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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 al,l 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
jigging 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 4th 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 for you,
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 dragon
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 have 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;
the Christ dies on the tree
    and rises from the stone,
Buddha rests in clarity on the stone
    beneath the enlightenment tree.
The trees are suddenly
coming back to us,
teaching, priesting.
*The trees come back*
Frightened (= evil)
men start forest fires to repel them.
But they come back,
another century, another weather.
And where I live they loom so large,
amazing burgeoning, never saw the like
in all these years, and how they talk!

3.
Maybe all that fracking
wakes the ultimate stone
that wakes the trees
who call the Man to Come,
the Woman of the Trees,
back to take charge again at last.
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,
ever 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 losing the 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.
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 rifer.
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
SPLLING 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 spell of 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
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$_2$
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 kyríos, 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
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
ahd we chatted
in the shadows about
Russian priests,
dangerous bicycles,
the jewel net of Indra
in which all things
and all of us are
captured 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 of 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,
for 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
of 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
tries 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.
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.
ghey 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
chjssel-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,
meadownusic, 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.
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 sometimes 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 builted 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 behind 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