

9-2018

**sep2018**

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= = = = =

1.

The merit or remembering  
equals the mountain.

On top you can see the valley  
end to end, cattle and shadows,  
nothing hidden. Even I  
can hear the tame goats bleat.

2.

Now the leaves fall like shooting stars  
you watched above the Delaware  
when you were ten. I mean me—  
you never got to be that young again,  
you who were born of remembering.

3.

And I don't even know your name!  
Distances abound. They are like grace  
given to the first swimmer, naiad,  
*space is just to flex our bodies alone—*  
there is nowhere to go,  
I hear you tell me, only going.

4.

It would take me years  
to name the speaker  
and the years aren't finished yet.  
I divide my orange neatly  
into segments, pour cool water  
from the carafe, I light the candle—  
see how much I have learned  
from being born?  
Heavy traffic on a gloomy road,  
percussion noises from cars pass—  
see how alike we are, all we share?

5.

If this is seduction  
it is way too slow,  
I can be a blue jay  
sometimes too, scream  
at empty feeders,  
scream from the branches  
come marry me.

6.

Light itself is the sun's shriek  
of joy and wonder and tenderness  
glad to be seeing us again,  
all her children all day long.

1 September 2018

= = = = =

A crocodile of a day  
x was the end of something,  
t stuck in the ground  
to mark the boundary  
but boundary of what?

2.

I heard the learned crocodile  
(the ancient amphibian  
well-armored, who teaches you Greek)  
and he explained the edge of things—  
if you can't walk there  
you must swim,  
if you can't do that  
you have to fly. So if  
you have no wings, you're  
at the frontier right now.  
There's a sweet green hillside here  
where you rest and watch  
the glorious antics over there  
in the land you'll never enter.

**3.**

**Never is such a hard word, Sir,  
what if I grow wings?**

**Why then there'll be no more never anymore  
and you'll read Greek fluently  
and not need me.**

**2 September 2018**

= = = = =

(Is the *wain* of wainscot the  
*wand* of wall?  
 Deep in the language  
 we guess at harmony.  
 But *wain* is *wagon* too,  
 or *Wagen* over there,  
 where *das Volk* drive them,  
 the *Folkswain* of a sweeter dream.)

2 September 2018

= = = = =

**They're turning quiet now  
but the roses of Sharon  
the mauve ones are singing now  
weeks after the blue ones began.  
A tree takes its own time.**

**2 September 2018**



= = = = =

Unhurried, no policy,  
shadows play inside the leafiest,  
a universe of arts and measures  
desperate it seems to me  
for our words—though our  
silence serves them somehow too.

2 September 2018

= = = = =

I love machines  
so much not to  
be one a little  
bit myself.

This is a greeting  
card to veins  
of metal, trees  
full of rubber, Asia,

plastic, tricks,  
mathematics,  
ancient gizmos,  
wheel and plow

this is an ode  
to habit and compulsion,  
touch my lever,  
spin my gears.

2 September 2018

## HAWTHORN DAYS

The thorn outside my house  
is buck- not haw-,  
invasive species, officious  
horticulture mavens cut them down.  
But not mine. I will protect  
this messy sideways tilted immigrant,  
even if it prays to a different god.  
ythough I think all trees  
go to the same church,  
“no priest but the perfected...”  
as Mary Baker Eddy said,  
fruit, leaf or flower,  
pages of its holy book.  
Or thorn. Buckthorn (*Rhamnus*)  
Hawthorn (*Crataegus*), “all night  
around the thorn tree  
the little people play”  
my father used to sing,  
in the mode of John McCormack  
back in the day when I had never  
seen a thorn tree and only  
mother’s roses in the back yard had thorns.

Now ask me where hawthorn comes in—  
 I'm working on it, I keep  
 getting distracted by the strange oblique  
 thorn tree leaning into the driveway  
 just past the garage.

*for Anne Gorrick, after her dream*  
 2 September 2018

## WANATANKA ISLAND

Dugong manatee  
 the sea is up today  
 a gaff-rigged schooner  
 leans against the shore  
 hundred and more miles upriver  
 where Hudson wedded  
 amiable Indians.  
 Sail reefed. Rigging  
 harpstrings in the moonlight,  
 play me, baby,  
 load me with your salt.

2.  
 Back in the day  
 when new meant good  
 always, almost always.  
 Mermaid. Dolphin.  
 And deep down in pale rocks  
 sea-cucumber tentacled  
 eating greedy. Or greed  
 is common, little child,  
 ply the orca of your appetite,  
 the sea is up today  
 and means your mind.

**3.**

**Chroma, the color of color,  
not so clear by night.**

**The mind eats senses,  
sly tentacles to apprehend  
otherness and suck it in.**

**The sea is up today  
because we breathe.**

**3 September 2018**

= = = = =

The obligation of the afternoon  
 attends me. Circus tent of the hours,  
 half-tamed tigers at tea-time  
 so much mail to answer, so many  
 things I have to pretend to want.  
 Wait on the wharf for an idea,  
 that ferry running late today—  
 exhaust the day: the sun barely risen.

3 September 2018

= = = = =

At last a motive  
I can understand  
I thought but then  
I fell asleep again.

3 September 2018



= = = = = = =

Sleep and waking the same one dance,  
I meet my partner self and close my eyes.  
How many footsteps the dreamer takes  
desperate to wake another place.

3 September 2018

= = = = =

Lupanar, the Romans  
called a brothel a wolf-den,  
they had a lot of dealings  
with wolves, Romulus, Remus  
whoresons both if Livy's  
to be believed. Who else  
kills his brother, and why?  
*They were the same man*  
not twins at all his wolven  
had many teats—  
maybe enough for all  
but then there's always me.

3 September 2018

## ON A HONDA

Hard-helmeted  
locked in leather,  
hot machinery  
snarling between  
the thighs, wearing  
the ultimate  
outfit to repel  
desire, rides, rides  
away, away,  
always away,  
alone, away, a  
motorcycle always  
means alone.

3 September 2018

## AN ENGLISH SUITE

Now what kind of tree is that?  
 more like a boat—  
 small, sail reefed  
 jiggling on a playful sea,  
*moutons de mer* how you say?  
 white caps, vivid  
 like sailors at a ball game  
 no? No. Scattered on the sea,  
 sheep on green pastures,

for piano – or what would  
*clavessin* be like in our day  
 music pretending  
 to be a tree,  
 shameless beauty?

You like that. 1715.  
 How well he listened.  
 Listens. A tree with ears.  
 Birch by the brook,  
 ancient arrow pronged in pale bark,  
 a rune, gleaming under the blue  
 imagination, heaven, *hein?*

The difference is the kind of hammer,  
does it pluck or only pound,  
a kind of string

(a string is a song)

ship rigging, bells off,  
the sun at midnight  
*and in the middle night*  
they run home to their mothers  
who teach them to sing,  
how else would a tree tolerate  
those miles of leafy conversation  
we call silence in the woods?

Tell me a little more tomorrow,  
Bach is so great  
because his intellect  
examines his feelings, honors them,  
as in the slow minuet of the 4<sup>th</sup> English Suite  
we hear a romantic earnestness  
that makes Chopin seem cold.  
Here was the math of music  
measuring the heart.

I thought.

But had no right to think  
or only such permission

as hearing gives,  
and maybe there is no other mother.

A kind of absolution then,  
taking the language apart  
touch by touch,  
feeling by feeling  
until we hear the other  
side of what we're hearing—  
something like that.

I can't be more definite,  
I'm still asleep in the world of the senses,  
we're all together in this dream

and maybe he, Bach,  
sometimes, somehow  
shows a way out,  
sound shaping  
silence into a doorway.

In Tibet they call him bodhisattva  
and smile when I say I like Bach.

String still quivering, tone,  
overtone stuff  
dancing on the airwaves

they used to call it,  
radio, *radeau* is like that,  
a raft to skim the waves  
bear us onward after  
all the shipwrecks of desire,  
the slower you play this passage  
the closer the shore comes  
almost saved

Could they call this that  
because the trees speak English?  
Only a Frenchman would think of that—  
am I French enough, ancient  
Huguenot ancestors, weavers,  
fled from Marles-les-Mines to Britain,  
there is always trouble, rubble  
in the keyboard of our race, religion,  
grimy industrial north, Bach  
was getting us ready for a time  
when all the beauty had to be inside,

so I could hear music  
in my mother tongue,  
the one I think I'm speaking now.

