The reins of the Sun are loosened, she rides over the trees to know me. This is a prayer. I pray to her. To anything—no one not worthy of morning devotions, dawn Mass, palms upraised in the Temple, psalms to everything.

1 January 2017
I had my body with me at the time
there was a hallway, a sweet encounter,
a smiling woman chattering Latin
I picked my way among her words
and counted every door I passed till one
painted red and with a letter pinned to it
addressed to me at least I think I am
or at least was the person they intended
who left it there — the envelope was empty
so I went inside. Here my story ends.
the rest of it you can see or just infer
I came from terror now and walk in peace.

1 January 2017
It's a new kind of theology
words without hats
shivering on mountain tops
with no mountains, noise
coming out, noise of breath
of air shaped through
our anxious flesh, sounds
come out and maybe one
day one sound will be
the name of a god
who will answer me.

1 January 2017
If the light blinks
all night long
how will the dawn know
it’s time to come?

1.I.17
Accidentally shelved the dictionary upside down. In a few days I’ll check to see what all the words have done. Will they be empty now, and held together only by angels of the alphabet?

1 January 2017
A blotter is full of surprises
magic happens when we look
away then look again—

all of this is time, bakers
and linemen and milkers of fat kind
(my father loved that word)
(I’m writing with his pen) I promised
much and little answered, sorry,
I’m still working — “parrots!”
she ncried from the living room
but I was lost in typing out
some words I thought I said.

2.
I missed the birds.
On the electric fireplace
the saw-cut geodes rest,
bookends for no books,
the beautiful air between them.
A whole foot of air!
Even if no birds.
3.
Of course is it like a towel
a little, it dries things
in this season, need a humidifier,
eyes too dry, try tears,
weeping brought you
back to the world.
The terror of destinations.
*Daunting portal*
they would have called it,
the house door, going out.

4,
When I was a child
parrots knew how to talk.
What has happened to me since?

Stuffed raven at Peter’s house
stuffed kingfisher in ours—
my first bird! Naked was I
and the stream it dove in
hurries past me still.

1 January 2017
IN SCHOOL

Knowing the answer is the same as the window. Too high up here to see the street. In school you’re alone with the sky. Looking out the window, only the clouds. I love them. Clouds are the answer.

2 January 2017
I’d like to be able to sing it
but all I can do
is look at it, sometimes
with a loupe in eye
or a ruler in my hand.
Sometimes I can catch
the tune of it almost
but hearing is not singing
is it, or not yet?
A little pale stone on the table
from a beach far from here.

2 January 2017
TRY AGAIN

It can’t have been an apple
with its simple
not very interesting flesh
all uniformity and sweetness.

It must have been a pomegranate,
its million seeds, all various,
sour with bitter with very sweet,
wine and repentance, white
and red, rough outside and smooth
within, jewels scattered,
profligate, a dense population
crowded in complexity,
migration of the tribes. Clear
now the nature of the fruit
from that trees. Next
to understand the serpent
was no serpent but someone else
and name her. Then we’d be
halfway to the true beginning
of the book we’re supposed to be.

2 January 2017
BOTANY LESSON

Such a flower once
all the petals
cease clamoring
for the wind's attention
and the rose herself
sees us, looks us
in more than the eye.
We feel this flower
all the way down
to the ground we share.
It pretends
we are the same
and we are.

2 January 2017
Looking out the window
I become a door.
Windows and doors,
there is nothing more.

_ I am the door _ he said.

2.
Doors have doorsills
_ aliquantulum elata _
a little lifted up
to trip you gently
on your way in or out,

to shock you into
that between-space
_ limen, threshold. _

The liminal is the only real.

3.
All the things we have to know:
windows and doors.

All the things you have to feel
come later, come prancing,  
come sauntering along  
through every pilgrim road  
we wander dazed on.

You decide — what is a feeling  
or this feeling worth.

Then you look out the window again.

3 January 2017
I’m hurrying there
all day long
that precious there
the other side of here.

Listen to the mist
in the trees, cars
are just lights
noisig their way through.

If I were a miracle
I would cure all your ills.
As it is I am a prayer
desperate, pagan

to the mist and you and snow.

3 January 2017
The lyric isn’t angry enough for some
so salt their roses
Lady, put pepper in their honey,
the only color flower they love is the thorn.

3 January 2017
We try to force the law
into the air pockets
left between
our needs and our desires.

This is theology and truth,
the crocodile sleeps in the turbid stream
the bird endures the differences of air.

4 January 2017
Sometimes clearing the throat is eloquence enough.

4 January 2017
Father taught me
to doubt every move
doubt my skill
and doubt myself

so even the slightest
achievement would be
an astonishing victory.
This too is education.

4 January 2017
Little lyric expostulations,
tuneful revenges
wild men at the upper window
gnashing their teeth at the glass.

4 January 2017
Herm in front of house
haggard satyr ithyphallic
inhibits idle visitors.

4 January 2017
Take your pills and go to meeting
where several hundred liars
strive for truth. Call this democracy,
slit it to barbarians ad the isles,
explain it all in big fat books
then sell the books.
This one, for instance, really good.

4 January 2017
Rapturous decisions, rapture as in rap, there’s not enough truth in the ink. Listen to the breath instead. Or listen to the angelus, it says you’re awake at last.

4 January 2017
I dreamed we were talking about God
saying intelligent things on a street corner—
everyone we meet might be a part of God
so treat them with respect, reverence even,
using the words they want to hear,
skillfully, in the dialect of flesh and blood.

4 January 2017
A drum works by being empty.

A hand does too.

4 January 2017
Decide on emptiness, it sings. Dr. Sunyata every day will keep Eve’s apple away.

You taste his pleasant medicine every time you hear a bell.

4 January 2017
Articulate the obvious — no one will notice.

If they do, they'll agree and call you very wise.
Useless smart remarks
translated into ancient Greek
and squirreled away inside
an antique chest of drawers
found in the Fayum.
Revise our tragic history.
It’s bst to remember that
nothing ever really happened.

4 January 2017
PHYSICS — A FAIRY TALE

Heat rises
they told the child,
it wants to return
to the Sun.
Me too said the kid.

4 January 2017
On the beach at Chica Loca
I saw a mermaid clear as day.
She was the Sun
rising from the sea.

4 January 2017
FROM HAGIA SOPHIA

Augmented, ornamented by time itself, eleven second reverberation. Two old men groan. The church itself sings.

4 January 2017
Man by fireplace with no cat*.

Sad. But the heat’s fur caresses him,
curls on his knees.

*Cats are wonderful magical creatures until they become your cat. Then they grow burdensome, suck all your affections, corral your anxieties, and exasperate your relatives and friends.

4 January 2017
Not everything is easy as water running clockwise down a drain.

Some things are contrary, need coaxing, shaping, a kiss on the forehead even to get them moving the way we want. The way we want.

