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5-2018

may2018

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Exorbitant weather
demanding so much of us
customers of the cosmos—
three inches of snow across
the river yesterday, forty
degrees this morning here.
May. I think it’s good for us,
makes us pace our cages faster
like Rilke’s panther—if we
go fast enough one day
maybe the iron bars will disappear.

1 May 2018
A pain
where I didn’t
know there was a place,
a little song
from the southwest
not Spanish
but almost.
Why are most
up here
houses white?
it hurts a little
if I think on it.

1 May 2018
May Day 1

Sunlight savvy
my mind to make
brim through with disorder
seized by grammar
and controlled.

Never admit
your yearning. Be a tree
and just stand there
forever almost
holding all your hands in the air.
Maybe whatever it is you want
will be a bird and come and rest in you.

1 May 2018
May Day 2

That’s what the witches told me yestreen while they were dancing around my buckthorn tree glancing over to make sure I was watching and I am always. We dance they said to imitate a tree’s impassioned silences the only way we can.

But at times I thought I heard the word they did as initiate and heard the tree as me.

1 May 2018
May Day 3

But buckthorn is on the move, invasive species experts say savvy gardens root it out but I love its presumption, low habit, reaching branches out to tangle with my hair, keep me alert when I’m on the go.

For I do, even me, I do go now and then out of the peace of indoor anxiety into the healing desperation where no mere human is permitted to stand still. Your endless thoughts are leaves enough—go home the buckthorn said.

1 May 2018
THE STORIES

1. The stories that once told me have all turned into daylight now, things big enough to be. Stream rolling past the house, trees tall as my eyes. Will they come back, the boy with the kingfisher, the girl in the sky?

2. In those days there were no dogs. Black leopards, a few, crept along the curbs, eagles pounced. In those days food was always far away, the streets sweltered in August noons. You could never find your way home.
3.
Where did the story lines go, did they just end, run out the way a drunken weaver’s thread might suddenly end?

I think what happened is they found a way out of time, left time, opened the door, fled all of our local sequencing, away from the purple chestnut trees of Zurich, away from Mozart even.

4.
A silent cave they found, silent cave of so many mothers. Maybe they wait for me there if ever I let myself listen again? I mean listen the right way, not just this jittery everyday Who’s that at the door?

1 May 2018
Snow on the stadium
it says in piano, the violin
agrees, there is a gentle
forgiveness in the right hand
while the left hand sleeps
dreaming of her, she
who makes the snow fall.
No. Who fills the stadium
with cheering thousands above
an empty snow-soothed field.
I thought this music meant me
but the violin was selfish, selfish
as sunlight and no sleep for me;
I am a pale car, I run on red gasoline.

1 May 2018
PAVEL KARAMANOV’S FUNNY VALENTINE

But didn’t I know him
before I was born?
Rain dripping through the yurt roof
and what is to be done?
She calls herself a doctor
but I am not sick, calls herself
an eagle but I have no sky,
no bone for her bite
when she calms down and allows
she is a wolf. And I love wolves,
as far as they, or any beings,
let themselves be loved. Getting
loved is not easy, it pecks at you,
flings you to the winds, sixty
heart attacks every hour! Maybe
I need the doctor after all.

1 May 2018
ETH(N)OS

1. Mingling the ethoi
neighborhood of the blood—

a man is a dream-machine
she said, his flesh mingling the spice
of all forebears

(the word –collective
noun—means the totality of
the man’s DNA, RNA, mitochondrial agencies,
plus several other continuums
we don’t know about yet)

the spice of each
unique, blueprint of feeling-thinking.
No man has the same dream as any other.

2. I wanted to know
why she said ‘man—
is woman other?
Otherwise spiced,
otherwise spoken
into the world?
I never found out—
she was gone before
I got the words right,
I’m left with the doubt,
generic or specific,
I can live with it,
a while. Can you?

3.
So a man has
only one body—
I thought that was clear;
but then I thought
that thought itself
might change it over time
and time itself transform
or re-nature it—
how many am I then.
And how many do I meet
when I run into a friend
on the way to the fair?
4.  
For ethos is ethnos. 
There is a null-difference. 
Each person is their own tribe 
athirst for comrade—
look, I will make 
my eyes dark as yours 
so you will love me. 
Or let me live at least 
next door neighborly 
play, close enough, 
my house too will have 
windows and a door. 
But this this tragedy 
of being only me.

5.  
Why would a woman 
(and it was a woman) 
say such things even 
though they’re the truth? 
Aren’t they supposed 
to whisper by the cradle 
soothing with stories 
to take the mind away?
6. 
O rhapsode leave your sexist thoughts
or you’ll never understand what she said—
spice is essence and man is mind
the human male has stolen for its own
the way a boy might set on his head
his mother’s feathered hat to stand
remarkable in sunlight, as if he deserved
the glances from his fellow liars.

Yet o adorable mistake
to have two sexes in it!

7. 
The rhapsode is confused by what he heard.
A female human is a cwen,
a human male a wer or gom.
Why did we let the true words go,
why did we let presumption in
to call a boy old or young a man?
Man is a mind in any body. So.
The rhapsode wearied by thinking
rested, hoping vaguely someday
a hum would come verbal from his lips.
8.
Confronted with such problems the bird shakes its beak and flies up to a neighbor birch and perches. There is nothing here to eat or drink. He flies away. The rhapsode though picks up a stone and licks it. No food, true, but there is something always left in the world to taste.

2 May 2018
The number eight divides itself like a priest raising his arms to bless a field of folk but look away, don't see his hands or the blessing will not come. There's not much hope for stone in the sky but look up anyhow, that light must be coming from somewhere, something hard, something that in his own way mothers you to life. You think.

2.
But there are darker tales to tell, crocodile interpretations, deaths witnessed. My friend when we were on the phone looked out his window saw a crow kill a snake. I saw the soul of the snake arise and swift its way back to Central Casting to be suited out for its next role, as a humble priest in the jungle or perhaps as this young person who leads you now by the hand.

2 May 2018
In the John Field A flat concerto the waves pause a little in their creeping up the sand. No wind. No storms out there. A person proves to be the only melody. Think of that the next time you ask for music, music. The waves start up again—slow movement maybe, but there are resonant cloud structures overhead, their shadow twists and scatters in the wavelets’ rush.

2 May 2018
Shell she opens
no sign of rain

waves remember
they dance in place

defining the lift
of their waters up.

Be angry with me
if I fail to complete

any sentence the sea
starts. Shore

is wjy we ‘re here
we are a littoral people

on this threshold I balance
in motionless ballet

she said, just like the waves
pure mathematics

and a little salt.

2 May 2018
Cool spring sudden summer
the weather
just wants to get
talked about.
keep us from fussing over
things we could actually do something about.

2 May 2018
Leaping
   the day’s glamor
every garden
   has its own downtown,
heavy traffic,
crows’ diner,
patchwork evidence.
sense of creation.

2.
One wanders out there
shouting (or muttering)
   Who? Who?
Religion is a hammock for the mind,
peaceful uptown of the garden,
a silver bus goes by
on our way to the museum.

3.
For writing to be true
writing must be between.
Writing is a secret place
between knowledge and conviction,
writing must be wet with doubt,
tuneful guesswork, darker shouts.
4.
So the trouble with games
is you play them or watch them
and don’t do anything.

Doing
wants to be done. Even someone’s
father whittling a wooden flute
is doing, even if nobody ever plays it.
A new flute in Arcady, a wonder!
A new glimpse of quantum theology—
and I mean it. I trust the wood.

5.
See the glamor
of our meek meanings.
We like things that bother us.

Too early to go to work,
must feed the birds.
A cloud as flimsy as a patch of haze
drifts in from the northwest.
I stare at it until it seems
not to be there anymore.
I want to take care of the sky,
worry about my cloud,
a shield-­bug on the window sill,
and one more haunted refugee
groaning at the borders of the mind.

3 May 2018
Maybe shouldn’t be
the man I am—
resilience only goes
so far—yje moon
takes a whole month
to come home again.
Believe me when I doubt—
feeble fire, so much lumber.
A whole world needs to get made.

3 May 2018
Rhinebeck
A map of Spain
no different from I am.
Everybody has a north.
Everybody has a river
running north and south.
Or is a river. Maps only lie
when you dare to trust them—
just like me.

Why Spain? you ask—
because a gypsy one time
gave me a flower.

3 May 2018
Rhinebeck
THE EXPEDITION

1,
Bridge build
over to Why-not Land
where the furrows
(nos sillons)
are full of seed
and from this one seed
all flowers come

and some we eat
some offer to the gods
some grind at midnight
to drink as we sleep.

