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## decB2014

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**Wer-beast gladly-eyed  
finally laughs — ah  
know you man now**

**as if a tower'd fallen  
and a mister rose.**

**We are no bearer  
than what we her.**

**5 December 2014**

## **THE LESSON FOR DECEMBER**

**1.**

**Having written one word  
write the other.**

**The one that loves you  
coming close to your untouched  
skin a marvel of  
imagistic transparency.  
Everybody understands the hand.  
Take care of this, the famous  
church, the steeple,  
open door, the people.  
It is no different from the stone  
or a magpie, not different  
not the same, the wind  
brought you to your mother's womb  
your father thought he was a ray of light.  
Sun maybe, a lemon, an Italian,  
a hand cart in a coal mine, deep.  
But he too was wind, a miracle  
when you think about it and I  
think about it all the time.**

**2.**

**History books are bound in blue,  
have you noticed, and money books in red.**

I grew up handling things until  
color got the best of me and I saw,  
just saw. So little to go on,  
likenesses, old Irish tunes,  
the taste of oatmeal, honey under.  
It was enough to grow a life, a library,  
an outfield and no bases, chemistry  
deep in your pocket, you were a priest  
one after the order of Melchizedek  
ever after, these  
words you understood. Write them down  
and watch the shadow that they cast,  
and follow the shadow word by word still.

3.

Pirouette the long skirt twirled at her ankle,  
your rifle almost tall as your shoulder.  
There has to be a war. Always. The moon says so  
the old man said, the teacher, the stranger.  
From *strand* the beach or border, the edge, we call  
him a *stranger* who crosses it and comes to us,  
knife in hand or thought in mind, all strength  
we have comes from what is not ours.  
The other waltzes in and teaches us to be.  
That is the riddle of ontology  
a being cannot be a being by itself alone.  
Identity is emptiness, the void. The gap, the yawn  
you half suppress and still keep reading on.

**4.**

**Strange document he called his own —  
3000 pages in six volumes and not a word in it  
in any Christian language, but all of it  
was about him, just him, no word  
he could read, no story for you to follow  
either, pirates or lovers, bandits  
in the Abruzzi, senators of ancient Rome.  
The old queen was dead — that's all he knew,  
we survivors milled around in the mall, wept  
self-consciously in half-finished cathedrals.  
Not even stone is really done. Are you  
still following your shadow, daughter of Iblis, butterfly?**

**5 December 2014**

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**The congregation smiles,  
its feathers smooth. Scales  
on the skinny legs —  
we all serve functions as  
part of the big animal.**

**Some call it God, others prescind  
the Operator from the Operation  
and save the G- word for the former,  
in luminous ignorance  
no need to decide. Worship  
deeply whatever comes to mind.**

**6 December 2014**

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**Rain is such an honest thing,  
a paradise of touch  
in all the glib democracy of wet.  
And if you love me let me be rain.**

**6 December 2014, Boston**

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1.  
Rejected by weather, the mind  
resorbed in piety — trust  
in the reality of the other — *pietas*  
loses touch with itself. *Listen*  
tell it. *Listen till it speaks.*  
Tell it that, believe it  
when you say it. Crockery  
smashed on the piazza,  
church full of smoke,  
am I holy too?

2.  
*Mirador* a place  
inside a woman's mouth  
where the truth is obvious,  
gleaming like teeth.

3.  
Other speculations are possible.  
Look closely into the mouth  
of the Talking Other. Note  
the moist glisten on the curled tongue —  
some mouths don't do that.  
The real meaning of any word



**is what it makes the mouth do  
when you speak it, and, or,  
what it makes your mind do  
when you watch attentively  
the mouth of the Talking Other speak it.**

**4.  
At least this is a beginning.  
Philosophy always comes first,  
the world is what you believe  
plus what happens.**

**There is no exaltation  
to be found in Not-Being  
as the Lady points out to  
the agent spoken by Parmenides,  
who would (in English) call  
himself I, a young man  
at the best of times.**

**7 December 2014, Boston**

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**Far from the world  
a tube of atmosphere  
inflated:  
    dream  
is a commerce of its own.**

**I screamed and didn't wake,  
screamed again, kicked out  
and went on sleeping.  
Only you in bed with me  
were troubled by  
this unknown tragedy.**

**How like this is  
to war and madness,  
we all endure  
what other people dream.**

**7 December 2014, Ludlow**

## **FOOD COURT**

**Thruway rest stop.  
Oily paper food scraps.  
Somehow we all wind  
up like wounded birds.**

**Never leave uneaten  
what God has given.  
He sends his raven  
to every desert, feeds  
us securely well beyond  
our own intentions.**

**7 December 2014, Ludlow**

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1.