4 January 2017
Hill half
grass half
snow. Dualism
pervades everywhere
you look.
No cure
for difference,
indifference least
af all.
Hill half
mine half
yours. You
don’t even
know who
you are.

4 January 2017
Footloose in Armageddon
there will always be
kids playing under rubble
touch each other’s
private parts, learning
how all things begin again.

4 January 2017
Flame in fireplace
air in empty tree.
What I see. Fool,
you can’t see air,
you see through it.
As you through me.

5 January 2017
The patriotic road salutes every car the same. No need for names. Wheels are passports enough.

5 January 2017
Weird open green Australian driver on the right green jitney. Bush Devil Irode in or on wrongly the streets of a busy Boston bigger than life, gave the driver wrong address, Putnam Ave. really across the river, the house I was trying to get home to was wrong, wrong street, wrong city, wrog people in it. So much for desire. All wrong. Or aspiration, yearning. The dream said: whatever you consciously desire is the wrong thing. Things. The right goal ofyour being in time is what happens. The strange young people
who call your name
or sit beside you, close.
The angry cabdriver
who said no, the portly
delivery man who said
friendly yes but not now
to take me home, all
to the wrong destination
aiming, all wrong.
The angels carry us
dream after dream
until we wake
in nothing like the place
intended. Just here,
the arguable actual.

5 January 2017
Sleep. Enter into danger.

Dominatio. Enthralled by dream. Visit the fire.

Carry pine branches, toss pine cones at newly weds as we throw rice. Dream.

It is a special kind of wine that drinks us instead.

5 January 2017
OF EPIPHANY

word should mean
not the Showing
but showing looking at showing,
the world at last
coming to see itself.

5 / 6 January 2017
Trying to find the beginning
is finding the right word.
Is it always the one
promptest to the tongue?
Or pen, if there are
somehow eerily other?
That is the one
the sea of thinking
casts up on the dry
coast of the unspoken
hoping to help
or to be healed.

5 / 6 January 2017
TUDORS

I remember everything from before,
their ruffs, their furs
the mean bloated faces,
they answer every question with a knife,
a living body on the pyre.

Yet they knew us into the world,
me too. I hate to remember
their smell in heavy fancy clothes,
stink of men and woman reek,
frightened children huddled out of sight.

5 / 6 January 2017
You know perfectly well
Rome never fell.
It’s all around us always.
cuckold’s bed and angry street.

5 / 6 January 2017
History is too many nightmares for one little boy.

5 / 6.I.17
Take a sleeping pill
and tuck it in
and let it sleep.
Stay alert
and watch it dream
this place you
think you are.

5 / 6 January 2017
A wheel o the other side of the world lets this be now.

Sun on a spindle monkey up a tree.

Listen to the leaves say all they know over and over till you know it too.

The true astronomy’s locked in your breath.

5 / 6 January 2017
What happens to me if you are the sun?

Is there a place for me in your Jerusalem?

Why did I come to discover the religion of you?

Life is like the other, other side of what I know,

I light a candle to see which way the smoke goes up, the shadows fall—

how pale you are as my only answer.

5 / 6 January 2017
EPIPHANY

What is shown?
Everything stands there waiting to be seen.

Then along comes a time and catches the eye.

A knight or a dame kneels to some king asleep on his throne

or queen wide awake who sees all these little lies we hide

by waking up again.

6 January 2017
The older I get
the more I become
father of myself,

watch my every move
with scant patience
and little sympathy.

I am my own father
by my own old window
but I will go out,

I will, and change
the world, I will
and make trees sing.

6 January 2017
Organdy curtains
clouds pretending
in an immense window.

It is Bergen Street
seventy years ago
can you understand?

I am the frightened boy
that day I looked up
and the whole sky knew me.

6 January 2017
BRAHMS

When you listen to Brahms you could easily be someone else. Your identity becomes fluid as his, queasy, uncommitted, ebergetically baffled by everything except the next beautiful move. Every measure shouts I don’t know I don’t kow how I became the man I am, tell me, music, tell this poor sinner my actual name.

6 January 2017
Suppose it was a king
back in the days of such things
who ordered a statue to be built
such that a thousand men and women
could live inside it, vast monument,
rhombus upended, eyes
legion all along its flanks,
and in our infant lust to imitate
we built a million more
all over the planet, could you
even now forgive the pale comfort
groaning liturgy of that democracy
and sleep in my apartment tonight?

7 January 2017
CONSPIRACY THEORY

Secertly all these years
I have (not) been me.
You choose which —
I’m not even here.

7.I.17
On a scale of one to ten
all the blackbirds flew away.
Birds are people, some
people will not be measured.

7 January 2017
AFTER VILLION

Human sisters who live on after us
don’t harden your hearts against us,
we men who sought you as the prime
reality, as children grasp the brightest flower
but god knows what they do with it
sometimes — did we do that to you?
Forgive us as we dwindle in all alone
recalling how lovely you were to touch.

7 January 2017
Sometimes a gift silences everything.  
Or words you say have lives of their own,  
don’t just curl into the beloved’s ear  
and sleep like children.  
They wander, squirm, distort what you meant  
maybe into what you really did mean or  
maybe what no one from the beginning of the world ever meant before.  
Be careful of what you don’t say.

7 January 2017
Pick up your tuning fork
your Oaxacan rattle
your plastic whistle from
a box of Cracker Jacks
your vila from Cremona
or just croak gulp sing
in weekend weather cold
as other people’s sins—
two days off from work
make anywhere a tropic isle.

7 January 2017
That face
when the fingers
get tired
of weaving the wind

in front of the eyes,
that face,
when the sign language
stops trying to make

sense and the face
appears clear
in its own language
of being here, face

open as the sky
makes us rush
to meet it, be with
all it means:

flower, stone,
story, synagogue,
bed, meadow,
final explanation.
7 January 2017

TO A READER OF SAPPHO

If I knew Greek better
I would embroider a cushion
and send it to you
to settle on her seat
to ease her long sessions
listening to you complain

how patient she must be
for you for me for all of us
who nobody loved enough,
nobody ever.

7 January 2017
LOW CONTRAST

for Susan, her birthday, 2017

Pictures, you make pictures.
I see people.
You see everything else.

People are my geology
the crag of woman
I climb in dream.

You see all round you
and know how to read
the million dialects of light

so that thought
becomes actual
in things seen

but I am a stone
come sit on me,
a sea come bathe in me

or swim to the shores
of the island I also am
or drink me down—
my stupid promises just
inveiglements but you
shout Here is Eden

everything still
wet with beginning
again for the first time.

8 January 2017
It's not good to want to say something, it gets in the way of what wants to be said.

8.I.17
In the end you 
know the beginning at last.

8.I.17
To see.
To see
without being.

2.
Turn over the stone
look at what is

all the time.

8 January 2017
Boston, at Faulkner
Well or wheal —
the language slows
to make us choose
to see how close
opponents are.

The window wonders
for instance, and the door
endures. And know
keeps saying No.

