and

for my own daughter, who is singing to the dog, and then examining the dog, who she says now has a disease, the dog who must keep a lamb on her head its 15,000 dollars an hour, the dog who is now getting, from Hazel,

a "live-forever heart."

I think another soft thought
and another soft thought
I think soft thoughts
like all soft thoughts
despised by the world
of men

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Hazel says, "I am going to live forever."

I say "What is your substance, whereof are you made?"

I say, "That we could live a thousand, and a hundred score."

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I have an academic industrial
complex
yelling out
“Don’t eat shit”

while the tenured hands of the industry
hold themselves up freely
to emphasize they are tied.

That’s why I don’t
write poems like this.

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Hazel yells, “Did you hear that? Anne says we can go to the grocery store!”
and the dog barks, like I am so humble

in this America
shaking from coffee
and every better way to be
than this.

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In the bedroom the old gray Pomona curtains with yellow brown peach flowers. I sold half for money. I kept half. You should know broadcloth can make you almost a hundred dollars. You should learn about the nature of all fabrics, how you can burn threads and smell them as a test, what is wool and what is Dacron, what linings will disintegrate after many years. You should know what you can sell for what. I have never lived anywhere of my own accord nor had money enough of my own nor freedom in any measure to leave. Or if I have, the cost of these qualities of freedom were not conceivable in my economy, which was a narrow economy depending on thrift and fibers and avoiding death. This makes reading very different. In the original, there are so many questions of choices. In the original, there is this feeling that suddenly one is not so free. Which of these is a story of an individual family which is like history? Did she mean ice?

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“It’s solstice, you can’t have the lights on.” They are supposed to feed me, but they don’t know how. I say, “What, you do not know how to feed me? To feed yourselves?”

So often do I labor in the softest way
The sweet weight of labor dis-figured as love.

This is just the first part – first stains on a curtain, then a fear of grape jam. I remember the bicentennial and looking out from a window. I remember California. I remember how I could remember every day of my life

How in the public library my ambition tripled

And who, in this
soft love, is not-----