2.
Some places you can get to
only by car
or something like a car.

Arjuna remembered what the d1.
river said.
And always trust the driver.

And when you get there
open the window before the car door,
smell the air first,
pine scent, see the border of grape-hyacinths
between you and the woods.
The house you’re looking for
seems deep inside the trees.
Now open the door and get out.

3.
There is some heat in you
so the trees put out their
new leaves as you pass.
Spring late summer early—
the Amethyst Rule.
You wear the truth on your finger
as if you were already married to it.

4.
Delicate as Jericho
the house is there.
Rusty barbecue, rusty
swingset in the shade.
You stroke the front door’s paint
softly with your fingertips
reasoning that anyone at home
will hear the gentle brushing
in all this silence.
5.
Nothing happens.
Back to the car? No.
Push the door.
Swings open. Enter.
Your life is in your hands
now as your mother used to say.
And an empty house
is a dragon in the forest—
every child knows that.

4 May 2018
APOLOGIA

Spilling the fen
back onto paper,
water-vole and heron habit

let the water wash
my usual lies away,
Cambridge! Tower of Ely!

I made the world
out of the words I read.

Now half-blind
I have to remember what
books are like inside—

where the water comes from
and birds fly out.

4 May 2018
IN SOLESMES

they heard the tonus,  
echo of that whispered authenticity  
by which the bishop passed  
his spiritual energy to his successor  
and the young bishop heard.  
Like a mantra spoken solely  
from the master’s lips to one  
who must be master himself,  
master himself. Pass, and pass on.

But this was music, you could sing it,  
record it, play it back  
while you idled in your hammock  
or wept on your knees at bedside  
for all you’ve done and all you couldn’t do.  
Can’t do even now.

Music is like that,  
makes you more whatever you are.  
But I have listened, and listened hard,  
and listened to the silence too.

4 May 2018
THE SPECTACLE

As near as we came to it there still were flashing fins of light between us and the animal we sought.

If it was an animal. Words issued from its mouth, and while I assert over and over that all things talk,

all matter has a voice, can this silvery presence in air and water possibly be speaking English? Or do such angels have the knack of making us hear what they say as if in our own language, as in the Acts of the Apostles long ago after the tongues of flame came down.

But this was water, air, pure silver, gleaming, cold as a glass of milk, and what it spoke reminded me of the sound rain makes on windowpanes.
but these were words. Barren cliffs 
and mobile understandings. howl 
of seabirds and I love you 
but ‘you’ was not its name for me

but some other, a principle aloft 
or subterranean intelligence 
preserving still the wisdom of some 
long ascended master who left no book.

4 May 2018
HOMEROS TO HER

It's now again at last.
I see you climbing
onto the train
your long body
flexed at hip
to lift your matter
into the motion
machine. The way.
We all do. To go.
To come to me
at a time already
appointed in the stars
whether we know it
or not. Or by the stars—

who can tell? From Greece
to Egypt, from Africa
to that little island lost
in a little sea. Come home
to me. I have waited
for you 3000 years and now
feel some impatience
to resume our conversation
bone and blood and eyes
smiling over this huge seven-
star hotel we call the sea.

4 May 2018
APPEARANCES

1. Tumult of calm
   the leaves come out
   late all at once
   the sky turns green

2. Morning soft morning cool
   the three day heat
   has cooked the colors
   now the spell sifts in
   summer sets on us

3. You heard me at the door
   I was you yourself coming in
   you looked up from your book
   and there you were
4.
Appearances they say
deceive but we
are born from them
all I am is what you see

5.
In such weather children play
or used to play outside the house
out here where the images stand still
and only we, we children, move

6.
Morning paper in a language I can’t read
I like the ink smell though, the photos
of pretty ladies and crabby politicians
ads for some inconceivable apparatus
I look close and almost sure I see a tree.

5 May 2018
Watch the tern
if eyes are quick
watch if not
the loafing gull
sizing up the waves
to eat, to eat!
The wrapper slips off
the store-bought bread
looks so pretty
on the chopping block
a loaf on wood
simple beauty
the other side of appetite.
DIAGNOSTICS, 3

Dip your finger
draw the wet tip
on the maple table top

a sign, tell me
what it means
who you are.
DIAGNOSTICS, 4

I have no DNA
I gave it all away
a crow came by
the plucked it
from the window ledge—
look, seven down
street full of other people.
In other words
I have dispersed
myself in words

you have them now
so you are all
that's left of me.

5 May 2018
Must be a bull the sea rides
to charge so strong up every shore

no matter where we stand
the sea is always pouring in at us,
cleanses our air, drains our mountains,
hears us our prayers

and if we listen hard it answers us.

(22.IV.18)
5 May 2018
TAURUS

The days grow longer
a man could live outside
but not sleep out there—
the nights remember winter.

(22.iv.18)
5 May 2018
MORE

We come from wanting
from this desire to be more

the weather chills us
but the mind doesn’t mind

as long as the more is there
there even if not in reach

the mind goes on
language is its way of getting there.

(22.IV.18)
5 May 2018
Artificial thought
on sale
at your college store.

(22.iv.18)
5 May 2018
Can it after all
begin again,
the pincushion
and venetian blinds,
rosebush and salesman,
can’t the world be the world
once more,
just one more time?

(26.iv.18)
5 May 2018
Catch up with the past
so when the lightning comes
it will show a blank page
sweet as cinnamon waiting
to spice your life with a sense
of what you still have to say.

(28.iv.18)
5 May 2018
WALPURGISNACHT

The witches
rendezvous
in pure time.

In the space between
a moon one night past full
and three inches of new
snow on the Catskills

no snow down here
but they are naked in any weather,
company after company of them
each troupe surrounds its own tree

but no one can see them
they move too fast
or is it too slow
and our nervous eyes
are gone before we can see them move?

(30.IV.18)
5 May 2018
NAMES

Grape-hyacinths
color of Achilles’ hair
and yellow somethings
a little clutch of them
Siena brought me
I thank her for
the colors the soft
touch of the petals
I can’t even name.

2.
Enough to hold them
dry, now, tender
as someone’s name
you met last night
late, will you ever
see again? But say
the name again
over and over
and maybe you will—
that sort of flower
between pages of a book
touched timidly
then let go.

5 May 2018
BIRTHDAYS

1.
Hey everybody
this is not your birthday
necessarily

sometimes it is
depending on what the crow
shouted from the roof beam

from the farraffers of the sky.

2.
I don’t know
what such birds know
but they do know this.
This is now
and now chase a hawk overhead.

3.
Soon they’ll hand me a list
of famous birthdays on this date
and ask me what I’ll make of this.
4.
Rage is contagious,
woke fuming about the government,
the lies of famous men.
And all my own pretty lies negated,
rejected, too pink, to perfumed,
too close to the truth.

5.
Something baroque
about all this.
:Little bits of music
stitched together,
a horn is just a habit,
turn to the tonic,
little bits of stucco
leafy on the ceiling
and everything colored
but colored pale.
You’ve been in those churches.
We are in one now.
6.
Yet let
‘s not be
minimal-mused
Post-Everything
as Jackson said,
so rich a wisdom
in his thrift.

7.
Good morning,
History,
where did you
sleep last night?
I dare not
ask with whom.
The answer
is obvious.
Ominous.
8.
Sing for your supper
they used to say,
one more passacaglia
limping to its end.
And I'll have breakfast
first— "song? / After bread"
to quote anew the great
rabbinic atheist my friend.

9.
I'm cheating a little here
(another Metaphysical habit)
because I write first thing in the day,
oration on an empty stomach.
The words taste better then.
Truer, bluer, newer,
breath is eager, pulse
tight on the reins, demanding
one more canzone.
10.
I grew up in Brooklyn
when it was Italy
and I didn’t understand a word of it.
Basta passed me by
and we called pizza pizza-pie.

Thank god there was a mailman at the door,
no dog, a bus went by
on its way uphill to the cemetery ridge
but not even the wind coming
sweet and fresh up out of the marshes
by Jamaica Bay could speak English.
So it’s not entirely my fault
I had to make this language up.

11.
Merrymount was somewhere else
long ago and danced and sang
like the autumn fairs of Crescent Street.
But I was Kierkegaard as usual,
frail and clumsy at the edge of things
biding my time, bewildered
by women’s silks and bosses’ bristles.
The band went by and took the music with it
so I hid at home and plotted to be me.
12. But in fact two men were born today, explorers on the same day, same year, same earth, Peary who walked to the North Pole and Dr Freud who analyzed our souths.

