Bad times
in the poetry business.
What can you expect
when it’s a business.

19 July 2015
FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

The *religion of the West* (confluence of Judaism, Roman and Orthodox Christianity, Arthurian romance, Celtic and Norse myth, alchemy)

depends utterly on two Egyptian journeys: Prince Mse leading his new people, the New People, out of Egypt, across Sinai into the land of promise. Then the infant King Jesus being brought by his guardian parents into Egypt for safety, yes, as had been urged by the three Wise Men (lords of the *Eastern Religion*: a Hindu, a Buddhist, a priest of Zoroaster, those three). But more importantly so that the growing child could be empowered by the mysteries, still fluent in his time in Egypt: Alexandria, Thebes, Panopolis.

So from Egypt it fled by night, this Western Religion, and had to hurry back by night to reclaim the wisdom and sheer knowledge left behind in the Jews’ hurried flight.

So the perfected Western Religion could move west, to the Isles off Britain, the coast of Galicia to
which Jesus’s brother Prince Jacob came to bless the Atlantic across which the Western Religion would presently expand.

*Al-Khem the Central Religion* (Shia, Sunni, Sufi) called Egypt, the Black Land, silt of te Delta, tilth of the Nile, land of miracles, transmutation, alchemy itself. All of our love for chaning things into other things (fossil sludge into het fuel, stones into statues, tree bark into medicine, sounds into words) all come from alchemy, from Egypt.

To which each new-born prince must flee.

*19 July 2015*
I speak as a schoolteacher though they call me professor and doctor. They send me students who know nothing, who’ve been through twelve years of servitude but haven’t learned that A is an ox and M an owl, who don’t know what a leper looks like or how to enter the Forest of Broceliande. I have to teach them everything, first the letters then those numbers by which madmen spell reality and then the names of trees starting with poetry.

19 July 2015
APPROPRIATE SWIMMING POOL CONDUCT

Keep in lane. Lap. Leave the water alone. Try to find the lifeguard if there is one sexy or at least interesting. Leave the water in its place. Dream only when your head is above the water. Leave as little as you can behind except the essence of your joy or whatever that emotion is makes you flail about so, feet splashing, water in your ears, eyes, mouth. Please tell e what it is one lap at a time. Leave the water in the pool after you climb out and go home.

20 July 2015
Birds landing on the rail
American history
Hamilton and ice floes on the river,
hawk on corn stalk
slow bend beneath takeoff —

the reciprocals
of money, the bank, white men
all over the place,
clean clothes are such an affront,
the wealthy slim the poor obese

what have we done,
fed them on Twinkies and no sleep —
you bet I’m angry
I did it too and I was done,

in like case the mirror and the rose,
the freight train and the wrecking ball
we build the world to smithereens
Artaud mad in Rodez
pioneer of an escape hatch
led nowhere, a drug
is one more commodity,

there is a way to freedom
but you have to take it all by yourself.
I tell myself that every blessed day
and wonder why I don’t unpack and leave.

Into the paradox! Hermit in the crowd,
smile on the face of the Crucified
forgives me for squabbling so
over his lovely sky-blue robe.

22 July 2015
The sun is here
birds led her to me
you have to trust everyone
and here we are
*illuminated*
in my small *immensity*               G.U.
as if she had been
looking for me all her life
and found me at last.
I shiver with the last
chill of dawn
and fall into her light.

22 July 2015
When we worshipped trees
Adonis was the name of him
and Venus was the summer sun
who wore him out with light and love
till he spent all his leaves.
But then she came again next spring
and he was full again, and green.
There is no sorrow here,
only going, and coming,
and going on. Sun
in the leaves of our linden tree,
even now waiting for me.

22 July 2015
I sprained my knee watching baseball or writing in my notebook, anyhow I was just sitting there like a frog on a water leaf then it hurt. Vigilance strains the tendons of the heart too.

