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WHAT THE NIGHT TOLD ME

The story tells.
We do not tell.
It goes along
thing to thing
along its way
until it finds
all by itself
the place
it calls the end.

We hobble after
guessing hard
what it means
by where it goes.

The story knows.
The story hurries
stately to a place
it means to know,
And when we get
there it lets us in.
We look around
counting, naming
people we see
the story brought
here with it.

**The story is complete,
may even sleep
while we wander
touching with our hands
this part of it
or that, the fact
or act or truth
we never told.**

1 December 2015

== == == ==

**A table-top full
of spinning tops—**

**that was my house
when I was child**

**I wonder soon
will I be man**

**and still they spin
soft whir of life**

***symmetrical agitation
of living matter***

**they explained,
and flew away.**

**I grew older, old
but never *up*—**

**time has no vertical
no ripening**

no maturity.

If I close my eyes

**I see the spinning,
all speeds, this way**

**that way, never stop.
Moviemaker, show me**

**on your fat screen
that table, out there,**

**everybody sees it
and I can rest.**

1 December 2015

HYMN TO APOLLO

**Remember the lyre
before you pluck
another flower
even a silk one
from the diner table,
remember the bible
before you read the menu,
try to taste the food
with your fingers,
close your eyes and tell
the fortunes of men
at the next booth,
don't look at the waitress
lest you fall in love,
it is not easy
to be you, to be here.**

**It is difficult too
to remember the sound of it
the throb of it
in your arms and hands,
even the sound of it
somewhere around,
some days you can
almost catch it,
could whistle it
now if you had breath**

before you forget.

Is it possible that the gods are alive in each one of us? Is it possible that the gods have moved their residence to dwell in us? And like us best? What can we know or be sure of? We guess, and guessing is a god's game, and maybe we win every time. I think they are all in us even now, no time has passed from their great Then to our little Now. They are with us. And when I sit in the diner I see them, I feed them too when I lift my cup.

1 December 2015

=====

**Reading in the night
is a way of remembering.
Trembling. Sleeping
while wide awake.**

**All the irritable
parsing and analyses
you do as you read are
just your parter snoring.**

1 December 2015

ELEGY

for HJS

Walkway find it
Manhattan Avenue
past redstone church
to Nassau.
Monitor. The flowers
in his father's shop.
A friend
playing Mahler's 4th
for me. Enough.
Not enough.

1 December 2015

=====

**No one ever talked to me
I had to make
the friendship up
from how they looked
and talked to other people**

**Love also is a guess—
no wonder I never grew up,
live still in the guess.**

1 December 2015

=====

**Can a word
rhyme with itself**

**in this society?
Must there always be**

**raisings with the almonds?
I trust the tree**

**and doubt the vine—
say that in Russian for me**

**Ivan, let me hear it
back again in Welsh**

**(means foreigner), my native
language I never knew.**

**How dare I think
this is a ghazal?**

1 December 2015

DISTICHS

**The name of any city is
Exile the Poor.**

**Things waiting for me
around the corner from the real.**

**That kind of neighborhood, all-night diner
people in parked cars waiting like me.**

**Sometimes say it
before it's said**

1.XII.`15

=====

Says the Demon:

**A centime for your thought—
I pay old brains
in coinage obsolete**

**what would you do
if you were you?**

Litigiously I respond:

**Such a circumstance
will never arise**

**I was thinking of nothing
which is where you come in.**

1 December 2015

=====

**Tell the stars to bother me
just once more with their sly
insinuations of destiny,
their threnody for the feeble
human will, their song of sleep.**

**For I have listened to the sky
until I can't tell thee from me
and all the leaves fell of the trees
and I see you when I close my eyes
better than when you're in the room.**

**O a man is just a crumbling pyramid
keeping its secrets as it falls apart.**

1 December 2015

ABOUT THE NUMBER 124

Engendering an island
peopling it from a guitar
plucked in a cloud
this river is really the sea

Manhatta before the Dutch
or this heart of his
before she showed up—

her name and her place
(Eden) and the sandalwood tree
all had the same number

as if the moon had worked it out
in his chilly scriptorium
and let it fall

fertile among us so be it with me.

1 December 2015

=====

**Suddenly back to default
Gan Eden and somebody else's
mistake. Now who to blame?**

**Eden was a dream
scented with sandalwood,
the flaming blade of sunlight
woke us and we were gone.**

**All these tribes and tribulations,
our shopworn differences
—why does religion make men kill?—**

**women strive in covens to bring
peace into the world, around them,**

**how far can a thought go?
I need to blame
somebody before I can sleep.**

2 December 2015

=====

**Fanged waking
knowing nothing
I can do will help**

**yet with a mind
to do so, a meaning
to be meant**

**out there
among the living.**

2 December 2015

=====

**White cars
go so
much further
away, why?**

**They leave me
behind, *clouds*
comfort their
*departing***

**Each could
be bearing
a lover away
one more day,**

**a circle
is complete
only when
bodies meet.**

**Failures and
sailors and
never come
home? Far**

**into the light
the car hides
all the miles
of here again,**

**a pale
lostness
vanishing
over the hill.**

2 December 2015

=====

**Some days
I don't know her face of
the light decides**

**as ever
the storm cloud
has no storm in it
and you forget the names.**

**I am the face you forget,
one face lost among
all those lost names**

**I claim. My own
means no one
surely**

**ribbons of cloud
count them
move
slow as they do.**

3 December 2015

=====

**When it was sleeping
it was something like a water bird
floating as it seemed
on a quiet lake yet what
makes the bird move
forward in the gleaming?
The unseen motive force
the webs paddling beneath
anything we can see.**

**And suppose this is no
longer a dream or a duck
but history, he animal
that moves, that eats us up.**

**Why isn't it lyric at least,
Rilke or rhapsody, why
does it just hurt as it goes by
and go by? What other
science is worth saying?**

3 December 2015

=====

Poetry now yes but
what will she do
when she runs out of life
and men don't do things to her
and her body is just asleep
most of the time? Poetry
isn't about anything.

Or sometimes it might be
about you reading it, only you.
It's what it makes you do
or tries to, it is a lake
complete with swan and
shimmering golden spires
in a reflection of a temple
that is not there. Nothing
is there but what happens

and only to you. Where could
music go but to your ears?
And what can it do there?

3 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Buying chairs in a dream
at roadside, three low,
two stools but the stools
I called high chairs
and there were dogs.
Quiet though, one
spotted like hyena
and they saw.**

4 December 2015

=====

**I have transgendered the sun
found the woman in her again**

**and manned the moon—
I waited for the right century**

**to remind us who they are,
Wisdom is the Sun,**

**Moon a man with no measure.
I have given their genders**

**back to their primal wills
and let them be in beauty**

and let them be what they do.

4 December 2015

=====

**I want to know
how things
spill over into
action and
carry us with them.**

Things interact with human will.

A game. A war. A stone. A wheel.

4 December 2015

BEING SPECTACULAR

or eke out morning
till the sun folds
over the hemlocks
and goes down, still
keep the merry morn
though *morne* means
gloomy and funest
in France. Up, up
and be the wind
up someone's knees,
reveal the architecture
of all the mysteries—
all art is the concealment
of true revelation. Touch,
touch until the skin
can't tell self from other
whoever that turns out
to be. Silver urns tall
with dead flowers:
irides in austral autumn,
birds-of-paradise or not
losing color as the day
slips west with the Lady.
Grey now. We appear
to live inside a stone.

4 December 2015

=====

Of course I cried out
and someone did
as if to *answer Come
close in lovely danger,
the lines in my palm
spell your very name.*

2.

Silence is best, my
father taught, green
the evening was
and in between, silence
responds to everything,
silence makes every
question answer itself

3.

it seemed. Of course
I cried, a child must,
childhood is for suffering
it seems, though no one
intends the pain
the pain arrives,
no more artifice

than night and fog and snow
which children love—
a white permission
to be outside! But as
philosophers insist
there is no outside,
there is nowhere but here,
the family, the blood,
the oldest fact, the pain.

