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## jan2 2018

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=====

**The statue lingers  
after its thought is gone,  
an idea  
frozen into space.  
We belong  
to each other by  
the act of seeing.  
I may be someone's  
statue too.**

**10 January 2018**

## **GROCERY LIST**

**Mantagna.**

**Beethoven.**

**Olive Mountain**

**Sanhedrin**

**Styrofoam.**

**Salamander.**

**Portulaca.**

**Semaphore.**

**Mandelshatm.**

**Lydia Sigourney.**

**11 January 2018**

=====

***Ketubah* comes to mind  
or marrying mind to mind  
the verbal agreement  
sealed in neurology,  
ours, hello,**

**“standing at the altar of one’s better self  
pledge to take this meaning as your spouse”  
as old Swanage counseled,**

**or as we say**

**Come home and think with me.**

***Marriage engages eternity***

**These are the words  
that toppled Jericho,  
and these are the children  
who mocked Elijah  
or was it Elisha, or Noah,  
these are the children  
who mock everything  
that makes us proud,  
music or muscles or message,  
some mission from on high,**

pride is a terrible ailment,  
a crack in our geology,  
a cancellation notice for the soul,  
and children, we still call them  
holy terrors, thy cure us,  
try to at least, of the terrible  
sin of being proud of being me.

Yes, but where  
is the contract in all this,  
the rabbi drinking ink,  
doves perched on the bride's  
pale shoulders, the groom  
barefoot with embarrassment  
dancing on the unbroken glass,  
words fly around the room,  
the temple trembles, the in-laws weep?

We need the paper, nothing works  
without the words, doesn't  
matter what they say,  
could be in Gaelic, just write  
something down and sign it fast,  
hide it in your bedroom closet,  
hang it proudly on the parlor wall,  
call it a poem or a manifesto,  
a letter from the Pope, a diploma  
from medical school, doesn't matter,  
sign it, show it or hide it,

**and does anybody *have*  
parlors anymore,  
a room that means  
we sit there and talk?**

**And in holy wedlock  
Words are our truest children.**

**12 January 2018**

=====

Not too far  
a train  
along the river,  
freight  
from the length  
of its rumble.  
The night.  
Going somewhere,  
bringing things  
there or back.  
Quiet now,  
all that single  
traffic stilled.  
Nothing moves.  
Dark,coughing,  
a man.

11/12 January 2018

**RHOMBIC GESTURE***for Charles Stein*

**Rain sky  
snow melt face.  
I thought your say-so  
was a sign.  
Libra, for example,  
struggling to balance  
cardboard cartons  
I'm carrying downstairs.  
The cellar. The undercroft.  
The trouble with me  
is I see all equations  
as images, all relations  
as relationships.  
The trouble with me  
is I love cellars.  
To be under the house!  
Like a line among lines—  
snug on the page!  
The trouble with me is images,  
sensory input, childish  
habits of hand and mind.  
My idea of understanding  
something is telling a story.  
It seems to me it makes me  
a bad friend, appropriating  
your science into my comic book,**



**without any pictures in it  
even. So looking at your images,  
Doctor Stein, I know  
what's wrong with me.  
I think I owe you  
for the diagnosis.  
But it's 52 degrees in January  
and mist is coming down Cedar Hill.**

**12 January 2018**

=====

**Blue sky happening back  
cantilever cloud**

**everything wants  
to be a bird**

**sunshine especially  
fluttering shadows**

**sudden sheen on ice roads  
cold but cheerful**

**O weather you witch  
you wife.**

**13 January 2018**

=====

I have to walk  
a different way,  
widdershins round the temple  
trampling the grass down  
a beaten path  
sprinkled with mantra breath  
dazzled with thinking.

2.  
It's when it's written  
down the danger comes,  
weather swoop, dreams  
of children suddenly  
all around us, nothing  
on earth bigger  
than what children dream,  
science, all of science,  
is a desperate effort to  
capture and understand them.

3.  
So I keep walking,  
keep trying to say  
this thing I do,  
this thing we are.

13 January 2018

=====

**We are not ready  
for each other yet.**

**There needs to be a flower  
hybrid of all thoughts  
some precious gardener  
coaxes from genesis.**

**When the flower opens  
and the alchemist bees  
come visiting, dining,**

**then our hours will sound  
loud from the bell tower**

**of the empty brick church  
around the corner, up the road.**

**13 January 2018**

=====

**Hoar frost  
probing gold nib  
of sunlight spiking  
here and there  
letters on the grass,**

***Dove la rugiada  
pugna col sole***

**it's all a message  
by no messenger delivered,  
a message from no one  
we have to read.**

**13 January 2018**

=====

If it were only  
a matter of animal—  
catch my breath  
catch a glimpse  
of its sleek danger  
slipping between trees  
this way, my way,  
so I can almost feel  
its fur already  
its claws soon after

I could arm again  
somehow or take  
shelter, is there  
such a place, or time,  
to hide from all  
that is coming

when it is not an animal,  
no lustrous pelt,  
no panther grace,  
no shape at all, pure  
menace from nowhere.