All I'm saying is  
the boat better believe me,  
Gulf Stream floating the piano  
its great wing poised over the sea  
cormorant drying its wings  
*this music is speaking fo ryou,*  
*sleep, little birds of prey or peace,*  
*this time will not come again,*  
*float, trust the stream, you have*  
*no choice, but trust is best,*

wind sweeps in the window  
open on the German Ocean  
we call the Noth Sea now

just let your fingers find the way, the keys  
I mean, the closet door  
springs open, friendly smells come out,  
fur and leather, *mère et père,*  
things to remember,  
walk the dark hallway, woolen runner  
that in daytime would be red,  
every corridor leads to  
something you can't read in the dark.



Is it over yet, the faerie asked,  
all your fussing to be clear  
when obscurity is what sells  
real estate, dim restaurants  
expensive menus ill-lit by one  
votive candle (they pray to money),  
I will agree, I will assent  
to your suppositions – it's all new,  
the music has come to free us,  
simple as that. I am your sisterbrother  
and I have never heard this music  
only once or twice before.

3 / 4 September 2018

= = = = =

Something I have never sailed  
some I have never climbed  
something I could not learn to play  
something I never learned to swim—  
*boat tree music the sea*  
but what else do I ever have to say?

3 / 4 September 2018

= = = = =

With the cello bow  
with satin cushion  
*poikilothron'*

or with history all behind  
with mystery before us

what word will  
show the way?

4 September 2018

= = = = =

I looked at the ocean on the screen  
and remembered  
all I had been told,  
ringing phone, the volcano,  
handsome young angel directing traffic,

all I had been given.  
starfish, oyster shell,  
French movie, a mirror?

Each year we bring shells  
home from the beach  
and they vanish in our rooms.  
A house chooses, guards  
its treasures, most  
of all the slip shell  
palest, smallest, every year  
most precious from your hand?

4 September 2018

= = = = =

**Pulling together—  
rhapsode on the loose,  
lock the curtains  
don't let him know  
more than the day  
brings to mind, those  
ultimate secrets  
pried out of time.**

**In that way his song  
will last through years  
and still be useful  
as long as we make  
one another weep.**

**4 September 2018**

= = = = =

The habit is the same  
the monk inside  
may say a different prayer  
fingering an alien rosary

or am I the same  
man who went to sleep  
midnight thinking of towers  
with triple turrets  
over a sea that spoke my language?

Lost in the heraldry of dream  
who woke? The calendar  
is always wrong. Deep down  
it is never really today.

5 September 2018

= = = = =

(Listen to language  
long as you can  
before you chime in,  
your new voice pure.)

5.IX.18

= = = = =

Welling up like a fountain  
from her flowing full-skirted dress  
the shoulders and slender arms  
are so strong on the cello  
as if the bow had huge weight of its own  
to bruise the strings into such song.

5 September 2018

[an old clip of Jacqueline Du Pré playing the Dvorak concerto]



= = = = =

I am too quiet  
to blow my horn.  
Summer is ending  
the trees look tired,  
need rain. I am guilty  
of something but don't  
know what. Guilty  
of not knowing.  
Or setting mousetraps.  
Or measuring the moon.

5 September 2018

= = = = =

There is more to be said  
but who am I to say it?

Smudge of cloud in the sky,  
wipe it clean, no, must  
have been my eyes.

Quiet morning,  
the huge silence  
when all the machinery  
is roaring at once.

5 September 2018

= = = = =

Slowly working  
on the other side,  
divide the day  
into girls you knew  
men you trusted  
cities you infested.  
There's always one  
empty space left  
blank – who goes there?  
The sky for once says nothing.

5 September 2018

= = = = =

*Y ddraig goch*

Listen to that ddragon  
it knows  
where you want to go

it has been there  
and come back  
a combat shaped like fire  
in the center of the earth

and from that mortality  
he brought back numbers  
and stretched them  
across the sky to measure

moons and suns and seasons,  
I call it him now because  
numbers bring genders with them  
and politics, and roses white and red.

he helps the mind turn inside out  
so that we see clearly what is there  
unspoken. inconceivable, plainly visible  
as if the light came with him and it shows.

5 September 2018

= = = = =

Brahms afternoon  
 policy of green heron  
 night time by the shore  
 below high tide the custom  
 of that biology. What  
 shall we do? We have listened  
 and still don't know. have heard  
 and forgotten, so much, maybe  
 our footsteps in the sand  
 are testament enough. Let  
 the sea remember for us,  
 its archives hold so many. Green  
 heron looks up. No, we have  
 to do something for him too.  
 The music also changes. Courage  
 something tells us, it has to  
 happen. It has happened.

5 September 2018

= = = = =

Asgard. as if the tourney  
had begun an age ago  
and they were waiting, up there,  
those super-intelligent animals  
we call the gods. They win.  
They always win, but they are gracious  
to us in our defeat, yield language  
to us and keep the silence to themselves  
we struggle to embrace, having no  
other tools but words to silence us.

2.

These are the ones we live with,  
the frictions, the marriages,  
the taste of water. In opera.  
giants build the gods a bridge  
from here to there. The music  
tells a different story—they  
never left. The scaffolding  
we mistake for cloud. The  
door swings open in every wind.  
These are the consolations.

5 September 2018

= = = = =

I woke a different man from when I slept,  
there was a fresh grassy cliff below  
the sea hotel and all the guests  
sat quiet on the hither lawn  
marveling at the sunrise. I walked  
among them, stood still, almost fell,  
drew back from the cliff slope.  
Who was I, and who was I then  
and now, pink sunrise over the North Sea?  
I stood with folded arms, a little cold  
as I woke into this hot American day.

6 September 2018



**LA MÉTHODE**

Horn call haps the day—  
the old language still serves,  
friction betwixt old and new  
sharp enough to light the match,  
inspire the little flame deep inside  
the hearth. The earth. *Rub*  
*two words together*, that's all it takes,  
then *add a third and go on breathing*  
until a verg flutters out of the air,  
your hair, and says something you didn't know—  
a statement, a puzzle, a prophecy, a joke  
and lo, your temple is complete:  
you hhave said it all.

6 September 2018

= = = = =

Waiting is wading  
not swimming in time.  
Gorn call, a hunt  
or opera is afoot.  
What is the quarry?  
A maiden idea, a lost  
perception? *I search  
for sunset in every  
moment, I carry  
a red stone in my pocket  
just in case.*

6 September 2018

= = = = =

1.

Lost in liberty  
 like a single digit  
 in a page of logarithms  
 —remember slide rulers?—  
 or a preacher crying  
 in an empty church  
 (does cry mean shout  
 or does cry mean weep?)  
 we say church or kirk  
 “the Lord’s house,” they  
 say ‘église’, the congregation’s place,  
 who owns what we know?  
 who gives colleges the right to say?  
 College is collection, gathering  
 but who lets them in,  
 who guards the door?

2.

I am worried about  
 this sanctity of trees.  
 In all our history  
 only three have humans worshipped:  
 the stone, the tree, the human form;



4.

The trees play my obsessions,  
they know what and where  
my few harp strings are  
and pluck them soft on land.  
Clouds above, wind in leaves.

5.

So this amounts to a confession—  
I am owned by what I see.  
Hear. Happen on. Think.  
I am a number, say 7,  
lost in a page of numbers  
(remember books?), a day  
looking for its almanac.

6.

I love the sound  
the cars go by  
well-muffled mostly,  
swishing on wet roads,  
open window,  
summer sarabande.

We write long these days,  
we are roads  
stretching out through the woods,  
fields of ripe corn now,  
bijoux houses of exurbia,  
we are roads  
and it is our nature  
to keep going—  
*in extension is our truth*  
stay with me to the end.

7 September 2018

= = = = =

Or enough to see.  
To speak the ashes  
of distant thought  
a mile of milliseconds  
back in your streaming.

7 September 2018

= = = = =

I hear the wide ocean  
rushing down the little  
stream across the road  
for what else is water  
but its way to find us,  
be there where we are?  
For us, I think, for us.  
Now go back to sleep,  
the moon is almost done.