13. So history really did have something to say, not just shotgun blasts in the woods and convertibles in summer. Expeditions happen, we learn things still. Travel to the furthest reaches of your house. The dust on the ceiling needs to be analyzed and someone should come to investigate the mud between my toes. That’s where true horoscopes are read—Nile or Delaware—all the stars are in us anyway.

6 May 2018
NILOTIC FRENZY

for KL

I’ve been reading you
inside your words
and love the silver that poured
from your pocket onto my wrist
a boy bracelet I wear in thanks
thinking: she made this.
So all the pyramids I build
(or think I build) will have
your shadow somewhere on them,
form of a woman on a limestone cube—
what mathematics could be truer than that?

6 May 2018
The painting of course was changing. Not the colors—cunning painters have been doing that for years. No, the figures themselves. The woman had turned to face me over her shoulder’s black mantilla, her husnad sank lower into the armchair, the evening paper he was busy reading was now in French—I could make out headlines about strikes, borderlands, departures. Music had come up out of nowhere—surely radio hadn’t come on the scene yet, yet there it was, Wagner’s Siegfried Idyll obvious as birthday cake. The woman looked angry, her red lips menacing—clearly I (any observer?) was intruding. No hint of welcome, tenderness. No wonder the man kept on reading. Or was he asleep, the paper fluffing gently in a breeze from an invisible window. Why is she angry? Why did this nice Impressionist painting turn, and turn against me? What had I done? What is it that we do with our eyes?

6 May 2018
WHAT THREE POETS TELL US

una nox perpetua

one long never-ending night
for sleeping
the Celtic Latin

but in that sleep
the English feared or fancied
what dreams would come

and be there now, here,
and we among them,
and the Czech German noted
angels can’t tell the living from the dead.

Are our eyes clearer?
Yes, but our wits are dim,

the dead move among us,
in us, as us.
And we die into each other—
there is no other place to go.

7 May 2018
CAR SICK

Yestreen was I a little boy
captive in a jouncing car
on east-struck roads through hills
and field too wide for my sick eyes.

No nausea. No pain. But every bump in the road meant me, me when all I wanted was to see out there and empty myself in what I see, instead of being trapped in me. After a while I accepted any implausible identity as usual abd calmed down, got to see a Canada goose solo on a shadowed pond and trees got greener as we headed home from hills.

7 May 2018
After hours
come more hours.
The clock steals time
walk in the shade
to slow its numbering.

7 May 2018
Cloud odalisque
in the harem of the sky.
Ogled by so many
but visited only by birds.

7 May 2018
There is a comfort in things people rarely feel. Is it that we move around so much and they stand still?

That seems too simple—yet lean on a chair back or set your palm down on the table and just remember, remember.

You can almost feel what it’s like just to be somewhere and feel, just feel. But then that alarm goes off in your head from childhood on, move, get moving.

7 May 2018
A DEVOTION

(I use this unicursal pentagram in honor of my father who taught it to me when I was young enough to listen. He loved the shape, the lendless ine, as he loved horses he never rode.)

7 May 2018
PIECES FOR THE HARPSICHORD

Imagine the opposite of everything. That’s where it is.

*

A woodchuck under the deck almost actual enough

*

Spring flowers flavor of bare shoulders the end of the alphabet

*

advances of a leaf shyly welcomed triumph of Descartes

*

or quantum question things happen do we happen too?
Justice left out overnight
trifled with by dreams
O please unlock the door

bitter images even in sweetest memory
he sang we were in church together
the milkman clanking at the door.

happy birthday means I'm glad
our earth days overlap
you can always cross me out.

8 May 2018
Spinnaker ballooning
theswept through dream
puzzled always woke on land
the mind of the moment
speaks only then
anything else is too late
precise measurements
always please
the mountain waits
to learn its altitude.

8 May 2018
They used to call telescopes, chronometers and such philosophical instruments because they help us to stop thinking and just know.

8 May 2018
IN A WIDOW’S HOUSE

A word woke me
to stumble down the hall
her voice called me
from the shower:
Leave his shadow
on the wall,
his voice’s echo
flowing with the water
gurgling in the basin
his last name.

9 May 2018
Nothing new.
The clouds we parsed
all afternoon
are gone now.
Just blue to see.

One day I’ll learn
their pale alphabet;
as it is I just hear
their music with my eyes
and pray to understand.

9 May 2018
Early morning cars sound so operatic so few of them pass each brave aria, solo, slow remorseless diminuendo. Gone. We are left to mourn by Juliet’s tomb, or Siegfried’s pyre. How tender is the silence now, the gentle after.

9 May 2018
Method: Interrogate the obvious until it baffles me.

Then I have a thing to work with, a wrong idea, a song.

9 May 2018
Do not end the piece of wood
the stick goes on forever
points to the moon and well beyond
no one knows where its line of sight will end

pick up the stick, easy in one hand,
yet all the destinations in the cosmos
are implicit in its damp, peeling back—

a branch of someone, some name
you never learned, ignorant, ignorant
you are, I am, but the stick knows everything.

9 May 2018
You are a precious jewel
mined from the mountain of your mother
he said. And then he said
This is your home, the body you are,
in all its feelings. Study what it wants
and what it does. What it says.
You are all born to tell
not to build kites and rocket ships,
live in your heart, he said.
And then he said: to complete your education
know as much as can be . . . .

we can’t use all this .......
Then said, we are leaves on trees
the wind tells us what to say

10 May 2018
Aspergillum

to sprinkle

holy water

on holy heads

There is a tool
for ever, ything

honor is the one

best used on people,

do it and have it

and go the long way round.

10 May 2018
Antecedent obvious.
You find it on the road
you stumble on it,
it’s in the way.
You think. But I
am an obstacle too
to something moving forward
through me
when I am a jungle
for them, a tumult of growth
when they need road.
So let me be road.

10 May 2018
None of this makes sense
but don’t worry—
since you have a-plenty
fishing dock and silo
sorghum and aluminum,
bluebird and chocolate bar.
We’re just playing
with each other’s heads—
what else is there to do?
I set this word in front of you
only so you will say another.

10 May 2018
Comfort in disaster
the worst is over.
Hollow laughter—
a knock on the door.
So from this day forward
will not answer the phone.
Death will need some
other way to be in touch—
reach out, as they say nowadays.
Once we wrote long letters
disguised as novels
about sad young men and women,
the last whispers of the very old.

10 May 2018
1. 
Defiled by thought 
the song settles. 
Then the silence 
lets us speak 
on the other side 
of thinking.

2. 
Thinking is fair 
if no opinion’s in it, 
no sudden judgment 
no air of righteousness, 
smug satisfaction, 
no good ideas. 
A good idea is the death of thinking.

3. 
Or then again 
erase my thought 
to into words. 
A bird out there 
laughs at what 
I think is me.
4. A streetlight on in the daytime.
   A high school gaping for its prey.
   See, that’s what I mean—
   that was almost an idea.
   opinion tryiong to sneak in.

5. All right, trees, you have
   your rhapsody, color
   loves you, and the sky
   hides in your leaves.

6. Know us the sin in us,
   listening without speaking.
   What you hear
   you say. There is
   no other authority.

7. Each beast’s back
   bears a rider
   none of us can see—
   sometimes we do
   see some shimmer
   mantling the air.
8.
In fact we grasp nothing almost of the animal we see. They may be waiting for us to sign the treaty, align ourselves with life at last when even humans will learn to speak.
Sharing the gift by breath alone.

The sound I moan is all I own.

11 May 2018
GLAD TREE

1.
Gladly tree.
And after lilac.
See the name
I know.

2.
At play also
genetic info
by you, in through
so many too.
He is my sister
ever after. Limestone
made me.
And you?

3.
So far from mercy
we lived till lately.
Now our tongues tell
a beaver story,
build and be generous,
use the water
that else flows by.
4
Of course it’s a game,
what else do we do,
scholars skateboard
down the chute of theory,
half-pipe hopefuls
lost in the sky.

5.
But all that’s OK
as long as we give.
Give what you’ve got—
how else will you
ever get more?

6.
Through the transom
in old hotel rooms
you hear the lovers
quarrel about weather.
You smile. This hotel
suits you too.
Love is a quarrel
with a pink result
we’re all the same
color inside.
7. You see the problem—
you’re somewhere
and I’m someone else.
Our pronouns estrange us—
I am no vegan
but I dread this meat.

