2-2018

**feb2018**

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BY CANDLELIGHT

By candle I’d answer
if you came with cloud
dawn over Amsterdam,
remember? We pronounce
things differently
in the sky, we do not choose
our seat companions —
how destiny begins
and all it ever means.

2.
On land there is time
but not on the sea.
Everything has been given to me
clear as a candle in a window
in the night in the middle
in the year when you’re
trying hard to know, from
losses real and dreamland.
A house in the dark you reckon
and as usual you’ll be wrong.
3.
A single candle is a dragon’s eyes. We know this, but go on doing business, commute to work, send the kids to school as if — as if what? As if all this isn’t someone else’s dream. But whose? The dragon knows.

4.
The principle of the thing is clear enough, clear as a candle in a paper bag, one of many, lining the walkway to a snow-decked house guiding in not-quite-fashionable visitors. We’ve all been there, walked to the door, stumbled on the marble step, always wondering why the paper vags don’t catch fire — is it something to do with the snow?
5.
You were reading Rilke by candlelight, that was the problem. Two lovelinesses cancel one another out. The prose (you read him in Russian) flickered in and out while the candle sang steadily, the brave tessitura of its ogival flame. made everythiung else approximate and vague.

6.
Friends were coming. You were afraid. What do they know about you, really, what do they know about the light? They come with presents, muffins, bottles of rare ink, rosaries shaped from olive wood. O live wood! you recall from a dearfriend long ago, dead friend, his poems living. The live friends meetnow at the door, as they come in stinking of daylight
you put out
the candle, plates,
tea cups, napkins.
you discuss
the amaryllis,
talk till the darkness
comes and even they
know it, smile
their way out.
You hear their cars
start up in the driveway,
you light the candle
again, try to endure it,
looking straight
into the flame
blaming yourself,
asking ywt again
Why can’t I love them?

7.
Critical situation,
pieces of glass,
snow crystals lodged
in the tooth of fabrics,
plastic, stone.
What is the melting
point of shadow?
Of human thought?
And when it blurs
into sleep,
that low place
by the river,
the opaque flow?
The candle’s out now,
pretend you can see
by dawn light, cars
drive by and make it
easy, their bright eyes
show you the road too.
They make you strangely
vaguely happy. look,
it’s ordinary again,
you can be that too,
as if — that as-if again,
nobody knows what.
Just remember
but not too much
and you’ll be safe.
Assurance flares
‘in your mind a moment
then fades out.

1 February 2018
The suppose endures. Connecting is the hardest part of writing clear, *trobar clar*, being truth, knowing whom. Let me know you also says the bird. Snow for an hour makes it all one.

2 February 2018
This handwriting
I can hardly read
is me.

How we
hide from ourselves,
jungles, bayous,
in deserts also
find bewilderment.

2 February 2018
Why can’t I wear
a tophat in the classroom
or anywjer else
I don’t bave one.
Why cant I see out the window
when it’s wide open
and my eyes are closed?
This is the nightmare
called philosophy
where questions overwhelm
oblivious ontology.

2 February 2018
Appalled by truth
her pals gone too
she parkbenches
a while though it
and she are cold.
Why does any city
leave such spaces
unoccupied except
for dreamers, pigeon
feeders, nodding
dead addicts of drugs or
love, the other kind
of danger to her all
too quiet heart? *Count
the syllables* he said
*and know*. Then he too
was gone. She started
counting before she
even knew what word
she was analyzing. Or
was analyzing her.

2 February 2018
Shafer
Agronomy

for slaves
of the earth we
joyous are,
mastering
our master so.

2 February 2018
Shafer
THE HEDGEHOG

An alto choir
singing softly

*herisson  herisson*

over and over
on one note
gently gently

till I wept
Till I woke.

3 February 2018
Waiting for something to be the matter.

A king in Samothrace looking for wisdom

he himself embodies but forgot he knows.

3 February 2018
Where do sorrows come from
is it from far
or are they always near,
kittens sleeping at your feet.

3 February 2018
I heard singing
in my dream
so why is there
no singing here?

Nothing silences music
faster than opinions,
themselves the dross
squeezed out of thinking
by ordinary unceasing fear.

3 February 2018
And this too scants music
this hummed apology
for an absent song.

3.II.18
Bright sun
makes everything
into one street
we all live on
a while, temporary
neighbors of the light.

3 February 2018
Time to jaw,
open the light
let it listen
while we chant
what the bird
told us with its wings—
*fuir, fly away*
from word to word
drifting on the strict
currents of music.

3 February 2018
If it’s not music
it’s not me
he sobbed
into the silence.

3.II.18
NUMBER THEORY

If I could see another
it would see me Two.
Three would be the sky
and Four that eye
Rome called Jove
the above this Five-
Elemented earth
whose goddess Six
looks affer it and us
from her heaven, Seven.

3 February 2018
TWO DREAMS AS IF

Footfall
and pain befell

hurt filled my foot—
snakebite?
    yes,
but the snake was my vein.

The Secretary of Health
explained to me
that I have to go on
eating regularly
for the mental health
of the whole United States
as if the mentally unstable
depended on just me.

4 February 2018
Watching the sky pale
over this valley
we read so many names
on that papyrus
the blankest page tells
more than all the rest.

4 February 2018
Sometimes through trees
a gleam of water rushing
as if a leaf let light pass
when there are no leaves.
Dawn over the rapids.

4 February 2018
The earth spins
we stand still

How well we have adapted
to this place!

But then comes winter
on the unprepared

out there everything frozen stiff
motionless as we.

4 February 2018
One-seventh of February is over already. These numbers will slay us if taken as medicine. Instead let us call this Anyday in nobody’s month but wild geese fly over migrating to O Canada or wherever we also at the right time will go.

4 February 2018
The world is full of bodies
not so full of the minds we mean
and mean us in turn,
the signal bearers
in our day-long night.

5 February 2018
BARE TREES

Childish handwriting
those branches
scribbled when God was young
were still not old enough to read.

5 February 2018
PISHKE

Little words
pebbles rattling
in a tin can
or small coins
in some charity’s
donation cup,
little words
to teach, to heal.

5 February 2018
Snow come
means to know
know. That’s what
winter’s for,
to work the mind
inside the brain.
Wake, while the air
is full of pillow feathers,
all those white dreams.

5 February 2018
TIMOR LOQUENDI

1. In a world of things am I also. Not a question. It is a question, a questing. Why does I feel what It wants Me to, this thingly world?

2. Am I damaged by what I preach? It is so dangerous to speak. tempting, risky and who knows what will come out of is it my own mouth and who will be listening to what gets said and what it might make them do? Hearing too is dangerous and silence itself full of craters, like the moon.

6 February 2018
What is spoken becomes a church demands belief attendance at its rites before you dare turn away and think your own thoughts the ones with no words in them.

6 February 2018
ASSEMBLANCES

1. Put me together
till I look like myself
and I will be your friend
forever, having no other
guide to my own identity.
Please make me me.