14 January 2018

=====

**I have walked over the earth  
dozens of times and come  
always to this place —**

**sleep is a mighty master,  
djinn in a brass lamp,  
a bottle full of tomorrow.**

**Always the same place  
the silent waking  
on a spinning earth**

**think how many stars  
have witnessed your sleep,  
how well the world knows you!**

**Every living thing calls your name.**

**14 January 2018**

**=c = = = = =**

**Bad kings  
bring bad weather:  
that's all I have  
to say bout this  
Washington winter.**

**14.I.18**



=====

**They're waiting  
on the other side of now —  
the waiting room of the universe,**

**I am the doctor and the patient.  
the busy nurse, the anxious parent:  
it is my turn to be now.**

**14 January 2018**

=====

**Is a dream the opposite  
of paying attention?  
Houses turn into trees,  
Sutch people come along  
dragging canals behind them  
through the patient earth,  
a rook lands on the roof  
and calls: *You don't  
belong here — wake !***

**14 January 2018**

=====

**Somebody will give you permission —  
yake it and run with it  
until poor green Daphne turns  
back into a girl again**

**and trees learn how to talk  
not just think their ways to you—  
wake everything up,  
everything is possible again.**

**14 January 2018**

=====

**Jogger in yellow  
jersey, sunshine  
bare trees, empty  
road, nothing more—**

**chronicle of a day  
joyous with space,  
the manifold of time—  
this word the key.**

**14 January 2018**

=====

**Close your eyes  
and remember the light.  
It's not easy.  
It's like a song  
you heard years ago  
in some other city,  
you rec all the feel of it  
but not the words,  
not even the tune.**

**14 January 2018**

=====

Something knows the air  
all the way into our lungs,  
We hardly know we're breathing,  
can sleep and do it fine, mostly,  
but sometimes at night  
one wakes and sees the cracks  
in the ceiling above the bed,  
how can I be seeing them  
in the dark room, how can I  
go on breathing when I'm not.  
But we always are. Maybe the dead  
go on breathing too, alternate  
atmosphere, spirit channels.  
Or not. Stretch marks on  
a bad idea. Everything is body—  
it's bot me, it's my tinnitus  
talking. And you hear it too.

14 January 2018  
to Schumann's 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt.

=====

*for Sherry*

**Light has shoulders too  
colors you can feel  
like a woolen sweater  
under your fingertips  
when you're just looking  
not even touching,  
color touches for you,  
you reach up to the sky,  
don't be ashamed, we all  
do that sometimes,  
and sky comes tumbling  
down into your open arms  
I mean your open eyes, you  
never look away, you see it  
down into our shared world,  
you never look away.**

**14 January 2018**

=====

**Then it said nothing  
so I waited patiently  
like a child on line  
for the confessional  
counting up my faults  
deciding which ones  
to confess when my  
turn comes, and which  
to keep silent, sacred,**

**And still it said nothing,  
I felt like black smoke  
from a snuffed candle,  
speaking of churches,  
drifting, soon diffused.**

**But when I was gone  
it finally spoke,  
told me to tell  
to all my mothers  
but didn't say what  
because I was not gone  
enough for it to say.**

**15 January 2018**



=====

**Listen to the runner's feet  
or water down the rapids  
or even wind shimmering  
in the loose window screen —  
these are songs of going.  
leaving, kissing goodbye.**

**15 January 2018**

=====

**People are people early in the country,  
time tastes different wherethere are no streets.  
hard to get a handle on dawn, but courage!  
noon will let even someone from the city touch.**

**15 January 2018**

=====

**Barracudas of the local mind  
swim fast, eat thoughts  
almost as fast as you can think them  
Stick a warning poster up on he shore:  
Keep safe — write faster than you think.**

**15 January 2018**

=====

**I blink my eyes for you.  
This is a signal of some feeling  
that has no proper name.  
I look at you and blink.  
What does that make you think?  
Whatever that is, that's what I feel.**

**15 January 2018**

=====

Morris dancers used to come  
along our street, and Gypsy  
workmen to fix dented fenders,  
horses pulled the milkman's cart,  
and amazing size the blocks of ice  
the iceman carried on his shoulder  
in wet burlap, and sky-blue hydrangea  
dew-drenched in the little garden,  
I'm not so sure about the dancers—  
it may have been a patriot parade  
or firemen showing off their brand-new  
hook and ladder, polished crimson  
fire engine, friendly blue policemen  
on brown horses they call chestnut,  
trolley-car clang two blocks west—  
the air will carry all of us away too.

15 January 2018

=====

**Snow. The sympathy.**

**Everything touches,  
it touches everything.**

**Connects.  
Is that what it means,**

**the *blanket* of snow?  
And when it melts  
who loves us then?**

**16 January 2018**

=====

**Almost time  
to be  
someone else.**

**Stop me  
before I tell  
who you  
are too.**

**16 January 2018**

=====

Cubits they used to say  
elbow to fingertip  
of a man lifting a stone  
into place

here it is, the pyramid,  
the loaf of bread in the desert  
that never stales,

the words  
fall around his shoulders.  
a pallium,  
white wool  
sent from Rome

making him himself.