8. So of all things speed is best—
Shiel points out in his sheer essay from Redonda half a million years ago—the fast sperm achieves the ovum first, starts the process anew.
And we beasts are born early—
years before we can walk or talk—
why do we suppose we are?

9. When you hold the cloth up
some air and light comes through.
Even wool.
Enough to breathe your bones, fish your shallows, mine garnets
from your rock. 
That is why we're always 
naked, can't help it, 
everything sees us 
in its own way.

10. 
Barbarossa was a bad guy, 
he ruled over millions, 
Barbe-bleu was even worse, 
he hurt his wives.

11. 
Virtue is easy to assess—
others have it, I have less. 
The word meant being masculine, 
a hero, male. No wonder 
we ride the subways to our trysts, 
dreading the patriarchal overcast 
they call civic identity, or the sky.

12. 
Can you imagine saying all this 
to a human audience 
on the borders of night? 
Supper after song, 
appetite is sheer contradiction.
13.
So out of the marsh I came
and others from the swamp, bayou,
seashore, lake.
What on earth do we think
we’re doing, here on dry land?
Is this some weird prank,
a trick our forebears played?
How can we live away from water?
It’s worse than being thirsty.
Where will I build my dam?
How will I see our god the sun
stepping towards me on her ocean?
Inland is hell. Indiana.
Discover your river
at least, great wing of the sea.

14.
Short breath of morning’s
briefing after dreamless
inner formation.
Short lines
tell fewer lies.
15.
So it comes to truth at last
the only subject of all discourse.
The glory gives us
that we meet and we carry on.
The truth is always at your back
nudging you forward.
To somebody else
just standing there.

12 May 2018
LITURGY FOR MOTHER’S DAY

Let the word
unpiece me,
whole me.

2. Prayer
shapes the lips
that make it.

3. How do you make
a prayer? Count
to ten in any
language and be
there at the end.
Then give
that place away.

4. Or as if lounging
by the fishy sea
you’re young again
and guess a God
who minds you
mothering. The waves.
5.
I asked Bill Gaddis once why religion—so important in his first big book—didn’t feature in his later novels. It just went away, he said. It made me thiunk the truest faiths are those we leave behind. The lost gods. Mithras. Tiamat. Zeus.

6.
Mother’s Day now that’s a proper decent religion for oiur planet, white gardenias, smell of lilac. But the golden forsythia’s already fading. And we poor orphans just sad atheists.
7.
Come back
to the little
I know,
say everything
else, Then leave
that little seed
alone. It and only
it knows how to grow.

13 May 2018
How to tell in from out—the little carved stone bird, a grouse I think, on the window sill will not likely sly away. I was going to say never fly, but you never know.

13 May 2018
1. All the things you ever touched are people now, they took on personhood from your hands.

2. Think of that Sistine ceiling, young Adam’s hand summoning old God into the world.

3. O Christians, if God is Our Father are we not God’s body too?

4. And from the cross He told us See, that is your mother, that woman standing there.

13 May 2018
It said Throw away the things that don’t need you anymore. But ‘away’ should have hands of its own—gentle, welcoming, strong.

13 May 2018
THE VEINS OF STONE

This porphyry amphora miniature, holding at most three ounces holds all I have of one lost lady brought it from some Greek island somehow for me.

14 May 2018
That's how I know who you are—hand clasp taste of identity we perform each other in the desert of a busy day.

14 May 2018
Poems are my only way of thinking.

I may be wrong but the words are always right.

14 May 2018
If the sign
appears in the sky
if the sign
flows by you in the little
stream where you
pause to watch ducks,
if the sign
leaves itself a moment
as a shadow
on your bare arm
in the car's window,
if the sign for once
forgets itself and speaks
will you even be listening?
We Irish Gypsy Jews know
a bit about signs—
we have been running
away from them
for two thousand years.

14 May 2018
Alone in the neighborhood
he kept a big dog
Mr. Hoffman limping
up the alley
with his collie
eighty years ago.

14 May 2018
= = = = = = = =

Knowing the names
of neighbors.
   Architect,
newsaper man,
   Communist,
nurse.

   In this way
grow up to be a priest
knowing only the function,
believing, like Dante,
function is our only identity.

But I am a layman,
I suspect
   something else, fresh,
unknown, is hidden
under your interesting uniform.

14 May 2018
Don’t you wish manual labor was more about hands—not shoulders and backbone and aching cramping legs?

14 May 2018
Three minutes before
the alarm goes off
I must be still asleep
thank goodness,
all of these words
are just more dream.

14 May 2018
Beethoven was not deaf. He just stopped listening outside.

14 May 2018
NIGHT DATA

1. Azerbaijan comes to mind stop me before I repeat the night’s whole alphabet, Baluchstan, Carcassonne, Detroit where the girls wade across to Canada.

2. It’s all wrong, but it’s all night, a stream goes by it knows no better

3. nor do we who try against the remorseless grammar of biology to linger. To be here where the sun comes up again. And again.

14 May 2018
Machines like us.
But want us to be
regular in our habits,
in our address
to them and one another.
They like peace, and fellowship,
and most religions please them
with their saints and Sabbaths.

A laptop told me this
in its drowsy voice,
case closed,
its little light still on.

14 May 2018
I thought it was a jungle
it was a leaf,
it remembered me
from the last time,
spring maybe,
  or unfurl again.

It breathes in air I breathe out,
it filters light.
  Something like that.
I feel dazed
  looking at its efficiency,
simplicity. Resentful, even,
of its certainty.
  Green things never doubt.

14 May 2018
What do they do
in the night
that darkens the day?
Call it music
or memory,
unbidden to the dreamer,
a burden, to wake with,
work with
all the livelong day
without a compass
getting here.
It hurts but it happens
and then the music starts
again, pizzicati, Tchaikovsky’s 4th,
he was born in Poland,
did you know that?
And no one knows
how or why he died.
One more nighttime history—
but a different world,
estranged by ocean.
O let me sleep again
we pray
and sometimes something listens.

14 May 2018
Una voce

the fish and the fishermen,
hake for market,
    seabass for home
supper and give your friends.
    The ocean’s share
is tremendous—I stood there
weltering in greed.
    Its and my own,
one voice to cry out,
    my shout lost,
found on the sea roar.
Always me and the other.
Tiamat, te amo, the mother

2.
I was just standing there
trying to work out where
it ended and I began.
A boy is mostly confusion.
Salty slosh around my ankles
and sometimes the wind leapt
salt to my lips too,
    listening.
3. You need to do this once or twice in your life, interview the ocean until you hear its answers billow up in you too.

4. *One voice* it means, as if it needs two of you to have a voice at all. You’ve known it from the start—language is the other, frantic insect caught in the silent night.

15 May 2018
She came from Eulenspiegel's country, Pretty Hill where they hanged him, and the frozen sea.

Walk out on it, turn back and see the shore that lets us live.

She stole something from me too, a tune I think, or glass of water, she put it in her pocket and ran back to where the land begins.

When I saw her later in the café she taught me the words for emerald, codfish, rainbow, stag.

15 May 2018
It's for the best
my mother always said
no matter what happened.

Now find the best—
go with it, among
the dandelions there are daffodils

and every day has weather in it
to cheer the soul.

Anima gaude,

O soul rejoice,
you have not many
other weapons against the dark.

15 May 2018
I could be home
writing a poem
instead of wandering
here on my back
in dreamland

though here I am
a new appointed
justice of the Supreme Court
(that’s my official
chair over there)
even though I don’t know law
and can’t read cases, still
I am a kindly man
and in this deep world of ours
kindness is all.

16 May 2018
TO THE WOMAN ON HORSEBACK

Can you feel me from there
green space between us
your water bottle slung from the saddle horn
I know you keep wine in it
vinum merum uncut with water.

I know you have a paddock
full of white horses to scare me
and chestnuts for you to ride,
I know that a cop on horseback
is nicer than a cop on land

and I know that horses are the ocean,
I know they can see me
even though I don’t ride
have never ridden, never felt
the thrust of their animal against mine,

I know that they do what you tell them,
you are their mind of their own
but do you feel me
and why am I the opposite of a horse
though I was born on the day of the First Horse

though the ocean is the one thing
I have loved all my life and never betrayed,
it excites me when it comes up the valley
a river of silver horses, millions of them,  
herds of them stampeding inland from the coast  
and I know they can sense me and know me  
but can you, with your peacock brain spread wide,  
with your intelligent hands?