2. Then there’s this rock
must become turtle.
A whole sky
become one eye.
And who is the other?

3. Patchwork quilt
I saw from the plane
they called it England
and who was I to argue
with the cloth I’m cut from?
4.
Nothing grows where I don’t go.

But I is everywhere trying out

various names, languages, skins.

So grows cabbage in every garden almost

and all that quiet green continuity

that feed your sheep.

6 February 2018
Platonic liquids come with strange angles, sharper than oxygen. A river is a box that has no bottom, a glass of water slices through jungle with the smell of aluminum. Platonic liquids come without number, we breathe them in through our pores and they seem to make us think. If you call this thinking. Platonic liquids wash away remembrance both of wrongs suffered and good deeds performed, a quiet equality seeks out its level in us. This is healing. And the sharp angles keep us lucidly awake.

6 February 2018
recalling Georges Perec

Big apartment house.
Big dull dark red apartment house.
Seven stories. Nig
building full of windopws
all of them dark.
I will sit here in my car
parked by the big vacant lot
between me and the big apartment house
and I will wait and watch
until the lights come on
in some of those windows
and I can see who lives in such a house
or later maybe who comes out.

7 February 2018
Anything is better than driving hurtling through narrow streets managing not to hit anything, anyone, bikes coming towards me, stanchions, work crews, I can’t get the thing to go slow, slow down, better to stop altogether, cars too can have heart attacks, just stop, better to sleep at the side of the road, I thought it was winter but the grass was green or was I still sleeping?

7 February 2018
1. She takes off her cape and the names start changing. Green still means go. Rubies and sapphires mostly, topazes, how strange they are. Things. Her cassock glitters with them.

2. Come in I try to say it comes out in Latin, I’m speaking language again, here is tea from Assam, strong, here is raw sugar. What I say turns out to be lies, nothing is there. She sits down.

3. Be merciful to me, a stranger I say, now I’m telling the truth. Every encounter is a number already noted in some book. Find the book read the numbers until you come to nowm she says.
4.
My eyes are too weak for such research. So sit down too and call me Linden Tree. I will. I do. A name is a big help, pain though somewhere in the torso, mine. Why? Blood sometimes gets frightened, sleeps. And it was all right again.

5.
Now is a peculiar time, ornamental, obvious, full of counterpoint, sleet from a low sky, memories of Pyramid Days in a dry country, a taste like, like grapefruit I think, but why linden I want to know. Because you asked, almost. If you had actually said Who Are You, like an ordinary child, I would have told you Irrawaddy is my name, I flow through Burma and I am full of rubies as you see.

6.
Have I let a river into my house? Look down she tells. I see my legs are changing, floating in light like stained glass in the church. Are you a church, I wonder, and she says she’s church enough for me.
7.
It was at least a beginning, like a conversation. But don’t think of anybody else when I’m here or here will turn into there, roadways knotted, burning Xmas trees, children reciting foreign alphabets. Now and here are long time married, stay for breakfast, rewrite your will, it doesn’t matter as long as you listen and I am all you listen to she said,

7 February 2018
WHAT THE EVENING MADE OBVIOUS AT LAST

Dying is so selfish.
All for me and none
for anybody else.
Leave them all to cope
with the world I made.
I think I will not die today

7 February 2018
Don’t think of me when you wake up late for work but when you go to bed hours later, isn’t that fair? Doesn’t the image of any other (like me) deserve a place alongside your lovers, your cat, your magazines?

8 February 2018
One of those morings
again, when who knows.
There was a mulberry
bush in the front yard
surrounded by hedges,
Hold to these — inside
the house a strangeness
hard to map. Who
sleeps on that green couch.
What really goes on
behind the bathroom door.

8 February 2018
When sleep is ready for me
I sing this little song
how ink rolls down the windowpane
instead of rain, and how the sun
wears lipstick when she walks
among the early trees. Now everybody
clap hands but don’t make a sound.

8 February 2018
ZWISCHENLAND

Between sleep and waking
no river runs
only a broad plain
grassy, full of beasts
some tame some wild.
Birds scream like snow-
sjovels scraping ice.
No sun rises there
but things can be seen
by their own power
to call you by name,
your name or its own,
who can really tell.

8 February 2018
It gets colder at night
that’s why. Why what?
Romance and cave dwelling,
wistful music on the lute.
Flute. And dreams
wide as billboards
to help you remember
colors in the dark.

8 February 2018
To see with your own eyes is also to see illusions. Look at the picture of the galaxy they show us. Maybe the stars in your lover’s eyes are the only stars there really are.

8 February 2018
Cross in the middle of the block against the law, the way you cut a grapefruit, say, to spoon out flesh and juice by segments. Like fruit, reality has no corners—look at me, do you even know who I am or why, and yet you start doing it even better than I can.

8 February 2018
Kingston
What has to be said
never gets said.
The rose has to wait its chance
then blossom and say it.

The river goes on sleeping
the long dream we call its flow.
So don’t go to church to hide from god—
listen soft and hear the god word speak.

9 February 2018
Pallor and be blue—
I wrote sermons these days
for lack of science.
The minute knowledge ends
the editorial begins.
Fly away, mes oiseaux,
and come back with a branch
or a berry, bright bits of glass,
shiny buttons off the men from Mars.
Then the sermon will finally end.
A hymn heard. The consecration starts.

9 February 2018
FEBRUARY MUSIC

1,
Madamina, little rabbit,
tell your owner
spring is coming.
Some people believe anything.
And Valentinus was beaten
with rods. the blows
were not of love
but by now we say they were.
And every rose is red.

2.
Tinsel paradise a flock of words
more or less musical strewn
across the mindscape. Romance
is a tower in a mild country,
you can see it from the Hill of Tara
where my true love slept with me
and we still are sleeping, bless us,
with that long green dream.
3. Every now and then poetry gets personal. not just like Olson and O’Hara those glorious Irish crybabies who made whole cities their mother, or do I mean Otherland, where the very birds in the street are talking to you, just you. Shame on me for listening.

4. Crybabies tell what happens to them—if he or she can pronounce it in vers libre or on the saxophone or scrawl it before our eyes, so much the better. With close study we might learn how to unstand what befalls us, we might learn how to cry out loud too.

5. Enough poetics. Let’s have some breakfast, you heard me, I know you just woke up but I’ve been waiting since the Pleistocene for some decent barley gruel and ginger tea. If you love language, feed your poets, those vegan vampires who prey on your desires. Use them for our glinting images, feed them back to you with musics, as our great Egyptian said.
6.
Have I told you enough?
And is the rabbit
still listening?
We have to meet the galaxy
some day, and have
to have some words to say
100 billion stars might listen to.
Remember, there is no
empty space, everything is busy,
magnetism, waves of gravity,
the whole arena full of charging bulls,
wild spectators, sea battles,
Rosicrucian sermons, Moravian hymns.
That’s what the stars say interest them.