Poor Faust! Poor ___
of transformation!
How he already is
everything he’ll be
or can’t, his cunning
a kind of coming
through no door.

9 January 2017, Boston
Esmeralda, a cautious green.
Skirt swirl, dash up
stone stairs, wind[ing]
over Wilshire.
Look. A set of hills,
a charge of horsemen
tumble out of hillmist
maybe. Tell me, O She,
what you see I said —
saying won’t help you
nowt, said she, the mit
is mind, the men are dead,
only the swirl of skirt
is real or true, the sky
a skirt nobody wears.
Except maybe Esmeralda

9 January 2017, Boston
Exalted cornstalks
left after November
rim the winter road
by my new hometown.
I lived in Brooklyn 25 years,
lived up here for 50.
Plus. Whose child am I?
I too am somewhat tall,
stand at the side of the road
preferring to stay. Standing
is wonderful — it has
staying built inside it.

9 January 2017, Boston
We look at things as if they were there. Daisy’s cheek against the tabletop alongside the book she’s writing in. She sees language from the side—it doesn’t know she’s looking.

9 January 2017, Boston
Intervals of otherness, father,
I bring to confess. Grate
through which we see each other
dimly is a case in point —
glimpses of pink skin of priest,
glimpses of black steel
between the tell-tale perforations.
We are saints to each other
for all we know. All I bring
in the way of sinfulness
is being discontinuous —
is that like a sarabande
of little suicides, trivial
rebirths? In the discontinuous
moments I felt free,
nobody, work-less,
see no evil, quiet
as an armchair
when there’s nobody there.
Count me my penance —
teach me to want
to be continuous
so even one moment
lasts forever
like Him on the cross.
9 January 2017, Boston

= = = = =

Let the margin bleed
new saliva in old mouths —
one more anaphora,
this poetry. Again
and again different words
to one same deity.

2.
Call this liturgy.
The burden of relatives
in the waiting room
rude health of hips and shoulders,
their troubled faces.
Their bodies are praying
while they try to chat, keep
good spirits. Anxiety
is also a liturgy.

3.
There is always
reason to worry.
It is a mind’s
favorite thing to do.
I wanted to belong
to the water
but the sea was far.

10 January 2017, Boston

= = = = = =

Bronze bust
of an emperor
unknown.

Or I was marble,
those pupil-less eyes
were mine that looked
out on Africa
but saw nothing—

we ancient ones
made it all up inside,
no glacier, no giraffes,
no actual animals
it all thought
its way out of us
as words and shadows,
random realities,

we have come to a junction
of no roads, a meeting
where no one waits.

``

10 January 2017, Boston
Random notations, out of our control—
pretty nurse walking down endless hall of hospital.
Men she passes too sick to need her, want her,
name their dreams after her, we just happen like weather.

10 January 2017, Boston
COUPLE IN CITY

Two little people
in immense world
in immense dream
looking for the magic
doorway to waking.
Or to even deeper sleep.

11 January 2017, Boston
A DUTY OF POETRY

To unknow a place
enough to speak in it
or write its name
across its own sky.

11 January 2017, Boston
Difference between poems composed longhand and those composed on keyboard— it grows greater every year with me.

My hand alone is lyrical, alert and slow.

My fingertips nervous, intellectual, aggressive, fast.

Where is the mind/soul balanced between?

11 January 2017, Boston
= = = = =

Let the looms reset
the warp aggressive,
madder-rich the color,
let everything come out.

A piece of cloth
is the truest declaration,
most accurate poem,
vernicle, sudarium,
fits every human face.
My old red bandana —
soft breath makes it speak.

12 January 2017
The rain too tries to remember me — is it time for time yet? No, still space alone, still the first day stretching out, gleaming fresh as a car in the rain, no time for time, our hands the only hours.

12 January 2017
January thaw —
a bird comes,
we shelter
under its wing.

*(sub umbra alarum protege nos)*

12 January 2017
Measurement alley
where scientists drink
the intoxicating illusion
of objectivity. When all
outside, on the broad,
thronged, sexy road
of approximation
the crowd’s happy enough
just to keep going on,
\textit{consents to destiny}
and hurries there
with all the friends
they can make,
all the gods they
can half-believe in.

12 January 2017
But what do with my hands.
They sleep when I wake
the jeweled golden casket
gleams in moonlight
The Moon stands full
over this ancient subdivision
life on earth
by the river, facing the mountain,
no one being sure
but nobody doubting.
Only my hands won't move.

12 / 13 January 2017
What kind is this
town, 
arm of the sea?

Forgive me
for always asking,
have so much to learn
so little to tell.

When I was a child
I thought the names of things
—sandarac, Barnegat, parallax —
would be almost enough,

we could dine on
Cufic cinnamon,
and drink Arethusa
syllable by syllable
and never thirst again.

12 / 13 January 2017
Sometimes what I’m watching turns into what I’m reading and then it’s morning. But not yet.

12 13.I.17
A line
leads everywhere —

that is the mercy
of geometry, of poetry.

Don’t follow it too far —
find another and start afresh.

12 / 13 January 2017
Video of a spinning top
a girl crossing the street in the rain
a boy on a skateboard asking for money.
The world is easy —
it's everything else that is hard.

12 / 13 January 2017
Hold the fort
against the savage thought.
Peace is like a lawn
without all the work.
No mowing, no growing,
just being there all the time.

12 / 13 January 2017
It is not my business to ask why I’m in business. Enough to take the daily shipment and process it softly into a readable product, then give it away as fast as I can. It is a lovely way to make a living.

12 / 13 January 2017
What could it have been that comes after sunlight and before language?
A dream with deep red fur. Glass from the volcano. City streets laid out by the shadows cast by stars none of us know how to see. But earth knows, and the secret bone inside our bones tethered to sheer mind in the blue elsewhere. Maybe. Or I have come to you again after all these years to say my simple piece.
I thought we would have
a lot to say to each other
but it was birds out the window
talking freely this way and that
and of course we can’t have them in here
where we made do with our silences.

13 January 2017
I called and you never answered. But my call was silent, wordless and maybe your answer was too and if I look I might find it still among the mind’s deleted messages.

13 January 2017
Just for convenience
know where I am.

Walk a road that isn’t there,
bathe in an absent lake,
cross a missing river

— already
you’re close, too close maybe.
It is not easy to be anywhere.

13 January 2017
Orderly ascensions
love lifts
the woodpecker up the pole, he
pecks his way down—
that is the nature
of the tree we be,
dear groundlings, humans, free
of everything
but our own desires,
the will that wants us to do.

14 January 2017
So be a mystery.
Let love change you
if it can,

strange animates
wander these woods

and as the sunlight
itself tells you
never can tell.

14 January 2017
PATRIOTIC HYMN

Blackest ink
on whitest page—
we will make
a nation of us yet.

14 January 2017
One morning all
the pens ran out of ink
the paper was asleep
the light was tired
collapsing through the window,
the color blue
was trying to wake up.
Even the horizon yawned.
Was it all all over already?
Where was he music they promised us?