16 May 2018
I knew I had to read all the books. And when some decades later I was done I could begin. Hello, trees, I’m ready for you now, hello, sky, time for you to come in, I can see you now, my hands are itching for your pure space.

16 May 2018
Know me as someone else
or just a noise outside the door—
at least I know where all
the action is: threshold, doorsill,
the dark within. Not even
a person yet, don’t need to be,
I’m just a sound you hear
abd hear again. Come now,
make the most of me.

16 May 2018
The numbers don’t have to be right
they just have to be there

If one fine day
three came before two
Paradise might open
for business again

Eve and Adam and God
or Adam and Lilith and Eve,

who what Eden
would have been like
or might be like even now

with a sleepy angel at the gate
his flaming sword
long ago sputtered out?

Come with me
let’s crack the rusty hinges—

or is the poor deluded serpent
the only one left inside?

17 May 2018
Sky the color of my calm,
 rapture left us here already

a world happening all round us
 and we stubbornly cling to a thing

we call identity—I will be me!
 shouted into the indifferent glory

of these springtime trees. Winter
 snickers, but for a little lets us be.

17 May 2018
White car all alone in the trees—bring me my lute to celebrate this solitude,

I think I know the driver who left this pearl here in so green a shell

but I won't tell, he doesn’t know how secret he is, unconscious spy, interloper, thief of the cloud.

17 May 2018
Just a little closer and it will be time. Here, it’s just space, time’s skin.

Listening with me, children, to the bubble bursting the eggshell cracking the chick beaking speaking its way out.

And here we are all together in a flightless sky.

See what I mean about time? The watch slips off your wrist and we seem to be in Mexico again.

17 May 2018
End of Notebook 412
PHOBIC

I am afraid of dying.
I am afraid of dying before I have lived
the life I mean
by being born. I am afraid
of dying before some words of mine
reach the heart of the people.
I am afraid of the people.
I am afraid of what the heart
knows and I do not. I am afraid of dying
without knowing.
Without showing what I know.
Without giving it to you.
I am afraid of you. That you will leave,
turn away, pluck the sun out of my sky
and break the moon. Sluggish drops of wetness
fall on the nighttime planet. I am afraid of the night,
the white face that suddenly looks in the window.
I am afraid of the window, windows
speak a foreign language, like Asian tourists
talking as they saunter down the street.
Asia. Street. I am afraid
of the names of places. At any moment
a name can open up and be here.
I would feel trapped there, in Karachi
my great grandfather’s city, I am afraid
of ancestors, hundreds of years,
I am afraid of years.
What I think is the truth, but I’m afraid of thinking, afraid of truth. Truth says You will die, and that is terrible no matter to whom Truth is speaking. I am afraid of you dying, and everybody being gone, of me being alone in the world in the middle of people and I don’t know who they are or what they want. I am afraid of not being what they want. I am afraid of not being able to give it to them. I am afraid of that bird flying by, afraid it will fly in the window, death-sign for my Irish, geis, when it comes the head of the family goes. I am afraid of the family, afraid of anybody that comes and can go. A white van parked deep in the trees, it’s wrong, I am afraid of being wrong, I am afraid of saying the wrong thing so I have to say everything. Something I say will turn out to be right, right? I am afraid of silence most of all. They did it to me when I was young, when I was bad. Silence into which I paved every word I ever knew, a truck on Front Street, a horse on the road, what it says in the Bible, who rides a white horse, I am afraid of the Bible, nightmare crucifixes, I am afraid of beasts
on four legs or no legs, sirens blaring, air raid. State Police. tornado warning, escaped murderers running naked through the woods helicopters overhead. Searchlights counting the trees. Sometimes I am even afraid of trees though from *the branch of a thorn tree the crown He wore was made*,

O the old song, I am afraid of old songs that live deep in the head and can't be stilled, my breath knows them, all the words, or almost words, bricks fallen from the wall. Mostly I'm afraid of being dead. Dead, with new languages to learn. Or none. New duties to take up. Or none. New strangers to dread and love and know. Or none. I am afraid of not being me. I am afraid of being me with some terrible difference, or being me but all around me unknown pain, new pleasures, new scriptures. Or none. I am afraid of being again instead of still, I am afraid that *this* is not the real time. I think I am afraid of being.

17 May 2018
Kingston
AY OFF

Of course it’s a risk
it’s a morning
with all its privileges
starting with pale
over and roaring under
and what shall I do with the
day?

I haven’t asked myself
that question in so many years,
the day has always
had its own plans for me,
people and places it dreamed up
but what shall I do with the day?

I met it coming over Cedar Hill
a couple of big trees
tried to stop it
but to got here,
came through the window
stares me in the face
so what shall I do with the day?
If I were in Canada
I would catch a moose and ride it
like Lao-tse on his ox
over the hill into nowhere
but here I am, two feet on the earth
and my mind on all fours
so what shall I do with the day?

Odes and apologies are never enough
we got gas yesterday so that’s out,
it has to be something serious and rare,
the day is adamant, a day is
a kind of emerald after all
precious, unique, and so on
so what shall I do with the day?

Forgive it for calling? Forgive it
for waking me up? Forgive the cars
that growl past our finally open window
now that spring is finally here,
forgive myself for not knowing
what I shall do with the day?

What if I pick the wrong thing
or do the right thing wrong,
can’t I just be the wind in the trees,
mild and cool and friendly
and above all changing nothing, can’t I change nothing but just be?
But that is not what a day is for, a day is for being different
so nothing ever after will ever be the same
so tell em what to do with the day.

18 May 2018
Snarky quick moves
scherzo, Mahler’s 9th
then the sorrow sets in.
In his music sadness always wins.

So young he died. Once I stood
against the rough stone pillar
of his opera house and grieved.

I think he stood there too
thirty years before I was born,
not exactly weeping,

neither of us, just knowing,
knowing, when knowing
is the saddest thing of all.

18 May 2018
FRAGMENTS FROM OVID’S LOST GETIC POEM

The shadow falls
and lingers
when the sun moves on.
That’s how you know.

*

The skin is all
about remembering.

*

Encrust the evening
with emerald recollections
of how the day has been
and who gave them to you
and rejoice in sorrow
for the day has been.

18 May 2018
Fill the bowl
not with milk and not with wine
fill it with dry things
fill it with seeds
that still nourish inside them
the seed of water hidden
fill the bowl with sesame seeds
or red rice from the mountains
or oats from the Black Isle
just frill the bowl,
filled with stones from the beach
that know how summon the sea
an empty bowl betrays becoming,
betrays life. Fill
the bowl with anything you love.

18 May 2018
Words vanish as we write them down their place is taken by other words we didn’t mean, maybe no one meant. That’s why it’s so dangerous to read, especially just before we go to sleep. That’s why we have mothers and fathers really, to read to us and make sure some of the outward words make sense, sort of sense we can sleep with in a long night of terrifying meanings.

19 May 2018
The trees billow up at me
they know I’m alone
everybody else asleep
only me to make sense
of their green aggression
coming in at me from the sky
all their million tongues
fluttering silently news that I
am supposed to make sense of,
carve on stone, shout in the market,
whisper to my unborn child.

19 May 2018
Sky all one color
a tender cool pale grey
like the memory of blue.
Yet there are in it
densities of difference
zones through which we live,
and love, and understand.
I can almost reach up
and feel them with my hands.

19 May 2018
The man who ate two breakfasts meets the man who ate none.
They walk beside the railroad tracks sometimes like kids stepping from tie to tie between the rails, mostly they walk safe alongside or hobble on the gravel berm talking of Empedocles — a volcano is a hole sunk into the sky one said, and the other said the thinker wanted to fall into heaven. None of all that really happened the first one argued, the other man agreed. The river beside them did not contradict.

19 May 2018
But nothing moves out there.
The deer forget us.
The black bear’s asleep over the bill.

19.V.18
FOUR GONE CONCLUSIONS

The Earth is round but we are flat.

The answers are right the questions are wrong.

Cathedrals actually do penetrate the sky.

Time does not pass—it accumulates, and we drown in it.

19 May 2018
CLOTH

The cast of weaving
something knit
a glamor

to show the bone
of elbow or knee
a mild affront

kilt it
at the enemy

in union there is strength
but in company division

what is to be done?

2.
Why should they lose, love one another?
Love is loss, is it not,
your self seems to migrate
to the other—

you stand at the stern
of the creaking ship
waving goodbye to the self you are.
3. Maybe someday come back—it happens.
Rose-breasted grosbeak at the feeder just like ago when such birds frequented the windows of our lonely nouse.