8 September 2018



## AS TIME PASSES

Accept the burden  
of being old  
the burden of lust  
hunger, appetite,  
accept the burden  
of imperfect identity—

you will never know,  
never say completely  
who or what you really are—

accept the burden of forgetting,  
the little gemstones of oblivion  
that let the sudden light  
of now and only now sparkle,  
pastlessly, almost true.

Accept the burden of gravity,  
hard to rise, hard to lift,  
accept the burden of its opposite  
when things float away,  
thoughts turn gossamer, duties  
vanish, requirements yield.

**Accept the burden of being almost,  
practically invisible to the young:  
you have become at last a part of the landscape,  
rejoice, you have always loved trees.**

**8 September 2018**

= = = = =

Every bibelot, seashell, figurine  
in a house full of them  
should have a poem of its own.  
A gust of wind sudden in the window  
tells me it's a good idea.

\*

*Stone rabbit*  
not much bigger than my thumb  
on the window ledge for fifteen years.  
It has small ears.

8 September 2018

## THINGS

Every object is an inspiration,  
invitation, obligation.

That's what it means  
to live all together in a world.

Nothing is irrelevant—  
even this headache

is a conversation  
with the morning light.

8 September 2018

## **DARK BLUES**

**Know what it means  
who has hands  
on the handle  
hands on the wheel  
the machine keeps knowing  
the wind is just one  
part of it, the hawk another  
you get that color  
when you close your eyes on me**

**8 September 2018**

= = = = =

Rebound – a shark-tailed cloud  
lostin gthe sky. Are you a girl  
or a goblin the bird asked.  
The woman had no answer,  
answers are not easy to find  
in this brittle city – glass,  
crystalized honey in ancient tombs,  
Mayan calendar, teeth of the comb  
boys used to carry in their pockets  
on the way to the dance. Oh all  
the broken things, gospels, promises,  
cellar windows cracked by soccer balls—  
how wicked all games are! The opposite  
of play, that sacred tumult with no rules.  
That much she knew, and told the bird  
which seemed content but did not leave.

8 September 2018

=====

I said to the woman in the elevator  
 Culture is doomed to get expensive  
 high rents. opera, schooner on the rocks,  
 hundred grand a year tuition. She looked nervous  
 so I said no more. We waited, edgy,  
 for the seventh floor. Got out together,  
 both turned left, following an arrow on the wall—  
 could we both be victims of the same disease?

9 September 2018

= = = = =

I want to set the story straight—  
 I am Atlas, I don't  
 hold up the earth, earth  
 doesn't need me or you for that.  
 What I do is hold up the sky.  
 Remember who to blame  
 if I ever let it fall.

9 September 2018



= = = = =

Sad how the Greeks got  
so many of their 'own'  
myths wrong, and we  
get them wronger.

I'll give you examples  
later, when the moon is full  
and the snakes have gone to sleep.—

Mostly a myth is  
something to keep mum about,  
let it do its work inside  
the animal of your thinking breath.

9 September 2018

= = = = = = =

**Choosing the garment  
to fit the day.**

**Colors are your best  
chance to be superstitious—**

**look like the sun on Sunday,  
be an emerald Friday night.**

**On with your sacred tee-shirt,  
pale socks interpret ancient earth—**

**what more can I tell you?  
Be a color today.**

**You will never forget this instruction.**

**9 September 2018**

= = = = =

Old rubber bands snap  
often when you stretch them  
even a little.

Everything gets tired, maybe.  
Not water, not wind,  
not the way they blend  
together in us and come  
out as language—

words are the one  
thing that will never fail you.

9 September 2018

= = = = =

**The immoral moralist  
at his desk in the open window  
borrowing morning again  
from the public time outside.**

**9 September 2018**

= = = = =

Getting dressed in the morning  
is just another part of the dream.  
The trees are watching every move.  
Eventually things seem to get real—  
coffee, weather, noise on the radio  
but don't be too sure – that's not  
really Beethoven, it's something  
he dreamed up they found and played.  
They. They're lying to you all day long  
and from that fiction rises all our truth.

10 September 2018

## THEORY OF NARRATIVE

Listen to the bell  
the bell tells.

The student Anselmus stands by the river.

The student Anselmus stands beneath the tree.

The bell keeps ringing  
the river passes.

There are people living in the tree.

This is where all fiction begins,  
under the tree  
what the old woman  
tells the boy.

The old woman is a bell of course  
or a bird.

She is seldom an old man,  
sometimes the boy is a girl—  
this is the tragedy of all things told—  
tragedy is not always sad  
but is always we fated, we watch  
the inexorable working out  
with minor variations.

**It is Strauss's *Four Last Songs*  
sung after midnight in a distant city  
when only the bell is listening.**

**The end of summer. The end of music.  
But the bell keeps telling.  
The old woman was inside the old man.  
The boy was in the girl's high sad sustaining voice.**

**Silence, the city by the river. The story finally told.**

**10 September 2018**

=====

Thank God I'm capable of self-contradiction  
 otherwise I could never be a river,  
 never feel the tide push against my thinking.  
 O beautiful Hudson you have taught me all my life,  
 beautiful contradiction, mid-channel bearing  
 south all you have gathered, thrusting  
 against the incoming tide from all the world.  
 Teach me bothness. Cure me of a sense of self.

10 September 2018



## SPELLING LESSONS

Will we have enough tomorrows  
to learn at last  
how to spell the mother of each day?

We take turns guessing—  
a children's game called poetry.  
Will it all end when we get the spelling right?

2.

*spel* –

as in Gospel = good spell  
where spel means news,  
the good news.

Or the God spell,  
the news about God  
or the spell that God casts  
that we call the world.  
(God said Let there be ... and there was)

or the spell a shaman casts,  
witch doctor, hypnotist,  
wise woman cooking up

a spellof good weather,

Druid grandsire's spell  
that makes us see this way or that,  
what is or is not there  
or is only there  
on the island of the mind  
the spell washes up against  
and we suddenly see.

Or spell is Swedish *spel*,  
a play, Strindberg's *Drömspel*,  
*Dream Play*, or German *spiel*,  
a game, or playing, *Singspiel*,  
play with music,

or the play on stage  
effortlessly slips onto the stage inside  
where we dream and love and do battle  
with glorious figures we will never meet  
in this life, on this earth, or maybe  
never until we learn to spell.

11 September 2018

= = = = =

After a few cool nights  
after some rain  
the trees look different now,  
each its own green,  
own shade, as it begins,  
the fading, each in its own  
way, Lady, color is pure mercy.

11 September 2018

## TORCH SONG

Cool enough to know better  
*bottle of ink*  
went downtown to listen  
came back home to think.

11 September 2018

## VERNISSAGE

I need to sit in front of a thing  
and listen hard before I see it.  
That's why openings are hard,  
I hear the lovely winey chatter  
but not the pictures on the wall.

11 September 2018

= = = == = = = = =

I heard someone through the wall—  
 it was a long-time-ago  
 speaking to me now, my language  
 but with an older feel to it,  
 like calling a car an auto-móbile.  
 ly was before-my-time  
 sneaking into my time. Mild nightmare.

2.  
 Sometimes when you're writing in the dark  
 the pen runs out of ink or skips  
 a word or two and you don't know it  
 till the next morning. Well, this  
 is the next morning for the lost voice  
 complaining about a white car in the driveway.  
 a dratted auto-móbile had parked me in.

11 September 2018

= = = = =

As once I heard in Thomas' church  
Bach's music coming through the wall

so now staring into my empty hands  
I feel the skin of those I one time held

and then all that old-time time is gone  
and it's just now. Radio on, hands indeed

still empty but no feel but now, cool  
late summer evening air, grass wet from rain

but not raining. Not raining. Cars go by.  
Their headlights show the little world we have

but at any moment the *other thing* comes back.

11 September 2018

= = = = =

Listening to dead voices  
Piccaver McCormack  
the cylinders the disks the internet  
a century has come  
where we can listen to the dead  
anywhere, at home, in the car, jogging  
to Caruso. What does it mean  
to *them*, the ones we hear—  
can anyone be dead and still keep singing?  
Rilke must have thought of this first,  
I wish we had a record of him  
speaking a poem about the living and the dead.

12 September 2018



= = = = =

Organize the evidence  
in a telling fashion  
on the sideboard.  
Then lead the judges in  
pretend you're giving them dinner—  
and indeed there will be  
food enough on the table  
and they will eat. But their eyes  
will linger on the evidence  
guessing, estimating weights and colors,  
naming odd objects, weird  
visual effects. Before  
dessert is even served  
the process will be done,  
they sigh and eat their pudding.  
The poem has been written.  
There is no other way.