But the voice said Stay
inside, go deep inside inside
and find me there, and all
the answers speak at once
and I'll be waiting
more noise than sense
more sense than meaning.

4 December 2015

=====

**Caring calmly, blue.
n a window in your wall—
look it's me you say**

**looking out is looking in
a spinning top recites your name
live lean and you be free—**

**Santeria Saturday!
save us from the blood
nothing makes holy but holding in the mind**

**blessed means bloody
oak leaves outside the bodega
she showed me a photo of them**

**so be a priestess of just light!
religion means to choose an enemy
they build with nails and never wood**

**they crucify the atmosphere
combers come in wider now
storm far out in the unseen**

**into that state-of-exception
we call every single day
\ nail it to the next.**

5 December 2015

=====

**We wear black on Christmas
because Christ was born to die
and these two thousand years
are still his funeral, all this
His dirge and eulogies we spend
our music and our language
praising. He dies to stop us killing.
How do our churches feel about that?**

5 December 2015

LODGE

**It could only be the right tree
whose leaves look familiar but who knows
over the porch of the Masonic lodge
they will not let me in
though I have knocked three times**

**once with my fist once with my cock
once with a word I heard a stranger say
before I was even a child**

**and there must be another stone,
a geode I don't know, a dance of kneecaps,
a sarabande of shuffling old men,
a merrymount of sloe-eyed virgins,
something, tree bark, camouflage,
somebody must know the tool**

**the tool that scrapes the door and opens it
and then I all come in.**

**We tried it long ago in Massachusetts
but joy fell out of weather,
the townspeople came with axes
and attitudes, bibles, bullets,
the way it always was. Is..
how to build a stone wall without stone
how do you open a door that isn't there**

in a wall to a garden that never grew

**and yet you hear the flowers singing in there,
roses red and yellow and alströmeria from Peru
and slim-hipped lilies susanning around like swans
or so it sounds, all you can tell
is how it sounds, god, how can you see
what is only music, how can you climb
the cut-down tree, see them dance
motionless in the late autumn mist as if,**

**and as if? There is a little book inside
gives the answers to all these riddles
or really only one answer, fits all of them,
I batter on the door, I'm crying now,
i offer them everything but it's not much
yet it seems to be enough. The tree
suddenly puts out leaves again,
the streetlight winks out, a police car
rolls by and doesn't stop, a bat zips by,
a man comes up the walk, friendly,
middle-aged, claims to be my brother.
Or did he actually say my mother?**

5 December 2015

UNCLEAR

Not sure about Clarity,
Pound's *ming* in the second tone 明
sun and moon shining together

not sure how to read
a human face or a book
that other countenance
by their light,
 twin sources,
bicolored light
like the red and blue plastic lenses
to watch 3D when we were kids

Wisdom and Understanding
as the kabbalists say?
hot sunlight of inspire-me!
cold moonlight of remembering.

That's all understanding is,
remembering, all the sad last-times,
bad dates, bad trips, bad metaphors
that trapped you in bad permissions,
bad jobs, moonlight leper-pale
over your bad house?

But how to see them,

**see with them, both at once,
like those Tibetan *thang-kas*
where sun and full moon
loom lit, one on each
side of the Deity figured,**

**yet this morning freezing
mist settles in the trees
precisely answering me:**

**a Mishna of the ordinary
that's what we need,
quick tour of everything ever
said about anything at all.
Only the weather is real
but (because?) it never lasts.**

6 December 2015

=====

**Sitting down to music
mist in trees
don't turn the speakers on
just hear it anyhow**

**that's what morning does
dreams melt into
unauthorized music
lewd as sunlight**

**touching everyone at once
we do not see her gold
but her silver's all round us—
mist in the trees**

my chest vibrates to the unheard.

6 December 2015

AGAINST KNOWLEDGE

**Could every day
by thought be losing it?**

**We must miracles
in our hearts, we want**

**things that way, *event
with no explanation,***

like a mother's kiss.

6 December 2015

GINKGO

We don't have to remember
because the tree is in front of the house
ginkgo up from the sidewalk
and a yellow cab goes by.
This happens seven hundred thousand times
without anybody saying enough already
and it will go on tomorrow, the cab
will stop and a woman climb modestly out
clutching a portfolio that excites
all our curiosity but in vain,
she'll never share, we'll never know,
but the tree is there. The fruit
crushed underfoot smells terrible,
cat piss, *on dit*, but this is worse
because supposed to be good for you
and for years I took pills of it,
G. biloba, twin-lobed like the brain
I forget what it is slated to do,
what miracle of transcendent
dailiness it might wake in my rowdy
but exhausted sensorium, I stopped
taking the pills and seem no worse
no better, cabs are still yellow,
the rent for even one room apartments
in those brownstones is outrageous.
And don't forget the smell in summer.

6 December 2015

THE TENANT

This modest shingled
house a little too close
to the county road is
actually a space station.

Or so they told me
when I woke this morning,
my mind full of Liszt's
Reminiscences of Norma

and strange translucent
bipeds in the hallway
told me the truth, half
a century they've been here

and all the books and notes
and plays and e-mail and
miscellaneous junk I wrote
are just their messages,

coded, secret, their wistful
letters home. Did I mind?
they wanted to know—why

wait so long to ask me?

**Inscrutable are the ways of
such beings, their wings
modestly folded round them.
Of course I don't mind:**

**whatever I wrote (if indeed
it was me doing the writing))
is written for the whole world,
including their weird planet,**

**just let me go on writing,
let me go on hearing the piano,
bel canto, be with my wife,
my coffee, the window full of light.**

6 December 2015

ARTEHE

god of oak trees, god
in the oak, god
who holds his leaves
all winter, god
of never failing,
of feeding wild swine
acorns to sweeten
their flesh, god
whose name I know
from reading
some articles, can
there be a god
in articles, windswept
hill in Aquitaine
or the low plain
where the sea wind
fails to bend the oak,
god of not bending
god of no one remembering
I have to remember now
just guessing, is a guess
enough of a prayer?
I want to lose no one,
they all are holy,
mind of oak, mind
of men, mind even of me.

6 December 2015

=====

*How long till music
hears itself again?*

**Sing! Leave declamation
to us tuneless bards
who put the vowels to work
to feign a music for us.**

**Sing! Be lyric, lovely, loud,
ladyly, lordly, lewd, illegal,
be all and more, bel
canto and magical logical,**

**no plainchant and no tone rows,
no god but the next note,
make us tremble to attend
exalted catastrophes of song.**

7 December 2015

=====

**When you break the fire
where does it go?
Is there a temple shouting truth**

**inside the comma pause
a teacher tells you to wedge
between two thoughts**

**but thoughts are never separate
the gods that rave between things
attend your reverent prosody**

**make you spell everything together
like a schooner smashing on the rocks
and all the parrots fly away**

**and human speech is born, is that
what happens when breath dares
to pause and not go on? Only more words**

**will save us now, words float, words
tame the sea, sharks flee the intellect,
understand me, understand me or I die.**

7 December 2015

=====

**It's never the one here,
presence isn't just some location
you can jab at on a map,**

*presence means to be another
yet be possible,*
**to enter into speech
with all the entanglements
of its mortal branches,
withering fruit and yet**

**and yet go on talking.
You can't be here
and do this to me, for me,
unless you are different,
alien, remote, other.**

7 December 2015

STONES OF NIGHT

Facts of the matter,
f acts of matter,
the stones meet us,
stone avails,

Pliny, Book XXXVI

pyramids are vanity
and the great sundial
in the Circus Maximus
no longer tells the right time.

Obelisk.

Does the sun tell lies
or has the earth shrugged
and turned away?

Hold your stone to your forehead
and see better—

the further the stone travels
to meet you the smaller
it should be, denser, potent,
maybe even giving light.