14 January 2017
It’s getting brighter—
maybe it needs me after all.

14.I.17
Caught by images
I rage. Or is it
just age
    that happens
when we look too long
at what isn't there?

14 January 2017
Things we’re not allowed to think.

That’s why they’re things already. They don’t need us but they are kind and let us listen to them thinking.

14 January 2017
Reserves mean gold in a hundred years who will miss or find this tissue, this white sock unmatched left in the drawer? Things troto tell us, tie us to one another, to a place, our place. Overwhelmed by nostalgia in each thing my hand holds and won’t let go.

As if we drown in the world and we clutch to things as lifesavers, to keep afloat. We owe so much to this cookie tin, this crystal, old maple chest of drawers.

15 January 2017
Have I said enough about the stars?
Live a long time at ease with everyone—
that’s what they tell me,
shine all the time until your time is done.

15 January 2017
Midmost catenary droop
a bird sits, I guess a robin
they’re here all winter
but don’t much sing—
wires we put up for birds
carry our own twitterings
from huse to house. Are we
just functions of our real estate?
Is that what real really means?

15 January 2017
I see the leaves
can’t read a letter

soak the paper in warm water
stir in clove and cinnamon and honey

let your body read it for you.
A thousand years!

15 January 2017
ARS POETICA

I’m not allowed to mean what I say—
if I did it would make the words
just a message not a something made,
a stone, a vein, a shadow on the wall.

15 January 2017
But things waiting before were telling us things but what can a rock decide? Knowledge is not the same as action, alas. All it can do is realize. Mostly what we can do is doing without knowing. How to tell myself from a piece of wood, a big table, an old armchair. Rest in me, I cry, my words give you a break but fail to teach you anything. Worry not, o pilgrim, your road curls up at your feet and sleeps. You are where you mean to be. There is nowhere else at all.

15 January 2017
You’re a maiden till you mother.
It’s not what you take in defines you
but what you send out of your body,
that plain soft, hard, open secret.

15 January 2017
In the middle of the night
I wanted a grape,
just one red one,
not the sweetest kind,
crates of them on
September sidewalks
where I grew up,
every family made its own,
dumped sugar in
to make the wine come quicker,
flowed freely in our
streets, Ghinny Red
the goyin called it
I never tasted.

2.
I am a squeamish dreamer.
Avoid the faces and embraces
of people I actually know.
Instead I wake up from no story
with no image in mind
but the dark all round me.
Or maybe just one thing
ike the shape and taste
of onered grape somewhere
between the pre-frontal lobes
and the back of my throat
I woke up wanting.

3.
Had to be Italian
to write it down
Crescent Street
or had to be Dante
my secret target
all these years
but who would even
know my presumption,
to dare to make
something as accurate
as a poem, a grape.

4.
I have milked this matter
with your yellow Italian pen
Monte Grappa it might even be called.
harsh brandy from the lees of wine.
Did the pen wake me
with its own ricordanze,
the deep nostalgia of ink
for everything that could ever be said?

16 January 2017
= = = = = = =

Waiting for the rose
to be dawn

this hour far
the train went by already

hooting on the trestle
where it called a man

a friend years ago
the rose too

killed Rilke and Scriabin.
Dawn kills the dream,

the thorn of night
is left behind though,

blood infection, moon
struggles free from cloud.

16 January 2017
CURIOUS HABITS OF SHOPPERS

They take their clothes off in the store, they want to become commodity, to be on display is to be real again after daylight takes their dreams away.

16 January 2017
Or does everything go on anyhow
no chance of not?

The deer come down the garden
but I won't walk in the forest

for fear of falling, roots and branches,
fear of the ground.

16 January 2017
All the honest reciprocals lure us to their primaries. Lust.

(Take a friend to the movies to transform your relationship. Campari afterwards, no hope for driverless cars, not yet.)
Everybody goes home alone.
An empty room is all I mean.

16 January 2017
A window needs somebody in it even if only a cat, like Amsterdam on the Herrengracht, my father looking out towards the creek, arm of the sea, Oceanside, the swans.

We shape places to shape us—polish the steps with our soft hands until they gleam and we go up—sacred attic! The Tetragrammaton dangling in the window, each letter a crystal encased in its own gold.

The breastplate of the High Priest tinkles in the suburban wind, you know? Be satisfied after all with downstairs. Breakfast waits for you there like a pop song. Condescend to the necessities, bible, butter, a piece of rye toast.

16 January 2017
Must be waking
now anger
the evidence

sailor cap
wet spot
on the carpet

who?
Stands all night
like a tree

like Socrates—
didn’t your friends
hear about fear

your fear
that takes movement
away, leaves you

just enough breath
inside your thought
to be afraid?

I wake up like that,
schooner sunk
cliff crumbling away
from under me
tree fallen
on my bungalow

the ink on fire
birds all over the house
feathers everywhere

here’s one
as from the smallest
crow presaging

one more of all
my many deaths,
the sound of words

I clutch as if
I held my wife, my
head on her shoulder

somehow safe.
16 January 2017
The lostness of is-ness — something like that. Existing at all in this world, this all. implies an absence of, or from some other modality. Braver maybe, full of grace, where dance is continuous the way we breathe.

16 January 2017
1. Yesterday forgets—there are goldfish in the diner aquarium a compassionate display of the uneaten.

Reminds us we are sea.
Salt and silica and me, that’s all I’m offering, chamber music in a shell, abandoned sinners wandering through prose.

2. That’s what we try, angels of us trying to make sense.
Glory road, obvious organs, show me the answer so I can spell the question.
Engrave it as an afterthought—hotel lobby swarming with orchids, the elevator girl speaks ancient Greek.
3.
So our ads never lie,
we do sleep better
with our heads to the north,
a kiss between the eyes
crystallizes dream,
the awkward smell of rosemary.

16 / 17 January 2017
THE DWINDLING

Faint aftertaste
of jazz, remember,
that old thing,
or Stone Age swing,
all lost now
with Pachelbel.
Music heals everything but time.

16 / 17 January 2017
TWO A.M.

Diesel hooting,
there must be fog.
Night wind whimpering
like a wounded dog.
How can a sleepless
man protect himself
from what he says?

16 / 17 January 2017
To know the soft words of our becoming,
lies or truth they whispered to each other
on our way —

to know that,
the spell summoned us
to enter this dream again, what words are our ancestors,
what words keep saying us.

17 January 2017
(The skin
asks to begin

but the thigh
asks why.)

Rhyme is a circle that feeds on itself.
Spin your yarn and burn down Troy again.
We all came to Carthage — it’s what we do there counts
or hurts or helps or be quiet so I can sleep..

(A little transponder on each little car
tells the government just where we are.)

The bells keep ringing far away.
It is the sound the horizon makes.

17 January 2017
Waiting for the sea-green room to open
the woman runs her finger down the door.
Touch is magic. The wall itself yawns open
beside the doorway, like the iris of a camera.
She walks in, her mind on other matters.
We walk through miracles licking our fingers.

