

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 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 va;;ey  
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**

S= = = = =

**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 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?**

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-amouning.  
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, prophecies,  
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)  
but 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



=====

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  
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 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**