7.
When you have nothing to say but the truth
that’s when to be the most cautious.
The sage loves standing there with his hands
in his pockets, says the I Ching, eyes lowered,
saying nothing. I think of John Cage,
his kindness, his illuminating reticence,
his Winter Music. I wish I could call this that.

February 2018, Shafer
1. Once you’re born you’re in—
why we check birthdays at the gate
too many Watermen spoil the party
everybody writing everything down.

2. Which brings personal history to mind—
I never knew my grandmother
on either side, I only know what language tells
and what kind of cozy kitchen is that?

3. We try so hard and mostly get it right,
move through attic spaces where the ghosts hang out,
kiss the reverent cherry tree out on the lawn,
walk to school and share our Devildogs.
4. But then the mirror comes along,
its shiny insolence right in my face
and I remember all I never knew, the passion
to be more than adequate o’erwhelms the kid.

5. Because this is not about growing up—
one never does. The world around one
just keeps changing till you’re there
where no mirror can sneer at you again.

6. Pelerinage de la vie humaine—remember that
from a France before accent marks, pilgrims
on their way through life, are you that too,
señor, and thus have need of my dispatches?

7. For I have been there where the river ends
and all the dead soldiers turn into porphyry
and the desert listens to the ravens calling
vivid sermons into the empty air.
8. Not much I don’t know, much good it does me, but you it will help, to cross the street, climb the shallow steps into the red brick library on Center Street where I stored your mind.

9. There’s insolence of office for you, I claim to know you better than yourself because I have none of my own. That’s what passes for logic in poetry.

10. It’s just above freezing for the first time in days. You knew I’d tell you that, proud as I am to be a bearer of the thaw, the weather is truer than politics, though both know how to kill.

11. See, what it means to have no grandparents is to be left in the dark about growing old—it came like the mail and I don’t know how to do it. The ice has melted from the branches—is that all it is?
12. Why is emptiness so beautiful? If I knew that I’d fill your heart with love because all the colors are alive in there and suddenly you have kinsmen everywhere.

13. *Of course I’m Shakespeare— who else could be so smug, accurate, elusive, gone? All that’s left of me is ink on paper or your copycat Device.

14. And you of course are Shakespeare too—he left us a language to be him with and by my guess, everything we need to know is stored therein, just find a way to spit it out.

15. The bitter truth, the long apostolate of hearing language as a prayer to the divine mind incarnate in each of us—that’s what the Bethlehem business was all about.
16. The grandeur of conscious being—what opera could be more accurate than that, the thrill of thinking, that never-ending music, the majesty of silence, the ever-virgin womb.

17. These little old truths fascinate me, glitter like quartz or pyrite in my fingers—we spent some time in the jewelers just listening—and you brought home a map for me to read for supper.

18. Yes, true as geography, pebble in your shoe, roses for Valentine’s, dark red, see I really do believe. The morning told me—leap up all of us, run barefoot to the truth.

10 February 2018
And then he read the mail, there was none. The temperature had gone up two degrees, he found that good. The road was still empty. Last night some emergency nearby, fire engines and flashing cars, silence. Now it was nothing much, just the mind grazing on emptiness, its favored food. A little blue daring to seep through the clouds.

10 February 2018
Get the *form* of the thing uncounted, clear, then all the rest runs natural—language is you now, there is no difference.

10 February 2018
If I keep talking long enough
I may find my way back
into the forest with its Dragon
full of feathers and glittering scales
rubies gleaming under his arms
and he has many ams, so if it be
that I find myself actually there
I will say your name, you who
offered me to his intentions
since in myself I'm too humble
to lay me down before such
magnificence of color, hunger, mystery.

10 February 2018
TRIPTYCH OF THE RAIN

1.
Let the vast old wraith
grey sky gentle us to day.
Describe us alive, health happy,
greens in the kitchen, hymn tunes
happen when you look outside.
Be dark on paper, legible as a fawn
browsing in snow. And be pious
like a child listening to grandmother
explaining the past. We have, see,
things to tell the sky too. Sabbath
sciences, archeology of our sleep.
To be simple, it wants us to go on. Miracles ripen like any other fruit. Asparagus pale fostering in sandy loamy rows, pale integers in the math dream reckons. Tell me to explain the other side as if this side itself were fully known. Never yet. But I’ll try to comply, cross the railroad tracks and dare myself to set even one foot on the decaying ice that shields for weeks our river from the sky. It looks like a snowy field but it’s a million gleaming teeth smile of her huge mouth.
3.
Albany-bound coaches rattle behind me—briefly I belong to the river not my land. But I belong to everything, have no children but those who listen to me and like any kids hang around or drift away. I think I’m a house sometimes, if a man can be one, all the room filled with precious junk, shadows, creaking floorboards, that endless appetite for *more* that houses have, all those doors and windows. Ring the bell and see who comes to the door.

11 February 2018
Rise light and be rain.
Explain the night again
where all times come
to fall upon us and rise
among us, in us, the *action*
we’re caught in and you too.

11 February 2018
= GENETICS

...reveals that our earliest
European ancestors had black skin.
Le Monde, 11.II.18

Cheddar Man tell us
how hard we worked
to bleach our skins.
Black people scare white
people — they are ghosts,
reproaches, reminders
of what we once were
and maybe should be again.

11 February 2018
MENISCUS

Meniscus
little moon
on the tea’s
surface in the cup,
or my fingernail,
come bother me
with curvature,
light bent through
space, or falling like
Oahu rain afternoons
while we walk around
in the zoo, scared
even of caged tigers,
or climb the cliffs
and see the bent horizon.

11 February 2018
A mean little man
bites a lazy plump lady.
Could this be language
or just a slender wire
looped across the sky
from somewhere
to somewhere else
we’ll never know?

11 February 2018
Listenless arrogance
rowers chained to their oars
skimming a sea they think they mean.

11.II.18
Endurance. Enduerme.  
Our battle is with gravity, 
with sleep. They are both 
our allies and our enemies. 
We need alertness, resistance, 
submission, repose. With. 
With means our side and against. 
All these. Somehow last 
from year to year always 
working to pay back the loan 
of life we get from mind, 
from atmosphere. No matter 
void of giving. No giving 
we guve ever can repay 
the gift of life. Work harder. 
Make things, think things, 
sing things, say things. 
Start now and never stop. 

11 February 2018
One decent thing about numbers is there’s only one of any one of them, seventeen, say, only one except maybe its echo minus 17 as in weather. All right, you’re right, there are really two of any one, still decent. a married couple, a number and her shadow.

12 February 2018
SKY

The closest place we could find to put the Sun to feel her warmth but not get burnt.

12 February 2018
Of course
a house
everything
sort of is.

The door
closes by itself
behind you
when you go out

make sure you have your key.

12 February 2018
Things make us aware of ourselves.
Tree of blood,
tree of breath,
windstorms
of our fingering
hurtling through
solid matter
Things tell young things you can always
tell when a human has passed by,
everything is different but nothing is changed.

12 February 2018
All these sentences, propositions, opinions!
All I really meant was roses on the table or any image I’m strong enough to carry, All I ever meant is you.