4. So why not now?
Look up from your weaving and when you look back
the whole cloth is done.

That’s how it happens.
Drape it on your shoulders and go out.

19 May 2018
ODOACER

first king of Italy
was born in Hungary
wore a mustache
to prove it, brought
apple blossoms from Asia
to sweeten the sea off
Ravenna. All poetry
is usurpation. Seize
the language; depose the emperor.
Long live the king.

19 May 2018
for Tamas,
his birthday 21/V
LILITH

Your desire
is her only power
and she stands before you
in so many forms

or passes by
and sets her shadow
on you and you
follow. Or linger

long in the loss.

20 May 2018
SOFT DAY

Now the warm day hums. Preachers gibber vernacular. The sun is in one of her forgiving moods, soon lonely teenage wizards and witches will sit on glum porches tasting their breaths. Cars come out to play. Test me, I am an equation you fail to solve every summer. And here did that safety pin come from you find on your desk just now and what are you doing anyhow trying to work on the day they call Sabbath around here, getting it wrong by a day but no matter. Are you telling me yet again that approximation keeps us alive? Go tell it to the fish if you can even find the sea.

20 May 2018
A haunted world
with a green
girl laughing through it
*Om Tara tuttare ture soha!*

20 May 2018
Worry is built into the weather.
The longer you live
the more weather you’ve had
hence more worry

every gust of wind knows
how to bring you. Alarm you.
You smile at the spring breeze,
you prate of zephyrs and all

but deep down you know.

20 May 2018
I am not ready to begin.  
But it is.

So off we go,
children of the sandcastle

dreading the wave
that will wash us clean.

20 May 2018
after Catullus

I rescind my desire

or redistribute it
from cloud to coming cloud

I know how
to write those shadows down.

20 May 2018
No one has to know
tohow I know
or how much I know—

that is a human’s safety
in a loud questing world

Nor do I even need
toreckon what I know—
it comes at need

then sleeps the world away.

20 May 2018
Warm Sunday
a month from summer
birds hocketing, girls
girling, boys noising,
bees being everywhere,
old men trying to keep warm.

20 May 2018
Test tube certainties
you never dreamt.

Proof
by polygamy. Truth
is an afterthought.

If you live on this earth
maybe is your mother—

hence professions,
practice, prayer.

Fox cubs leap straight up in the air.

20 May 2018
1.
How blue at last
our sky means.
Malevich busy in
anthroposophic heaven,
Botticelli, Raphael, Albers,
Joyce in Zürich gazing
trough a glass of white wine
up at the purple chestnut
blossoms along the Limmat,
Pentecost Monday. Lenin
is already gone. Green
pigments seduce the earth.
Now, Gods, stand up for artists,
they have kissed your cheeks
until you blushed all over the west,
yes, yes, art, like springtime,
is a huge embarrassment, a dance
no one really knows, its steps
are devious and the music slow.
2.
So I have come to Trebizond at last to gaze across the Obsidian Sea towards the unseeably distant coast of Dragonland whence women come who know the secrets of thin air.

I’m huffing and puffing from my years of pilgrimage, I keep humming show-tunes like an actor out of work, but this is my job. My ankle hurts but that too is part of the practice. Arise, black waves! Bring out your dolphin intellects. I would hold congress with their minds, teach me to touch the bottom of the sea, speak Greek, tickle passing clouds, scribble Mirsuvian scriptures all over this dry red Anatolian rock. How dry this language is! Dry as a book with too many words on its pages, yet they give this bible to every child, this morning every eath. I baffle easy.
3.
Come back.
Do it with a spoon,
charred myrrh
in the thurible.
Of all religions
this is best—
a blank canvas
and a window full of light.
Do it. Drown
the silence,
shout colors out
until it is this world at last.

21 May 2018
Horn problem
anxious stag

headline sighs
hopeful lies

apothermic sleep
among us

the night
our only coverlet

quilted with darkness
our skin at peace

we dream a forest
an anxious deer

a paper flutters by.
There is no truth.

21 May 2018
You turn on the fan
it swivels then steadies
and hums and hums.
I hear voices in it
an octave down, slow
dark voices from
the betweenesses
the blades interrogate.
An undertone of sense
I can’t make out—I know
they’re talking, just
not talking to me.

21 May 2018
Reshape the horn—
here it is
hung from the sky
half-moon
your wheel whirring
what life makes do
makes us do
warriors from north moon
spies from Capricorn
the king lies on his golden bed
worrying about the weather.

22 May 2018
Maybe we really do
belong to other people
and if they turn their eyes away from us
we perish like Atlantis
overwhelmed by oceans of neglect,
gods nobody prayed to anymore?
For who is Attis now
and who Athena? Her owls
mourn her absence still.

22 May 2018
Just a little stickum on the base so they don’t topple. Bibelot on windowsill, headlines in a week-old paper. What is time? A space that keeps us from now her father said. And what is now? 0 Julie I hardly knew thee.

22 May 2018
Not sure when now begins?  
Look out the window and it’s gone,  
its lovely shadowstaining the trees.
Sin remembers—is that it?
The bacteria punish
false connections?
Or each wave
also a forgiveness?
Can I borrow,
ocean, your frequency?
Wind knocks an old shed down.
Smell of old wood
like a priest’s absolution?
In liveliest confusion,
too many images equal none.

22 May 2018
Irrawaddy, river,
my cousin from Burma
brought me a dagger
crusted with human
gore I thought, probably
cosmolene all sticky.
Knives need repentance
too. Forget it at waking,
there must be some reason
(reason is a saxophone
playing in a smoky room).

22 May 2018
When a headache is a habit
the brain runs out of think—

old joke, ads for shaving cream
mile after mile, modest signs,
punchlines in the grass, crown vetch
grows on freeway berms,

eye stole my need and made language,
estole my yearning and made other people—
O angels, angels, what would we do without you?

22 May 2018
They say the medicine I take makes my green eyes blue and with enough years to come my eyes will wind up brown and I will be Egypt at last.

22 May 2018
AFTER PENTECOST

Writing sin
the ink sinks in.
So many languages
we need the Dove
to bleach the paper clean.
Or else the Tongue
of Fire to take all this away.

22 May 2018
It knows how to be 90
It knows how to freeze

Old song of degrees,
of sylvan weather
in the urban squeeze.

Let me out
of the cycle
of complaint,

let opinion oxidize
and preference fade
until shadow
is as sweet as sun—

it’s all in how you shake it,
how you dance

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 1

My pitiful efforts
at vernacular,
can do it maybe
a breath at a time,

have to remember
crowded A train,
stink of gingko
nuts crushed
underfoot
pushcarts on Blake
Avenue, bronze
panther under branches,
stairs down into the zoo.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 2

Leopard coughing in the woods
shortcut to the temple
she heard
    she hurried
safe from the guest-house,
acacias all round the hills in purple blossom.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 3

But by the library
the big one downtown
not the little one uphill
with the blonde librarian’s
charming lisp, no,
down there, among
the stately rows of
walnut (were they?)
a glorious visitor
from Australia, one
blue gum tree.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 4

If the sun
were one mile closer
the trees would know it,
they walk that road
every day.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 5

The kindly mind
our built-in Christmas tree,

little words dance around it.
A cat can knock it over,

but it rights itself,
writes itself all over us

and the glittery star
on yop of it keeps

an eye on us even
through a gauze of thought.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 6

Serviceberry fluttering white
on our way to Otego
where I learned their name
a friend ago one
Early spring. Tree
antiphonal with snow.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 7

Come blue come grey
I think that giant
tulip tree just barely
showing leaf—is it ill,
is it slow?—
controls the whole sky.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 8

When things touch
they tell the truth.
Birch bark
under my hand.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 9

I know an angry
nation when I see one—
pine trees up and down the ridge
or a meadow with no oak.

23 May 2018
FROM THE TREES, 10

The Jews speak of *etz-hayyim*, the Tree of Life, that grows from *Kether* the crown down, all the way to the *mula* cakra that runs this beast world, our bodies. But there is another tree, not of death, not at all, not of distance. It sprouts from the least thought. Everything anyone thinks is a seed of it, and grows it deeper, thicker, taller, out into the unknown, this shared world where we live in starlight. All thought grows into the great commingling, branches and leaves and flowers and inconceivable fruit---and all this we have brought into being. *Space is being.* Who can say, maybe this tree of ours (is it ours?) does really grow intermeshed, upward through the downward of the Tree of Life, and our timid notions may reach the Crown? This tree is all we think, and all we mean.