12 September 2018

= = = = =

A few more words  
to fill the cup.  
But the crows are silent  
so who am I to speak?

Sky the color  
of an old undershirt,  
the trees relaxed.  
Who am I to work?

Leave things as they are—  
that's hard enough.  
Back to bed—who am I  
to pretend to be awake?

12 September 2018

= = = = =

Hot coffee burn the lip  
watch the fox scamper up the hill.  
imagine Troy before there was a Greece—  
what happens when the same  
world comes again? He hides up there,  
his den behind the summerhouse.  
bet he eats fieldmice, red squirrels.  
What do I know? A great society  
with towers in the sky, lovers  
in linseywoolsey, money lenders banned,  
a yellow river tastes of ancient gold.  
For as far as you go back, there is always  
something that came before. The old king  
with his thousand pretty daughters.  
and he too was young once. a quince  
squeezed in his hand, eager appetite.  
The fox comes back, and why not.  
Nothing is only once. I turn  
from the window, history never stops,  
coffee came from Africa to begin with  
and some way we did too. I dioubt it.  
I think I have always been right here.

12 September 2018

**=v= = = = =**

**Trust the hypotenuse  
let your mind glide along it  
from baseline up to the vertical  
where it meets the Exaltation  
of the Figure, Religion  
is easy, is angular, is like that,  
sly footsteps against gravity  
and then there you are.  
We learn so much about the world  
by falling asleep. But falling  
is the wrong word: we rise into sleeping.**

**12 September 2018**

## TRÄUMEREI

1.

A pinky ring  
not metal slipped  
from hand to hand  
lost and found  
again, left  
to right, safe at last  
inside a glove.

2.

Had to finish  
one conversation  
before the next,  
each kept the other  
waiting, one needed  
the other to make sense ,  
both constantly  
interrupted, then  
the two women  
lost in the crowd,  
called their names  
again and again  
in the crowded suddenly

theater full of laughter  
then everybody gone,  
I am alone, wifeless,  
keyless, afraid,  
and a workman accuses  
me of not returning  
the empty CO<sub>2</sub>  
cartridges I somehow  
seem to have used.

3.

I write these bland  
descriptions down  
to ease the terror  
they made me feel,  
still feel awake.

13 September 2018

= = = = =

Somebody revisiting the new—  
sunshine today, and clouds.

We accommodate to the chaos  
we call Nature, whittle flutes,  
create music to taste the wind.

We try hard. But the left hand  
is always waiting to make trouble—  
but by our new wisdoms we keep fleeing  
from that primal Eden where the beasts still live,  
the sun a flaming sword above us all.

13 September 2018

=====

Horror of things seen—  
 morning is built of propositions.  
 Grammar leads the way. But after  
 noon a wind comes up  
 and shakes the fittings loose.  
 Words can dance around like mad,  
 say things you never knew you meant,  
 shout them, even, so that others hear,  
 repeat them puzzled to themselves at night.

13 September 2018



= = = = =

Then the sun went in,  
closed her door  
with pale curtaining clouds.

She left me feeling guilty  
about something I had said  
or just thought. *The Sun*  
*knows what we're thinking—*

that's where all religion starts  
and guilt and sin and law.  
thick books and maybe even poetry.

Only music comes from somewhere else,  
lets us hide in its different kind of light.

13 September 2018

= = = = =

Pebble in my shoe  
same substance  
as Gore Mountain.  
The earth needs us  
to hold things  
together, close, close,  
so all can be known,  
the taste of light.

13 September 2018

## IN THE GROTTO

Droll way to dark  
led,

                  a stroll  
in countryness  
found a grotto  
spilled its dark  
into our faces,

a white girl  
stood by a stone bench  
her stone hands  
reverencing up  
at a white woman  
who stepped out of the rock  
saying

*I am*  
*conceived without stain,*  
*born without sin*  
*and you are too—*

*I am come to tell you  
we are born intact  
at last, able for light.  
There is no past.*

[At the Lourdes grotto of the Franciscan friary, Catskill NY]

14 September 2018

## ESSAY ON RHYME

Can such be marvel? Iron pen, a feather, an obstacle course to habituate rookie Marines, a semaphore? When you hear me use that word, you know the dark is coming, a children's guessing game: What Word will Come Out of the Dark?

The problem, young man, is that *everything* rhymes. Only a few of them *sound* that way but they all do.

I kneel beside you in the empty tattered technical church, comes from *kyriaké*, the lord's something, place, house we hope but who are we? We don't know what it really is, or he, or she, or we, we are miracles too. We just know from what the word tells is, something belonging to, longing for, the *kyrios*, the lord.

See what I mean? The loss is tangible. Thingless, we wake out of one dream. sigh our way into another. Sign the contract of the livelong day. This is an essay on rhyme.

14 September 2018

= = = = =

Bravery? To get  
out of bed. Open  
eyes honestly,  
gaze at the sky.  
Seeing *what is there*  
is the only heroic.  
Accept the omen  
of the apparent  
actual. Now  
you can breathe.

14 September 2018

= = = = =

Morality is the music  
for morning. Duties  
clear, as a horn call  
in the woods. The hunt  
is on. I am the quarry.

That isn't paranoia,  
just biology: eating.  
going, grasping,  
letting go. Finding  
the way home.

2.

In dream last night I mumbled  
mixed creeds from different religions

and why not? Am I not  
a *mischling*, a half-breed

born of all the stuff we read,  
heard, knelt down before,

kissed in the dark?

**3.**

**So it's almost autumn now  
in our beliefs. All  
the trees are still green  
but each green a different tint.**

**14 September 2018**



= = = = =

In the corral  
of making sense  
the horses are still wild.

Will the weight of a woman  
tame them?  
Will her hands  
understanding their withers  
ease them into clarity?

*A horse all alone on a hill.*

15 September 2018

= = = = =

*for R.D.*

*When Dante danced  
alone the music  
never stopped.*

It's thirty years  
since Duncan died  
and the round-dances  
of his intelligence,  
the czardas of his lifted breath  
pace us still,  
Americans who try  
to hear the sound beneath the sense,  
the word that has no spelling  
except the silence between  
all the other words, broken images,  
child's game, old man's cane—  
all the while desire  
is the clue we follow,  
and we hear, we hear and say  
that's him, breathing.

15 September 2018

= = = = =

There is air out there  
and dim within.

I'm up  
too early to meet me,  
thoughts get musty  
as we sleep. Wake.  
Shake. Make. That's  
more like it—  
get something said.  
Then go back to bed.

15 September 2018

= = = = =

**An empty page  
is a contract  
ready to be signed.**

**(What more can I tell you  
of the process?  
You think the ink.**

**You figure out  
what name is yours today,  
your need, your destiny,**

**and understand all you are  
ready to lose Now  
pick a word out of the air and sign.)**

**15 September 2018**

= = = = =

*Pipto*, I fall.  
Fall, yearn,  
burn.

Noises  
in the trees:  
just people  
or were once  
now just radios  
in cars slumming by.

No peace. Clamor  
inside and out.  
*Pipto*, I fall  
into the world,  
it falls into me.

Piptology is all we have:  
learning how to fall.

15 September 2018

= = = = =

Out of the slipstream  
silver coin

P.S. 159

where my mother taught  
for years I went for two  
then my numbers changed,  
it didn't count, I could still  
stare at the ocean at Rockaway  
evenings and weekends, with no  
limit but Europe imagined out there  
or Tristão da Cunha if I looked south  
only 10,000 miles, always,  
away from home.

The slipstream takes you further  
every day until you're here,  
the opposite of home  
and all you have,  
girls on the beach long wet hair ,  
big sunburned men I  
looking as confused as I am—  
why has the ocean brought us here?  
Will I ever let it go?

16 September 2018

= = = = =

**Rickety memory cabañas,  
scared to take shelter there.  
Pick a coin from a remembered dresser,  
pocket it and sneak away—  
the morning's watching.**

**16 September 2018**

= = = = =

I'm almost gone  
 or am I all?  
 To be complete  
 is also to be finished—  
 filled up, like a Paris  
 bus, when the driver cries  
*complet* and the bus rolls away.