12 February 2018
To be alive this morning
after an old friend died last night —
hadn’t seen him in ten years —
is he further away now?
Doesn’t feel like that.
He’s still with me.
Or maybe all we really have
of one another is a shadow
and that lasts as long as the light/

12 February 2018
THE BOOK OF SECRETS

Every book is.

If not in the story told
or in the words that tell it

or if not in those
then in the empty spaces

in between them
where the real words

silently sound.

12 February 2018
ND, Rhinebeck
After all the evidence there is only inference.

Nothing can be proven, the thought goes free.

12 February 2018
TELLTALE

1. The addiction to the light
   the what we trust
   our time to being
   our time to tell

2. and I am none of these
   a fitful whisper heard
   beside an ancient
   lightning-wounded maple tree
   telling what has passed
   by in all its years
   tells me to recount,
   recite my days.

3. But story’s soon
   what I most doubt.
   And Duncan said
   I sinned against it,
   maybe so,
4.
but I will tell everything
I never knew,
clear diagrams
of what never happened,

lost as I am
in endless telling
all the possible endings infinite,
I sleep with Scheherazade.

13 February 2018
The exhibit
is in your eyes
where you hear me

we are museums
all our friends come
time to time to inspect

the marvels of otherness
each one of us
without even meaning to

beautifully displays.

13 February 2018
TIME TRAVEL;

*a somber Valentine for Charlotte*

1.
If I were rain
I could reverse
the vocabulary,
revise

the engines
that run us,

I would entrain
by otherwise
to it and through it
but never back,

o machinery of utterance
love in the uttering.

2.
Because the festival
breaks open.
Time travelers into the past
succeed in destination
but will they, do they, remember
the future they come from?
I think not.
They will have in them
only the mind of then,
trapped in that old time
for all we know,
the horror of their lost now.

3.
So it is after all
like being in love—
you can’t imagine what
life was like before she
or he became
the epoch of your heart.

Before her
a desert in the dark
after her
a grievous nothingness.

4.
I vaguely remember
the years B.C.
life before you.

And already your shadow
stretches back into that pastness
as if already you were there,
accidental guide or conscious angel,
how will we ever know?
Presence, present,
is all that matters.

So all that time
was liminal
to an us-infested now,
how strange it was,
a cape shaken off my shoulders.

5.
Time travel —
I guess that’s what love is,
each shunting
to the moment of the other,
momentum,
small steps,
noble precipices.

To be together
is to open time up,

split the log
and let the light out,

lift the stone
and let it float
far far
above the field

awakening.

You’re sleeping now
on Valentine’s morning,
I just pulled the blanket
over your bare shoulder,
a cold time of year
they chose for lovers,

but I can borrow your dreams
because love is an utterly
different kind of consciousness.

14 February 2018
Volunteers for everywhere
we must be soldiers
in the Civil War against forgetting,

politics just a hill of gravel, no core to it,
dry. treacherous, self-amounting.
tries to make us forget what we really mean.

14 February 2018
When the greatest trio in opera
has slimmed down to one
more lovely duet
we see the nature
of love. That the two-ity of it
is rich. magnificent, only
from inside. The outer glance
shows two smiling people
if they’re even smiling. So what
the viewer thinks, what’s
so great about that. But in
those endless corridors of silent trust
such joy dances, romances,
slumbers, wakes, prophesies,
wanders a world larger than the world.

14 February 2018
for Charlotte
PRAYER

Exaudi, hear me out,
don’t rake me at my word
only, hear the heartbeat.
the lying pulses that try
so hard to tell the truth,
to be there where you are,
eternal intelligible silence.

14 February 2018
Suppose otherside
as say Manhattan had
and you flipped les égouts so
the sewers were the sky
then down we’d go
to reach the holy ordinary
again so hard so find,
a finger running slow
gently down the spine
are you really there
and is this really me?

14 February 2018
ARIADNE ON ISLAND

A Chamber Opera as Critical Theory

Setting:
a small island in the North Atlantic near America

PROLGUE:
See my tattered workday clothes—
I am the fisherman of meaning.
Other agents scan the sea of life
for precious things and sympathies,
gold and squid and trivia like that
but I exhaust the interior of time
to put some voices to the Calls I hear
so you can hear them too and answer
them as you see fit. Now behold
this parceled island, public space
pervading private land, deer, coyote
and a pilot whale offshore, wind
cleaner than you ever smelled,
seals basking on the neighbor reef —
you’d think all that would be enough
for any isolated chunk of rock
(glacial afterthought, peak
of the sunken terminal moraine)
bot no, it wanted people too
so here we are. And you.
Scene 1:
(APOLLO enters, visibly perturbed)

APOLLO
Where is she?

SMARAGDUS (a retired jeweler)
She’s off-island.
Something about a check-up.

APOLLO
When will she be back?

SMARAGDUS
I’m sure the evening ferry—
she didn’t take the boat, why bother?

APOLLO (troubled)
I didn’t know.
I wish she’d tell me these things,
I worry when I come down home
and she’s not here —
the sea-wolves and the crocodiles...

SMARAGDUS
Don’t be silly, there’s not a croc
within a thousand miles.
APOLLO
You never know...
I see them as I go,
the shadows of my anxiety
slip through the waters.
And you can never tell
what’s coming from the sea —
I love it but don’t trust it.

SMARAGDUS
Is that how you feel about her too?

APOLLO
Don’t be insolent.
I love her forever
in all her ways.
But off-island
is a terrible condition.

APOLLO & SMARAGDUS (duet)
Off-island is the worst of places,
all Hours and no Graces.
You can’t breathe free in nation-states
but the sea disarms all potentates.
Come back to the island!
Come back whole,
come home and sing your truest role.

Scene 2:
Musical intermezzo.

At the ferry dock.

Apollo stands apart, nervously waiting. The islanders stay apart from him, respecting his obvious preoccupation. His usual air of being caught up in thought, thoughts that perhaps do not interest them.

A horn sounds loud, and the ferry slips up to the dock. The single deckhand swings the gangplank ashore and the few passengers step ashore one at a time. Ariadne comes last. Apollo moves towards her and she hurries into his arms.

Ariadne (Aria)

I’ve been to see the doctor
she says I’m fine,
I’ve been to see the lawyer,
the papers are all signed
so everything that is mine
is mine, we own our little house
free and clear, I’ve been
to see the jeweler: you’ve bought me
two rings, one ruby and one tourmaline
to help our metabolism, and I
bought you a little golden duck
to sit upon your desk. challenge you
to be free in air and water both,
and I bought myself a piece of lapis
true blue with gold flecks in it
to remind me all the time of you
and what you do. and how your right eye glows when you get angry...

APOLLO *(interrupts)*
I’m never angry with you.

ARIADNE
I hope so. I’ve been to see the governor but he was playing golf. I’ve been so see the carpenter about that throne we need rebuilt, I went to the florist to learn how to turn all our hydrangeas blue, blue, just for you. And then I came home to you.