22 July 2015
One side is sweeter than the other. Razor. I have resisted the inferior caste in which I was born—not at the bottom but way down the pole—and affected the aristocracy of mind, fooling nobody but myself all these years but that was enough to keep me and it going. Sometimes as if becomes as if—tel quel and here I am. I learned all this while wondering why my right cheek needs a shave more than the left. *Not quite Christian not quite white* it says on my diploma but goof rnough for ordinary prose.

22 July 2015
= = = = =

Seeing how big the page is
you naturally fit
the song to the space is sings.

So I’ll say here
all the things I couldn’t squeeze
into the measure
of the last nine weeks,
tufted titmice peck at store-bought seed.

22 July 2015
PARERGON (1)

To lose nothing
to keep it all
not just in your head

but out there, here,
where the birds can shit on it
or wind blow it away,

it’s not for real if it’s not at risk,
danger is the key
signature of human art

no one’s sleep RMR
but so few awaken
though weather happens to the heart

he said but meant the mind
I always do
prisoner of what sets me free

the language
I love to serve
but as a master does
lifting a morsel to someone’s mouth
to make sure they
taste the final sweet of it.

22 July 2015
= = = = =

Un likely that I’d know
more than the dawn truck passing

who is she who drives so white
and why? Are there ghosts
in her garden? When she goes
to take down flour from her pantry
(flour, white flour) do they mock her,
sneer up at her from her dinner plate?

We all are victims of our crimes—
sin quick, remorse everlasting,
the bite of something
when I try to sleep
The truck is gone, I’m still here
drowsy with grieving.

23 July 2015
Reasonable doubt
is there any other kind?
I have been wrong about everything
that came out right.
The night was broken with noises
I crept downstairs
to find myself guilty.
Soon dawn with bring
color to the flowers in the tree—
that may be, or seem,
a kind of forgiveness.

23 July 2015
CREDO

Build an opera house
the swans will come.

Plant a rose bush
and know it will talk.

Live a life in hopeful hearing
but never tell your whole heart.

Get out of bed
and hope for daylight,

call long enough
someone answers.

23 July 2015
(f you sleep at irregular hours they may send the wrong dreams. You might not be ready for them or be too late. You may dream in the house of a stranger and wake changed. Hours are like that, like everything else—each moment has its own meaning, each thing its own word.

23 July 2015
Yellowest corn beyond
all metaphor
sparkling hair she
dry anointed
the wound of my hand till
it dared to turn.
Let the happen happen.
do not try to happen it.
Do not touch what touches you.
Dreams tell us that every night.

23 July 2015
BEING IN TOUCH IS THE SAME AS BEING

I woke with skin to prove it
and memory as index of the dark.

What happens when we sleep is somewhere else
it summons something deeper than we know

exactly, and there we are, changed
mortal by what we saw or felt

and the room fills up with strangers yet again—
there is no fact of the matter, only matter.

Only what we remember—and how long
will that last in this chattering world?

23 July 2015
What do I want?
I want not to want.

Despondency is too easy—
strive, be difficult

enough to turn, turn
but not away.

23 July 2015
Because of truth
we grow impatient

because of love
we live in towns

people all around me
want me to be gone

they listen ardently
to what I don’t say.

23 July 2015
[ AFTER CALLS ]

A different measure of things,
so much for thee
old tune of three

sang me two months
‘beyond necessity’
except to sing

like any anti-Occam
as we call poetry,
the multiplier of entities

it sleeks the world
with sinuous unnecessities
proliferates exuberant

folderol like Bach and Michelangelo—
prove nothing!
demonstrate everything!

Exhaust the universe
with evidence
we all sing too.
23 July 2015

== == == ==

The motor gives way. Something like silence seems.

We call this Day

having few words to decide for us what we feel

there is a star over every word we say

sometimes it gives light.

An angine starts up it is the principle of the thing
to make things happen. Rude awareness

bird on a roof of nobody’s house,

money on the mind
the simplicity of food

we own this place
but that too is a kind of renting

from landlord Time
who may have plans for this half-acre.