23 May 2018
I write about the sun
so much because she
holds my hand.
I’m a sucker for tenderness—
or contact at all
that I can take as such.
And with white blossoms
sudden on the spirea—
who could ask
any other proof?

23 May 2018
Revelations come in tiny doses
a moth wing lifted
sifting light through
to you,
    a flicker worth attending,
retaining.

    Each minute difference
an apocalypse.

24 May 2018
HERALDRY

*Everything changes me*

it says on the human crest
above our race’s coat-of-arms:

*Azure, an apple tree proper*
*between a woman and a man*
*naked, regardant.*

Pluck one leaf and everything changes.

24 May 2018
EARLY IMMIGRANTS

Why didn’t they bring
the cathedrals and leave
the theology back home?

A building says something,
creeds are just chattering
angry unimportant differences

tbut rhey built bleak wooden boxes
to shout their sermons in
alarming the crows

making ancient foxes snicker.

24 May 2018
Stagger steady
from the doctor
seemingly healthy,
at least he smiles
nice words. In each
moment we survive.
I stand outside
unconvinced. I think
we are just pigeons
and someone has stolen the sky.

24 May 2018
More to worry than to do
I walked around the yard
half a dozen times, half a mile
in slow circles. Going nowhere
following my fleeing breath.

24 May 2018
THE MERE

1. The mere as being. Oceanic singularity here, right here.

2. Wetlands, Wakarusa Bottoms, the road runs its finger through pointing imaginary west.

   I stood and waited for a shadow to speak, and it did. Books flutter open in the merest breeze.

3. *Mere* = simply or only; mother; sea or lake. And across one mere the dying King was ferried by beautiful women to be healed and they were themselves the Grail he sought.
4.
Not Kansas. Velesta’s soft blonde smile yes, but Kansas no. Carry the smile with you maybe. Eventide, vespers singing, scatterbrained Protestants at their play. The one hill for miles around is full of delusion, education, noisy restaurants. So never cross a river to get anywhere. Especially not there, where America begins, what we have made of it, what we have done to the rock.

5.
But someday the stone will speak and the sighing grasslands will chant gently in your ear—you’ll hear it from here—accurate encyclopedias of earth’s wit. They know our tricks and crows remind you every blessed morning you don’t have to go anywhere, you just have to sit still and listen.

24 May 2018
Pick up the pieces before you go, geology can only wait so long. Then a glacier comes along or lava flow and farewell bits! From these fragments you and I might have made a world.

24 May 2018
THEOPHANIES

God names scattered on the drift
dead leaves
(they are not dead)
(for Wisdom keeps a humble house,
these leaves all full of noise and drought
becomes the desert where things come to mind)

scattered in sea foam, écume, our scum.

Everything tells us who we are.

And they, they are not far,
in rustling and sighing and soughing hear them,

and hear them in lavender,
and lilac, and all the sacred dross.

25 May 2018
Examine the thing
that comes to mind.
Theology, say,
is a woman in dark clothes
walking in the trees.

Obey the street
*it something knows,*

lead me
where you want me
to be. The roof
holds up
the whole sky,
the earth seldom
dares to move
beneath you.

Small sensations
rule the skin.
And skin rules the world.

25 May 2018
Pale sky of a hot day to come
this blank page seems.
It will be crowded and sweaty
by the bottom of it, words
crammed on the subway of sense
until there’s so much meaning
you want to cry, or just go
fall asleep and dream
again this empty sky.

25 May 2018
TO A BLACK ESTERBROOK

Dear old pen, and dear far orpiment, and all you sexy minerals, chrysoprase and wake up smiling, lapis sky and hessonite below, dear old substances we rule that rule us back, dear old Earth I feel scarcely worthy of.

25 May 2018
Every spot on earth
is a crossroads.
Each has a signpost
in letters we can’t read.
And on it a crow is perched
whose calls we almost understand. By each
crossroads stands a gibbet
where some poor thief
was hanged. On a boulder
nearby a weeping woman
grieves for her lost child.
These are the facts. And here
lightning struck, here too
some god descended, stepped
out of his chariot, smiled
and was gone. Every spot
on earth. Stand and listen.

25 May 2018
MAY 2018.docx

26 May 2018

We are strangers
in our own house

we hide in closets
toilets, under beds

we hide in shadow
we have lost our keys.

26 May 2018
Watching the sculptor
we wait for her
to take us in her hands
and shape the morning
so we can wake.

2.
Her mind has to be
on other things as she works,
otherwise we could not
come into meaningful form..
Other things. We pray too
to the other so we can be.

3.
When a landscape
turns into a man.
When a face flies away
and leaves the vast
quiet movement of the empty sea.

26 May 2018
COMMENCEMENT DAY

The feast of letting go.
Of being gone
   into the world,
hence the beginning
of all beginnings.

All you know now
is how to know more.
You studied chemistry
and Ancient Greek
now read my eyes.

26 May 2018
After a night of bad dreams
nothing works.

The air is still,
too many cars
snort up Cedar Hill
in the sun glare.

It looks
OK but we know better.
Dreams spoil the day.
When I step outside
I will have to hide, hide
especially from whatever
is hiding in me.

Who’s there
in here?

I walk in fear
of what might answer me.

26 May 2018
Speaking columns
hold up the
architrave
that holds the images
of those we love
and hope love us—
the Gods
whose sacred books
are all the words we speak
and some of the ones
we dare to write down.

26 May 2018
In sunlight,  
in being gone  

warm day  
eases down  
itits transparent curtain  

and we breathe  
somehow easier. The world itself  
is an interruption of something  
else. Animals  
run away  
from us to show the way.

26 May 2018  
Shafer patio
Don’t talk the weather away. Thermick is listening, the teen-age god who pumps mercury up the tobe. In Lydia they had a river in Phrygia they had a curious hill in Greece they had Apollo, Apollo had Olympus and we have weather. Wake up with this handful of silver.

27 May 2018
THE KINGDOM

The jesters are waiting for the king to come get comfy on his throne. Long, long they’ve been waiting, shifting their jokes around in their jaws, nervous, giggling, getting old.

2.
A land without a king is a land left on its own. The wolves laugh at us from the hills: You had a king but let him get away.

3.
Iffy breakfasts of democracies. The waiter frowns at your poached eggs, the coffee’s tepid. Outside, the flags slap and slither in the wind. When will someone who makes sense come home?

27 May 2018
PETUNIAS

for Ann

They come back to see us
ceaseless farewells
to our lore, teachings,
tenderness even,
they bring their mothers and sisters,
a father or two out on the lawn,
noncommittal. As we also
must be. We are here
because we were and they listened.
And now you are here
waiting for them with purple flowers
splendid above the random snacks.
What we eat. What we give
to one another. They come
in some odd way to thank us,
blame me a little, some of them,
for not being more. But they smile.
It's hard to frown near flowers.
We want to be everything to them
and still keep a little bit for me,
you know me, that little word
that rules the world. Flowers,
a heap of orderly comfort
soft between future and the past,
these flowers, all flowers really,
are saying goodbye too.
But the sight of them lasts,
lingers in the room, the graduates
shake our hands, the alumns hug us,
so tender this moment, luminous,
frail, the petals of time,
petals of what little we know.
We are teachers, we are skilled
in giving to others what we do not have,
there’s magic in it, a little,
scent of a flower (they say petunias
drive evil spirits away by fragrance
alone), a hint here or there,
a shiny key to the garden shed
where the mind’s tools are stored.
We give what we don’t have
because we turned into what it was.
Awkjward grammar, theyknow
how to say it better, these purple flowers,
and our students guess it too,
as if we really are the thing they try to learn.

27 May 2018
Manly raptures
of a night asleep.
Of course I don’t
know what it means.

Nine hours in the dark!
I must have been exhausted
or someone was. Come,
tell me who slept for me.

And left me to do
the waking all by myself—
morning, puzzle, one more
has to be solved.

And what if I’m the solution?

27 May 2018
HYDRAULICS OF HAPPINESS

I thought to said
heaven when you said hello—
I listen hard
to hear what no one says.

27 May 2018
My Xmas card my stone of destiny
my boudoir lampshade all pink and frill
the little dead mouse in dust beneath the bed
the flag of Genoa on a tanker’s stern—
things, things, a mind seems made of things
but maybe that’s jkust music.

27 May 2018
THE ADOLESCENT

I feel like a banjo
when you come into the room,
all loud and clanging
and not too hard to play.
When I grow up I want to be
a cello and only sing out
when you hold me snug
between your knees
and you use all your skill.