**Gentle recovery system**

**heaven on earth**

**try harder with your mandolins**

**the car is in the shop**

**a cure for winter never come**

**home is where the roads cross**

**no roads cross**

**it's always further at night,**

**the broken headlight**

**scum of roadside picture postcard—**

**sleep late into savagery**

**ordinary daylight.**

2.

**Predisposed to doubt**

**a man's always waiting —**

**we let things fall because we care,**

**the ridge goes up abaft our house**

**the dog is sick—**

**is that Orpheus enough for you**

**you wicked pretty leaves**

**who tear the song apart,**

**my little everlasting breath?**

3.

But the Hurrians came  
and the Hittite elders  
and carved the hillsides into books  
we're bound to read,  
as if all poetry is just recovering  
from the other time, some other song.

4.

I flew over the Black Sea  
saw to my right wing  
those Mongol Swedes they call Russians  
and my left wing dipped towards Anatolia,  
Fatbelly Hill where the stones  
still keep the old palaver fresh.  
We talked in signs before the words,  
we talked in moan and shiver,  
sigh and sob and touch me mother  
I am the unborn the lost light —

then all the carvings on the upright stones  
one day turned into faces  
and we were.

5.

Learn when you talk  
to let,

let the back of the mind in  
and the tip of the tongue

the unremembered,  
tell.

I think the stone was saying that.  
Not much is lost if not,

a stone is always talking —  
that was my Leipzig moment,  
Bach's harmony in the empty church —  
a schoolboy practicing his fugue.

6.

We call them ghosts when they're people,  
songs when they're words.  
They rule the world without our knowing it —  
or they are our knowledge,  
they are all we ever have left.

7.

**Do you hear music?**

**I hear men breaking stone.**

**Trolls in the cellar,**

**the old walls —**

**they watched Chateaubriand**

**when he rode by**

**on his way to the forests of Ohio —**

**the old wall is where they live,**

**on quiet winter nights**

**I hear them breathing down below**

**under the woodwork of what**

**I dare to call my house.**

**8 December 2014**

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Noon riding  
ice on everything  
the connoisseurs of catastrophe  
await their curtain call  
*everything that happens hurts somebody,*

that's the rule,  
final chorus,  
Rossini *accelerando*,  
the kind of weather that would wake the dead.

9 December 2014



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**Metablossoming nakedness  
unspool the light until  
things go there  
into dense air as  
if we belong to it.**

**9 December 2014**

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**You say what you are never feeling—  
that could be the Irish thing,  
a Tinker’s prophecy, a mermaid’s kiss,  
or the silky silence of the fur of seals  
your ancestor, your quiet mother,**

**but whatever, you fold the *matter*  
somewhere in your heart, you tell  
everything but what’s the matter,  
everything but what you mean—**

**and rightly so. For who  
is any one of us to have  
a meaning or a feeling,  
aren’t we just what happens too?**

**9 December 2014  
End of Notebook 372**

## READING PARMENIDES

And getting it all wrong,  
by necessity wrong  
since we understand neither text nor context  
so the words float  
in the mere currents of our thought,

but let us live with Fragment 8 a while  
and be its children  
drink tea in its shadow  
listening to what it seems to say

### *8.1 There is still left a single story*

and then we faint with pleasure  
as if we had suddenly seen all the Greek plays at once  
and saw the people behind the characters  
and wiped the blood off Agamemnon's chest  
but slept with Clytemnestra anyhow, yes, we, we did  
and all that done, well or ill, and still  
left us a single story

### *8.2 of a way, that it is.*

and because it is  
it surely goes there  
where we must go,

**one road, one story, one,  
but suddenly a fear:  
could story just mean word,  
just something somebody said,  
not a story, doesn't a story  
exist before its telling,  
some practice carried forth  
before we knew to speak it,  
a hand reached out,  
a pomegranate grasped, a sword let fall?**

**Or is there no story but what is told,  
and you can tell it too,  
because a way exists, a way is, and**

***On this way there are signs*  
God gave us signs  
God save us from the signs**

**in this world  
there are nothing but signs  
and who shall read them  
the dark of prophecy the dark of priests  
lit by the flash of light  
the passing Vestal, her ankles in twilight**

**What can I know?**