But this very day
the sarsens of Stonehenge
came to us from Wales,

**I squeeze my eyes shut
I will not see.**

**I will build a palace of pure air
and live in the shimmer
like that Etruscan king
safe dead in his labyrinth**

**no man can find his way out,
labyrinth the old word for being dead.**

**But I will celebrate the feasts of wind
by keeping human silence
celebrate this long night by huan speech—**

**Are we there yet, father,
he asked the chariot,**

**Listen to my wheels, *mon fils*,
we are only reflections
in someone's mirror,
grow up someday and find out whose.**

**Press hard
so the paper remembers.**

**Are we there yet?
We've come already and gone**

**we're on the way home
which is always a different
place from where we started out**

**I think I understand,
the boy said and went on sleeping—**

and in his sleep he sang this song:

*My father is a car
and my mother is a chair,
teach me to be there
where things already are.*

**And after all, sleep needs us
to do its work in the world**

**in the wind
remembering**

**make love to me
from far away
the distance cures us
distills us
so the love lasts**

**when we have forgotten us
we will finally**

belong to each other

**The stone said so
when I rubbed it on my sore knee**

*she sent this
to help us both forget*

**Pliny died in the Vesuvius eruption,
none of his thousand remedies helped,
the dead need a different kind of stone**

**though his wisdom is in the ashes
perfectly preserved
*a shadow in the shape of a man***

**his long writings all done by night
survive the volcano—**

**theriac, all-heal,
writing is the only remedy**

**only language knows how to forget,
*a man in the shape of a shadow.***

8 December 2015

A BOWL OF SOUP

**Leguminous, salt
knows its way,
warmth lives there**

**in this sense
soup is central.
It is something
like the center
of the earth,
something like
the green revetments
of the mantle,
something like
a smile, a child
reading a book,
a bird flying over
and soon gone.**

**A bowl of soup
comes to mind, is
what comes
to mind, winter
just before dusk
when the light
shrinks back
into itself, time
seems to be**

**something you hear
the way music is,**

**which reminds me
of where I started
a bowl of soup
is like an opera,
chorus with one
soloist overcoming it,
the baritone
summons the fishermen,
Gioconda, a bowl
of soup is like a net
that catches
the virtues of the sea
and serves them
in this case to me.
I'll do my best
to save some for you.**

8 December 2015

== == == ==

**Dreams, trying to
obey them how
do they teach**

**backwards like Bible
or straight ahead
like some manual**

**fallen to us from
a well-meaning Moon
o the pages lifted**

**so softly between
image and the words
the dream lets me**

**hear myself speaking,
I can get up and
write them down**

**but no one knows
where down and up
really live**

**and who lives there
with them**

whispering in my sleep,

**or not my sleep
at all, sleep
belongs to everyone,**

**who knows
who that woman is
whose pale face**

**studies me
on a dark street
and passes by,**

**nobody I know
and I am nobody
known, sleep**

**is a thick curtain
drawn tight over
no window at all.**

8 December 2015

=====

**Honest adobe as if
from Egypt and an English yew
above my grave-to-be**

**a plot of afterlife
soft underfoot, all baggage
pf the life before**

**left quietly somewhere.
See if you can use this stuff,
the blue penknife t won**

**at Rockaway maybe
or this book I somehow
filled up with words.**

9 December 2015

=====

**We come from everywhere
to be here. And conversely.
Traveler under a brazen sky
forget your Latin and your Greek
a newer language you'll be
needing now, cave
and prophecy, antlers and
whatever comes after music,
the thing you actually hear
after the stupid sermon stops.**

9 December 2015

=====

non son Lindoro

**I am not who you thought I was
but am the one I always was
before I met you and was led
to change my name to save
both of us from change, the kind
that happens when time gets
spent together then who knows?**

**I am not who I said I was and then
the music heats up even the opera
gets happy, no, there's more to this
than this, I lied to get you to listen
to me when I told the truth, I tell
the truth now, it's more religion,
just literature art and culture, truth
that can be tucked away in words,
I am only who I am and that's the end of me.**

9 December 2015

=====

1.

Sit where that instinct
stands. Shade
yourself beneath that palm
like the one on La Cienega
you found, your own initials
carved in the hard cuticle
of the trunk — what was
your name then that fit
so clearly in city inscription.
That is not even a question.

2.

At first when I said 'you'
I was thinking of me,
I admit it now, but then
midway through a sentence
'you' turned into you.
palpably yourself, just
like all the rest of us
standing there alone
with the sky on your head,
dangerous quantity, unknown
quality bearing a name or two
but whose? Whose?

3.

**It's always like this—
I have you so clearly in mind
then lose sight of you
in all the rhetoric engineered
to trap you but it fails,
you're gone, not even the smell of you
is left, people do have smells
you know, I'm not being impolite,,
smells and textures and even tunes.
And some of you have palm trees
and big avenues to grow them on,
far-off things, dialects and demands.
And names again. Forgive me
onbe more time for not knowing yours.**

10 December 2015

=====

**Close enough to Paradise
you hear the rule-book
fluttering its pages in the breeze,
every paragraph a prohibition.
So hard to be you
out there in permanent sunshine
butterflies and avocado trees,
what more do people need,
bluish water lapping at your toes.**

***O Man, whither goest...* he follows
his shadow till he loses it at noon..
No. No shadow. It's always noon.
Noon and no lunch. He remembers
corn muffins and begins to cry.**

10 December 2015

=====

**Not as late as thought.
Erasmus, arch
onto Flatbush.
The memory palace
is more like a town,
a city, spread wide
over a river, a gulf,
Istanbul, where
cattle cross into Asia**

**if that's what the word
means.**

**I live in the word
as in my *wyrd*, my fate,
half in Europe half in this
sleepy nowhere called now
which they keep telling us
and I almost understand
is the only place there is.
And over us still that Dome.**

10 December 2015

A NORFOLK AIR

**But you know
how to be in a place,
high hill, lowland,
I have seen you , Julian,
you guard the marshes:**

*I guard this small place
by means of vision
wherein I see the whole
world, and me in it,
doing my tasks, small
as they are they add
to the light around me*

**Once I looked through her
window in the cathedral
where man after man
sat in a throne and presided
and their names are not known
or are known but not
remembered. Only a place**

**knows how to remember.
Or a stone. Or a word.
So I have sealed what little
I know of myself in a word
or two here and there,
scattered almost invisible
like strawberry seeds
but some of them if all
goes well stay in your teeth.**

10 December 2015

=====

**Not tHEse says
Zohar but HE,
not these gods
(who may be truly
gods) but HE
and we know not
what HE is but
our life is that HE is.**

10 December 2015

=====

**Catch now the *tong*
bong of the bell
before the overtones
turn to bird cries**

**not so far, catch
the word rumbles
in the empty sound.**

**Hear me, word
I need to hear,
hear me to say you.**

11 December 2015

=====

**A mild December
morning who
shaped like a
spruce tree
waits for me**

**I meant it as a question
but it was the answer.**

11 December 2015

HUDSON: WINTER WALK

**Suddenly there were people in the street
where only cars are supposed to go,
people walking along with that hungry look
people on feast days acquire, look like birds
of prey swooping low over hen chicks—
I mean their eyes are like that as they trudge
dutiful from entertainment to entertainment
the way we do, of course we're just the same,
how could we be different? Same feet, same street.**

11 December 2015

=====

**That time of night
(that kind of day)
when other people
look like masky
faces in Ensor's
paintings, flaky,
as if their color
is coming off, all
that is visible also
flaking away. Why.
We look too much
at one another,
maybe it's just
wrong to have faces.
To show them
to each other
so nakedly, nostrils
quivering, lips
parted, and eyes,
those eyes.**

11 December 2015

=====

**What can that man be
thinking of? Or think
be man of, when women
do all the thinking and
by thinking make talk true?**

**So few men listen.
They have their tools their toys
their bows their wars.**

So as a man this be my project:

**How can I think
beyond I am?**

12 December 2015

=====

**The way began
as it always does
man or woman
saying a word**

**we have no name
we are figures in your dream
all we do is speak
we say a word:
follow this word.**

**The one wakes
to work.
Follow means write.
Recite
the next word that thinks me
and go on.**

**Yosemite was like this
waterfall and woman's lips
in those days I owned the night.**

2.