24 July 2015
== == ==

I’ll need some help
to sort this out—
apartment houses
don’t have fire escapes any more
how do they reckon
to rescue the middle class
from its inevitable predicament.
The poor have iron
stairways to the street
and iron terraces
to sun themselves on
and grow basil in tin cans.
One way or another
we’re all waiting at the window
for the Holy Spirit,
her tongues of fire.

24 July 2015
SOME SLOW JAZZ FROM ANTIQUITY

This isn’t me
this isn’t what I meant to say

or even an escape from
what I meant.

Start again.
There is a lily
I have touched
with no hands.

That’s better.
There is an engine
that runs the trees and me.

Adequate but vague.
Back to the lily.

Nothing belongs to us—
that’s better still.

We belong to everything.
Now you’re getting there.
You and me brother
and sister musicians
lost our instruments along the way,

that’s why the club is silent,
drinkers look up puzzled

but the lily,
she spreads her petals over the whole town.

24 July 2015
All you need is flowers A
all they need is sun and rain B
all rain needs is birds in the clouds C
all clouds need is sky to drink sea in D
all the sky needs is you looking at it E
looking at things far off is praying F
but the sky is the closest thing there is G
what I see when nothing is there is sky H
if the sky had a name whose name would it be?

25 July 2015
Eliminate the possible
and you have your answer.
A swing-set alone in a meadow,
the seat trembling a little in the breeze.

See it from far away like me
move towards it like a quick-step
like a middle-aged ballerina,
it’s still too far, hurry and be close

the wind isn’t one to wait forever,
there is a decorum in these matters,
in matter. Run now, leap backwards
onto the seat and it starts to swing—

how old are you, who owns the meadow,
can you feel the wind, does it lift a little
or hold you back, are you flying yet
back and forth higher and higher

is the arc possible, your heels in the air,
can you remember the first time ever
when time was born? Were you there?
You have to all these questions in the air.

25 July 2015
Scrunched-up piece of silk
black, shot through with silver thread
ball of it in the hand feel of an old sick.
Memory has its lesions too. Emissions.
Losses. But here it is, whatever it is.

25 July 2015
ZENAIDA

The rain dove can
fly fifty miles an hour,
rose tint to its breast
faint in pearl grey.
You know him here by another name
and love the sound of her sad cooing
and you can’t tell the sexes apart.

25 July 2015
And of course, of course. The mangle of sunshine and the gush of shade wrung out of the air by the twist of light.

We live among the senses in beautiful confusions by which our investigations (those love affairs) are sustained.

25 July 2015
Ekebu — the knights are charging out of the internet radio. Zandonai. Whose name could be weirder than I?

25.VII.15
Bruised by paradigm.
To be Jewish in a pagan land
Kalliphornia, last bastion
of the efficacious grape, the poppy
scarlet with dreams,
of goat-wit guys,
hierodules, magic random chicks.
The law is a dried-out sediment
on the other side of the day,
of the bay, you must water it
with sweat and spit
from a tarnished silver cup,
it soaks up, loosens, comes to life,
the law gives life.
Come home and be a rabbi,
wrap your loins in storm cloud,
the whole world will be your mikva,
come and get wet.
And yet the pagan wine
leaves tattered dreams,
gothic ruins, foxes in the vines,
and you have heard this so many times before,
the law is simple, the law is made of skin.
26 July 2015

 Exhaust the evidence
 keep saying that—
 what must I mean?

 Is it like ‘write
 everything’ of years
 ago all over again?

 Phrases recur. Valéry
 wakes up at dawn
 and writes down what I will later think.

 I sleep again, he is awake
 enough for his patrimoine,
 his workshop, his dreams.

 26 July 2015
Wrong. To wake with worry.
There is no story
to console or excite.
Only vignettes of some future
eliminated by the vey
act, fact, thinking them now.
Sacred law of unicity.
Things happen only once.
If it happens (you reason) in your head
it can never happen out there.
Pray that you’re right for once.

26 July 2015
Tell me how it means
the engine not running—
run out of *is*, must use *am*.

The imperfections of attention
are revelation.
How is that? Absence
sings louder than presence.