17 January 2017
The comfort of the situation resolves all doubt.

Taste of the teeth in your mouth, touch of your right fingers on the back of your left hand.

These are the images swans carry gently in their beaks in their slow portlan mapping of your lagoon.

How far you’ve come from winning prizes, now you give them to the weather, the mist, bare trees.

Everything pleases you and nothing is yours. You are an animal after all.

17 January 2017
PRAYER

What can we do about the news? Who will you send to prophesy to us, to stand up to her haunch in the Jordan and baptize us with her flashing eyes?

17 January 2017
IT

Let it pretend to be morning
there are so many things it does
pictures it scrawls in the mist
what a child it is
and we always believe it
what else can we do
when it’s the only one there
the only one who talks to us?

18 January 2017
VADEMECUM

Send the girl south with her diary and don’t ask her to write letters, just a dream or wish on each page or what the sunshine did that day and what the fisherman had for supper. That’s the literature we really need, Tolstoy says too much and too little and we have too much already—we need the little, the scraps left over from the alphabet, a page you ripped out of the phonebook or was it the Bible and you’re sorry?

18 January 2017
I don’t feel safe away from the keyboard, just look at the letters, Roberto, everything else takes care of itself.

Because this is where everything is stored, Aladdin’s cave and no thieves anywhere, it’s all mine, everything I find, and anything I find down here I’m free to give to you.

18 January 2017
Easy enough to tell a tailor
make it the size of me.
But what do you say to the priest?
Or the schoolteachers waiting
for yellow-bussed victims,
how can they fit the known world
around each bored and frightened child?

18 January 2017
These are just notes
for my alter ego to inscribe
when he wakes up again
and thinks he has things to say.
Right now I feel a little raw
like a lover of some heartless slut
who never answers my letters.

18 January 2017
1.

I tried to explain it to myself but already I was gone, headed south in mind to follow her though I had no explanation, just what I was trying to make up as if I could ever understand what I or anyone else was doing. Or would do.
2.

South because warm
Gone because going
is what we know best
though hardly well.

In mind because ho
other way to move,
to time, no highway,
no car anyhow

just the direction,
sense of different
weather, a river.
There must be a river.

18 January 2017
ON THE CRUCIFIX
OF TIME A WOMAN
IS SLEEPING
HER PAIN TURNS
INTO DREAM AND
IN THE DREAM
SHE KNOWS AND
KNOWS THE ANSWER
AND THE ANSWER
KNOWS HER TOO

Hypnoglyph. My hand was writing these words using a thick magic marker on the side of a two-quart milk carton another side of which I had already covered with writing I don’t remember. I remembered this, though, as I woke, about

1. Melchizedek made me do it.
Reading the Bible, I fell into its mysteries
    and the ones
still hidden behind them.

The man, the men and who are they,
the women called by the names of beasts,
what world am I still living in,
o Leah my love let me lick your milk.

2. To read a book is to swoon.
Hard to rouse, hard to “come to”
we used to say.
Some books never let you wake.

(Is that why so many religious people
are angry so much of the time?)

I’m still trying to understand
Melchizedek, four thousand years
and nothing’s clearer.  
*People come and go—*  
is that the answer?  
Are we all it means?  

.3.  
Flowers on the fireplace  
*all seasons know themselves in thee*  
three mornings now full of mist  
I must be ready to be bold—  
there are identities to choose,  
hammocks to stretch out in,  
courtesans to paint lifelike  
as they loiter on their terrace  
hung with rugs from Isfahan,  
rugs from Tabriz.  

I have to say  
my own name clearly  
and get it wrong each time  
until you answer, and that will be me.  

19 January 2017
TRUST ME

Such responsibility to fix upon the other! Why not? I’ve always only trusted the weather, it is what it is and what more can you ask? It’s people like me who give talk a bad name.

19 January 2017
1.
In the decipherment
a naked angel stands.
No bigger than a cathedral
but made of softer stone—
a little bit like ours.

2.
This is what it means to read
a word or some words
or even a book of them — turn
a page and see the angel.
Turn a few more and he or she
swoops down and embraces you.
From deep inside the words
they rise to you, your reading lamp
blots out the sunshine all around.

19 January 2017
UNDER EVERY TABLE

The cleft in matter

*klephtes* means thief or theft,

a theft of matter.

*We gap, Our legs spread,*
*yawn of our bones.*

*In our dreams we scheme*
*cunning ways to fill the gap.*

*Bridge the cleft or fall*
*soundless in the first crevasse.*


19 January 2017, Kingston
CASTALIAN

just the one word
written on a blank sheet—
pertaining to
that nymph who was
herself a fountain
and whose waters
sipped or –better-
listened to inspired.

They say the Muses
lived at that spring
and from her essence
spoke in all their arts
into us if we too pay
attention to their
favorite language:
what comes to mind.

Some say that she,
Castalia, was made so
by Apollo, who
ravishd her into eloquence.
But I say she was always
who and what she was
and we can even now hear
her voice in every water.
19 January 2017

= = = = =

Cast a wide word
things will remember

use the fewest every chance
wait for the rememberer

slate or arrow
roof or goal.

This man wanders around
looking for his soul.

20 January 2017
Precious precipice
in flesh to ride,
a person is a mountain
against the sky.
Believe my blood
it tells the truth
the final sign
an open hand.

20 January 2017
RITUAL VESSELS

So I have said my prayers to things where are raptures undisclosed, fire engines on the moon to give the Old Man atmosphere.

2. Where can we begin again? It never happened. The ink wasn’t dry yet on the world when the complaint began, autumn wind, tree branch crack, foxes everywhere.

3. I keep trying to find my way through the imagined landscape. Loveliness of maps, that they are flat, no roots to stumble over, no hills to climb. So that life I was born a book.

4. Later, in China, there was bronze as two dear poets of my neighborhood have discovered and made beautiful again—patina, contour, rough-textured mysteries,
spaces cut from the dark safe inside.

5. All vessels are ritual vessels. No such thing as a cup without a mystery. Bronze. Gold. Cheap paper coffee cup is a throwaway Grail.

The mystery is the shaping of that which has no shape, wine or water, so we can drink.

21 January 2017
APOTROPAIC

1. Something else at stake here. Magical deliverance — the girl dropped the lemon at last, the world breathed relief, that sour fruit would have wrecked Eden and this time for good. Her tears were relief too, in confusion, it takes a long time to learn to let the wrong fruit go and let it drop. Let the house take care of it. Floor of all things.

2. The French call a lemon a pear. Weasels are cute for them but ferrets vile.

Who are we to know anything about things, or anything but things?

Plastic flowers on the diner counter need their Linnaeus too.
3.
Onomasticon. As usual
it's all about vocabulary.

Taxonomy of mood and matter.
Sometimes walking by the docks
you smell some chowder boiling
on a no-account rusty freighter
the kind registered in Liberia or Panama,
you wonder what fish is being eaten.
You get a little hungry though you just ate dinner.