*(End of aria. Then speaking)*
And what have you been up to while I was gone?

APOLLO
I stayed up there on our hill and looked at the sea. All day I wandered all across the sky from the Vineyard
all the way to Orient Point,
I shouted sunlight
on the sea, and sure enough
the sea sang back to me,
I liked its music but I worried,
worry is my middle name,
worry is my anxious fire
that fuels the engine of my love
and if I didn’t worry all the day
I’d sleep beneath some stone
and the whole world would sleep with me.
Bless you, darling, for coming home to me.

Scene 3:
They walk down through the wild roses to the shingle beach, where the waves lap gently, every seventh wave speaks louder, slaps the rock. Listen.

ARIADNE
O I love these wild roses,
white and red.

APOLLO
Rosa rugosa.

ARIADNE (playfully)
You say that every time.
APOLLO
I can’t ever get enough of naming things.

ARIADNE
Watch your step—
these stones are slippery, loose.

APOLLO
I always walk looking down.

ARIADNE
Look, follow my finger, out there—

APOLLO
An eider?

ARIADNE
A while family of them, following the mother.

APOLLO
Where do you think they’re going?

ARIADNE
I feel close to them
but not sure where they’re headed.

APOLLO
I think you do. Women know where all things tend.

15 February 2018
Speak the speech
I didn’t give you

let your tongue
make it up

as it slips along
the river of your breath

till it simply says.

15 February 2018
= = = = =

Speak what you don’t know
and I am even deeper in the dark

respond to my ignorance
with glorious exactitude

mumble monographs full of science
when science still means ‘knowing,

something known.’ And nothing is.

15 February 2018
Morning is the hard to see
the unknown miracle
a comrade arm around my shoulder—
a German pop song from 100 years ago,
92 humidity and rain anoints the streets
saint asphalt saint phone poles
saint white car crossing over the hill.
So it all is church after all
however hard we flee it,
the holy has us by the hand.

16 February 2018
Incarnate all around us
the blur of being.
Every breath tries to answer it.
Respond. Respose,
marry the world again and again
Everyone has been my mother
everyone is my needy child.

16 February 2018
Caution of the military through the bright morning—forgive the antecedents and safeguard the trees—more of them than us—our promised land.

2.
Amaze the animals with harmlessness.
Tread lightly be soft as sunlight rousing leaf shadows, all the dialects of wind chatting easy and no fear.

3.
No fear. Low pack hard leveled rough hillocks, we move smooth on grassland being only who we are.
4. Army of the obvious come to claim settlements. We made this land by coming here all the rest was only weather.

5. And weather has poor memory. An elk maybe, and certainly a beaver, a pond in moonlight, a bear gone fishing, I knew we could fit in somewhere, with our children’s books and glad machines, and we bought rubber from Malaysia to bounce off the ancient oaks. Never believe life is anything but play.

17 February 2018
I seem to write sermons these days
should I go to church to silence them?
Greetings to all the gods in Philadelphia—
the new Brooklyn where all graduates go,
happy Lent, give up anxiety for forty
days
and eat whatever circumstance sets to your lips—
see, here I am pulpiting again.

17 February 2018
Next I’ll open a motel
in the desert, specialize
in palaeolithic weddings.
Come get married to the wind
let red sandstone your priest,
come drink from the salty arroyo,
eat whatever I sling on your bare knees,
be naked in blue sunshine,
know the delights of being
anytime other than now—
or take time with you to the past,
my lizards all speak English
and the eagle overhead
will shield you with his immense shadow.

17 February 2018
The time it takes
is all the time it needs.

We reach the shadow’s edge
and stand a moment

listening. Then some of us go in.

17 February 2018
On the other side
of the sound
some dark soft gullet

a song
is something
a body says,

sounds. The words
don’t matter
or they are just matter

for the breath
that alchemist
to turn into music.

17 February 2018
Fisher Center, TON concert
LISTENING TO THE FIVE MOVEMENTS OF MAHLER’S SEVENTH SYMPHONY

The Orchestra Now
Conducted by Leon Botstein
17 February 2018

1. It carries you not into its imagined spaces but into yourself, endless corridors of your own time, the half-forgotten beautiful losses and for a long while leaves you there.

2. We’re in our carriage on the imperial – royal railway being carried west from the city into the mountains. There are birds and women wear veils, you walk through deserted boulevards, past silent churches. One woman, such eyes!
points to a nearby tower
you know you have to climb.
But first a glass of
it is not wine. And then
you do a thing like sleep
but there is no dream.

3.

(i)
Am I here?
Or is that someone
else dancing? Bears
are taught to dance
so why not me?
I’m comely, rugged,
rough fingernails
catch on threads, pull
the weaving loose,
you can see right through,
my feet pummel the dance floor,
am I not a sort of god
the music knows,
a little god it grows
from the bare trees
of everlasting winter,
a man’s own thinking?
(ii)
Boy
with a drum
in his arms he
leads the way

his sisters
cluster round him
all hurry along
and as they go
their footsteps smear
lines of chalk
scrawled on the sidewalk
that once made a game

or that once were words.

4.
A man with a monocle
examines his dream.
He holds it near
the candle flame
and says a siulent prayer
to Hermes, purveyor of dreams:
“Everything I see
is me
but everything I feel
is you,
your words, your sense going through me. My dreams show empty rooms, empty [plazas but they talk to me as if they were full of people drinking white wine, people dressed in dark wool.”

5.
For all its roar its energy and crash this music’s intimate—

a hummingbird in August close to your ear, a slim remembrance of an almost romance, the smell of wax.

All the drums are in your blood, those trumpets in your breath. and the melodies, my god, they say what you really mean.
SOON

we’ll be on the other
side or near its story at least,
the blue
dragon of the east
red girl of the west
green raven of the north
you never saw.

And down south
a yellow animal
u haven’t learned the name of yet,
big and sleepy, eyes like a snake’s,
squat-limbed, fur
rough as a cornfield in October.
And I am a little bit afraid.

2.
You ask me where the center is
as if I know. I think I do
but won’t tell you
in case I’m wrong

and my false doctrine
would lead you into harm.

But think of rivers
and what they know,
single-minded, slow.
Then think of rabbits
preferably in a cartoon
hopping through colors as music plays—

put those together
you’ll know more than I do
but even so I worry that I’ve told too much.

3.
Remember the spiritual
our mother the wind
used to sing to us,
sweet as Lena Horne,
intricate as I don’t know,
Heinrich Ignatz Franz von Biber maybe,
remember, I am the wind
she sang, and you are mine,
remember, yellow bird you’ll fly away
apples grow on my pine trees,
remember? Remember?

4.
Ikebana melodies?
Maybe not.
The flowers fall
where they choose
or as the wind disposes
or mother gravity commands.
Maybe there is a design
in what we hear singing,
how we read the wind,
how we caress the glistening
roads with all our going.

Do we
hear only what is there
(if that) or something more,
something in us that murmurs
cover corporeal counterpoint
to all the noise around us,
a tune that tells us
all the little we really know.