**What does that make me?
A zealot? A believer
in the ancient mysteries?**

**A thought wafting through
a head of hair..**

**Some people greet me by name,
I am easy to pronounce
in most languages.**

**Zealot. Armed with attitude,
world safe for heresies,
I hunger for your ears—**

what should we believe but weather?

**I'm like a crazy bible-toting evangelist
howling wisdoms to the crowd
but I wrote this bible I brandish,**

**high priest of the obvious,
missionary from now.**

12 December 2015

=====

**Exorbitant presence
one self on one planet
bravely obvious—**

es schallt die Posaune
**it said, trying
to fit *the trumpet*
shall sound to the music
but it comes out
a trombone, marching band,**

**a lover out loud
twanging his wretched guitar
as if his young beloved
were cold and deaf
and needed reminding,
loud remembering,
warming by vibration,
the trembling strings.**

**12 December 2015
Rhinebeck**

SONG

**The door you need to knock on
is a door not there.
You learned your father's
second language poorly
enough to tell who's there
when the doorless door
asks you, the way
stone and wood know
how to speak. You don't.
You don't even know
your father's first language—
a country where they had
a lot of birds.
More birds than trees,
more stars than birds.**

12 December 2015

=====

**All I ever meant
was to hear the stone
speak and say
its actual name**

**kept trying year
after year, saying
what I thought
I was hearing**

**and always got it
wrong I think
but how can anyone
really know**

unless they heard it too?

12 December 2015

WOMAN BY FIRE

**1.
Woman crouching by the fire
but which way is she turned?
Does she face it, give it
instructions what to say
or is her back towards it
so she can see her shadow
leaping out into the world
around her she must tame?**

**2.
There are trees, telephone poles,
low buildings in the distance.
No one is near. No one
can interfere with her shadow
that slips gently over everything.**

**3.
In this world of ours
people are generally far away.
The people you mean,
I mean, the ones you need,
the ones your breath is
meant for. That you are meant for.**

4.

So all we can do is examine the fire.
the alphabet of flames
standing up from burning branches
she found fallen in the woods,
gathered and used.
Flame has a language, quick,
you have to be quick
to read its nimble palimpsest,
letter streaming over letter
till the text is done.

5.

Then she talks to what she has read.
Its words and her word blaze together—
you've always known this is what language is—
what things say to us and what we answer,
those two chemicalling together, in what poets
a hundred years ago liked to call the Dance
when Isidora and Loie Fuller taught even men
to pay attention to the thinking world around them
in that lovely old religion called Modernism.

6.
But she is not dancing
as such, this
woman by the fire.
She crouches, only
her arms move
quietly, oddly,
signaling, shadows.
Can't see her face,
age, eyes,
only shadows.
*Only the message,
that's all I am.*

13 December 2015

BARLEY MALT

**Generation of sugars
on the mountain.
To make that other thing
with the Arab name.
Farmers their own.
Something about malt.
Something boiling
in the other room,
shadow behind the door
where certain spirits
like, the neutral angels
of an earlier universe.
Tangled among brooms,
umbrellas, walking sticks.
All the tall thin things
trying to fly home.
The smell of malt—
smells also ascend.
If they stay here too long
we breathe them in
drink them in, then they
are us ever after, or as
long as we are.
We too tend to go up.
Then it's all over,
a little foam left
in an empty glass.**

13 December 2015

=====

**No caution here, no edge.
Sleep has no frontier—
just a boundless snowfield
like *Grand Illusion*,
suddenly you're in Switzerland.**

**No edge. Just a maybe
stretched out as terrain.
We go there every night
lucky or not. Hot
in this room, the window
jagged with street lights,
we manufacture diamonds too
the dawn cracks and crushes.**

14 December 2015

DAWN AVOWALS

**Always hard to know
which day I am.**

**I have forgotten
all the other ways to be me.**

**How slowly we recite
the thing we know so well
but have no words for.**

14 December 2015

NARRATION

**Just have to tell one more story
then *Exodus* will be finished
and Moses live again.**

14 December 2015

=====

**Those who have died
leave wonder behind them
for us. Their grief our gift
somehow. Something left
for us to use. The last
gift of all and we will too.**

**They go on changing in their world
but in our world they are fixed,
immutable, crystals of meaning and morals
for us to study and measure things by,
crystals to cherish and reflect.**

14 December 2015

=====

**She looked at me
appraisingly as if
I meant something
but I don't. Or as
if I were worth
something but I'm not,
ah sweet mystery
of life like
some song says.**

14 December 2015

=====

**We forget the meant
and cling to wanted.
Emily in mild
December said this
better but I forget.**

14 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Will there be enough
left for me if I
don't get there?**

**That's the question
I ask every book
I pick from the shelf.**

**A book is not a
journey, it is a huge
city you can enter**

anywhere and be at home.

14 December 2015

GARGANTUA

**was the name of a gorilla
in my childhood, a crazy
sailor hurt him, acid,
his poor trapped eyes
looking out of animal.
I don't know more than this.
here is not much to know.**

14 December 2015

=====

**Soft breath
bare twigs
twitch in breeze
mild mild
the Virgin speaks.**

15 December 2015

=====

**Not a day
to say.**

**But why?
say I.**

15.XII.15

=====

**Language lazes in me today
a summer cloud above bare trees**

**I guess writing also
is a paradox**

**making sound visible
even what you hear**

**only in your head.
But where else is hearing.**

**The wind too and the thunder
and the man mowing**

**obviously writing.
Only I am the illiterate.**

15 December 2015

=====

**After Solomon died
what happened to his thousand wives?
I suppose somewhere in the Talmud
someone guesses, but I worry,
I think of all those women
young and old, barren or fertile,
stumbling out of his zenana
into the commonplace light of day,
being all of a sudden just like
ordinary people. A thousand widows!
Did the holy city have black cloth enough,
taffeta and bombazine to array them
in the honorable uniform of survivors,
black black black all the old lades
of my childhood taught me how they look,
but what about the young ones, girls
the king maybe even had not yet gotten
to enjoy (as the saying is — though we
nowadays could think of harsher words).
And there they are, the streets full of them,
maybe men yearned for them, out of desire
or that more sinister passion, to own
something that had been the king's,
royal treasure on two legs, a weeping girl.**

15 December 2015

TRISTESSES

1.

Too soon to be simple
though I want that gentle wing
keeps singing in my head
these days, so little sleep, why,
is the ship becalmed or
only anchored in storm
who pulls me down?

sanfter Flügel

2.

That horse is anyhow
and hard to ride.
In agency is lost innocence
he seemed to be crying,
torn open pillow, feathers
flying everywhere, fire
engine passing in the night.

16 December 2015

MYSTERIES OF THE HOLLOW EARTH

1.

Existenz is an animal.

A deer. Words

narrow focus. Arctic

is not a bear

anymore. A hole

in the ice, though,

a stairway down.

2.

The cup was full

but the ship sank.

We survivors

drank snow, ate

the blood of birds

who fell dead

from the cold sky.

We knew nothing

for a long time.

Then another ship

accepted us.

Existence is arrival

somewhere.

A long wharf.

Women in furs.

.

3.

When we opened my eyes
we were inside a big round room
the ceiling hard to see, Beside my couch
celibate nurses hurried to attend
what I still thought was me.
How busy you are with my body!
I claimed, they smiled a lot
in an unfamiliar language.
I was inside the earth it seems
where the Existence began.

4.

Dr Rose was there
waiting for me,
had been there all day
with tired legs.
Cathedrals are like that,
the blue light, the hum
of Japanese. Nurse,
get me water please.
Of course she would.
Just testing. Nurse

get me out of here.

5.

You are already
she said gone I mean
that is the sky you see
above you, no wonder
you keep calling
me a nurse I am nobody
like that you see
or you don't see, sorry,
it is not easy to look
on my face and know.
It is time for you to be
singular again. Existence
is like that, one measly
life at any given time.