16 September 2018



= = = = =

Siren dwindles in the distance,  
 pursuit continues, cars pass  
 like church bells always reminding us  
 to leave for somewhere else.  
 Daring us to stay. Rubber bells,  
 broken promises, live alone and like it—  
 that sort of Church. I embed  
 myself in yearning, yearning  
 is always for the other to be here.

16 September 2018

=====

The sin of being comfortable  
in a world of pain—  
but then the sinner thinks  
they may not feel their pain  
just as I may not feel  
or be in touch with  
the deep distress that guides my life.  
He pats his dog and thinks of something else.

16 September 2018

= = = = =

**Funest means the opposite  
of what it looks like, kid.  
so bounce your ball  
my way for a change.**

**(scrap from *Seaspel*, June 2018)  
16 September 2018**

= = = = =

Today the sun came  
up the west  
and startled me  
until I saw  
the sky's a mirror  
too some days  
and the green  
trees tease with light.

17 September 2018

= = = = =

The capable chapel of afterwards—  
now what will that mean today,  
what liturgy elicit from the fronds,  
ferns, firtrees, furniture—  
pews, altars, prie-dieus, stools?  
For all things sing, or can,  
and often do, for the money of my mind,  
yours too. The theology  
of such grottos is obscure, the statues  
luminous, evocative, unclear. The *gestalt*  
though is capable, excites reverence  
or at least mystery—in this world  
a puzzle is as good as a prayer.

17 September 2018

= = = = =

I am a child  
trying to figure out  
what the words mean  
I hear the grown-ups  
saying in my head.

17 September 2018

=====

Casting a new play every day  
has its advantages—  
actors have no time to learn their lines,  
rehearse the thing to death.  
Live and anxious they play each scene  
in front of a frightened audience—  
\_\_\_ and me, praying they make sense  
and all our scribbles add up to sounds,  
meaningful, profound, sexy and quick—  
you don't want to bore them with the truth.

17 September 2018

## LES ADIEUX

I'm mad at how  
and when I get mad  
I run away—

peaches and cream  
are things of the past.  
I need bread now,

bread and oil and cheese.  
Or else I'll keep running  
till I run out of ire,

then settle down somewhere  
and watch the park  
fill up with sunlight,

children, mothers,  
darkness, empty out again.  
By then I might

be able to forgive you.  
But sp little is certain—  
have I been born yet?

17 September 2018



= = = = =

Wet roads  
lead home.  
Science says  
we water  
are and need  
and social says  
we seek.  
*All roads*  
*lead to me*  
we think, all  
roads are sea.

18 September 2018

= = = = =

The sun is here every day  
whether we see her or not.  
It's the cloud and it's rain  
we should worry about, pray to,  
name our temples for.

18 September 2018

= = = = =

Despite my priestly fingers  
I have a rumpled thumbnail—  
a commoner, a worker after all.

18 September 2018

=====

(Last night: glimpses of a story—  
as a Jewish person can convert  
to Catholicism (like Max Jacob),  
so also an ordinary person can  
convert to *faerie* or Fairyland.  
The fairies don't just snatch people away  
(like Robert Kirk), but welcome loving  
converts to their elegant hills, halls, habits.)

18 September 2018

= = = = =

Pattering raindrops  
scolding chipmunk  
chattering sparrow—  
life is noisy,  
moody lady  
singing love songs in the rain

18 September 2018

= = = = =

I think sleep  
has more to tell me.  
Here I go.

18 September 2018

Be angular,  
wallbeater.  
No room  
for smooth  
shadowdoubt  
on your joinings—  
force things  
together contra  
naturam, books  
say too much

19 September 2018

= = = = =

Sky almost blue  
I almost me.  
Be selfish  
as a salmon,  
against the current  
all I mean.

19 September 2018



= = = = =

Innocent otherwise  
rubber band relaxed  
on a countertop  
sounds like someone's  
sister singing a tune  
from her childhood her  
mind on something else.

19 September 2018

= = = = =

Room in the mirror  
for someone else,  
what color eyes,  
hair, pick and choose,  
don't always be the same,  
glass be merciful  
glass play tricks  
show me who's really there.

19 September 2018

## DÉDICACE

The ornament of the book  
is the one who by  
speaking or thinking  
made scraps of feelings  
sayings blend into  
a thing of its own,  
out in the world  
all by itself, I mean you.

19 September 2018

## SPECULATION

1.  
catching the mirror  
before it shows  
my face again, spin it  
towards the light  
and let it see another,  
maybe even the other,  
certainly the other side of me.

2.  
What glass is  
and does. From sand  
by heat compressed  
a something stays.  
It shows. It wants  
to be everything  
It sees, and say so.

3.

Latin *speculum* gives  
 German *Spiegel*,  
 rhymes with eagle,  
 means mirror. Images  
 fly, carry infant thoughts  
 away, lodge in mountains,  
 gleam in half-light  
 over rivers, Mirrors.

19 September 2018

# PYRAMIDS

waiting  
to be built,  
Pharaohs happen  
in my head—  
head is an anyway  
house, a shape  
knowing itself  
in the desert  
to help all that sand  
understand once  
there was water  
now there is only  
water where I am.

# 20 September 2018

## SHALE

thin shakes of it  
 slippery on the verge,  
 streamside, years pass  
 slim as fish—  
 alewives hereabouts  
 and trout.

Stone  
 is what I meant  
 but settle for small  
 stones, pebbles,  
 this slaty sky  
 waiting for me since dawn.

2.  
 We naturally ushered  
 one another in--  
 a shallow cavern  
 wet underfoot  
 and we chatted  
 in the shadows about  
 Russian priests,  
 dangerous bicycles,  
 the jewel net of Indra

in which all things  
and all of us are  
caught in mutual relevance.  
There are no accidents.

3.  
The music was Chausson,  
made me think of Jack Spicer  
and Duncan, their beautiful  
jealousies that fed their work,  
music is a spotlight on the past,  
through its wavering tones,  
its passion to be complete  
we get a glimpse pf all we've lost.

4.  
But some persist,  
things, persons,  
sudden vistas, a tower,  
a horse maybe,  
a cemetery on the hill.



5.

All we finally have  
is what comes to mind.  
The the hand has it,  
lets it go and it's in  
the world, complete,  
fgor the first time  
all over again.

6.

And here's the proof:  
the empty cobalt-blue  
little perfume vial  
on the window ledge  
holds all the light  
os this day. Its glass  
is brighter than the sky.

21 September 2018

= = = = =

It's a kind of faith  
that something matters,  
that the words he spoke  
are worth hearing,  
worth repeating.  
Speak them with me  
and we are suddenly  
in the garden again,  
peace all around us  
like soft hands joined,  
even the peacocks are silent.

22 September 2018

## BILLET-DOUX

If I could draw a horse  
 I'd send you a horse,  
 if I knew the Hebrew  
 word for blue flower  
 I'd send you a rose  
 like you've never seen.  
 If I could pronounce  
 clearly your secret name  
 you would come to me  
 freely, and forgive my inept  
 attempts to bring us close.  
 But as it is, I'm left with this.

22 September 2018

## HORN CALL

I could go out right now  
onto the back porch  
stand in sunlight  
and blow the little tin fog horn  
from your old sailboat  
and the fog would come,  
I know it, chill and wet  
and feed the trees, ease  
the dry wood of our house—  
wood like the soul  
yearns to be wet. And things  
would shimmer! the sun  
will still be here, mist  
would wrap around us  
and we'd stand like our own  
ancient ancestors, quiet,  
at peace, while blue jays scream  
and squirrels blend in with the fog.

22 September 2018

## CANTERBURY VARIATIONS

1.

Can't you,  
wary a little,  
pay more  
attention to

the wolves out there  
and those who hunt them?  
That cruel sport has gone on  
as long as we've been here..

2.

Yet you blossom in the woods  
like impregnable marigold,  
leap about among the ferns,  
pluck hawthorn haws  
as if no weapon ever  
worried the fringes of the day.

3.

For it is most at morning  
that they shoot. as if  
light itself is their target,  
trigger-happy, men mostly,  
what woman needs a gun?

4.

On impulse I joined a church  
went to Masses for the frankincense  
prayed out of fear and desire,  
never a thought for the other,  
needs of the beasts  
in the wood, the priests  
of money in their cabs,  
us subway slaves,  
black children with scared  
faces, three of them  
trying to share one orange.