4.
Thank her for voiding the catastrophe,
the downward turn, irreversible,
the Masonic Lodge in Hell.

She dropped the lemon at the instant
when the magic current swept through town
and filled her bare hands with potency,

magic of their own, her own, so ever after
words would come from voice and fingers
to protect those near her from disaster.

We're safe now despite the government,
Tudor and Borgias and Bushes and Trump—
the styles are different but the cash is the same,

it all is money and vanity, what else could we expect from any state?
So I, the timid anarch, dared to write

and wrap my words in Kleenex
and slip them underneath her door
so she'll find it later when

she bends to pick the lemon up.

21 January 2017
Heat comes, growling,
cracking in the baseboard.
Everything persuades me
it's alive. Can I rest
now, I seem to ask,
and let you all do
the work of being?
No sir, you’re far from done,
you’re just groaning
like the radiator,
clanking noises
when you have to begin.

21 January 2017
Picture something else—
hydrangea six months from now
blue by the seaside even.

This morning mist
is too beautiful, too frail
to clutch to mind.

The mist dissolves the remembered
into the actual, and the other way round.
Not eight yet and it seems to deepen.

2.
Beauty can be like that,
grows deeper as you look at it

The rail fence across the road
an ink stroke, Sung dynasty,

wavering horizon.
Forgive me,
I was almost describing.
Things don’t like to be described.
Just praised. Listened to. Believed.

22 January 2017
Old-fashioned mistakes
go to church because you gotta
don’t eat till you get home
cross yourself by the cemetery
imagine you are somewhere else
another country another time.
All wrong. All necessary.
Beatific blunders. Be glad.

22 January 2017
All these wise remarks of mine these days. What’s wrong with me? Shouldn’t I just be dumb again trying to figure out the simplest stuff?

22 January 2017
MIST

Mist says:
Look close
only what’s close matters.

Two little birds in a bare bush.

22 January 2017
Don’t listen outside—
all that stuff is commercial, tribal, manipulative, forced.
Listen inside. Listen inside everything. Listen to everything, like an animal.

22 January 2017
The unwritten law releases me
my eyes close
they have carried me far enough
for one morning
the mist is safe inside me now,
safe as sleep.

22 January 2017
That could other. 
*Empfindung*, a theory conducive to belief that something happens in us from outside of that same us. Emotion without movement. Though we say: I was moved at the sight of. This that. The outside maybe. Unintended cause. Effect unfathomable, can’t even feel what I feel. Magic would be one answer but isn’t. The Greeks had gods for such things. I saw one the other day in Kingston, she said her name in my head. She has very big hands.

22 January 2017
I have eaten.
My hands smell of food.
Mustard, mostly,
I hardly touched.
It is strange to think
we eat to live.
Is there another way?
I stood out back
a while watching a fawn
nibbling some corn,
she looked up
whenever I moved
then went back to eating.
Mostly I stood there
being peaceful at her,
as it got darker
I went back inside
while still she ate.
I had been present
at a sacrament I don’t yet
understand. Privileged,
yes, but ignorant.

22 January 2017
Exhaustion remains possible. Street singer on Montmartre on quiet Sunday cantilena. I am the young forgiver still in love with every difference.

2.
Not Montmartre the next neighborhood over, lower, east. The yellow streets.

3.
How could I be sure of anything that’s said? Frogs and toads, fluke and flounder, measure me by ignorance.

4.
Who so slow the paraclete? The comforting spirit knows our time, scarlet memories lacerate the air—would you choose to come down into this interminable conversation? All for the sake of our few colors? Angels don’t see colors, they behold everything in primal light.
22 January 2017

Mist brings the rain
from the lake in the sky
where cloud swans drift
soft above us. There,
that’s more like it, lyric
lie to wipe history away.

23 January 2017
Man with nugget of gold in his pocket and nothing else. What can he do? How to get where gold is bought and things are sold? He has only the clothes on his back. His shoes pinch.

23 January 2017
If the page dared to check itself in the index, would it understand suddenly what it really means?

23 January 2017
IN THE LEPER COLONY

Don’t know where I went to sleep but when I woke I was in a leper colony. Unclear whether I had the disease myself or was just visiting. But why would I? Eventually someone will tell me, or my body will. The lepers seemed pretty happy, considering. They were all excited about the new commandant of the camp, a brusque no-nonsense kind of businessman, no medical or pastoral experience as far as anybody knew. But voluble and confident. Self-confidence means a lot to a leper.

At the morning assembly, required, we all stood at attention, as well as we could, listening to his first address to his charges. We learned that we were lucky to have chosen him — unclear how or whether we had actually done that, but still, it showed a nice spirit in him. He was going to make our colony exemplary, the greatest, in fact, and protect it from freeloaders who pretend to be sick, and from disruptive elements trying
to insinuate new scientific “evidence” or so-called cures into our familiar and dependable methods, the tried and true chaulmoogra oil.

I was especially impressed with his first Orfer of the Day: all books were banned. A book, he pointed out, is just a package of germs, every page impregnated with some other leper’s germs, all different kinds of leprosy, not to mention other diseases. No, books are cesspits of infection. Each leper was to be allowed to keep one book — a Bible it might be, or Book of Mormon, or even a Koran — but never allowed to let anyone else read it, though once a week, at a special hour to be determined by the administration very soon, the leper might read from his or her book out loud, to anyone at all who chose to listen. Think what an inspiring moment that will be, every week, and every week the wisdom of some religion or novelist would inspire the citizens of the colony.

I was thinking about these things when two tough-looking orderlies, wearing mouth and nose masks, came
up and pulled me out of the row and marched me towards a shed at the edge of the enclosure. When they got me there, they began shouting at me in Spanish, bad Spanish as far as I could tell, with a heavy American accent. I don’t know Spanish myself, so it was hard to figure out what they were saying, what with the accent and the muffling facemasks. Eventually I got the idea that they had checked my medical records, I didn’t have leprosy, didn’t belong in his wonderful environment, had no right to the benefits of residence and support. I nodded my head all the time, and answered in English, at which they scoffed, as if my accept were funny. Right in the middle of one of my sentences, they yanked me to my feet and shoved me through a door and slammed it behind me. I was standing in a desert-like place, a little lizard looking up at me. Behind me the huge grey wall stretched as far as I could see.

23 January 2017
Shafer Hous
Trying to decipher
what was never written
blind men fingering the wind
they brace their backs
against the blocks of the Pyramid

uncertainty makes us strong.

23 January 2017
A deck of cards
hauling its prophecy
towards us
on all fours.
Try hard to believe
what seems to be.
The happening
only once of things.
The reprieve
comes from inside
where nothing
listens and
everything hears.
POETRY & PROSE

The trouble with writing prose is that I’m saying something instead of listening.