That's how the animal begins,  
papyrus, harp strings,  
fish in a basket,

you can hear him  
all over the mountains  
whispering his tender commandments

straight into your heart



**as it is presumptuous of me to mention,  
having as I do  
no purchase on your identity**

**and no heart of my own  
to test the verity of these sandstone acoustics**

**just the words, sand, words, winds.**

**16 January 2018**

=====

**Walk closer  
to the river  
than the water  
even,**

**a bird  
above me  
higher than the sky.**

**16 January 2018  
Kingston**

=====

**Courses of inaction  
missionary men—  
we had religion  
before the priests came  
with funny names  
for what we knew,  
and funny smells,**

**purveying preending  
an old bible  
their own god  
had transcended —  
as if summertime  
talked endlessly of snow  
and tried to frighten  
lovers from the glen.**

**What was it we had  
yhey gave their names to?  
What did we know  
that slept three hundred  
years into our day?  
And can we wake  
and wake it still?  
The sunflower knows it  
and the courting bee.**

**17 January 2018**

=====

**Ink spill  
black snow  
on my cold fingers**

**I'll have to write  
to read what it says.**

**17 January 2018**

=====

**But why are we here?**

**The touch of your skin?**

**Touch sand instead,  
rocks on the shore.**

**There are only  
three real things**

**stone and trees and sea**

**all the rest is us  
still waiting  
to learn what we  
at least are supposed to do.**

**17 January 2018**

=====

**There is a mind  
that knows us here**

**find the mind  
the waves know where.**

**17 January 2018**

=====

**Google Louvre.  
Venus with no Seine.  
Gioconda with no crowds.**

**But what if the pictures  
are really for the sake of the building,**

**what if the house  
matters more than the people in it  
and we are just custodians of space,  
curators of enclosure**

**and what really matters is shadow  
shaping dark places  
to hide from her all-seeing light?**

**17 January 2018**

=====

**What of the middle,  
Pound's wobble-not  
pivot, that by being  
motionless collects  
a kingdom round it?**

**This breath of air  
is the center of the world.  
When you exhale  
it all has to start again,  
Genesis and Exodus  
and then Apocalypse,**

**the you breathe in again.  
This world we know  
is nothing but a human breathing.**

**17 January 2018**



=====

The sky  
has a way  
of getting here first

You sent  
your disappointment  
not by a letter

just a sense  
of it arched  
through the sky

the catenary path  
of human feelings,  
I grieved at your grief.

17 January 2018

=====

**Area of low turbulence  
kid on a scooter  
fro-yo stand closed for the season,  
a red car blanketed  
under two days' snow.**

**Here you can wander, watching  
every branch an arabesque in white,  
every vista  
scribbled all over by snow.**

**Read it to catch aglimpse  
of the sould of the child  
it all is.**

**17 January 2018**

= = = = =

*for Kimberly*

The years let me know you.  
And years are like slow ants  
moving around our toes,  
not specially touching,  
no tickling. The ants  
sometimes scurry, sometimes  
stand so still you think  
they've gone to sleep.  
The years sleep. They change  
their clothes, their colors,  
their Chinese names. We  
though, we don't change.  
The you I knew, we say,  
or when I was the one  
who knew you — but really  
it's the same. We are skin  
and breath and love  
and interesting anxieties.  
We go to church in the weather.  
We say mass in every word.

17 January 2018

=====

**Resist again.  
Go for the first time  
always.**

**A canal  
is not a river,  
the lovers  
who walk along it  
are copying themselves..**

**Like me, writing  
one word after another  
instead of just writing  
the first word of all.**

**17 / 18 January 2018**

## **NOT JUST THE APPLE**

**Everything was forbidden.**

**We were spirits  
and we wanted**

**wanted experience  
so we ate.**

**Eating means engulfing living beings  
—the still kind, like vegetation,  
or the moving kind, like animals —  
and destroying their lives  
into our own.**

**To take in substance  
we must be substance too  
and so we made bodies  
and hid inside them.**

**And here we are still  
trying to make sense  
of what it was we  
happened to ourselves.**

**18 January 2018**

=====

**We came on an asteroid  
we will leave on the air  
itself —  
    we came here  
only to tell you something  
we all too soon forgot.**

**18 January 2018**

=====

**Divided by anybody else  
this love affair of theirs  
would equal the number  
of spirals in the golden  
head of a sunflower  
where all those Fibonacci  
seeds march round and round.  
I mean eventually they  
would come to each other  
again, or at least be on  
the same spiral pathway  
leading to the maze middle  
where maybe one day  
both of them can drink  
from the mysterious fountain  
at the center of everything.**

**18 January 2018**

=====

Lens work,  
the truth of Mars  
chilly up there  
so far from sun—  
frozen seas and we  
between the two  
planets praying  
for home. Venus  
in warm mist —  
that sort of thing,  
woman of cosmos  
mother kind. Maybe.  
We saw the sun  
rise on the horizon  
big as a nickel, yellow  
only a little. The image  
freezes the thought  
of those who see it —  
just like an image, you'd  
say. And for once I agree.