5.

Later I tried to get it right,  
still kept the frankincense,  
breathed for the other, sent

my breath into his bosom,  
 you know the way.  
 And the wolves approved,  
 one came into my driveway  
 and said Be calm,  
 the world is still the world,  
 still in charge.  
 Just don't shoot; think  
 sweet, all will be well.

6.  
 A den of them lived  
 kindly up the hill  
 a season or two, moved on  
 away from all the building  
 going on. A wolf  
 wants peace.

7.  
 Which is where silence comes in.  
 There is a special kind of silence  
 called music, wolves love that best,  
 and those who do music, rich  
 complex music, are wolves at heart,  
 prey on our feelings but never bite.  
 I heard one playing the other night.

8.

So it's the hunters to worry about  
not their quarry. The opposite  
of a wolf is a dog,  
the opposite of a man is a gun.

9.

From Rome to Canterbury to Nangchen  
by way of Norfolk and Damcar—  
that got me there, that is here.  
Alchemy a subway stop along the way,  
beautiful old tile walls, glistening with wet.  
It's so easy to travel if you just stay home.

10.

Sometimes I miss a friend  
and that's how you know.  
A friend is someone you miss  
sometimes, especially  
when you hear a strange voice  
in the street at night,  
or see a figure walking  
slowly along the crest of the hill.



11.

Bells of local churches  
do not ring the changes.  
Dull bong the hour,  
sometimes the quarters.  
The dullness I reckon  
keeps wolves away.  
Bears don't mind,  
and foxes hide,  
paws over their years,  
praying for a decent  
radong or gyaling  
or even an organ pipe.  
You think I'm jesting  
but I have seen them  
flee the dull onslaught  
of tuneless bells,  
bells that forget  
why they're ringing,  
the fire they're made from  
and why we should come  
gather in the chancel  
of their sound.

12.

So I grew accomplished  
in evasion, hid  
in the woods of my head,  
always waiting for  
some woman to bring  
the sunrise. And she did.

13.

I seem to be confessing  
not my sins but my sense.  
How good wit led me,  
the Lord led me, lady led me,  
along the wolf path  
over the hill to the shore—  
and there I find a little  
sliver of the sea,  
gleaming silver in the rainy day.  
And there I blew my simple horn.  
You hear it still.

23 September 2018

= = = = =

Leave the bread in the toaster,  
the bird on the rail,  
don't touch the shadow,  
nothing more fragile than form.  
Walk like a Christian  
think like a Jew, love  
like a Buddhist,  
now eat your breakfast,  
the world's waiting for you.

23 September 2018

*(end of NB 417)*

= = = = =

1.

A sweet word  
coming south  
cloud over chestnut,  
tulip tall tree,  
new walnut on the hill  
first fruits—  
the squirrel told us,  
portaging his green husk.

2.

Things come back.  
It's not all white trucks  
carrying everything away.  
*Rocket and watercress and rue,*  
the thighs of Praxiteles's Venus  
support this solemn world,  
*marjoram and feverfew*  
a Haydn string quartet past midnight,  
yellow flower left at the door.

3.

We do not know the true names of the gods,  
 Venus is Aphrodite is Freya, yes,  
 in the languages of people. But she  
 has her own true name—  
 I think the sea know it,  
 the whispering surf from which she rose  
 to teach us clumsy students how to love.

4.

But to be exuberant about it,  
 overflowing milk and honey  
 and a stuffed bear for every child

the gods are still here  
 and dance seemly and unseemly  
 through the secret places of the mind

from which we make our choices,  
 move, dare to dance our own steps  
 to their music, ah.

that is what they made us for  
 or we made them – who knows?  
 Who will ever really know?

24 September 2018

## THE DRAGON

*for Vesna, in thanks*

The dragon came  
and sat down on the town,  
saved it from the sky a little while  
so all the starry influences  
got lost in his scales his feathers his flames

so we were humans for a while,  
devil-free, *ne Bog I ne Tsar*  
like the old Nebuchadnezzar folk,  
no god and no tsar,  
jus us for a while, us and the dragon,

gorgeous, immense, his wings  
held all of mythology, no story  
safe from his fiery breath.  
he told all, all the tales,  
no queen or wizard left out,  
we listened and learned everything,

because everything is story,  
history, theology, the infinite detail  
of all the sciences, just stories  
he tells us, the wind rustles in his wings,  
his breath enchants us, we linger  
in a wisdom deeper than mere truth.

24 September 2018

= = = = =

*It fell me to this place  
more like a sound—*  
(Haig Erch was there,  
his smile a paradigm).  
My words went often wrong  
—as music often does—  
but still the smile persisted—  
near Cologne maybe  
'or Cologne itself' he said.  
We are named for what we are  
but he from whence he came  
or they did,  
                    who made him.  
I can't go on—I have said  
already far more than I know—  
dreams despise enlightenment,  
at least the European kind.  
I think that's what his smile said  
and we planned to meet Thursday,  
right after some war.  
It fell me to a place more like a sound—  
that's the only thing I really know.

24-25 September 2018



= = = = =

It's like a wedge  
 driven into rock  
 or like a noise  
 in the dark  
 or a drop  
 of moisture sudden  
 on the skin  
 or a piece of tin  
 glittering on the ground  
 or a door  
 in the side wall  
 of a house  
 or a hill  
 out the window  
 or a deer  
 runs across  
 the road  
 or a road.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

The religion of beginning again  
 builds its temple overnight  
 in our neighborhood. Teams  
 of missionaries two by two  
 come knocking on every door.  
 Any excuse serves their gospel—  
 rain or sunshine, price of gas,  
 your clock runs fast or slow,  
 and they know, so knock knock,  
 they have pamphlets in their pockets  
 about how to get started, words  
 to motivate the world around you,  
 hypnotic gestures, recipes for cake  
 that put old-fashioned doubt to sleep.  
 Believe this never was! Believe this now  
 that trickles down your skin like sweat,  
 honest sweat on an autumn day.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

As usual  
 waiting for the other side  
 or turn it over  
 myself or turn  
 out the light and just  
 remember all you  
 wish for me  
 where 'remember'  
 means to make  
 it up for the first  
 time ever  
 just like you.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

The gentle Sharon roses  
are still here, the mauve  
out front, a few of them  
glad of the rain as I am  
I think. And the blue  
out back, more  
numerous, a little,  
and they seem to live  
to give delight  
by being it, huge  
leafy bushes  
full of summer  
deep into autumn,  
they make me love,  
they make me talk,  
blanket on my knees,  
nothing moving but the rain  
and what these tender  
flowers tell.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

Sometimes out of impatience  
or spurts of excess energy  
I play the first two  
measures of the *Diabelli Variations*  
on the table top or counter,  
the fingering all wrong,  
the notes all the same  
(wood, wood, wood)—  
only the rhythm is true.  
Only rhythm is true.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

All right, I admit it,  
 I don't know when it is.  
 There's someone playing a lute  
 in the trees, I had  
 a birthday yesterday,  
 the Civil War monument  
 glistens with rain,  
 my ankles are cold—  
 when is the world?  
 I think time is a young girl  
 humming to herself—  
 as she walks home  
 thinking of god knows what.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

How simple this music is—  
I can actually hear it,  
taste where it's coming from,  
smell where it's headed.  
The lute seems almost in my hands.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

I've lived in this house  
 for fifty years, it still  
 seems new. Is it really  
 mine? The paid-off  
 mortgage says so, the Post  
 Office thinks so, the oil  
 company, even UPS.  
 But when I sit here  
 looking out my window  
 through my bushes  
 I wonder whether anything  
 is ever owned, ever mine,  
 I am still a stranger  
 with a crush on this place,  
 this vista, the tune  
 of the stream across the street,  
 the cars going by.

25 September 2018



## VESALIUS

Vesalius saw them.  
they looked sort of the way  
we do, some of us, men  
not young not old—

*this is what you are*  
his book said, a tall  
beast with veins and arteries,  
muscles and bones—

and you thought you were  
gods! Look at you now,  
color of sausage meat, eyes  
vacant, ears hearing nothing at all.