18 February 2018
I can see the river flow
from where I am,
little river
runs west, bends north
then west again to fall.
What more can I ask of a window?
The Second Coming! And heers’ a cloud,
it’s up to me to see Who’s in it
as I must know to Whom the river goes.

18 February 2018
One thing at a time?

No. A thing
at no time,
a thing called here

that never was
and always will be —

our meek vocabulary
in this preposterous
adorable dream.

18 February 2018
There are brilliants here
and smaragdine apostrophes
to Cyprian Aphrodite
her island self so close in us.
an emerald ring, a promise kept.
The world was my sister then
and all my words were green.

19 February 2018
= = = = =

Your green eyes
darling, green
as springtime any
week now, time
your other island,
otherness glory
in the sea of same.

19 February 2018
No news knows me. Sun pale candlelight pierce cloud. Persuade me to this day, let me be an anchor let down from the sky, let them moor on me and every thing again.

19 February 2018
Pachad,  
fear  
keeps saying it.  
The why  
of anything  

damaged coral  
atoll  
the sea  
kept from its breath  

o Oxygen  
I love you too,
How well the wonder waits,

    Purity is always and the next to come,

rhizomes of the real run through seeming,

wake and be now again.

Narrow road over the mountain pass into the mystery of then.

19 February 2018
(on Maggie’s Valentine card)

A flower almost
lost in its color

like a word
captured in your mouth

everything welcomes us
and you especially

wonder how and why that is
but know it is,

it comes to us
strokes through us

Were we, are we
after all

only a road?
And who goes us?

19 February 2018
Plumbers with their thousand little gizmos
and one big pipe wrench —
being ready is not easy,
the thingly world needs to cooperate.
But the gremlins have changed their names
become secret citizens of our neurology.
Proprioception falters. Where did I set down my spoon?

19 February 2018
MEDIAEVAL MANUSCRIPTS, ILLUMINATED

But why
didn’t they
show us
as we are?

Are we really
stubby or snaky
cartoons, no more
muscle than some
withered oale
flower?

Didn’t
they ever look,
ever see us naked?
Or was it wise
policy to look
but not see, just
know what is there,

finally to represent
without revealing?

19 February 2018
If it’s still there
when you put your glasses on
it’s a dream.
Or someone come to see you—
who could that be?

19 February 2018
Now the new old time begins

the unapparent the absent presence

Rhat’s what death does to a friend

as if he never was he always is.

20 February 2018
Lama Norlha Rinpoche, 1938-2018

I feel so sad
for those who never knew him

they’ll find it harder
to hear him now

but I expect they’ll manage
many of them

to meet him
in the mind

and maybe even
never know his name.

20 February 2018
FEBRUARY; FORTY-EIGHT DEGREES

Let mildness come:

answers everywhere —
what does language say?

Be strong enough to fail
strong enough to be weak

and let the other speak
the thing you do not mean.

Only through them can
words be utterly accurate

beyond the particulars
of your fears and desires.

20 February 2018
Lift the pen
let the paper sleep.
The beaver’s
busy again
far side of the pond.
The last snow
has melted now
except back
behind our house,
a secret climate,
micro-himalaya
still mounded white.
But something knows
it will come cold
again, the spring
one moon away,
the glad wedding
of us with where we are
unfrowns the sky.

20 February 2018
If I could jog
I would road
but where
how far?

The star —
once you start
you never stop.
That’s the point
of shining.

20 February 2018
Blackfoot erasure
on hard terrain
scour the sunlight
off the land.

Each phrase
is history,
finds you,

ghosts of tribal
people and you
have none, no
ghosts of your own,

no going, no staying.
When they’re gone
you’re gone too.

20 February 2018
So I have to mean what it says. Windows forgive the long burden of the light. Why shouldn’t I relent and let it do all it means, close my mouth and teally speak?

20 February 2018
Men leave women women leave men. What happens then. He sits on the staircase and cries, doesn’t care who sees him or what they might think. Thinking is over now. The woman has become a point on the compass, a measurable distance he can never go. Real tears. Real wooden steps on the stairs.

20 February 2018

[Thinking of Pierre’s recollection of Paul Buck mourning Glenda’s departure.]
The spring
is a place
you only
remember

a silver door
opens
behind your eyes
you walk
into yourself
admiring the view —

a waterfall, a jungle
camp full of Indian
ascetics, as northern
forest of silence,
a man you think is you

20 February 2018
Kingston
Try to remember.
You are a horse.
You struggled in terror
out of the burning city.
You carried an old man
whose name you never knew.
His son runs beside you,
trying to comfort you both.
For give me for reminding you,
the pain, but try to remember
when it comes time for you to die.
You turned into a whole city,
you are here now. And we too
are here, we too try to remember.

20 February 2018
Kingston
WAITING

Everything takes a long time.
But time is an illusion,
a mirage of space to travel.
I claim that nothing happens.
I claim we are always home.

20 February 2018
a flower lost
in its own color

as I am lost
in what I think

until the thought
looms like a man

and I am merely
a sudden agent

it thought
was what I meant.

20 February 2018
All moves.
Bare tree
you skinny
flower in the sky,
you busy street
below, we
think like birds
for a moment
then the sun
like gunshot
scatters us.

21 February 2018
When the instrument holds its tune firmly in mind the mute persuades the singer: Go on, there’s always more music to find, just don’t try to stitch words onto all of me the string said.

21 February 2018
It takes a lot of breath
to keep the lines so short.
Breathless chatter
writes long lines.

21.II.18
The canal runs all the way here
from ear to ear
with never a motorboat to discourage
eel-fishermen, swimmers in sundown.
It’s better this way, only the water goes.

21 February 2018
HALYOMORPHA HALYS

Soon comes time
to be another one.
A little insect
climbing up my page
tells me begone —
voice of innocence
voice of empty time.

21 February 2018
FEBRUARY CONFESSION

1. Outside, on the deck
a minute, sixty-five degrees
unheard of
in this latitude.
I gaze on paper,
scuff away dead leaves —
how can I be here,
the pen nib
glowing gold in the sun?

2. How did dead leaves
get between the cushions
pf the tarpaulin’d chair?
Pne thinks mouse —
who else would care
or wield such industry?
I’m ashamed of myself
for sweeping it all away.
And for doing so little.
3.
To make my wife happy
help her fulfil
all the ardors of her
complex simplicity
that holds all the skeins
together like the *woman
clothed with the sun*
the light itself a weaving.

4.
Because she is more
than anyone I know.
Simple as that.
I am outdoors in daylight
counting my blessings,
my inadequacies.

5.
To help them really
understand, to write,
to make people happy.
These three. I confess
to this simplicity,
all my fancy language
just to lure you
through the door.

21 February 2018
Lectons, listen airy, the clouds read you a new story every day. Is what a day is, that soft narration unwound from dark to dark again. And in between the children listen as they play, missing a word or two but who cares. A story is so much more than what happens.