6.

Cantilevered the gurney rose
tilted till I stood on my own feet
ha ha she said we'll call you
Etz Hayyim her tree of life
no wonder you're afraid
or not fear so much as doubt
that I could stand here silent

with pomegranates in both hands.

7.

**Mysteries mysteries folderol,
you'd like to be a Mason but a man
like you can't keep a secret—
how many bridges in Königsberg?
See, you couldn't not say seven.
How many stars in the summer sky?
The thirteenth Mersenne prime
but that's a guess. You'll never
pass the test. Initiation is
the same as existence, Existenz
is a little different, don't ask how.**

16 December 2015

=====

**Not everything has to be written down
only the half-true things
that need a little airing, a rubdown,
whittling some vague feeling
into something known.**

**We only need
to write what we don't know.**

17 December 2015

[What we know well, well, save that for your table-talk, or your Last Will.]

=====

**We could be equals, be pals,
be a coaxial cable
thick with messages,**

**we could even wind up some day
as real information—
highest form one life can assume.**

17 December 2015

=====

**I don't want to write
I want to read a silly book
that tells a story
that will never ever happen
and thus reveals the truth.
I want the truth.**

17 December 2015

GHAZAL

**Why shouldn't I be allowed to pen
ghazals too? I don't drink wine,**

**thirty years before 9/11
when I was last in a tavern,**

**I have no more Arabic or Persian than
modesty and caution in an Irishman**

**still, I have this hankering to lock down
some sort of rhyming couplets till the sun**

**sets beyond Overlook where hippies yawn—
I'm so prejudiced! I trust the bird, the moon**

**but on sunshine I have views of my own
you'll hear plenty more before Robert is done.**

17 December 2015

TO PLW

Really, one lie after another,
you don't live in the valley
you live in the mountains—
twelve miles puffing uphill
to pant at the gate of your yurt.
He's in, I think, the stream
is turned on, runs past the door,
I check, and sure enough
brown leaves are slipping past
fast, headed downhill.
I don't need a spirit-level to spot
your deception. Downstairs
you toddle, cloaked with wisdom.
But things have roots and branches,
valleys are not mountains, accept
the exaltation of your domicile.
Modesty affronts the House of Stuart!
Mountain man, growl in Bearish!

17 December 2015

LATE

**You know I won't be able
to read this tomorrow.
I can barely write it now,
sore neck, sore eyes,
jealous of the night outside,
its citizens with green eyes.
Yellow eyes. Back there
in the trees, another one.
An hour like this makes
be happy to be wrong.**

17 December 2015

=====

**I didn't study much the land
I let it study me
and write itself the way it chose
the way it streamed and stoned
flowered and waited
for the next thing it would know.
I had other plans, I was a city boy
wanted to live in beauty
and say whatever I pleased
and make the weather part of me.**

18 December 2015

=====

Such stuff spills out of dream
like Yeats on a fine day
thinking of a girl he does not
trust himself to name—
they all are lovely, they all are far—
and there was a man I quarreled with
gently, he'd written a *Catiline*
but he wasn't Johnson,
the dream was ub free verse
but every now and then a rhyme
to make me wonder
who on earth was speaking.
And who is being me now?

18 December 2015

=====

How little I've read
about, even thought about
this land I live on.
Yet how I feel it—
can you study by feeling
alone? As if the whole
place were one huge
work of art before which
I stand in awe. Isn't
feeling how we study art?

Footstep by footstep
eye-shot by eye-shot—
no other implements but these,
my chest fills with what I see
and sometimes breathes
out and let me say it.
The overwhelming power
of those few bare trees
I see every day. From dream
this morning I woke
wondering at myself, how little

**I have studied this place,
how willingly I let it speak
itself in me. Or do I fool
myself, and it's just me
myself talking all the while?
No, it is itself, it is
what has become of me
in these woods, these roads.**

18 December 2015

=====

**Use it till you use it up,
enough light at last
that I can see my way
to stumble but not fall.
Falling is terrible. Shock.
A million years of human
evolution suddenly
erased, there I lie
along the earth, time
knows how to pass, time
would leave me there
and all our lofty consciousness
just my hurt face in wet leaves.**

18 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Sometimes being here is enough
the way birds are—
crows, for instance, though
I wouldn't dare to compare
with those august intentionalities—
you'll never see a casual crow—
dark compassions crying overhead.
I guess I'm still trying to discover
if I belong here — every instinct
cries out yes! but why do I dream
of Broceliande and Yosemite?
I mean real night dreams, not fantasies.
What I fantasize is this, right here.**

18 December 2015

=====

**Just enough to get it started
then who knows?**

**Because my pretty nanny
spoke good French
I've been confused all my life—**

**sunrise does that to people too,
spartan genes and Siberian fantasies
so *hier bin ich*, the last Neanderthal.**

**Something like that. My first
love a Canadian and I was three.**

**Think what hat means in me
when I read Mallarmé.**

18 December 2015

=====

**I want to write sonnets
but they're too long and too short—**

**all that blank paper round the words,
so tasteful. My own taste**

**runs to sauerkraut
or kimchee when I'm flush.**

**Yesterday's rain has roiled the stream—
you hear such things from windows!**

**Goethe riding by on a camel,
actually the president landing on my lawn—**

**truth is so mixed — accuracy
is an old man beating a stick**

**because it will not ever
burst into flower again.**

18 December 2015

=====

**A bus too big for the block
is bearing the babies away.**

**School begins with an S,
we haven't gotten there yet.**

**A bee is best in summertime
but that's an S word too.**

**How hard education is—
so many busses!**

18 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Christmas disaster:
Santa Claus is
really the Moon—
that's how he slips
down the chimney,
he leaves his famous
reindeer browsing
on mosses in Lapland.
He comes to you alone.**

18 December 2015

= = = = =

**The blessing the diapason
the Eucharist carried safe
in its pyx all the way from
childhood till now,**

**every religion walks the hall
at night, saints and Sufis
agitate the candle flame
breathless blessings maybe**

**but they kindle dreams.
And I walk too, cobbled
alleyways the Brits call mews
eyes closed I find me there**

**at every corner the street owns
I hear voices in another room—
my grandmother's voice
I never heard in this life**

**rich as it has been with hearing.
The diapason. The main voice.
The sound of what I mean,
the range, *the tears of things***

**the scholars tell me means
something else but I know better
and that makes it worse, can't you see
I am everything I've ever been?**

18 December 2015

=====

**Girl feeding goldfish.
What can I know.
Things are near and far
depending. Water**

**glistens as the food
sinks in. Her hand
reflected. Fish cluster.
Everything seems clear,**

**the tiny castle, the pirate's
treasure chest. She's gone,
her task finished. I'm left
with what's left of the world,**

**quick golden fins, clarity.
This miniature reality.
My task is far from done
but I feel it ever nearer.**

**Know nothing Do everything.
Something like that
as a start. Or as the Bible says
but I don't have one to check.**

18 December 2015

=====

**Something said
but who**

**always the locutor
on some beach**

the answer.

2.