25 September 2018

= = = = =

**Cold in the car  
rain on the moon roof  
students hurrying by  
to keep dry, too young  
to do anything but feel.**

**25 September 2018**

= = = = =

And down there  
out of sight  
below the trees  
is the sea, here  
in the form of the  
Hudson, estuary,  
tidal, salty, even  
seals sometimes—  
my lifeblood, link  
to Gerritsen Beach,  
Sheepshead Bay,  
Atlantic, home.

25 September 2018

## IN THE VALLEY OF THE METAMBESEN

1.

The words go up in the air why  
because the rubber band of breath has  
let them go, speech is slingshot,  
paper plane later, graceful grateful  
skim the lower atmosphere, Olson's *ta metarsia* where our weather lives.  
He understood at last that language  
is part of the weather, system, sentence,  
speedwell and sweet William and Bible,  
*capisce?* We are what happens to the air.

2.

Broad banks of maybe clover—  
thank-you notes from flocks of sheep,  
so much has passed through this little valley  
on its way to the big valley, mill and gun  
and horse and Frenchmen and a wee Dutch child  
sobbing for its Munsee mama. It differs  
here, that's what it does. In the valley  
of the Metambesen, its healing waters ill-bottled  
by glacial shale. I work in a mill.  
I am the grain they grind.

3.

The careful study  
of the relationship  
between humans  
and their language,  
one at a time  
at best, is the one  
theology we need.  
Speech is diagnostic.  
Poets are self-  
taught physicians  
(barefoot doctors  
in the book room)  
(with a little help  
from Chaucer, etc.)  
trying to get it right.  
Physician, heal thyself!  
I said it in Greek  
but no one understood.  
Speech is diagnostic,  
soft as music is  
it helps to sing it—  
what words recur,  
what liturgy  
hums you to sleep?

4.

Then someone says Hello  
and all the other gods run away.  
The flight attendant  
in her garnet robes  
bends down and whispers  
*this is fun* as the plane  
dips in an air pocket  
and the travelers gasp—  
a word is like that,  
they make a sudden  
gap that wasn't there,  
you level out and recover  
but once a word  
has been spoken  
there is no silence  
ever again except  
inside the words,  
between their warm hands.

5.

Yes, breathe on me,  
ye heathens, your pagan  
vocabulary makes my roses grow,  
late summer Sharon, blue

asters, daisies of Michaelmas—  
 all I know is what you tell me,  
 all I know is what I can  
 compel my clumsy lips  
 to imitate, coax  
 syllables, warm myself  
 at your fires,  
 coven of the spoken word.

6.  
 Not proud of being so slow  
 I make up for it by  
 keeping go—landslides  
 west and floodlands east  
 a word is the gleaming  
 pinnacle in between,  
 close as we can come to safe.

7.

Medicine water

I take it the word means,  
not too alkaline  
with flecks of gold in it.

I taste it daily  
with my ears  
on summer nights  
the open window  
sings it in.

O water is the swiftest stone,  
chases devils and diseases—  
it taught us language  
means to go on and on.

26 September 2018



= = = = =

Strange weather—  
the vinegar  
lost its sour in the night.  
The oranges  
left outside all night  
still there  
uneaten, unpilfered by  
beast or bird.  
Still, there's unlight,  
paper still drinks the ink.

26 September 2018

= = = = =

Adults don't eat candy bars  
 that's how you can tell.  
 When the wrappers float  
 down from the trees you know  
 children are leaving the earth—  
 it's about time, why grow up  
 on a planet of Obligations,  
 Commandments, Legislations,  
 Logarithms? Head for the sky  
 celestial pockets fill of Mars  
 bars. Milky Ways, Tootsie Rolls.

26 September 2018

= = = = =

You gave me a daydream  
and I'll tell you what it was, is,  
someday when you give me a day  
to go with the dream,

a rime  
of true tongues, wet lips, easy  
quiet breaths, nothing fancy,  
nothing forced, just what I thought  
when you told me to dream.  
Isn't that what you mean?

...

(26.IX.18)

= = = = =

Hands grow wise  
from what they touch

but age is contagious  
so be careful—time  
(that virus) seeps  
in and out of skin

so almost you are  
what touches you.

Caught in contradiction  
breathless, reaching out,  
we rollerskate uphill.

27 September 2018

## OBSIDIAN VARIATIONS

1.

Rich text of unexpect,  
glistening earlobes  
of the alabaster deity  
from ripe antiquity  
withered fronds around  
her pedestal but she  
juvenescent in propinquity,  
touch me in perpetuity.

2.

Stone is pure knowing,  
rock is forgetting—  
leverage weakens, what  
we pluck up and cast  
casts us away, abbreviates  
the longitude of our sojourn

3.

O love me, leafy,  
halo my hope  
cunning deep into  
my conscience  
now Sun lifts her

balance pans fresh  
over even my trees  
I almost hear Her.

4.  
Easter in autumn,  
scandal in skin,  
so that even if  
you don't like what  
I'm saying you still  
take pleasure in  
the words themselves  
that say it, one  
at a time! life  
on earth! no mosque  
all minaret!

5.  
Dust on the temple pavement  
hoofprints of the god.  
You have no body yet,  
you're waiting by the fountain,  
schematic lucid, breath  
passionate, circling air,  
you wait for what the water  
tells you, tells me too

who you are. Who are you  
 you ask the quiet fountain  
 and yes, the water answers,  
 yes. I stand in the shadows  
 eavesdropping, hoping  
 to catch your shadow in my hands.

6.

In the labyrinth of suppose  
 give me back the knife  
 I lent you, black obsidian  
 shiny sharp, to trim your hair  
 only a hundred thousand  
 years ago you haven't lost it  
 yet, I hear it tinkling soft  
 in your pocket with loose change,  
 hand it back to me or instead  
 I'll trade it to you for one  
 hour middlenighting in your  
 cavern you discovered far ago inside

7.

when even I was young  
 and the darkness there  
 is all musk and myrrh,  
 Magyar words, Norse fur,

shadows semaphoring  
on every wall of the cave  
leaving traces we can stroke  
just like Plato and all that  
stuff they verb in school  
and in the confusion of that  
profusion they call art  
(such a little name for such  
a vast wall of impossible  
images), in that whelming  
sea of seeing we are together  
wedded in the same sight

8.  
so long divided by natural eyes,  
then we will belong to each other  
and can go our separate ways  
and I could be anybody again.

9.  
Leave the ancient  
knife behind  
offering to the holy  
unspeaking dark  
but even the dark  
has hands.



10.

How's that for a ghost  
 story, love story,  
 lesson in stenography?  
 How long can you hold  
 a word in your mouth  
 pressed against alveolum  
 before it solves itself  
 and melts all over your lips?  
 And do you swallow then  
 or spit it out? The dictionary  
 is made from what you  
 think you mean. But no  
 word ever means that.  
 Least of all this.

27 September 2018

= = = = =

1.

Recumbent dryad statuary,  
Rehoboam, wasn't that him,  
king he was of pagan Israel?  
And all the while the dryad slept.

2.

Lopsided centaur  
half-drunk with desire,  
o who will let him  
take her to Camelot?  
Or what was that kingdom fierce,  
questing, unforgetting,  
lion in cavemouth,  
a little dragon  
ardent in your poculum,  
your silver drinking cup?

3.

Artichokes, colza fields  
stretched over Zwischenland  
under the brave chiaroscuro  
of the clouds. Who is  
the day's saint, sun? A young girl,  
mother of a million thoughts.

4.

Tired centaur rises,  
rouses from dreamy torpor,  
half-a-man I am  
yet better'n you he growls,  
peers at the photograph  
every moment takes, makes,  
hard camera of the head.

5.

I was a skull I thought  
able but indigent  
bee buzz at left ear  
its chronicle of pain.

6.

*Hold you in my arms*  
*no more than that*  
he thought and  
thought he spoke  
but was she listening  
shawl on her head  
her pale eyes closed?

7.

Stand in the empty  
synagogue and look round  
words on yellow walls  
you can't read, won't  
even guess. Not Hebrew,  
else, other, otherwise  
in characters archaic,  
Siberian run es, Irish  
chjsel-dances along  
the rim of wood, edge  
songs, . fringe-writ,  
language of Lilith,  
dialect of Eve. Now take  
your shoes off, you  
stand on holy ground.

8.

Bantam cockcrow  
spills out one more  
morning. Even chicks  
can chirp her up.

9.

