

New Year's

The Cantonese laugh
of the landlords
upstairs. They blow their noses
late into the night.

Downstairs, I sit
in a haiku
almost. Snow crusted
on the neighbor's roof.

The forest behind
the house resembles
a sea of stiff reeds. The sky
sends down enough glow

to write by. Jill's
red wreath still hangs
dark in the window. I'd like
to be the wine

we're aging in the cool
bedroom, sealed
and developing in secret:
mute, the changes,

trivial almost, from one
day to the next. When I turn
the electric baseboard
heaters to low,

a dingy hue sinks
 into the dark living room. Now
the restless birds settle
 in the eaves. And now Jill

opens and closes
 books in the study.
I think myself without desire,
 but the sound of cars

outside, the automatic fan
 in the bathroom, low
rumble of central heat,
 each house's own

industrial furnace. And
 I see now no Tang
poet would recognize
 the unnatural radiance

of the sky (from nearby
 greenhouses), the high
pitch of engines gunning up
 our hill. Even

the Zodiac, marching
 over us again,
seems out of sight.
 The words I find for this

have been heard before—
 but who
will see what is here
 if I do not:

the house crusted with snow
 the forest like stiff reeds?