27 May 2018
Use strange words
whenever you can—
you never know
when a chance will come again.

27 May 2018
Today the day is all a house, it's all inside, in here, there is no out, no other. This is the field. The ground. The only sea.

27 May 2018
= = = = = = =

Hall. A name.
A mirror at the end.

2.
The policy of fishermen
To scoop out what they cannot see.
The dream is best,
A kind of ocean with no shore
ever in sight, no rest
for the oarsmen in your galley,
your built-in crew.
No wonder you wake up tired,
slippery silvery thoughts fleeing
in the unaccountable brightness.

3.
What does the mirror show
When you finally get there?
An angry face demanding
How dare you use my name?

4.
But a hall is the only way out,
to reach the stairs, to go down
into ordinary life, policy
of hunters, to capture
only what is there, only
what presents itself to be seen. Policy of beggars, to take what comes.

5.
Is there some other way of doing it?
A morning machine to ease you into the day, smooth as yogurt, keen as orange juice?
No. Dry hallway. Creaking staircase. Your own name, alas, Stamped on the mail. Far, far away you see soft-fingered Night luring you on. It can be done. Policy of the Sun.

28 May 2018
MEMORIAL DAY

They used to call this
Decoration Day
don't ask me why.
I’ve forgotten all my passwords
so why do you love me,
why? I finally need
an answer. Prove it.
Tell me what I’m thinking,
only you can do it
and I need to know.

28 May 2018
Trying to be close
Or most. Signal flares
blazing halfway
home. *Horizon.*
A line finitely far
unreachable though
between people.
The thee and the me
eternally remote.
Examine the atlas and find
an island with no sea
around it. That would be me.

28 May 2018
To be a creature, to inhabit a known world—Faust pondered to be more than that, to be wonderful, almost like the sky to own the weather!

The devil could offer not even that, not even a live reflection in the accurate mirror of other peoples’ eyes. By the end of magic Faust was invisible. Not even dead.

2.
Against the occult—for God’s sake open the curtain, open the window, break down the door. They think a flower or a cactus will think them better.
They think some words will carry them away. Maybe. That wet stuff in your mouth is your saliva. *Aqua Vitae,* water of your life.

3.
They hurry past. They are people, visible. Minds busy with God knows what. C&W sort of music, loud in the parking lot. Forgive their indifference to your projects, your ardor, your torpor. They have other things to do. And so have you.

28 May 2018, Kingston
I dreamt a tall tree
with no bark at all.
Straight and glowing
gleam of raw wood
and full leafed at the top,
ample, healthy, green.
The bark had gone
some insect way </>
and they (who are they
who come for such things)
had treated the wood
with something that saved it,
_____</> it, let it breathe.
Or what does wood do
when it’s alive? Even old
furniture seems still
to have some consciousness.
But the tall tree
What does it mean?
It made me happy
to see it, that it survives
still, that someone cares.

29 May 2018
A day too
must be a going
since later
it is gone.

Do we go with it
or does it pass
across our path?
They never taught me

when I was young
where the day goes
and whether I go
with it or stay here:

call me if you know.

29 May 2018
Have I become
the one I was,
enough to read
Proust a second time?

Annals of me,
Zeppelin overhead
and a war far away,
a bayonet brought home,

blue lights in subway
tunnels, a girl
eating a mango,
one blue kingfisher dives.

29 May 2018
Eliminate the obvious and there is nothing left. Why did they tell me that? There is nothing hidden, no secrets. Only people hungry for mystery, amateurs of the occult. Make do with the stone on the ground, the crow in the air. These feed you, comfort you, give you true dreams. This beautiful world of nothing else.

29 May 2018
I don’t know who won the game. I didn’t know we were playing till it was too late to keep score. There is a heap of stones beside my chair. Are these my winnings, or the teeming evidence of my errors? The day is getting warmer as I fret.

29 May 2018
EXORDIUM

Get up and do it.
What is it?
Time will tell
but don’t expect
the clock to
give you a hint.

29 May 2018
What happens when they see you
and reach out to say some version
of hello, I almost love you, goodbye?
You stand there at the window, wonder
how glass can be so clear, so hard.

29 May 2018, Shafer
Not a word
tears
though, faces close
to mine. The closeness
said enough, said
a long time
we are who we are
together.

A smile
almost beginning,
faces flush red
when eyes weep—
as if ancient law
only our bodies remember.

30 May 2018
Wait
for other
things
to answer—
an olive pit
carved
as a canal boat
roofed over,
carrying goods,
the likenesses
of people on board,
the inexhaustible
smallness
in the world
exalts us.

30 May 2018
As if it were breakfast
a breeze through the window
satisfies. We are simple
in our needs, complex
in our descriptions of them.
Say more and more about less
and less. Gravity of feeling,
the empery of skin.
Just breathe in.

30 May 2018
Fallen leaves
we call dead
but they’re still
in the long
cycle of their
being. Bud
to leaf to green
to fall to mulch
in water meld
into the continuous
beneath. From
which we rise.

30 May 2018
FOUR TREES IN TOWN

1. Haunted evergreens
conical foursome
shade of a house wall:
the Evangelists standing there
to make us see.

2. *Arbor vitæ.*
Every book
a gospel surely—not
what someone wrote
but what we read.

3. Reading is revelation,
As we read we build
fences against error,
we tear them down, error
is porous, lets light
through, imaginations,
miracles. So
the trees told me.
4.
Look at them again,
how quiet they are
while all their deciduous neighbors
are sighing and shifting in the breeze.
Quiet and dark deep dark inside,
chambered as if with caverns
of story, endless proliferations of myth.

5.
I want to go down in there
and wrap my arms around one of them
and tell him something for a change
thank him for all my endless listening
to what he and all trees tell.

6.
Idiolect of trees, of each.
Spruce hiss and locust rumble
I wonder at their number,
so many kinds, so many voices,
all round us, no end to their giving.

30 May 2018
Red Hook
Drink from this dusty glass
it keeps its colors true
but tells them this and that
on their way to your eyes
they never knew, a little
history, its soft sad pigment
changing the green. Red
also suddenly remembers.

31 May 2018
The policy of magic
starts with dead religions.

Persia—they killed their gods
and we’re stuck with what’s left,

ayahuasca and tarot cards,
a phony sense of liberty.

31 May 2018
My mother was a teacher and taught me how to be and how to speak to other people, those dragons on my path. She taught me hope and silence and knew everything that happens has meaning, and I never doubted.
IN THE BACK YARD

What’s on your mind
the blackbird asked.
I want to fly I answered.
Just then a hawk swooped
and carried my poor bird away.

31 May 2018
THE CUP

Drinking this will cause you to believe.
Cross the street—
the sacred grove is waiting for you
in your neighborhood park,
gods and goddesses
on the slatted benches,
squirrels and pigeons
feeding at their feet.

31 May 2018
1.
When the sky
just looks like the sky
with nothing in it
you’ll know you’ve arrived
at the right time.
The noise of traffic
spills over into silence.
A tree is no different
but you are, you are.

2.
I had lost the will to impersonate myself.
I was in a church to begin with,
walls gleaming with images I believed.
I believe. I picked up a leaflet from the floor
and read the words this page started with.

3.
In three days I will build it up ahain he said.

31 May 2018
Almost beginning—
time is out of space,
Apollo’s arms
muscular but lithe
tight to his chest
crossed. A road
has been closed,
its asphalt gleams—
every avenue
shall be a temple.
He promised me.

31 May 2018
It’s a kind of talking. Or like thinking. Or like water sometimes washing over a swimmer’s body, chest and shoulders, the mouth just above the water, speaking. It’s a kind of talking that has music in it. Or the water has, flowing over the chin sometimes, flushing the words away but the open mouth perfectly clear, an old master painting: Mouth in the Moment of Saying. Or was that a book someone wrote. Or meant to write. The water flowing over flesh is of course like writing a book, only it is doing it to us, not we to the words or whatever it is we think we speak. Sounds. The sound of water rushing over the shoulders of a swimmer. What language does the water speak? At Pentecost everyone spoke every tongue or was it suddenly pureHumanese? Or maybe said nothing at all but we understood everything. We, I say, as if I was there. Was I there? Am I there now, in some onrush, downrush, of fire, but fire translating itself into water. *Fire of Waters* was a film once. Now we come
to speak of Water of Fire, the water that speaks out loud all the words ever whispered in it. As by a mouth, gently open, of a swimmer, say, mouth open as if to speak. Or perhaps just to breathe, and why not, since breath is where all the words come from to begin.

31 May 2018