

Ulver

"Stone Angels"

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[The full lyrics to Stone Angels are printed in the album booklets.

It is a poem written by Keith Waldrop first published in 1997 by homonymous title

Reedited in Transcendental Studies: A Trilogy on 2009]

Angels go - we
merely stray, image of
a wandering deity, searching for
wells or for work. They scale
rungs of air, ascending
and descending - we are a little
lower. The grass covers us.

But statues, here, they stand, simple as
horizon. Statements,
yes - but what they stand for
is long fallen.

Angels of memory: they point
to the death of time, not
themselves timeless, and without
recall. Their
strength is to stand
still, afterglow
of an old religion.

One can imagine them
sentient - that is to say, we may
attribute to stone-hardness, one after the
other, our own five senses, until it spring
to life and
breathe and sneeze and step
down among us.

But in fact, they are
the opposite of perception: we
bury our gaze in them. For all my
sympathy, I
suppose they see
nothing at all, eyeless to indicate

our calamity, breathless and graceful
above the ruins they inspire.

I could close my eyes now and
evade, maybe, the blind
fear that their wings hold.

The visible body expresses our
body as a whole, its
internal asymmetries, and also the broken
symmetry we wander through.

With practice I might
regard people and things - the field
around me - as blots: objects
for fantasy, shadowy but
legible. All these
words have other meanings. A little
written may be far too
much to read.

A while and a while and a while, after a
while make something like forever.

From ontological bric-a-brac, and
without knowing quite what they
mean, I select my
four ambassadors: my
double, my shadow, my shining
covering, my name.

The graven names are not their
names, but ours.

Expectation, endlessly
engraved, is a question
to beg. Blemishes on exposed
surfaces - perpetual
corrosion - enliven features
fastened to the stone.

Expecting nothing without
struggle, I come to expect nothing
but struggle.

The primal Adam, our
archetype - light at his back, heavy
substance below him - glanced
down into uncertain depths, fell in
love with and fell
into his own shadow.

Legend or history: footprints
of passing events. Lord
how our information
increaseth.

I see only
a surface - complex enough, its
interruptions of
deep blue - suggesting that the earth
is hollow, stretched around
what must be all the rest.

My "world" is parsimonious - a few
elements which
combine, like tricks of light, to
sketch the barest outline. But my
void is lavish, breaking
its frame, tempting me always to
turn again, again, for each
glimpse suggests more and more in some
other, farther emptiness.

To reach empty space, think
away each object - without destroying
its position. Ghostly then, with
contents gone, the
vacuum will not, as you
might expect, collapse, but
hang there,
vacant, waiting an inrush of
reappointments seven times
worse than anything you know, seven other dimensions
curled into our three.

But time empties, on
occasion, more quickly than
that. Breathe in our out. No
motion moves.

Trees go down, random and
planted, the
way we think.

The sacrificial animal is
consumed by fire, ascends in greasy
smoke, an offering
to the sky. Earthly
refuse assaults
heaven, as we are contaminated by
notions of eternity. It is as if

a love letter - or everything I
have written - were to be
torn up and the pieces
scattered, in
order to reach the beloved.

No entrance after
sundown. Under how vast a
night, what we call day.

What stands still is merely
extended - what
moves is in space.

Immobile figures, here in a
race with death gloom about their
heads like a dark nimbus.

Still, they do - while standing -
go: they've a motion
like the flow of water, like
ice, only slower. Our
time is a river, theirs
the glassy sea.

They drift, as
we do, in this garden so swank, so grandly
indiscriminate. Frail
wings, fingers too fragile. Their faces
freckle, weathering.

Pure spirit, saith the Angelic
Doctor. But not these
angels: pure visibility, hovering,
lifting horror into the day,
to cancel and preserve it.

The worst death, worse
than death, would be to die, leaving
nothing unfinished.

Somewhere in my life, there
must have been - buried now under
long accumulation - some extreme
joy which, never spoken, cannot
be brought to mind. How else, in this
unconscious city, could I have
such a sense of dwelling?

I would
raise . . . What's the opposite

of Ebenezer?

Night, with its crypt, its
cradlesong. Rage
for day's end: impatience,
like a boat in the evening. Toward
the horizon, as
down a sounding line. Barcarolle,
funeral march.

Nocturne at high noon.

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