BALZAC

rises naked from his dream
and summons his robe

heavy heavy camel wool
but lined in silk

it flutters to him weightily
flapping from across the room

an Arab trick he learned
from some old book he wrote

he climbs into it slowly
it smells of yesterday

I will wear it all day long
until it smells like now

and words rise up like dust
from the embattled wool.

25 November 2014
But if they waited for me they’d still be waiting
the waters of that Egyptian lake would still be pure
untroubled by the reflections of ascetic faces peering in
to see beyond themselves the simple fact of what there is.

They didn’t wait. They built palazzos and economies, rode horses and murdered goats until they needed religion to make them feel half-decent again, and they could label all their pleasures sinful and do them on the sly.

I would have kept the waters clear, done it all by words, all talk and no action, and the soul rejoice.

25 November 2014
I will never go back inside again
he prayed, stone womb or woman.
Ever. So hard to be and not go back.
They call it home but holds a tomb.
Leave something of myself inside
no never. Devil burning autumn leaves.

25 November 2014
I’m going downstairs. I’m going down the stairs and the stairs keep going down, I keep going down, stiff right leg first, nimble left after, step after step going down. My hand on the banister is cold, the stairs keep going down, after a time I begin worrying, how far down do these steps lead, how far is down in my own house, is it my house, doesn’t it belong to its wood and its shade, the old wood, deep shadow on the stairs, creak of wood, how far must I go to reach the beginning, my ordinary house, floor, life? The stairs keep going down. All I know now is going down, the light never changes, the steps go on.

25 November 2014
The gathered ones around the deathbed are the source of the over-nature hum of thoughts in all their minds: grown intense by interacting the reverberations of all their feelings into one same will. They make the heaven into which the dying man expands. Out, always out into that permanent within.

25 November 2014
MASHA’S DREAM NOVEMBERED

dlya Mashi

four minutes of
being inside
someone

starting with the interior chambers of the piano
(house of the Beast to which Beauty penetrates
consciously daring the seminal mistake)

4 minutes or
as if someone sleeping touches someone,
someone else who is sleeping
and there are no dreams--
what is remembered?

Every action leaves a residue.
but where is it kept?
So many histories are stored in sound.
Low notes of a reed instrument.
Wind blowing from Atlantis
which is what white people call West Africa,
Aphrica, where the sun knows
how to make music thank
god we can’t actually hear.

25 November 2014

(From Masha’s Chopin Backwards / Seven Clarinets Dream Piece)
What would it be like not to remember a lilac

or to walk for the first time on a street with people

or close my own eyes and open in another’s face

see what they see for the first time alone?

It is warm but not very close, articulate but silent.

I have tried for it too long—now it is time for time to do the dance only it can do.

25 November 2014
The worrisome the wonder
the pyramid aria from Jesus in Egypt,
try, harder, but snow keeps falling
we smile at things we don’t understand
all the words I really know
could be written on one page
if anyone could know them there for me
onto the inscrutable blank
an old word just means white.

26 November 2014
WINTER NIGHT

Could these linger?  
Lights out over the county  
the sheen of snow makes  
what light there is.

Snow fault. Mercy  
of every ease, holiday  
complex’d outage,  
outrage, we remember

ourselves in darkness,  
if only I could be  
what I believe,  
could take my stand

as a sort of human  
being is bent on becoming—  
saint or sage or  
a friend in the dark.

26 November 2014
LATER

Later, when the light comes home
sining Irish songs it learned in the deep woods
(when the Irish chopped their own woods down
their trees came here, you can hear their Gaelic
when the wind blows, they prosper far from use)
later, when the door learns its old tricks again
and the blue flames twirl on the gas range,
warm kitchen, steamed window, later
when the baby grows up suddenly
and preaches from the dining room chair
difficult gospels we almost manage to believe,
later, when we’ve all but forgotten
all we think we know now, and pass
glasses of warm milk around the room,
with sugar in it and a crush of cardamom
to make bad dreams end well, later
when the sun finally relents and rises
and we discover a newspaper on the porch
in another language! another city! another war!
then we can fold our hands and smile
and spend all morning trying to remember.

26 November 2014
To be particular
is to be in parts
or trusting parts
will form a whole.

To be particular
is a kind of faith,
a religion of school-
masters and courtesans,
to know each entity
without its world
it lives in and gives
life to just by being
more than what it is.

26 November 2014
Appropriate to write with inkless pen

*power outage general in the town*

all systems compromised.

The snow is beautiful.

*The Beautiful Contradictions* by Nathaniel Tarn is the best book title ever, something to envy in its sprightly exactitude.

And the trees are lace with it all and the generator roars, warm radiators. Poetry mostly happens inside but talks big about mountains and oceans, poets hunched over tables like Dadaists at prayer.

27 November 2014
The trees
all dressed
for their first
communion,
white carpet
laid out for them
to hide their big feet.
But where
is the priest?

27.XI.14
“No priest but the perfected man”
she said, edging us towards the door
she opened wide to display
a harmless land,
scalable mountain range in clear sky
a peak for everyone.

27 November 2014
Lift the sky higher
I still can reach the moon.

27.XI.14
Departures not easy
standing room only on trains,
flights cancelled, conversation
guided by the weather.

It’s the real again,
that lurid thing—
bus marooned in snow drift,
some angel with a radio
torments us with music.

You call that a metaphor?
When something looks like
something else, call the police.
Resemblance is fatal.

27 November 2014
HOLD TO THE WRONG SIDE

captions under enigmas
make the matter denser—

a sky full of crows
over Poughkeepsie

we know the worst
tomato juice and mayonnaise

sweet old America
bore you to death with bonhomie.

27 November 2014
Imagining it is the same
as a waterfall, say
the tall slender maiden
tourists worship in Yosemite—

maiden, digo, not bride,
nothing like a bride,
there is no marrying
no giving in marriage
here where the woman
rock of earth overmasters
all your skies. I stood
on the parapet, marveled
that I was permitted
inside this cosmology
as witness and friend.

Dry rock swift water
completed me — a man
who has stood in that spot
will never be the same.

27 November 2014
Encountering the self in the desert
there is greeting to be done, *khaire*,
one says, old greek for hello
thinking I’ll remember me from long before,
or *khairete* maybe better, plural, for all
the selves I’ve been ere now, as poets say,
though Shelley said all this more gravely
in *Prometheus*, to meet oneself strolling
in the garden. And are there two of me
and why would any care, who have more
than enough to do to come with only one
let alone the myriad mes strolling there
disguised as ferns and garter snakes and
that sad broken column was a sundial once.

28 November 2014
KEYBOARD

My breath is longer
animal machine
we share a shove
to make more

under my hands
my words breathe out
unimaginably accurate
fooling no one

“no more than before.”

28 November 2014
such a delicate mistake
to lift the shade and see
the out there (snow-laced
bare linden, maple, ash)
looking so much like inside,
the neural pathways of
this half-wit mind. The tracks
of speech, the long snaking
traces of feeling, ricochet
of fond desire, prayers sprayed
and frozen as they spoke.
I am winter too, fallen
on a glamorous earth, a dark
dull punctuation mark upon
the unending sentence of just so.

28 November 2014
WINTER AFTERNOON

To catch the light before it migrates to another sky and leaves the trees empty as poetry.

28 November 2014
It wanted to sleep not to worry about its straying flocks or the weather ever. It was me. There was a strange scent in the air, *Parc Monceau*, its wife’s new perfume. Parfum. Sommeil.

28 November 2014