18 January 2018



=====

**A baxter is a baker  
a webster is a weaver**

**feminine endings  
like sister**

**not master not monster  
not holster**

**but it holds something  
something cold and angry**

***oleum mortis*  
smelling of death.**

**18 January 2018**

=====

**Clarity not charity  
he said, smiling,  
giving all his bread  
away, his money  
most of it to the poor.  
I know what I need  
he said, all the rest  
is dross, turns to gold  
when it's given away  
with clear-mind love,  
river that never stops flowing.**

**18 January 2018**

=====

**Number the weddings,  
rainbow. You have been,  
seen them all.**

**2.  
A person is a triptych  
on a window ledge,  
wide open, all three panels,  
yet so bright the day  
beyond them no one  
can actually make out  
the clear images displayed.  
Did you know that?**

**3.  
Of course the rainbow  
did and does.  
What is made of  
what happens to light  
always remembers,  
but even she can't  
see in the dark.**

4.

Each one of us a triptych  
of measureless beauty and worth —

take it one faith.

Or on my word.

I who once or twice  
was brave enough  
to approach someone  
with my candle uplifted  
and in its flicker  
suddenly saw.

19 January 2018

=====

*Isn't everything  
too good to be true?*

**I did what the sky  
told me to,  
I found a city  
small enough to hold  
between my knees  
in a single afternoon.**

**I built a tower there  
using no hands,  
left the scaffolding in place  
so children could clamber  
all round the structure  
and come up to the sky  
to learn what they  
in their turn would  
be told to do.**

**19 January 2018**

=====

**The animal of it  
at work.**

**Muscles remember  
more than mind**

**or is mind another  
muscle, by muscle**

**moving, build  
everything else?**

**19 January 2018  
Wappingers Falls**

=====

**Lathering the earth with music  
those principals of the invisible  
orchestra, virtue-owning, noisy  
in their elegance (*simplex munditis*)  
pour straightforward unforgettable  
melody rushing between the levees  
of our imperfect attention, blur  
of memory always a wrong note,  
this clean music is now, only  
now and you'd better believe it.**

**20 January 2018**

=====

**Space**  
**is continuous,**  
  
**continues us,**  
**its major work**  
**is like our own —**  
  
**to connect by separation.**

**20 January 2018**



=====

**This blue  
dream  
shaped like an apple  
a little lopsided  
tumbling  
all these years  
through space,  
still falling  
from the branch  
of the no tree ever,  
we are most with it  
when we sleep,  
wet with its  
secret ocean.**

**20 January 2018**

## **THREE TRUE LOVE SONGS CONTRARY TO FACT**

**If I were a blacksmith  
your horses would love me  
a little but be nervous  
near me, just like you.**

---

---

**If I were a poltergeist  
I wouldn't make a sound,  
just keep my ears cocked  
to hear your heartbeat.**

---

---

**If I were an angel  
I would have no memory,  
be mindful only of my  
message, only of you.**

---

---

**20 January 2018**

=====

**listen to the land  
all night long**

**stand on your hands  
to know what trees know**

**then tell me  
before I wake so**

**I can pretend it  
was only a dream.**

**20 January 2018  
*for Nicole***

=====

**Then my new purple Lamy pen  
spoke words you don't need to hear  
to set your mind dancing already  
its own way, its own tunes, its own  
dance floor polished by all your loves.**

**20 January 2018**

=====

**The summoning  
also listens.  
That is how  
we are, folk  
between effect  
and cause, giants  
on a tiny earth —  
how it seems.**

**20 January 2018**

=====

Then came a day  
didn't know a thing —  
looked at the sky  
tried to remember.  
Those are cars  
passing by, most  
of them black  
like childhood  
again. See,  
something is  
knowing instead.  
Colors remember,  
that's their function  
in life, why Iris  
is a god back  
then and always,  
her rainbow.

Sun brighter  
on snow now,  
see, remembering  
is happening.  
But is happening  
only remembering?  
A deer steps across  
the empty road.

**Is there no now,  
is it all then  
come back again?  
What should a day  
know or be or tell  
or even answer  
what breathless  
question that  
nobody asks?**

**21 January 2018**

## EXHIBIT A

**The boiler room  
mighty turbines  
like a Swiss ferry  
here stilled  
in urban shade.  
What is this place  
that has such a vast  
room, empty except  
for quiet machines?  
You don't really  
want to know, just  
want to be polite  
to it, let yourself ne  
awed by its strangeness.**

**21 January 2018  
(The Lace Factory,  
Kingston)**



=====

**It is right to be  
polite to be  
polite to places.  
They are the only  
people there.**

**21 January 2018**

=====

**Simulacrum  
from Srinagar  
never before.  
A dictionary  
(that drunken  
circus) spills  
joyous improbables  
all over the mind.**

**21 January 2018**

## **ON THE NILE**

**Can we open  
the crocodile's mouth  
from the distance,  
catch his hot breath  
across the water  
and know thereby  
what we are like  
with all our lusts,  
our gluttony for lives  
not our own? Sobek  
god of repentance,  
god of learning to  
forgive even ourselves.**

**21 January 2018**

**S C E N A**

**—I don't belong to you  
I belong  
to wanting you**

**—Want me less  
and be me more**

**—how can I be  
more than am?**

**—am is empty  
be runs free  
can anywhere**

**—its flight my choice?**

**—it chooses  
what you think**

**—then want  
chooses me?**

**—not so; the rafters  
of your house  
are free  
you have windows  
choose to see.**

**22 January 2018**

=====

**A little after Strauss but not yet now  
you get a little tune in your head  
and there goes sleep. Music  
always feels like morning light,  
kitchen door, corn field, crows,  
sumptuous mezzos at the well.**

**22 January 2018**

## WALKING ALONE

1.