**I submit we can only learn the truth
by the actual edge of the sea.**

**And there are those who there
learned it and withdrew, knew
all they needed to, to mountain
and desert, speaking languages
by then that no one knew
who had not found their truths.**

**And after that the quest for truth
turns into linguistics yet again.**

19 December 2015

=====

**Headache on an unfamiliar head.
Just west of the vertex, as if
but no wound. *The sky
stabbed me.* Soon more light
will be. My mother's Isfahan
carpet is far away, in Florida
they walk with different feet.
Red, bordered with pure sand.**

19 December 2015

=====

**The little
pains that
don't quite
add up. Yet.**

19.XII.15

=====

**How long I had to wait
by Sardis's gate before
Lydia was free again**

**in my head
I got her gold
in cold Pactolus
pouring down**

**to wash my hands
so all my deeds
tell the people: This
man has been
in the First Mountains**

**and come home—
listen to him
carefully, mingle
trust with doubt,**

**caress his shadow
but touch him not.**

19 December 2015

=====

**Reading at night.
Place or practice?**

**Such words
we live by,**

**language our mother
sometimes sleeps.**

**And no matter what you do
you are a city too.**

19 December 2015

Das Grint\chlied

**Many more boxes have come onto the porch
it must be a seasonal thing
like dark afternoons and no leaves on the birch
and silly songs they make us sing.**

19 December 2015

=====

**I am old I do not go
I am not who
I say I am.
Old age is my last disguise.**

19 December 2015

=====

**Something always
comes of it.
A letter, a leper
limping up the church
steps, sunlight,
a message from
the governor reminding
me of what I can't forget.**

19 December 2015

THE SMELL OF SUGAR

Something like it
and then something else
and then the same thing
again and there's the harbor
and a ship coming in
could be from anywhere
sluggish up the channel
tugged into the island side
to bring sugar. Bananas.
Shoveling sugar. The smell.
Long ago. They stood in it
swinging the shovels.
The smell is subtle, stays
with them always, terrible.
They vomit when they go
home, drink black coffee.
What can we do with memory.
Bananas with tarantulas.
Sugar with the smell, white
white sugar. Raw not so bad,
like earth, but what they call
Brown Sugar is just white
refined sugar with molasses
poured onto it, hence sticky.
The memory wont let go.
Seventy years my father
carried it, gave it to me.

19 December 2015

=====

**Hard to be tired enough to sleep
because sleep needs other
passports now not just yawns,
tired eyes. Sleep wants some
abdication, signed armistice,
stand barefoot in the snow before
the lords of dream. Confession.
Absolution only the self can grant
and where is the self when
you really need you? Sleeping
while you wake, dry-eyed, afraid
to turn another page, god knows
what monstrosity of thought
or history spreads there, ready
to jolt you up three hours more?**

19 December 215

BRISE MARINE

**So many masts
to drive one steam-
driven ship, o Mallarmé,**

**you tell us too much, more
sails than words
know how to bear,**

**too much, too much.
You leave us panting
for the veiled in cloud and foam**

**Elsewhere your poem
shows you not quite resisting,
but us, poor us,**

**we have to go there
for you, your words
hum like wind in rigging**

**till we come to that weird
coast where everything is
that need never be said.**

20 December 2015

=====

**Tell me again
why I need
anything more.
All these years,
haven't I eaten
enough by now?
Shouldn't I be ready
now to just be?**

20 December 2015

[Sometimes one splits an infinitive for its own good]

=====

Now it is now,
no gnomes
in the garden,
lawn pure
with birdbath
sunshine, bare
jamaica they
tell me is hibiscus,

the bare word
will do till spring.
But now is now,
the land all round
is vigorously its own
would laugh
at deeds and real estate
if it had a mouth

but it is all mouth.
It talks to me
or something does,
tells me the little
that I know. Of it
I try to sing.

20 December 2015

CHRISTMAS 2015

Lucian wrote a letter
to the god Saturn
asking not very politely
how on earth we
can celebrate the god's
Saturnalia when so
many people are poor,
really poor, and not
just some unfortunates
over there but here,
we are poor and the rich
have so much, so much
and always more and
we have nothing, crusts
and stale water we
get to feast with. No
answer from the god
as far as I know. And we
still celebrate the season,
winter solstice, turn
of light, all that, but we
don't even write a letter
asking, we've given up
wondering, the inequality
seems to be the nature
of reality, or so the rich
persuade the schools

to teach us. The poor.
I think of that pregnant
teenager with no place
to go, gave birth in a barn,
laid her bloody newborn
in whatever soft hay
the cows didn't eat,
rested. Maybe she prayed
too, wondering.
Did she see the years
to come for him
before the state
put him to death, advised
by the best opinions
of the learned? What do we
learn from this story?
We celebrate it still
in our fashion, the papers
are full of it, alongside
the news of sixty
million homeless migrants
bothering nice people
in snug little countries,
and all the new movies
and local politics, lots of
ads for gold watches.

20 December 2015

THE THEORY

**Christ was born
and so were we.
In this equality
rests a singularity,
that the becomingless
suddenly became.
Deus fit homo
works both ways.
And one day maybe
he'll take time away
and then we'll be.**

20 December 2015

AFTER JULIANA OF NORWICH

*I guard this small place
by means of vision
wherein I see the whole
world, and me in it,
doing my tasks, small
as they are they add
to the light around me*

*Only a place knows how
to remember. Or a word.
So I have sealed what little
I know of things in a word
or two here and there,
scattered almost invisible
like strawberry seeds
but some of them will if all
goes well linger in your teeth.*

20 December 2015
[from a text of 10.XII.15]

=====

I read my mail
I am armed against
I guess the day

email too
which in French
means enamel

that's hard too.
A white van
circles the house—

blinker on its roof
suggests these villains
are official

so a different
kind of dread
invades,

no words
on its blank sides
what kind

of mail is this,
what comes to me

without address?

**Paranoia
post office
public people**

**how do they
know I am?
It drives away.**

Unease stays.

21 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Nearer, under.
Counting breath
not using numbers.**

**There is no measure
but meaning,
it breathes out**

**ever after
to the other,
whoever.**

**Whoever
is the point of it.
You do not choose.**

You are of use.

21 December 2015

STUDIES IN RICHARD STRAUSS'S *CAPRICCIO*

1.

Where are the works

La Roche asks

that reach to the heart of the people?

The heart he means

is not that purse-shaped organ

that makes us spend our

money when it's 'moved.'

He stops midway in singing

and shouts it out,

a direct question.

Strauss is asking it, the premiere

is right after Stalingrad

but the words come before,

yes, we're losing, or we have lost it

because we lost already

the heart of the people—

not just the public, which is La

Roche's master, this impresario,

but he knows, we lost the heart

to abstract folderol, to controversy,

politics, resentment, war.

**Where has the music gone
and what has it done.**

**What are we doing
to one another.**

**As if there could be no war
if music worked—**

**Could that be true?
Could those who struggle with Apollo
strive only there?**

**What is it that the heart instead
is so busy hearing?**

21 December 2015

=====

Poor land of Tirol
then fifty years
later I was there.
The icy stream.
The rose-colored
mountain at dusk.
And Ötzi, his corpse
modesty displayed.
We met a man
here 5000 years
surviving only
to be seen. How much
his twisted little
body gives. Which
of us will give
such presence, after?

21 December 2015

=====

**He called to her
tell me what you hear
I hear nothing
nothing she said**

**but I hear it, hear it
loud. Maybe it
is your blood she said,
pulsing in your head.**

**Is this the famous thing,
hearing myself think?**

21 December 2015

SOLSTICE

**it's the light's birthday
things love to be far,
come near, come here**

**a person is where
everything winds up.
The human is center.**

**Tautochrone. It all
comes in. Hello,
new-born light,**

you understand us.

22 December 2015

=====

**Too early to be animal
I refine
on the beaches of sleep
grey sand of weather**

**monochrome sleek
let the kids stay home
make marks on wood
paper — as a regular**

**alternation of long
and short, for example
Iliad. Then the long
wave rises, comes in**

slowly and we forget.

