

12-2015

## dec2015

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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 4<sup>th</sup>  
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.**

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

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

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**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 read it in the paper,**

**dangers of reading  
thirty-seven books of his compendium  
History of Natura  
and how she serves us**

**how the world  
or the only  
world we can know**

**is all about us.  
About us.**

**And night holds me in its paws,  
knows I am afraid to use my eyes,  
so long, four a.m.  
before the Given Light returns,**

**afraid to make my own.**

**And he calls her a monster  
and paints her face red  
out of reverence,**

**Sphinx,  
knows she is a squeezer,  
her look enough to stop us,**

**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 chemically 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 liost 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**

=====

But the meanings the subtle  
variations in repetition  
what else can the music do  
with that one string  
he loops so gently round  
some beloved neck  
to let it sing  
                          there, as it might  
(as sounds do)  
remind us of places  
we have never been,  
yes, that valley, that  
citadel over the ice  
with swallows nesting  
in warm air alone  
brought up from the high  
royalty of doings now there  
that courtyard,  
clean fires in the corners  
where music brings us,  
  
his music, not just  
any rambling lute or gibbering flute,  
but this concert of varying  
textures, Gesualdo, Charlie Parker,  
Berlioz, bring  
it all to mind.

**22 December 2015**

**= = = = =**

**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**

.

=====

**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**