Just trying to know  
how it begins.  
A rising major ninth,  
cat on window ledge  
reddish, people  
speaking Dutch who  
switch to your native  
language when you  
come close, grammar  
better than yours.  
Gull lans on canal.  
Just like your birthplace  
this used to be sea.

2.

Is this clear enough  
or can anything be?  
Open the ledger  
look for your name —  
see the date? It's  
today, that's all  
a day ever is, a little  
dreamless sleep  
between two dreams.

**3.  
Answer them in French,  
they'll look away  
and let you pass by  
along their wet stones,  
the benches are wet too,  
it must be raining,  
nothing more. But how  
can a city ever be sure?**

**22 January 2018**

**THIS**

**This is a painting  
of a room I've never  
entered, never seen  
though I have been  
inside it many a time.**

**Outside sky, and everything  
under it all the same no-color  
but the room crackles with color—  
this is a painting of a room  
you can only hear, however many  
times you go in and come out of it  
it looks a little like the face  
of the woman you saw in the Bardo  
before you saw the one who would be  
your mother. Call it The Room  
of the Other Mother, every painter  
tries to show it, sometimes it has  
a human face, sometimes no face at all—  
geometry is just a childish trick,  
abstract modesty, too shy to show  
her actual face, so it's safe to hang  
this picture on the wall, the colors  
won't let you wander or get lost inside,  
you're safe out here with me.  
Don't listen if it calls you by name.**

**22 January 2018**



=====

**Things that catch  
sight of me  
that I don't see —  
hmmm.**

**The old  
one-way street  
enigma.**

**Maybe  
it's better this way,  
if it does anything  
at least it will be  
a surprise. Every  
child I am likes that.**

**22 January 2018**

## IN THE DOLOMITES

I wonder worried  
the way Rome fretted  
at the clean uplifted  
peaks of so many  
beings, huge people  
who held the north,  
jagged horizons,  
stone gardens wet  
with purple sunsets  
and I am so small,  
yet I dare to hold  
their names in my mouth  
and say *mountain,*  
*mountain, teach me God.*

22 January 2018

=====

**Seeing it the first time  
one says: a mountain,  
asks no questions.  
The sky knows everything  
anyhow.**

**But later  
there is marvel at the mass.  
How could anything be  
so big and the earth still fly?**

**22 January 2018**

=====

**Self-mockery  
is as suspect  
as self-praise.**

**Be silent.  
Let them think  
what they want.**

**23 January 2018**

=====

**I gave my words away  
the birds came back**

**their shadows  
quick over the snow**

**told me what I really meant.**

**23 January 2018**

=====

**I thought a sphere**

**it rolled towards me  
as if I had tossed it  
up a gentle slope**

**it came close and stopped  
looked up at me  
the way an animal does  
a little curious,  
a little scared.**

**I know we all are hungry,  
always, and said so.  
The sphere received my  
opinion neutrally, that special  
privilege of having no  
corners, no edges,  
no sides. Slowly I'm trying  
to learn its lesson.**

**23 January 2018**

=====

**Can anything  
be over?**

**The mind now  
has no then—**

**the calligraphy  
of memory**

**always beautiful,  
hard to read.**

**23 January 2018**

## **MEANING**

**Meaning is oblique  
a flag in the wind  
on a ship out there  
near the horizon,  
flapping free,  
impossible to read.**

**23 January 2018**



=====

**Something  
almost worth saying  
I wrote down instead.**

**Up to you  
always to decide.**

**Sense is always  
waiting to be made**

**but maybe there's  
something  
better to do with it.**

**23 January 2018**

=====

**Yesterday the sky  
was down here with us.  
Today it's back in heaven  
blue even, parts of it,  
the rest white, risen from us  
our yestermist reborn as  
cloud, fleecy as you please,  
American as lakes and hills.**

**24 January 2018**

=====

**Some days it's right  
to be literal,  
take the sunshine  
at its word  
and try not to be afraid.**

**Remember, we're still close  
to the beginning, our morals  
those of rats in mazes,  
our faith exiguous, frail  
as a dry old rubber band.**

**24 January 2018**

=====

**for Lori A.M.**

**Miraculous photos in your book,  
the print too faint for me to read.  
So I have to make up my own libretto  
for the music the pictures make me hear.**

**24 January 2018**

=====

**Bring me to the glass of water  
and let it swallow me  
for a change, I'm really small,  
I'll fit inside, and water  
will finally find out  
what it's like to drink.**

**24 January 2018**

## MORE

Isn't that what children say  
I want more. So I want  
more too,  
                  the child I was  
or think I was.