22 December 2015

TENEBRAE

**Things get easier in the dark
children wander in the brain
any place could be somewhere else
and there's hardly any weather.
When it's dark it always is
—time is a function of light—
and in the dark there are no questions
only throngs of answers, answers
and your body all alone.
You can even hear it being
about its business, whatever
that really is, this
not exactly animal you are.**

22 December 2015

=====

**Brighter, sleeker, wetter, timer,
the comfortable marriage contract
of light and shade
I mean earth and sky,
chiasmus, or is there also
an adulterous light that
comes from earth
alone, un-above, un-skied?
Hmm. I hurry to my lawyers,
Reshkoff LLC — where does
the light comes from
really? They'll look it up,
they'll call me when it's clear
but I have to understand they
have so many other things to do.**

22 December 2015

22 December 2015

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**A gap in the yew tree hedge
tells too. We see through things,
things let us in, sometimes,
let us see from their vantage,
see what we can't see.
We? Us? I mean I think we
are not things, not secure,
not useful, not really complete.
We might become the marble
bust of a late emperor, maybe
the death-mask of a young poet,
a name in the catalogue of Popes.
What is it in us that is no thing?**

23 December 2015

RUNNING

**into the variety,
the opening, the way.
You know the way
it was here
before the beginning.
It was the beginning.**

**She knew as I passed by
she was the way.**

**Things know
and people do.**

**It is a raving
a kind of hope
leads us. Us?
Not us, sis,
I stay right here.**

**But there are answers
aren't there,**

la vie sauvage à nos seuils
it said on TV
they meant squirrels
I heard tiger i heard wolf

but it was the same way,
wasn't it, isn't it,
the gate the opens
always inward
out into
the broken landscape of the self

You know when I have spoken
she said
when it is silent

silent as a bee
above a flower
five months from now
in a spring that has not come—

how silently we feed.

23 December 2015
Kingston

=====

**Knowing wrong
is still knowing,**

**it is the verb
that counts here
not the apparent facts,
nomina, the nouns.**

**To know
as Pliny knew
all the wrong things
rightly.**

**things change,
the knowing knows.**

**And this valence or vector of the mind *mindung*,
that's what counts in us, generation after generation.
And everything Aristotle knew was wrong
and ditto Plato., Galen, Plutarch — but they
taught us knowing. And we know.**

23 December 2015

= = = = =

Lead things away

**as if liberty
is to be far**

**from yourself
that bad neighborhood**

where you were born.

24 December 2015

=====

**A wolf would look good
strolling down this rain.
I make do with headlights
pooling before the car
sloshes into them
at me and then past.
Hylognoetic was my word
all this thinking going
on all the time around us.**

24 December 2015

KOHL

**Answer the truth of matter
with made-up lights
the way women darken their eyes
to make them bright.**

24 December 2015

=====

**The light knows me again
at the moment we are equals
in weakness. But every moment
it grows stronger. I linger
in ineptitude — a place
like any other, *phôs augei*
I pray, let the light decide,
it grows full, it is my mother,
I wait for her to tell me
what to do it always does.**

24 December 2015

DELAWARE LACKAWANNA & WESTERN

**Places in unity.
In Callicoon the train
ran right through
the middle of the street,
the only one. DL&W.
That's how a town
should be, artery
straight through meat.
Who knows what goes
there now. No D no L
no W.**

24 December 2015

=====

**Victorian novels. The stuff
you have to read to learn
the rites of manhood.
How foolish you have to
be and behave to grow wise.**

24 December 2015

A CHRISTMAS APOLOGY, TO CHARLOTTE

I.

**I want to give you everything
but nothing comes to mind.
And nothing and everything
are not so far apart — it's
the thought that counts, but
that's not true for Christmas,
birthdays, anniversaries,
any days the heart turns
to you with so much at stake—
I want to give you everything
but I think I have already
given you all I am, whatever
I make or think or mean.
And if I haven't, here it is.**

II.

**The amethysts were otherwise,
green, they spring from rock
to nibble at your ears and by
their chroma illustrate your eyes.
Something like that. And those**

**amber beads from the Baltic
whisper *Kalevala* round your wrist.
But these things are here already,
ancient history, ten days old.
How can I give you what you have?
How can I give you myself again?**

25 December 2015

=====

**Christmas and.
Light around, abound.
41 degrees
more like it after
yesterday's 71.**

**We live by numbers
since Ashurbanipal
caused the tables to lie on the shelf
and do his remembering for him,
who taught him that?**

**What would it be like without remembering,
just to be?**

**Last night's caroling
all our pretty voices lifted
trying to identify a
can't call it a scene, that's too theatrical,
call it a memory of the unremembered,
vivid recollection of what we never saw,
angels, shepherds, infant, how
did a girl get into such a fix,
where are the angels to soothe her lap?**

The stuff that worries me, the pain, the numbers,

**the years that toddle past slower and slower
so it's always now
wherever you look,**

**can't find then, can't find them,
those lyrical choristers parked in the clouds
whose exaltations we try to imitate
with winter coughs and eggnog altos,
the Jewish professor of Greek
sits quietly watching women pass.**

**Each one is Mary. Each one of us
is born for this. To bring
peace into the world. To turn
the sordid into somehow singing.
And not just now.
Every blessed pagan night to come.**

25 December 2015

=====

**Temporavoracious, so I can't have
what I don't want, a white wall
with fire coming from it, a house I never
and you neither.**

... 25.XII.15

=====

**He went outside and fell in the snow.
There was no snow
he didn't fall. He fell back
and made angel wings in earth, in air.
The full moon studied him through cloud—
he studied right back
but all he could determine
was the cotton-wool of a soon-to-rain sky.**

**He flapped his new wings a while
and earth left him behind as it turned.
So by now it was the Middle Ages
the luminous woodlands
were full of princesses.
They took care of him,
slowly, thoughtfully, taught him to speak.
But what a strange language
he came home with
all licked clean!**

25 December 2015

=====

And each death says
we'll meet again.
Mean it or not. We move
far from one another
sometimes very far.
But the link lingers.
A rabbit runs across the road—
he is part of it too,
the pattern, the infinite
Trestleboard not even
the wisest Mason can read.
We have hints, sometimes,
smell of night jasmine
by Lake Geneva, eyes
of a leper in Darjeeling once.

25 December 2015

=====

**If it held there
star-wise on rooftop**

**white shadow
of a gone bird**

**lingering, small
bright hole shape
of what had been**

**we deal a currency
of absences**

**I speak exclusively
with those who have never been.**

26 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Always another
link to let go**

Jewel-net of Sakra

**a pearl drops
from her ear**

**every image
captures us**

prison inside prison

her lips about to speak.

26 December 2015

=====

**Wrathful to read
the world an old
parson fanged
with theology—
how simple it would be
if God were as silly
as men make him out to be.**

**Women know better.
*So be angry
only with opinions*
as poor wise Yellow Horse
whispered in her
sleeping husband's ear
as he heard.**

26 December 2015

=====

**What will happen
when nothing happens?
And the little breeze
blows away the moon?
And no one notices?
Over Gloucester harbor
not a single gull
visible from here, this
Indian hour lost
in the blue hills.**

26 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Flower petals wither
tyhen they fall.
Their ruin still
has color, savor—
are men like this as well?**

26 December 2015

=====

**What needed to be said
waited by the elevator
in a Place Maubert hotel
sixty years ago.**

**You pull on a rope
to start your flight,
no Icarus can get lost
in this narrow heaven.**

**Then the bolster
on the bed, the weary
head, the new language,
dear God, the cigarettes**

and I am home at last.

26 December 2015

I CAN'T GET STARTED

**Everything as it should be
in pure apparency.**

**How long will paper
news or mail
come to the house door?**

The news is created to control the poor.

**Wordless the morning
forgive the night.**

**Warm December day the last in sight.
The end of the year is the end of the world.
That's why we celebrate the last night — all done!**

**Year's end, these scrapings from the barrel:
whiff of beef jerky, taste of old cheese.**

**Jitter gibber gyzm jolt—
what are fricatives telling us?**

**Silk Road? The road
itself is silk
and goes nowhere but here**

**I went to the movies
and never came back.**

27 December 2015

= = = = =

**It's not so easy to begin
after you've begun
but that's what the music needs
this word and not some other
otherwise the silence crashes round us
like sunshine, beginning where it ends.**

**(—Are you saying I shouldn't try to be the sun?
—I'm saying you should lie there and be the lawn.)**

27 December 2015

MISSIONS

**Send a meaning out
in a man's mouth.
Let him clamber
over some mountain
into some valley—
lowlands listen best.**

**Let him speak.
If the meaning
really means
a woman will hear it
and be a church
all of a sudden,
sunshine, pale stone.**

27 December 2015

ADOBE

**is an Egyptian word
from *toba*, 'brick.'
The Arab invaders
made it *al-toba*,
the brick. They carried
the word westward
into Spain, *al-doba*,
al-dobe, *adobe*.
and the Spanish brought it
even further west
past me, to the desert
when abode houses
still have a look of Egypt,
mastaba tomb, granary,
we make our own rock.**

27 December 2015

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=====

**Today the floors of my house
run uphill in both directions.
I must ask my doctors what it means.
But they won't know, or if they do
they'll just give me a Flat Earth pill
and all will be well until the next time.
Then what will I do? Stumble, fall,
lie there like the snow, or the wounded
lion of symbolism, not even beginning
to think about getting up again.**

27 December 2015

PROPHECY

**From moonlight in the woods
green eyes, then gone.
Things waiting. Rocks
tell the Day of Judgment.
Then. Then the change.**

**The so-called lifeless
things will bear witness
against the so-called living.
That is the Judgment.**

That is what the world will mean.