High overhead  
bare feet in stirrups  
she rides the sun  
bareback over Atlantic.  
That was my city once,  
pale shimmer between  
the ears, paradigm  
of the incomplete  
she fills out and focuses  
teases us to be as she  
passes over us. Suddenly  
a gull swoops low, now  
we are the temple, four  
walls and dome complete,  
now your voice sounds  
different in you,  
resonance, huge  
vacant spaces,  
hollow head,  
that sinking down  
of consciousness  
that men call music.

10.

Young mother  
with her papoose  
stowing it safe  
in small red car.  
We are all parts  
of one another.  
But why?

11.

And why children  
after all these millennia  
couldn't we be born full,  
full-grown, standing  
down from a cloud, ready  
for a real education  
that in our day comes too late?

12.

Now in her little car she drives away.  
Somehow I know where she is going.  
And the centaur knows too, he's waiting  
for her. stamping the earth. What  
can the sun do but smile? I'll try too.

27 September 2018, Kingston

= = = = =

**The mammal mind  
is built on suction—**

**suck in, digest,  
store, grow large.**

**Let little out.**

**27 September 2018  
Saugerties**

= = = = =

1.

On tip toe  
trying to tug  
the sky down  
around me  
to wake clearer  
or sleep longer,  
the sky will do  
any color you  
need it to if  
you can just  
work your fingers  
in and pull.



2.

That is *tho-rangs* physics,  
 dark before dawn machine,  
 everything is possible now  
 because for this hour  
 you are alone in the world—  
 means you are the world.  
 Everything else is God. Pray,  
 little Robert, pray.

3.

Empty mailbox full of packages—  
 a wordless dream , friendless,  
 foeless. Strange language  
 without words, the tree has lost  
 its leaves even though they still are green.

4.

The feet though thin  
 are string and lift the man.  
 The arms though long  
 can't reach the goal.  
 The mouth can't even say it.

5.

The light is waiting now  
over the hill. The *waiting*  
*game* they say.  
meaning time, daylight,  
clock talk, a voice  
actually speaking words  
you recognize deep  
in the dim of dream.

6.

The news is full of other  
people's lies—why not mine?  
Why doesn't anybody report  
what really happens in the night?  
Because what happens then happens  
only to me. And Me is a most distant  
province, unknown dialects,  
tigers prowl its perimeter, weary ones,  
Me, it is dark in there, Me says nothing,  
Me is scared of the tigers too.

28 September 2018  
5:30 A.M.

= = = = =

Who can remember  
all those Christmases?  
They blur, make me uneasy,  
not the snow, not the reindeer,  
but all frankincense and myrrh  
about the Christ Child  
and never a word or thought  
about the Christ Man,  
what he said and what he did  
and who he is.

28 September 2018

= = = = =

Caught by the word  
a palimpsest of greed  
*I want to be the one*  
but where's my verb,  
that abdomen in which  
all destinations belch,  
blend, ferment, end  
in broken sleep. Bonjour,  
citoyen! The arch  
is on the march, the cathedral  
has such long legs. Marshland,  
meadowmusic, by the sweet  
canal on shallow draft slim  
vessels glide—will you be one  
of those? Or does the fox  
yelping in the larch wood  
remind you of your catechism,  
did you remember to be right?

28 September 2018

= = = = =

This is where we wanted to be,  
a loud lady on a sly trapeze  
snorkeling through my shallows,  
mixed messages, marble shivers,  
ice skates on the moon, you know  
what I mean, don't play innocent,  
the pope decided all this long ago  
and now we have to share the same  
cabana she and I, the sea's getting  
deeper as we speak. And wetter too  
though you'll have to take my word for that.

28 September 2018  
Shafer

= = = = =

Throat-tooth monster  
 we slip down  
 through active chewing  
 into the zone  
 of pure knowing  
 that men call pain.

2.  
 Woven from will  
 you hurried to the wall  
 and wrote a word  
 and all I saw  
 was your body for the first  
 time on earth  
 freed from the web  
 of time, just there,  
 the actual shape of energy.  
 I could not read the word.

28 / 29 September 2018

## HORSE

1.

Stirrups hang loose  
the horse is waiting,  
admire me, rider,  
I stand my ground,  
I hustle the earth,  
I go nowhere,  
I make the earth  
be where I want it ,  
pounding my feet.

2.

Where I want  
earth is always  
just beginning.  
I am an endpoint,  
the telos of blood,  
heavy-muscled—  
when you are pressed  
tight around me  
you think you are everywhere.

3.

But it's always *here*.  
Here is where I am,  
where I am I move,  
when I move I am.

4.

Your legs around me—  
that is the given.  
You give up walking,  
all your going is gone  
into me, you squeeze  
and I become your goal—  
you are only ever  
where I am.

28 / 29 September 2018



= = = = =

Can you tell the feel  
of sun on skin  
from other warm?

Can you read the ever-  
shifting typography  
leaves write in their trees?

Can you bite the wind  
and swallow where it's been?  
Come tell me how,

o please come tell me how.

29 September 2018

## HOW POEMS HAPPEN

Sometimes it comes out sweet  
 olkd-fashioned neat as a fish  
 and swift, done and gone  
 before you know it – scarcely  
 leave your paw prints on it.

But spometimes it comes very slow  
 and then you know it's me  
 (whoever I might be) and you hear  
 the gears grinding, , old dry pages  
 fluttering inside, sometimes a glimpse  
 of a goddess off in the trees or the surf  
 far away and long ago in me when  
 once I builded her a temple, flotsam,  
 jetsam, quartz and marble and tile.  
 just outside Jerusalem, on the rocky  
 gorse-hedge-lined road to Donegal.

29 September 2018

## OUR TOWN, 1

In our town no horse  
but they have a piano  
out on the porch  
they play outside  
in winter – the poor  
music shivers through our air.  
No horse, no hope.  
and they drink fruit juice  
in the bar, supposing  
somehow it is good for them.

29 September 2018

## OUR TOWN, 2

All the churches  
are empty thank God  
peace of the Sabbath  
undisturbed by preachers.

Half the shops are shut  
up for good but sunshine  
gleams on empty windows.  
If I were me I'd live here

and I do.

29 September 2018

## UTENSILS

Pencil tuck be-  
hind the ear  
not so easy for  
eyeglasswearers

\*

Lipstick  
on cold stone  
out in some field  
writes your  
secret name.

\*

With a used toothbrush  
softened by months  
of service carefully  
scrub clouds off  
the mew-risen moon.

\*

Drop your tweezers  
into your empty  
sink – nothing  
else clatters  
the way it does.

\*

How ancient the spoon  
how newfangled the fork—  
you can tell right away  
which way history's headed.

\*

I want to think  
about things today.  
Things have been  
quiet too long.  
:Listen!

\*

A nail file  
is my favorite tool.  
Not much  
it can't do.

\*

Stand on the bathroom  
scale and wonder  
where did those  
two pounds *go* ?

\*



If you go upstairs  
 every night  
 for ten years say  
 how high  
 have you climbed?  
 I'd guess Mount Everest,  
 no more than that—  
 modesty becomes  
 a householder.

\*

Everywhere you look  
 things excite guilt.  
 That is what  
 things are and do,  
 remind of all  
 I have not done,  
 all that's left to do.

\*

All mammals'  
noses run  
only humans  
use hankies.

What shall we make of this?

From his pocket  
suddenly a handkerchief  
not white is plucked,  
applied, employed.

Is it just a convenience  
or a flag of surrender?  
Are we trying at last  
to be something, anything, else?

30 September 2018

= = = = =

Imagining cloud passages  
from a lost gospel,  
how the air is shaped over Jordan  
maybe, or any water,  
a cloud is water they tell me,  
and water is the everlasting language  
or so it seems, why else  
are our mouths wet with speaking?

30 September 2018

= = = = =

Reading the book  
until we come to today,  
the time we call Now  
but who really knows  
when Now is?

30 September 2018

***FROM A LOST GOSPEL***

John has run up a mountain  
 to be with him, to help  
 or be of use, waited shyly  
 in the shade of a juniper bush,  
 thought he heard singing,  
 speaking, voices, more than one.  
 He got up, followed the sound,  
 found his friend all alone  
 in a meadow. voices still clear,  
 louder even, as if they were near.

(from 19.IX.18)  
 30 September 2018