*Woman alone at table. Brassai.*
*Stone wall ill-stucco’d. Atget.*
The walls still scarred with bulletholes
when I got there. *War*
is never far. Use *is* not *are*.
But I forgot, *we’re* out of *us*,
have only *am*.

26 July 2015
Sometimes I think nothing happens just the flower on the bush after a little rain. Just this enough for eight billion souls. And some rice.

26.VII.15
There are certainties too
the mind hovers
around the feel of them,
they allure, evade, flirt,
recede. But still are there.

The things that think the mind
you want to call them,
irresistible, ungraspable,
so terribly near.

27 July 2015
Sogns of a self?
A kind of glare
off the sea,

who knows
what moves in that light?

What can live there?

The crow is calling.
In this country we use a different metaphor,

and calls again.

27 July 2015
CROW TALK

Four times.
Thought he was calling me.
Five times.
Four again.
Once, softly.
Once again.
The transmission is complete?

The battlefield is empty.
They have swept the wind clean with their wings.

Fur again, closer, louder.
This I have been give.
This I believe.

27 July 2015
After the operation
rode home on sunlight
and she drove,
the glide of light
carried me
car-wise into magic,
home to herself.

27 July 2015
KHEM

meant black
silt of the Nile,
the black soil that age after
age sustained fertility
life in the plantations of the Delta —
the black silt that is the original
faeces of the alchemists,
warm wet earth from which plants grow, in the
laboratory to the warm wet manure
normal source of our slow fire.
Every dung its own heat —
importance of the horse as symbol,
he horses that pull the triumphal chariots
are the horses that give the slow rich fire
that slowly cooks one element
into the higher octave of itself
dazzle us with sudden gold.

27 July 2015
like a car stripping its gears
stuck on the sidewalk of Paradise
with no word to answer the Questioner
that big blue thing disguised as the sky.

27 July 2015
[NB 380, p.170]
The stone
from the sky
that became the human eye
depth-instructed
to see a world all round it
and call it real—
this stone so precious
sometimes remembers the other
and we have only words
to give what it sees to one another.

28 July 2015
Cheerful as an ice floe
busy as an island
we are visited.

A prayer-wheel or spinning top,
friend lying on the grass,
the conversation is continuous.

28 July 2015
Morning is legal where we live
first some birds then sun rises
then the cars come out trying to be elsewhere, our deepest need.

28.VII.15
From the is to the island
contradicting Donne
I will be difficult, sinly,
reprehensible, with studge—
people look apathetically
at every dictionary
not realizing what a brothel
it is inside, temple, stadium,
balloon ascension for a thousand years
over our little town and no pain.

28 July 2015
KEEPING THE WORD

1.
Amaze outdoors
ascension day all summer long—
sometimes the color
explains the day best:
woodpecker, analog, Herodotus
in Egypt keeping secrets. *Picus*.

I promised, I will keep my word
though I spoke it
when I was a different man.
*Mitra*, lord of the contract.
Agree with being me.

2.
Where do you keep a word?
Where is splendor? *Zohar*
I want to say, but does it mean
as Dante insists, *reflected* light,
such as when we watched, say,
Anita splash in the Roman fountain
our faces too were wet with that light?
I don’t go to the movies much anymore,
though there in sharing folk live *in splendore*. 
3. If Dante’s right. Or Arabi born yesterday, who taught him (all of us) more than we know. When you read or hear such Masters read what they tell you isn’t right there on your lips but squirreled away deep inside you, right where your childhood lives. lives on still, where all real knowing lives to be known.

4. Someday have to start living, stop listening? The screen grows dark by itself all too soon. A blond hair on a blue sweater, river in the desert, arroyo, a sum left over on the blackboard — please believe me so I can believe myself again, the word I stand by, does it stand?
5.
That is our religion,
a word intact.