27/28 December 2015

=====

**Like any child
I waited for the party to begin.
I was the only children there,
the rest were those generous
enemies, the elders.**

**How had they all forgotten
what any child knew so well?
Would I forget it too?
It's something in our blood
or bones that muddies it,
makes us forget the important
things — now even I
can barely recall what they are.**

27 / 28 December 2015

=====

**Sometimes, in the middle
it recoils. Night,
or another. The middle
is such a meaning,**

**a prophecy, a voice
crying out in the forest
*Here is what it means.***

**But then it's dark, dark
with forgetting, sleep
renders it unclean
till it is where
you are again. The middle
of everything still.**

**27 / 28 December 2015
End of Notebook 384**

=====

**As if it all had to begin again
and we don't even know what It is**

**this process that is so sure of us
tjhis number (is it?) that includes us**

**this f;lower we are meant to
bend down and fondle and inhale**

**the sweetness of but leave alone
and be on our way, remembering.**

28 December 2015

=====

Catching

**or trying to catch
the sky fish**

**Get ready to be the Sun
when the sky goes out**

**and all the *Places*
turn back into times again**

and we have to hurry just to be.

28 December 2015

=====

**Seize the high thing
over your head
it has life enough
to transform yours**

ceaselessly we verb.

28 December 2015

=====

**A hint of prophecy
in our blue air
under the grey sky
no wonder**

**I have listened
to the words I heard,
I wrote them down
easy as a stone**

**falling from the sky—
where do things
come from, you ask,**

**I tap you chastely
on your breast
and spread my arms wide.**

28 December 2015

= = = = =

**I want you back
wearing your robes of state
the curious headgear**

**I want you back
raving in the hills, hurling
flower petals at stone gods.**

**I want you singing all night long
but silently, so the moon can sleep.**

28 December 2015

=====

*Will we ever know
enough to be now?*

**I engrave that in silver
to wear on my wrist,**

**facing out so you
can read it and I**

forget what it says.

28 December 2015

=====

a different angel

**Snow on ice
the trace
consumes—**

**history eats the present
its angel is otherwise**

**it covers over
what we are
with what we were.**

**Death is our life
happening to us again.**

29 December 2015

= = = = =

**Treading air
just to be there.**

**Under the bridge
fishing for eels**

**not me — I wasted
too many crimes already**

**eating things that were
all by themselves alive.**

**I am the judge and jury
and I wait**

29 December 2015

=====

**I am a tall mast
without a ship**

you understand?

**(As once in New
Bedford by the dock
their lay the old
mainmast of the *Ernestina*
at the base thick
through as a standing
girl; a hundred
years old that tree
had walked the sky.)**

And what does schooner mean anyhow?

29 December 2015

ENSAYO

**Essay to leap
& say so—**

**we can't see you
can only hear what
you say happened**

anything could.

29 December 2015

=====

**Just to mark my place in the score
a market basket full of greens
(lambs' ears, rocket, red lettuce)**

**so when I come back as music
I will be nourished in lightness, spice
too is of the essence, pepper, that black
panacea six grains every morning chew,**

yogurt from the cow, honey from Alcyone.

30 December 2015

== == == == ==

**Hungry is the night
cured by dreaming**

**fun in a car
then Death black robed
stood tall above me**

**I reached up
along the body
until I found her breasts
then I knew I was safe.**

30 December 2015

=====

**All this while
I've done the world's work—**

**how to do mine.
Or is there a difference?**

**Who else could I be
but what you are?**

30 December 2015

=====

**One's own work has no words
but does have language
of a different kind:
meaning unfolding itself
like sea-foam on the shore.**

30 December 2015

=====

Of narrative spaces:

An image is from heaven.

**A story though is purgatory—
where the images strive, learn,
to make sense of one another
and of themselves.**

30 December 2015

=====

**I have vanished from this
I have kidnapped my mind
and fled across the border
into a calm region of no language
belonging to no one, the sun
just as bright, the moon
as fickle, but I am quiet there,
I acquire knowledge of stones
but tell no one, no one to tell.
This is a place I have known
sometimes in dream, people
are there, soft, enterable,
but they are silent too, we know
one another like stars know stars.**

30 December 2015

=====

**All it has to be is dark
and he'll hear voices.**

**Silence is a property of light—
control, conscious prayer, focus.**

Otherwise it talks all the time.

30 / 31 December 2015

JORSALFAR

**As if they were waiting to begin
as soon as I'm finished.
The descendants of every thought,
shadows of words spoken, our so-
called posterity. That's why
we have to keep talking, the car
moving, even slowly, over the map.
Watch the road uncoil on your device—
this is called Going to Jerusalem.**

30 / 31 December 2015

=====

**Close to the border again
the mind agave
light enough to pee by
but some sky will see.**

**Make it look years ago
paint the Sun her own old yellow
not to bright as now
but the moon brighter**

**(he's getting dull with our messages)
paint a candle in the virgin's hand
and brave us following her light
deep into the desert. Miss**

**Moses we call her, but our wit
means reverence. Follow
that girl anywhere, that candle
burns all night undiminished.**

**We're almost there now.
Study the broken ground, drink
the sap of the cactus. Bitter
or sweet it's time to wake.**

31 December 2015

=====

**It's five years since she saw
a mountain lion walk in our backyard
and the next day we saw his paw-prints
big as dishes following a slender deer.
Hard December then, mild one now,
a little sheet of ice that just won't melt,
salt, and step careful. No beast left,
we have to make do with music,
that subtlest of all animals, fangs
in harmony. Lydian mode, footsteps
start on F above middle C, then
see what happens. The Greeks
thought this luxurious, naughty,
Asian attitudes, tigers, drunken gods.**

31 December 2015

== == == == ==

**In this weather you don't
know who to believe.
Nobody loved my Uncle John
ran a tugboat on the East
River. And don't tell me again
how it's not a river. Rivers
rise from somewhere and go home.
This one is just there, green,
dark green, oily, the one thing
I loved in those days, that and
a small stone lion east of Nostrand.**

31 December 2015

=====

**Full daylight now
the lights are out.
White persists
the way a person's name
never really changes.
Balzac is Balssa.
Geneva's airport
in Arouet. And the sun
is coming out!
Tree tops take color!
The world's original
name comes back.**

31 December 2015

=====

**I make such a fuss
about weather, but it is
my friend after all,
tells me the news
behind the news. I try
to make it calm
wherever I come.
It's the least we can do.
No angry men with guns
means no hurricanes,
tornados from bad politics.
Don't mind me, this
is all just jazz. Isn't it?**

31 December 2015

=====

**What is the clam word for French?
The Hawaiians call everything vowels—
the Irish have no words for anything.
You can't taste the food you see
people eating on television — this
is a linguistic problem, so also
are most troubles. Shillings and ounces,
no farthings since 1960.
No Westmorland at all.**

**31 December 2015
Rhinebeck**

=====

**Isosceles woman
with a head of fire**

**one foot in Asia
one in Africa**

**everything we ever
got of wisdom**

**or daytime knowing
came through**

**between her legs
and we hear it still.**

31 December 2015