                  So little  
is known for sure, the dark  
mauve modernist iced-  
water pitcher, so generous  
on every table, at Toffenetti's  
on Times Square — I'm sure  
of that, yellow leaves along  
the sidewalk of Batchelder St.,  
my sister's first communion  
all in white, the stone lion  
I fed grass to west of Nostrand.  
Water, woman, god and animal —  
who needs more than that? And  
always and always the names  
themselves of things and places.

24 January 2018

=====

**The dragon roars  
to remind us.  
We think  
it's just the wind  
from the mountain.  
But at least we're thinking.**

**24 January 2018**

=====

**The green blade of the amaryllis  
bends back from the window.  
Busoni listens to the Bach chaconne  
and remembers it into the piano.  
No clouds near the sun. No words  
in the way. Snow quilting the lawn.**

**24 January 2018**



**C A E D M O N**

**We know the story. The illiterate neatherd is asleep in the hay, snug in the barn with the monastery's cows it's his job to take care of. A voice wakes him, invisible, an angel cries *Caedmon, sing me something!* The sleeper half-wakes, complains, I don't know how to, and sleeps again. But a second time the voice summons him:**

***Caedmon, sing me something!* Roused again, the sleeper tries to explain, he can't even read, knows no verse to sing, he's just a farm hand, then he shuts his eyes and snuggled down again. Yet again he hears it: *Caedmon, sing me something!* This time Caedmon is mad, gets up to his knees to berate the angel, opens his mouth and instead of what he intends to say, out comes**

***Now shall we praise heaven-kingdom's lord***

**and all the rest of it. Caedmon's Hymn they call it now, and Bede tells us that it was the first English poem. How**

**true the story is: Inspiration (what else is an angel?) is wasted on those who are lettered and secure in what they think they know, inspiration comes to those who are humble and uncertain of their skill. And it is not what we want to say or some self we want to express that comes out as poetry but the strange, the marked, the stuff you don't know you know, the story you never heard, the things that shock you as they emerge, word by word, as if you were speaking.**

**25 January 2018**

== == ==

—The lights come back  
to tell us something.

—O you're always telling us  
everything tells.

—It does. Just listen  
what you're thinking right now  
is what the daylight  
pours into your head.

—Have I no private,  
separate, consciousness?

—Do you so want to be alone?  
Don't you want to be part  
of the company of light?

—But there is darkness too...

—and that too tells.

25 January 2018

**OF CORMORANTS, FOR P.J.**

**You wrote the bird  
right out of the sky.  
But still the snaky  
neck arising  
almost bodiless  
from calm water  
teases me as if  
there's always  
more to be said  
before we fly away.**

**25 January 2018**

## **AGAINST DIACRITICALS**

**O Byzantium  
was it you who set  
your Massoretes  
to work on the letters,  
made birds and butterflies  
and bats to perch  
on my clean alphabet?**

**25 January 2018**

=====

**Suppose the numbers stopped.  
Left town. Changed  
their address. didn't  
answer when you tried  
to count bananas or  
divide to divide  
a pizza into equal slices,  
how many heartbeats  
in a minute, you'll  
never know. Number  
is an elusive concept,  
let it slip away once  
and it's gone forever.**

**25 January 2018**

## DAWN

Pale blue sauce on grey earth,  
The day comes back.  
We are monkeys chattering at the sun,  
ur-ur-ur became *aurora* said the ancients.  
*Say it or lose it*  
the wise one cries,  
so we shout into the sky  
and it sounds like this.

25 January 2018

=====

Nostril cvigarette remembrance  
Waterloo Bridge the bus uphill  
lost in Hampstead a father's trace  
his grace pervades the alphabet  
he taught so well the horses even  
know it, just ask a chestnut, yes  
yes, even the kind policeman  
randomizer alert embankment  
how far art has come since we  
let go, dropped the lease, let  
art show what nobody saw so  
there the river goes again so  
slow upcountry as if the sea  
had somewhere else to go, no  
sound will take you there, green  
as you pretend your eyes (my  
eyes) were once upon no time  
when seeing meant a thorn hedge  
around a house nobody lived in.

25 January 2018



=====

We see better by the ears —  
the fields, as in late  
autumn the unreaped corn  
tells about the absent landlord  
sick farmer, all the children  
waste their time in school. Listen,  
the bus is yellow because  
the orn was too. Buses  
and trucks, in the farmer's fever  
every house is a demand  
made on him he can't satisfy.  
Gloom of a sick man's sunshine,  
bring me home and teach me to dance  
he thinks. In fever there are women,  
rivers, priests, acolytes, candle wax  
everything dusty as a Persian carpet  
spattered with colors, sand, blood,  
moss, stone, corn, the sky itself  
is always dark, towards evening.  
I was sick once and met him  
in the meadow, his face like mine,  
knew he had so many things to do  
but what and why he can't remember.

