

2-2018

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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 agraid.
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 anywjere 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
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 after 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 nave 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

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 coims
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 trthought 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 somehwre 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 mornings
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 trhere 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

ARS SAIBENDI

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 arms, 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.

2.

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.
Explainmthe 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 fingers
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 s till 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?**

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-amouning.
tries to make us forget what we really mean.**

14 February 2018

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 thjnk 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. Response,
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 silent 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 mjsic’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.

17 February 2018

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
covert 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,

19 February 2018

=====

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
caught 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 DFEGREES

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 t 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
of 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

=====

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
Yastrzemska. 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 it'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 cream
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

=====

for C

**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 eberything 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

RADICAL ENTOMOLOGY

**1.
Caught by the radix
a blue Mephistopheles
fluttered from ebging 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,
obue 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.**

28 February 2018

== == == == ==

**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**