I wonder what the word ‘word’ means —
is it weird, or fate, or worth,
or does it mean like German *werden*
to be or to become, sign of future,
sign of passive, or past, *geworden*.
We know what it tells us now
but where does it come from
and what has it seen along the way
that we should know and reckon and accept
if we mean to stand by it,
this sound that once
long ago came out of, was it my,
mouth?

6.

So if fate
comes from *fatum*, ‘something spoken’
then the dictionary
is the Book of Fate.
Or any book is.
Any word you speak
stands by you ever after,
walks by your side,
casts its own shadow.

7.
The shade of a word!
Sudden excitement
at such a possibility —
to watch it move
separate from the word itself,
shaping differently, blending
with shadows of other things:
a dance of origin and dispersion
of meaning. And then
that in the heat of the day,
heat of argument,
that I would go and stand there
cool in the word’s shadow
and hear the difference speak,
the luminous, the calm.

29 July 2015
Or I can see
only when I stop thinking,
touching with eyes
the mind closed.

29 July 2015
Cast off into some sea.
the nautical image
in the swimless day.
I wouldn’t last five minutes
in the whelm of her I love,
the sea makes
sheer visitor of me,
one who only comes to see,
the healing seen.

29 July 2015
Man reading a book.
Woman staring out to sea.
Wanting nothing but to be everything.
Everyone. Old radio
color of a woodchuck
and warm like one —
in the old days
one had to heat the word
to make it speak.

29 July 2015
Alana dyes her hair
settles on a couch.
The camera crew
worship with their instruments
what they think they see.

2.
Later the picture,
very small,
accompanies e-missives
from the sponsor.
Sponsor means spouse,
the woman sitting by her word,
legs crossed at the knee,
chaste but powerful.

3.
What have we learned
from this picture?
Not all movies move.
A fire engine passes —
not every catastrophe is close
I pray. I look at the couch
she sits on and wonder
what it thinks of what it bears,
4.
Holding the weight of form
of all whoever rested,
furniture is the graveyard
of our whole past life.
Not lives. In this town
you only live once.

That’s what it says over the door,
dawn over the depleted casino
lights as bright as heat can make us.

Why do we look at each other’s faces?
Who do we think we are?

29 July 2015
Empty glasses in the sink. 
And they too are words we listened to, doubted, believed.

I want a girl as smooth as glass, he said, transparent, cool and diamond-clear.

They all are, I explained, you have to teach your fingertips to understand.

29 July 2015
I deem the day be
clearer than it is.
I will the blur away.

Can you tell north from south
with your eyes closed,
you can be the Emperor of China if so,
or any other Tarot card you choose,

or even a bird, a floater in mind’s eye,
a river that does not come back
or a handsome schooner
hurrying your way,
sails billowing forward but no wind.

29 July 2015
Something long. Something wrong.
No easy breakfast.
Bird cry. Identify.

Every percept is a challenge.

Know me, everything says.

And some say Marry me whether you love me or not. I am all there is.

29 July 2015
Reveille. A bugle
is a trumpet with no hands.

Writing my way back to health —
for your sake too.

29.VII.15
I forget the phrase that woke me
not sure it will come again
but a word’s enough to rinse a man
from sleep where no words live

until they do. A word is the same as a day.
Now I must remember:
   Day or Daytime was in the phrase;
its target or predicate, something said
or learned about the day or its light

or the time we share with one another
outside of sleep where all the others
are masks — or maybe strangers, lonely
blue strangers we’ll never meet again
and maybe they’re the ones who word us.
Wake us, into the soft dawn-light, soft
as the hibiscus by the window pale
in a world of comparisons.
Waking up is thanking someone. The music changes, why flowers leave colors, *die blaue Hortensia*, why poems have flowers, words have mornings and everything wakes up together. That must be what, or part of what, it was trying to say, the phrase that went away and left me alone with the day.

30 July 2015
1. Things that look like things but seldom are. We recur out of necessity, we accept a string of beads from a woman’s hands and have to deal with each bead. Each day. This is called praying or distancing the mind from its usual tricks. Rescuing the mind from what it thinks.