24 January 2017
Could the taste of the world
change overnight in the mouth?
There are I thought
permissions built into things,
roses, basilicas, even canals
where women stand in the cold wind
in headscarves, watching waterfowl.
This is how it was, all the same,
real, present, illusory, ready
to absorb our minds. Something
like that. We have to be there,
somebody has to watch the swans.

24 January 2017
Suppose for a moment I have no identity. I am someone else. It’s an hypothesis, let it rest on the table a while like pudding. chocolate, faintly quivering when outside this secret residence a truck rolls by. Loud. I tremble a little too — is reaction identity? Professor Klotz explained that living beings display irritability—they react when you do something to them. Run away. Cry out for their mothers. Shrink in the petri dish. So what bothers me is what makes me me? More hypothesis. He blamed me for paying to much attention to the girl beside me but I really was interested in her fetal pig, bigger, more dissectable than mine. But there again, who was I at the moment? These could be anybody’s memory, don’t remember if she was fair or dark, clearly a memory is just something you make up so you think you’re somebody who remembers.

24 January 2017
ARROWS

If an arrow could talk
would it express
more concern about
its target or its
speed? Or the motive
of the strong fingers
handled it so lightly
before they drew
remorselessly the bow—
would it care about that?
Are we of the senses
or of sense. We are arrows
with little time to think.

24 January 2017
Crustacean time
to amble low
with a hard shell
ready to nip
the toes of felons
of the intellect
or snip the wires
that disinform,
the old old news.

24 January 2017
Looking no one in the face
and they look right back.
Vacant lot. Hide back of billboard.
Walk with no one here,
he or she pressing close
beside you. By he light of no moon
you can read the huge poster
beneath which you have enlisted
in the army of the invisible
palpable. No one reaches out
and strokes your chest, you feel it
as if it’s inside you. You speak
and no one answers, clearly
making sure you understand.
This is what the night is for,
and cities, their real meaning
is in the waste spaces in between.
Anybody can build. Only the wisest
bravest can leave the ground alone.
No one knows this better than you.

24 January 2017
THE DESPONDENT PURSUIVANT

Check the records,
the waltz came later,
can’t whistle in history
only now. An animal
holds a picture up—
simple as that. Clocks,
cathedrals, simple stuff.

2.
A chair was all we needed.
Her throne, who taught us
to cherish each detail.
Where else would meaning
hide or flourish but in
the actual? How can I limn
the face of anonymity?
Yet no one is the real
hero of this chronicle.

3.
Wait. Morning still
belongs to us, to me
even scion of clouds

Am I enough to be
outside, carrying aloft
a blank sign? C’est moi.

4.
Ponder the unasked question and from deep inside the book the answer comes, smooth as samite, sinople. Build an arbor for your love and hrow grapes on its interwoven laths, drowse, let the birds fly in, fly out.

25 January 2017
Some noble determinant
a flower in the wind
long after this. What kind?
A blue hydrangea busy
with thoughts, holds
its dew all day long
chambered, intricate,
safe. Soft in the garden.
Let your fingers gently
move through its manyness.

25 January 2017
Imagine it otherwise,
a cat in a car
hurrying east. Purr.
The sun needs its help
to rise. Cats care little
for people, their work
is cosmic, they sleep
a lot to help the Queen
of Dreams whisper
to everyone, so art flows
through us day and night.

25 January 2017
The anonymity of sainthood—
who listens
to the wind in the trees
(what trees? Maple
measelwood, Baldur's
mistletoe),
I conjure
by Saint Botolph
of East Anglia
71 churches bore hisname
but his head was shrined
in Ely, where I must
have done him reverence
during my follies in the fens.

25 January 2017, Boston
PHARAONIC CARTOUCHE

How close we live inside the names. For sound is spacious, the sound of a name is a big house we live in, and in things too, in anything there is room. In any thing there is room.

25 January 2017, Boston
Out of grans sleep comes roused
a dream republic
up to your waist
and there you stand
magnificent as morning
tossing your hair
and reciting to sparrows
the psalms that woke
you to be now.

26 January 2017, Boston
As if it stood
alone among greenness
each tree stands.

Millions of trees
between Hudson and sea.
More them than me.

They are the real
citizens of America,
outnumber us,

outclass us in virtue.
*Virtu.* Patience. service.
A dead tree is fire,

furniture, frame
of the houses we
live in thanks to them.

Sometimes I hear
them talking, thinking
what we just thought

we ourselves were thinking.
26 January 2017, Boston

= = = = =

Organized otherness—spiritual investments in pure raptures of being here. This nice place this only place there is. So here we are, marvels of nature. We wait our turn which turns out to be always now.

26 January 2017, Boston
We're trying to prepare an answer to Dante's first sonnet from the New Life. We're still at it, months countless later. Why when Love had fed the barely wakened Girl my burning heart He, Love, had wept so bitterly and flown away. Could Love be me and I in dream or vision gave my heart to some girl I called the donna, the lady in control the ruler of earth from whom one can flee weeping into heaven?

26 January 2017, Boston
(ETUDES FROM DANTE)

Noon exactly on our endless day
I need to find a self to be
and find one in te dark wods

where every path was taken,
spoiled by the footsteps of selves
before me — where was my self?

Could he find a virgin way to be?

26 January 2017
Hebrew Rehab, Boston
MORNING CHORALE FOR MOZART’S BIRTHDAY

Servile contradictions
nodes of grace
the gears keep slipping
the match won’t scratch

and then it all
of a sudden does,
sunrise et cetera
the whole globe spins

but above all lesser
circumstance
at the core of the cosmos
a child looks out the window.

27 January 2016, Boston
PETIT JETÉ FOR BARYSHNIKOV

Legitimate
pretender to the air
a heel kicks backward
to ascend —
    all art
(that means)
is somehow
contra naturam —
a man
in midair leaping —
or does it
signify instead
the real
nature of what Nature is?

27 January 2017, Boston
Dream incessantly making masala chai 
I rose to do so, taking dream instruction 
as Aesculapius. Or to quiet the dream. 
We always need to please the doctor. 
Please the nurses. Leave the hospital 
past the smiling Haitian orderlies. We all 
come from different planets. Sometimes 
a dream is the harshest medicine there is.

27 / 28 January 2017
1. Now from the needs come seeds. Plant these, a thousand Solemn Masses will spring up singing. Ruthenian rite. And in the west of the Ukraine a little chapel to the Unknown Saint whose image is in every house, a mirror.

2. Trust yourself enough to be heaven. Stars on all sides, camels limping in carrying amber from god knows where. You think: We live in society like insects in amber. You know this is not true but you’re glad you said it.
27 / 28 January 2017

= = = = = =

Resentment is Romeo
Remorse is Juliet.
They will never be married.

There should be only one family, of all of us.
Mao knew this, but what could one old man do?
The brother is the enemy.
That’s what Cain, the Upright, was trying to make us see,
or those hidden masters who made up his story to test our wits, I wonder where that city is that Cain went off and founded?