26 January 2018

=====

**I tell what I know  
in plain weekday language  
leave the music  
for your ears to find  
in all the interruptions,  
cars going by.**

**26 January 2018**

=====

*for Michael Ives*

**A pen that writes more  
than you want it to**

**but skips a word now and again  
or just leaves a letter out**

**to change the meaning  
of what you thought you meant.**

**26 January 2018**

=====

**The salt shaker often full,  
the soup untested. Tasted.  
What did the old man mean  
all bent low in a storefront  
full of live chickens? I mean  
what did it mean, to me, a child  
afraid of everything, a war,  
an old man with a beard,  
coming towards us, with one  
wrung-neck chicken in each hand  
that later I was supposed to eat?  
Childhood is forror and despair.**

**26 January 2018  
End of Notebook 409**

=====

**Weighed down by sunlight  
five oranges on the kitchen table  
waiting for their Chinese painter  
to illustrate their radiant  
asymmetry. I touch one  
and it rolls a little, a liyyle  
like the earth I'm standing on.**

**26 January 2018**

=====

Watching them go by  
i was a river  
the relationship  
is intimate  
I could taste each one  
distinct as blue  
jay feathers on the lawn  
after an owl fight,  
owl feathers.

what I mirror  
in my surface lasts forever  
deep inside  
this is like seeing you all  
over again  
or this is called you and I  
will never forget.

26 / 27 January 2018

## IN CARVE THIS CUNEIFORM

Hard as it is to do this thing  
once it's done it's done  
mice can shit in the narrow grooves  
or ants stroll there in the shade

and the meaning lasts. Gouge  
one letter at a time, it stays  
ten thousand years, or would  
if there were that many years.

But i think the word i breathe out  
may last longer than the living air.

26 /27 January 2018

=====

**Shiny roads  
me rain.  
Too many words  
to fit a song so  
silence me.  
Because and because  
and become  
like a lantern  
still burning  
in an empty room.  
This place  
is always.  
Every drop of wet  
a gleam says.  
Irrelevant dawn.**

**26 /27 January 2018**



=====

**What is a writer's greatest problem?**

**Autoplagiarism.**

**Or have I said that already**

**somewhere else, in better words?**

**27 January 2018**

=====

**That strange sound  
a freight train  
escorting the river  
to the city  
to which everything flows.  
It persists  
in the trees  
around me, that too  
part of its cargo.**

**27 January 2018**

=====

**They die away from me  
do they die too  
away from themselves  
or really into their actual  
self-less identity, *knowing*,  
gradually ceasing to remember?**

**So many gone from me,  
someday to build a shrine  
to all my sacred dead  
or is this maybe it?**

**27 January 2018**

=====

**And the word  
on the other side—  
who's speaking?  
The world surely  
is a telephone,  
I hurry from room  
to room trying to answer.**

**27 January 2018**

=====

**And is this too an eagle  
a bird of prey gorgeous  
white-pated on [?] the river  
slow with authority?  
Every *this* is.**

**27 January 2018**

=====

**And the answer?  
Raptacious moments  
catch us by surprise  
beautiful personage  
open every door.**

**27 January 2018**

## **THE DIFFERENCE**

**In a class I do all the work,  
you sit and listen.**

**In a workshop  
you do all the work  
while I just sit there  
admiring the view from your minds,  
the song of your voices.**

**27 January 2018**

## SCRIPTORIUM

where once a writer sat  
copying a text  
faithfully as he could

it's that way still,  
some ancient scroll  
unfolding in my head

I have to figure out,  
read clear, spell right.

27 January 2018



=====

**Children worship the sun,  
think it is something to eat,  
something they could eat  
if they could get it out of the sky  
that blue mother, who keeps  
fruit and cake and sprinkles  
out of our hands, children  
are always hungry, we are  
always hungry, we try to gorge  
on music and language,  
on touching each other softly  
but the hunger lasts, at least  
we have colors to play with,  
coax them with our red mouths.**

**27 January 2018  
for Ashley Garrett**

=====

**Amnesty  
in own life,  
rubber ball  
bounced pink  
off stoop steps,  
each step  
a value. Aim.  
Forgive my  
imperfections.  
Go to church  
in my head.  
All is forgiven,  
unremembered,  
lost at sea,  
Lost in me.**

**28 January 2018**

=====

**I almost know  
what I'm doing.  
That 'almost'  
saves me from  
disaster, the  
catastrophe  
of certainty.**

**28 January 2018**

=====

**Familiar taste  
in unfamiliar place.  
Pepsi in Paris?  
Not quite like that.  
More like reading  
the *New Yorker* in church  
(and it's the only one  
some people have).  
But it's just me again  
in our dining room  
writing at the table.  
And the Korean War  
never ended, did it?**

**28 January 2018**

=====

**Writing with another  
in my hand,  
a plaster bust  
of Josef Haydn  
once stood on  
my window ledge,**

**but what do I know?  
I have a baton  
but no orchestra,  
fingers and no jharp.**

**Gladness and forgiveness—  
these mercies last.  
At least the window  
still show an actual  
world outside my thought  
but within my reach.**

**28 January 2018  
(with C's yellow pen, gift of LB)**

=====

**Shadowing the beaver,  
the 'boy in the pond'  
they called him, left him  
alone. Words are sacred,  
names even more so.  
The boy moves silently  
through the thawing reeds.**

**28 January 2018**

=====

**Indiscriminate awareness  
soft on the sofa  
languid as a lily  
so many sins so few answers  
twisting turning with forgiveness.  
O be my anxieties for me  
for once, a ball  
bouncing down the steps slowly.  
The cat is asleep.  
I am the unknown.**

**28 January 2018**

## A DRIVE ON SUNDAY

The spirits go on answering  
and the trees stand firm.  
This should be enough to know.