21 February 2018
Shafer
Rubicund imagination
in the peasant’s
daydream I am,
something Slavonic
root vegetables roasting in goose grease,
a whisper in sleep.

22 February 2018
Stepped into this small Buddhist temple, Vajrayana, red as organ meat, spangled in gold. But there stood a crucifixion scene, body cast in bronze, as if one more way to lead the mind to prayer, that is, knowledge of its own true nature. And other images nearby showed a naked man, all bronze, arms wide almost as if crucified, but this man’s arms were free, torqued powerfully as if he’d just hurled a discus and now turned to rest upright, undamaged, entering radiant repose. Christ leapt from the cross to hurl us into the light.

22 February 2018
It costs more than money
to say hello.  
Wombat on the postage stamp
is fair enough, or toll
call to the Orient, easy.  
But the spiritual cost
of knowing anyone at all
is immense, literally,
hard to fathom the sea
between you and your friend.  
Talk talk and your soul feels sick.
Is communication fatal?  
This gift \((munus)\) we share with
\((com-)\) another. does it drag with it
fragments of our heart?  
Is that why silence is always best?

22 February 2018
The Ledger
the real
bound in cloudskin
tall
as an elk, clear
as an eider on an inlet,
lines like palms
of my own hands both
pointing together say
at a star, a star,
a star needs two hands,
imagine a star,
there are never enough of them in the sky.

23 February 2018
Live like an invalid
sing like a god
the life of poetry
in our days.

23 February 2018
When it’s all the same color
morning we have to difference it.
That’s what words are for.

 Forgotten already my bad dreams
 I interrogate the window
 the intersection, the patient trees

how long they’ve endured our scrutiny.

23 February 2018
Never stop doing what never started.
It happens me, that’s all.

23.II.18
How much is left in the hand
of all I’ve touched?
That’s why they stenciled
their hands in red ochre
on cave walls under France
to see what they remember
of what they once held.

23 February 2018
Be careful —
the newly dead
can take over a living
one they choose.
They turn you
into what they thought
of themselves
as far as you can.
Bless the true Irish wake —
it sends them kindly
firmly on their way, away.

23 February 2018
Forensic poetics
what you’d swear to
in a court of law —
test your fave poems
by that rule,

     stand before the Muses,
watch the subtle movement of Apollo’s smile.

23 February 2018
Another one nearing
coming too close, a radical
proximity, wait, wait,
I know the word I mean
just let me say it

spell it
to me. they have come
from the corners of the earth
to stand so close to me
I smell their hair, breath,
clothes. I want to be mountain,
want to be somewhere else,
the train is waiting, hiss
of the pneumatic brakes,

take me, or take me to the isles
foretold by Venus, the veins
that run through me carry
her message, blood always
runs home, uphill to the heart.
Sails up, carry me to myself.

23 February 2018
Shafer
I am tired of telling so much
and have so much more to tell.
I could always let the crows tell it
for me, flocks of them by the river
at Poughkeepsie, here too, enough
to carry the simple meaning
of my endless message. Sometimes
I hear myself talking, now and then
get a sense of what I guess I mean.

23 February 2018
Shafer
Lacustrine, the liminal
minimal at work, private
ocean, rhyming with itself:
a disease in music
muscle, go down rowboat,
ply those mighty oars

23 February 2018
Shafer
I touched the reliquary of Saint Jude and instantly my pain dimidiated, grew half intense, then was gone. The pain in my arm.

The relic was I think from his arm too. The long bone, ulna, silver & gold around it, so it felt.

But then I had only ten minutest to catch the Rhinecliff train. Time, that unassuageable pain.

24 February 2018
Today is the day
to do something
about that butternut squash
in the kitchen.

Formidable vegetable!
It hangs in the basket
beside the fingerling praties

and I wake up seeing
its curvaceous plumpitude
alluring us but what do?

Charlotte has recipes
and I have doubts,
but we have knives
and an oven and a day
for once free of schedule.
and through my sleeping
the squash explains
I have no excuse. Do I.
*El momento de verdad*
just like Barcelona,
Hemingway, Etna sparking.
Get into the kitchen and sing.

24 February 2018
Benjy Goodman gave her father’s clarinet to Carnegie Hall museum, a 1938 remembrance, I saw her in my mind’s eye smiling, Tufts, ’67, Shy smile of her friend James Stamoulis, the summer of Carl Yastrzemski. I heard Gene Krupa’s crazy eyes, rattling on his drums to wake the beautiful dead—the power of information, power inexhaustible of a simple fact.

24 February 2018
Spring out front
winter out back—
our house stands
at the threshold.
The low ridge back there
shields us from sunlight
shields us from the south.

24 February 2018
Time to grow up? Nah. not yet. Always room for that later, when it’s too late for school movies, church, concert, dinner date at that Schrafft’s on Flatbush gone fifty years with that cute redhead from the Bronx I never knew. Then I guess it’s time to take on adult pleasures, pension plans and dentifrice.

24 February 2018
Reading the paper to a dragon, he prefers the *Times*, fewer photos. Pictures only confuse what words make clear. They’re like clouds, they can be anything. He needs specific information to stoke his furnace. I read fast as I can, I wish he’d learn to read all by himself. Or maybe he can and all I speak is just his way of testing me.

24 February 2018
In the conventions of our needs alpenstock in hand the preacher of each whim ascends the pulpit intoning something but that all the other whimsies contradict.

I would be south! I would a lizard on red rock behold in tropic calm! I claim a Lapland sledge!! Feed me red rice from Bhutan! For I alone must listen to them and decide. O woe I am a sluggish car with broken headlights in deep fog — the doctors blame it on genetics but I know iy’s me who never knows what want he wants.

25 February 2018
Alphabet soup, remember? What else is it you’re reading the letters float before you on the page, no calories even to warm you in such weather. Stir them, let them settle, respell your secret name or her name who sent you on this mission.

25 February 2018
Among the phoenixes there is one who needs no ashen fire to renew his plausible identity. Merely halfway to the moon he flies and from that fraternal light derives ideational nourishment, then comes back down to make us listen to the legends of the ionosphere that used to be only angels knew. I hear him in my sleep.

25 February 2018
Press the Allegro key then 1 and 2 — at once all room will fill with white linen and you will find your loins wrapped snug in that very cloth — and that is all you’ll need to wear in this new world the keyboard speaks — your garb is adequate for every weather and like any cloth will tell you what to do: just listen to the weaving and remember.

25 February 2018
The ramparts of reason crumble as we speak. The anger of the working man is stolen from our social energy by the plutocrats who rule and wreck this sometime democracy, the media manipulated by the bosses —oh not your boss, your boss’s boss — to turn away the righteous anger from themselves and point it towards sacred human otherness: skin color, religion, immigration until the workers or their children rush out and slaughter one another.

25 February 2018
If there were an answer
it would be
somewhere between the Tropic
of Capricorn and the South Pole —
Dabte saw it
in his Ulysses’ mind’s eye:
a mountain pronging
up from the sea
full of hard work and austerity
rising into cloud.
No more definite than that.