27 / 28 January 2017
THE SAINTS

being ex  
 hypothesi  
 closer to  
 the Throne  
 of Power will  
 intercede  
 for us with  
 Majesty, by  
 being closer  
 than we are  
 now to the Source. 
 There is a logic here  
 Dante challenges  
 by praying to Love  
 rather than the Lady —  
 no wonder Love shrinks  
 weeping back to heaven. 
 We’re still on the first poem  
 of all, still in the dark  
 where dreams fall out of trees  
 like water long after  
 the rain has stopped and pretty  
 girls are jealous of Her beauty.

27 / 28 January 2017
ANNANDALE

In the night up here
it all belongs to me —
all the dreams, the whole
blessèd dictionary.

27 / 28 January 2017
DANTE’S OTHER WOMEN

They move away, they die. Love then is a process of elimination, exclusion. We admire what is left to us and celebrate this remnant as if it were what we wanted all along. We rewrite pasts and call it poetry. Math (or numerology) will help you with this. She was nine, he was eighteen, I am eighty-one. Pondering this symmetry feels like a good night’s sleep.

27/ 28 January 2017
Short breaths of middle night find a quick measure, more lute than viol, more’s left unspoken. Night knows everything but whispers slow.

27 / 28 January 2017
A picture of fire
the sound of stars
close your eyes now
you have everything again.

27 / 28.I.17
Tumult, reading glasses, subway jolt, soda spilt, wrong to travel so fast in your sleep. Only angels dare wander with closed eyes. Wings know the way.

27 / 28 January 2017
How can you tell who you are today.
The crows usually tell you but today they flew away.

So guess. A guess is kind of gold you can buy stuff with.
Temporary identities.
Luminous half-truths —

They’ll carry you through coffee at least, and on the bus: and there the others are, your dream dates, your enemies.

Each one of them is a god of a universe, an own-world vast or timid, each one as unaware as you are.

Except that one over there, the one with those eyes fixed on you now — those eyes really know what’s so.
28 January 2017

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Inside me there is someone
whose name changes with the years
but the mountains don’t,

the ones he looks at as long
as the light lasts, and he holds
the last light over the crests

and brings it deeper inside him
into the dark of sleep. He
all the time is totally relaxed,

therefore steady as a stone,
complete. He is someone
I want to be, or to sink inside

and be him all my time.
But then I hear the wind
whipping the curtains

in all the windows of the world
and want to run, half-certain
he’ll be there when I come back.

28 January 2017
INSTRUMENTS

Just to try
make the word fall
nimble from the pen—

so much darkness
to believe in,
sculptures trying to come alive —

you know how museums are,
one puff of breath and
Queen Hatshepsut lives again,

she so sumptuously throned
like Sappho’s prayer
or dream — I gladly mix antiquities.

28 January 2017
Carving the paper  
with the pen  
I fail the alphabet—

those signs  
do not sing to muscles  
but to the quiet skill

of one thing upon another.  
Lick the pen  
and start again.

THE ORDAINED

The age of the thing
miracles itself
antimeria, sorry,
no softer word
to claim your hasty
ear, Mme. Monde,
I have to hurry
like a despot’s hangman
to dangle all the words in place
so that you know me.

2.
For I am Canterbury after Rome
and Lhasa after Anglia,
my merits few, my good fortune
numerous. You priested me,
darling, when I was most asleep
and now I mutter words
of consecration all day long.

3.
But as you say, who listens?
In obscurity is wisdom,
in utter darkness even
a little candle seems dazzling.
So sing we in a dark time
hoping for the grace to jear.
29 January 2017
By calculation, a blue sky.
Apparition. One band
of color in the grey beginning.

When little’s left
to be of me, the cloud
insists on parting. A hand
is always coming out of the sky.

A mouth is always waiting.
Speak me again,
that’s what it means
to say a word,

any word is a prayer to begin again.

29 January 2017
ARS POETICA

Where is the ankle-deep moorland turf of Yorkshire,
where is the peach tree in the Brooklyn backyard
wrapped in burlap all winter and in spring
brown sweet gum runs down?
Only the particulars are of any use, scraping
frost off the chest on the porch,
soft ice under the fingernails.

29 January 2017
GATE

1. We’re meeting at the gate and everything’s a gate, a gone, a road whatevering away over the hills and into the house next door where our mind is stored, spiral nebula, cafe on the corner, what them pass.

2. This is called being called. Vocation. To be at the gate and to be the gate. To go through. To be gone through. Then to be gone.

3. In the north they call a street a gate. They know. They’re closer up there to the Pole, closer to home, source, gate we came through, keep coming. Thule is the womb, and we fall south.
4.
Study the loins of Apollo Belvedere — does that name mean beautiful to see? — see if the tender slender musculature tells you something about your mother’s face. To stare at beauty is to be halfway home.

30 January 2017
Do I have to keep going?  
Because I own no miles  
they’re all on front of me  
lined up like paper napkins  
in a diner dispenser,  
only one at a time,  
but I want to be  
there without going,  
that’s the magic spell  
sought in this operation:  
a candle, a black  
hardened block of gum  
from a peach tree  
never oruned, an iron  
key, a cup of saffron  
water palest yellow,  
only a trace of taste.  

At the end I have  
to be somewhere —  
that is the law.  
Maybe the onlyone.

30 January 2017
The danger of the situation is that it is a situation — a complex of variables linked in spacetime, clogged. How can we be sometime else?

Levant from the situation, ditch the system. Daytime is ma fix, the night is rigged. Any paper will tell you that. News-source I mean not an honest piece of paper with words on it somebody wrote.

31 January 2017
The quiet of snow
is often noted,
like a humming consonant
at the back of the throat—

and the dawn advances,
black shrinking back
to be the bare trees.

31 January 2017
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Maybe things to wait for,
maybe maple sugaring come spring
even in these low parts
along the long arm of the sea
holds Great Antillia safe from Amérique.
We make do with corn and apples,
pears and pumpkins mostly.
pretending to the earth
that we care. Some of us care.
Some flowers grow only in the mind,
blue hortensias in seaside gardens,
the other blue flower, pale indigo
against the setting sun in Lower Saxony.

2.
Who should we believe,
a mountain?
A terrace over Lake Geneva
drinks under budding chestnuts
white and murrey? A calm
umbrella on a drizzly day
a pale wrist carries, someone
whose name you almost remember?

3.
Why so glum, though? There’s always
marriage, even in this special heaven
the words link together to lead to,
o just keep your fingers on the chain,
feel the sleek steel and the rough rust,
wet and dry, oily and dusty, every link
leading to the next and all to heaven
aforesaid, this special one that one
gives to another and two make one.

4.
So I claim
the joy of reason
even in this season
snow on the ground
and still snowing,
soft and brilliant
in the motion-sensor
light on the deck,
flake upon crystal on
and on, scatter,
not dense, not heavy,
each instance a gleam,
crystal, diamond, done.
If we can talk about it
it must be true.
If it lets us say all its million names
we must be free.

31 January 2017