

Nocturne

Phil Cohea

The drug that made me sleep this far has faded
and it's two A.M. In a dream of war,
fires catching the nearby homes, I wasn't myself
breaking the windows of the dying; my friends
for whom I wept I didn't know. Outside
the snow hardens, two days off: Thanksgiving.
Harvest ended weeks ago, wheat
swept away clean. Cold stiff carcasses
pass through town in the pickups of happy men.

A real war smoulders far away in daylight
through a constant haze. There Abraham
fathered our deadly faiths: Judaism,
Islam, Platonic Christianity,
polytheisms all.

Here, cold air,
clear under stars, reveals the breath of life,
how quickly it disappears in a rifle shot
or a stranger passing near hunched in a coat
without speaking.

I hear each car appear, distinct,
out of the unknown dark, driver unseen,
destination lonely and a place to freeze.

I know no one to call but me at this hour.
I know no one in The Middle East. How
can a place be a direction? How in the middle?
If I look that way across America sleeping,
an ocean writhing, the sun on African hills,
I see only my neighbor's walls.

My clocks
are no longer circular nor do they tick.
I feel time now. I've grown to bear its effects.
And even to play with it at times. I've traced it
in sandstone made graceful by wind, eons piled,
dried and slashed where The Bible counts for nothing,
no prophets ever walked or evil gods
or saints.

Night shadows do not move indoors
where Kocopelli pauses in his dance along
my wall to play a run of crazy notes.
This is The West, far West. Where does direction
start? Somewhere east but short of the war,
some place from where wars are directed. Awake,
I know the missiles will not come, the kids
next door are dreaming in peace, safely north.

No cars now for minutes, only me
and the refrigerator, breathing easy,
the quick movements of my pencil, rest
made possible by my warm leather chair.