25 / 26 February 2018
Like a sober drunkard
eating crackers
at four in the morning
among the silences
I am led astray
through the bitter
vaguenesses of memory,
swordless crusader
on a savage island
bleak as the dream
I can’t remember
that woke me in the dark.

25 / 26 February 2018
MELCHIZEDEK

king before anybody
priest before the world
happened around him

carries his altar with him,
wherever he is
is Jerusalem the Blest

a city is a man at rest
a woman striding
over emptiness.

He christened Adam,
heard Lilith’s confession
gave Lucifer waybread

on his sad road to hell.
He is with us still
occasional from hills and woods,

that broad field north of Red Hook
where I saw his shadow once,
the man who made us human.

25 / 26 February 2018
Moon day mercies
Juliet wakes
no one missing,
her lover sleeps
and soon will wake,
all tragedy
scrubbed clean, sky has
no history,
the house stands firm.
I read somewhere
that every ghost
gets the day off
when people have
to go to work —
sweet gasoline,
innocent car,
kids trapped in school,
normal Monday,
sunshine, dog bark.
The nook is closed.

26 February 2018
When the story ends
words open
and poetry begins.

26 February 2018
nocturnal information
Wait for me at the side of the road
be like a car, warm inside and ready.
Wait where the deer can see you
and not be scared and not scare you.
Wait for me like a shadow too
dancing in and out of presence as
sunlight decides, wait for me and see
if I can find you as I come strolling
along looking for you, just you
but never sure what form you’ll take
or what language you’ll use to answer
if I’m lucky enough to spot you and cry out.

26 February 2018
Catching up with the scarecrow in the cornfield
I huff and puff, I leap furrows and hope for the best. Crows insult me with good advice until I listen. Then suddenly he is at my side. I’m here, my brother made of sticks and rags, here. We talk until the sun falls down. Then he goes to sleep but I must start my weary old marathon again.

26 February 2018
One word after another until none.

And then we will see what le mal armé really meant.

26 February 2018
FIRST LIGHT

1.
East light
best light
streetlight straight
to the Roman
heart of whom?
Us, of course
citizens of stone.

2.
Light up. The ridge
dark against the dawn —
where does the south
come from we wonder,
where things build themselves,
mangrove fortresses, crocodile baptisteries,
whereas we have to
build everything by ourselves
line by line by word
by guess by somber
mathematics heaping up bricks
color of the heart.
3.
That’s why I wake at dawn
to celebrate the forum,
agora, senate house,
schoolroom, saloon,
candystore, ice ceam
in Red Hook, Stewart’s
Peanut Pandemonium.

4.
Because it is, it all is, a city
despite more trees than women or men
a city wakes us as we wake to
empty road, streetlight,
nobody there. But we
made everything that’s here.

27 February 2018
Think of things
that are good for you
starting with me.

I want to carry them to you
on a silver salver
whatever that is,

be there when you wake
and subtend your sleep
a shoulder

at your disposition
and a dream
big enough to share.

27 February 2018
Architect waiting by the ocean side —
do something with all this water,
shape me a new kind of house
that holds everything together
but knows how to move around.
Or did you do that already
and I am what you made?

27 February 2018
Carefully, from under the angel’s feet
a scroll from a lost religion
tug out and look it over, have a read.
Because all written texts
are scripture. All
scripture is finally about you,
what you really are, what you must do
to be the whole immense person you are.
Now you can read to some purpose
and I can go back to sleep.

27 February 2018
1. Caught by the radix
a blue Mephistopheles
fluttered from ebgind the stove
just like truth.

_illusion hath wings_
the real slogs along below.
He said, I listened.

Who is that loser
I see in the mirror
who knows so much
and does so little?
And thank my stars
it's not the other way round.

2. So just a little paper-moth
no bigger than a fingernail
color of a parchment will
she left you centuries ago
all that you are, a little
moth I say, from the kitchen
cabinet where we store
flour groats and almond meal—
the moths like them
and they like them,
nourish them in the dark.

3.
So things ramble on
and i try to keep up with them,
one more ode, my dear,
another free verse you’d
never guess it was a villanelle?

4.
A moth I didn’t see
brings to mind
the first act of Faust
where the devil is a dog
a while (and some still are).
I’m trying to be truthful
here at last, so why the blue?

5.
Because the root
is in the mind
and all it says
rebukes mere seeing —
something like that?
I could say that better if I were a philosopher but if I were I would have stopped talking long ago. Or is this song?

27 February 2018
Subliminal appetite
for sun makes us dream
all the dark through

we are addicts of light
but in the dream
some other comes

thank goodness a truck
roared outside and woke me
to the given light

safe again from all
yje broken-down
machinery of dream.

28 February 2018
Yjpighjt there was something to see but there was only me.  
I write that down and realize the alternate form of final T they used to write on the blackboard that puzzled me when I was six is how I write that letter now — when did I beg in? Did I grow up? What else is waiting to unfold childhood mysteries? Enough discoveries for one morning — do it one letter at a time.

28 February 2018
Raconteurs. And smug recitalists, oboe hooting in Wolfi’s quartet and the German girl in black sweater kept repeating the phrase (dependent clause in German, we all heard it) but did not know or would not say what it meant or what she meant by saying it, though we all said it too over and over, the three of us, in that vast empty room, so she turned away from us with something like contempt.
Earth is made of peaches,  
say — in Brooklyn  
Italians wrapped old blankets 
around their peach trees  
and we had one too  
in our Hungarian backyard  
kept them warm all winter  
till the brown sweet viscous  
sap said spring. And we too  
survived all those winters,  
our blinds down all day long.

28 February 2018
In Pike Place in Seattle
a big brazen pig is worshipped
by tourists and other children
selfing themselves astride it,
beside it, looking with awe,
trying to guess the meaning
of the beast, the place,
its being there, the city,
the sea outside it, the earth
so full of animals dreaming
their way in and out of one another.

28 February 2018
*NORSEX*

Saxons to the east and west,
Saxons to the south
but no Saxons north of us
but lots of Saxons in the middle.

28 February 2018

(Essex, Wessex, Sussex, Middlesex)
I can be meaningless
if I choose or by mistake.
Or trivial. Or quadrivial.
Or even smart. It happens.
So it’s wise to hear me out—
you can never tell
what they might make me say.

28 February 2018
I’ll call you when I can tell one number from another — somehow lost that knack last night, now they all look like seven.

I’ll call you when the calendar flips its pages and cries out in Mediaeval Portuguese, and fish come waddling up shore

and sunshine starts to whisper your name in my left ear. Then I’ll try again, stabbing digits one the keyboard, crying a little,

hoping you’ll be there to answer.

28 February 2018
When you get rid of all the nonsense
what you have left
is an empty paper bag
tumbling around in the desert wind.

28 February 2018
End of Notebook 410
Touch the color of him,
see the sunset fold again
around the western hills.
You bought this life,
these stones, this house.
And you tremble a little
when you remember what
you used to pay for them.

28 February 2018
Shafer