2. The absolute comes in small doses also, no trumpets or sunrises needed. Here, one little item
much like another
but curiously not.
This little difference
is the gap. Door-
way out of the world.

3.
The door Christ said He is
is always open.
You do not become a door
to keep people out.
The gap between
one perception and the next
is the door to heaven.
Doors everywhere,
some of them have names,
some formal frames,
but all go through.
Go through.

4.
Leaving is loving.
That’s what I meant.
You leave the dream
to love people
in the ordinary day,
that magical condition
always talking. *Between*
I keep telling you
is the doorway.
I want to be open forever
then sleep comes along,
silences me into pure listening.

30 July 2015
The unpermitted
the sagacious
table crowded round
with talkers.
Who needs food,
to experience one another,
that’s all, never
to possess.
Possession is not permitted.
Being wise with one
another. Rarely
before midnight.
And only the table remembers.

30 July 2015
Gapsody

sun softening through haze sifting its way.

Her way.

The claim of language on things. This person in the sky.

There is a kind of dream about being quiet.

But then everything speaks.

30 July 2015
Too long without a word
I speak, too long
listening to the empty
hallways in my head, how
the mind investigates each
sconce, doorway, transom
and finds nothing.

Too long without a thought
to offer or share or deplore,
too long without regret.

This afternoon
apostasy of doze.
Next door a car starts up
with a mind of its own.

30 July 2015
How could the razor shear the sea?  
How could one blue thought imagine me?  

Is it all after all a matter of rhymes we have to find before we are complete?  

The languid poetry of old did that secret hold?  
That not in words but actions must discover what links with, limbs with, what?

30 July 2015
The last Freemason died today, carried with him into the Familiar Strangeness of afterlife the secrets of unsatisfiable yearning pothos, his word, from which his architecture grew. From absence alone he made deep song.

30 July 2015
Left lingering
as if a storm cloud
never moved from horizon,
menace only to remind.

How can such things
rest among us,
savages we are and they so calm?

What do we really
think of trees?
Is there an urgency
even we can feel
in the slower things,
tortoise, bedrock,

bone? Again and again
I wake to want you.
This must somehow mean
if only I were quick enough
to catch the thought’s shadow
before the blaring
sunlight of language
unshapes it into oneness
with everything besides?

30 July 2015
BY A WINDOW

1.
Tense. Or close-grained light
around the rose—

light is the first Talmud commentary
on all things we can see

and every distance
sings a different touch.
Rose or no rose.

It’s rhat there’s a rosebush where I wake,
*Hibiscus syriaca*, rose of Sharon oldest immigrant flower, make me at home
near you, late summer be kind.
Not a rose at all.
2.
Every thing is a flower
I think, every
flower is a difference,
a dependable apartness,
voice in the desert, friend.

3.
Tired of our caresses
the light drifts away,
the dark comes
to make us its poets
in dense dreamery,

so a voice in my hand
lets me be
what dream commands
and lets the light
explain it all as if
I were the one it means me to be
until I am.
= = = = =

Abolish the absolute again thing by thing

let the plenum fill with difference,

the pleroma is everyone not one, I’m sorry

if this sounds critical or philosophy, it just is

because the unimpededness of mind welcomes no limit—

light thinks its way everywhere, leaves us, links us, lets us go.

31 July 2015
THE METHOD

Natural exhaustion. Measure the stream fluent from Anatolia, a formality of images—

Stroke a tree. A human is a T, all spine and shoulders, arms and no head. We are nothing but trunk. We tree.

31 July 2015
Weys Corners
EATING OUT

Cool spacious quiet
like a table on a mountain
with mountain folk to serve us—
there would I dine

and all our food would taste
of what we liked best
but be quick and lean as water
and stroke us all the way down,

the air around us darken
blue into saffron into rouge
and a chill walk up from the valley
insidious as music

and we would be ready for the night.

31 July 2015
SCHWÄNE

Swans on the Landwehrkanal under a blue bridge.
What more does a city have to explain?

31 July 2015