2.

We saw the sragon  
on the hospital lawn,  
knew he was one of ours,  
makers of our dreams.  
But she was she, breathed  
more ice than fire  
nit smiles her wings wide  
trh way they do, rode  
away on the wind south  
carrying clear weather.

3.

So that was nature.  
We stayed in the car  
nibbling fruit cup — fresh  
chunks of pineapple,  
cantaloupe. We're snug.  
This is *menskr* as our  
Norse ancestors said,  
human way in a human world.  
Glad insanity of cars in traffic,  
strip malls, Parthenons.



4.

The car was safe. Windows  
clean, good for snapping through  
images of clouds and winter pastures,  
sunsets better here than anywhere,  
I swear. (See a thousand photographs  
ci-joint. )

5.

So many of our friends  
have died, are dying. Every word  
however trivial silly or wrong  
I say is in protest against that.  
And we don't even know what it is,  
only by absence we know it  
if there is even anything to be known.

`29 January 2018

=====

**Suppose the kingdom is at peace,  
that Bayeux cloth still unwoven  
the boisterous Channel guarded  
by strong gods, children of Lir.**

**An island following its own fate,  
untouched, island, island, best  
of all places to be born  
and celebrate the self of living  
before the self of dying comes.  
O give me my island again.**

**29 January 2018**

=====

**I wear priestly vestments  
as I approach  
the altar of the everyday,**

**a colored tee-shirt to honor  
each days' deity:  
Saturnsday is black  
as new-turned soil, black  
as Baron Samedi's bowler hat  
but Sunday's yellow  
and Moonday's white,  
red for Marsday, Tuesday's blood and rust,  
and Wodensday in orange  
for cinnabar, native ore of Mercury  
and Thor's Day is Jovesday  
is deep blue of the autumn sky he rules,  
and green for Venus, her copper,  
copper that's been around a while,  
and green as my wife's eyes.**

**29 January 2018**

## DICTAMINA

**They land  
in our eyes.**

\*

**Fewer crows  
more prose.**

\*

**So many creows in the bare  
trees of Poughkeepsie.**

\*

**Barefoot riders  
on clouds are we.**

\*

***Jugendstil* porphyry  
carved to resemble  
itself more than it should.**

\*

**Time can't help—  
be quick.**

\*

**Acrylic.  
I try  
to dry  
fast what  
everyone thought.**

\*

**Little non-sequiturs  
accumulate  
to a great temple,  
steps of Pergamon.**

\*

**I can say anything I please—  
their eyes are so distracted  
by the big blue supermoon,  
savages awed by a sudden sky.**

\*

**Grey sky anything  
could happen ever after.**

\*

**Roads empty  
as reading matter.**

\*

**Mercantile  
antiquities,  
buy a fish  
for cash.**

\*

**Where do things  
come from anyhow?  
Wasn't it all there  
to begin with  
as soon as we looked?**

**30 January 2018**

=====

Have I tried  
your patience  
enough before?  
A clothesline  
between two tenements  
can carry love letters,  
I learned it  
from a magazine,  
you need a lover, an other,  
a rope, two pulleys,  
and the hardest  
of all, a will  
to commuunicate  
over emptiness,  
touchless, airy,  
far away.

30 January 2018

## REMEDIA ALCHEMISTICA

1.

Allow it to churn  
in the heart of the cellar  
that old fieldstone-walled chamber  
oft-flooded behind and a little bit  
below the mind. Take it out  
and say it once a day. This  
is *splendor Solis*, glow reflects off the Sun.

2.

Carry a cashew  
into the cupboard  
all by yourself.  
Lay it flat and let it sing.  
Creep in and lie beside it.  
What you dream will, when transcribed,  
reveal the whereabouts of the White Stone  
you swallowed long ago and soon forgot.



**3.**

**An apple from Annandale,  
slice it, feed it to a bluestocking from Boston  
and pray for rain. In seven  
cases out of ten the streets  
will look like silver, the walls  
will crumble, fade away and tigers  
roam through the orchard,  
kindly ones, who kill only when they must.**

**30 January 2018**

=====

**He opens the window  
expecting to see. He sees  
but there's nobody there.  
Answers the phone and hears  
the dial tone. What is wrong  
with me, he thinks.  
But is asking even thinking?  
Is being wrong so frequently  
even being? Imagine  
a philosophy with answers  
instead of boring questions.  
He tries to remember  
when was there  
anyone at the door?  
He read a book  
but what did it say?  
What is a window for?**

**31 January 2018**

=====

**At the rim  
of the camp  
the glow  
of the fire  
barely teaches  
someone moves.  
Someone is always  
there, at the edge  
of seeing. Tres  
make it even  
harder to see  
who moves there,  
who it might  
actually be.  
We live all pir days  
in guesslight.**

**31 January 2018**

=====

**Love is a drug  
like any other,  
so while the oligarchs  
waddle in, crushing  
civil liberties  
we flee into the personal,  
lick one inch of  
skin at a time  
and call it ecstasy.  
Or hold my hand  
and let me sleep.**

**31 January 2018**