AUTUMN WAKING

The warmer day
the horn call no one hears
except the frightened deer

horn call in the head
wakes me, plane going over,
two of them, north and south

grey sky glowing the planes
have swept the color away,
celestial paranoia strikes,

what have they done to the sky?

*

I am everbything I see
and you are too.
don’t let the government hide that fact.

A man staring at a tree
is the only one there is.
All we have is choosing, refusing.
* There is a slice of bread chewy as jerky which should not be eaten as the first dream.

Later is licit, buy dangerous always—bread of any sort is the vector of identity:

the loaf we choose becomes us, we grasp it around the hips and lift it to our faces

and whisper to the soft white interior

_Become me_

for I have been myself too long.

*
You swallow the crumb gently, it takes your dream away and leaves you dry, distant music, some guy singing in his passing car

*

or is it the violin youi tried to play in the dream city vbefor you even got around to being born? You were a different language then, long legs, a different kind of bread.

*

So sing these pictures till all your pale walls fill up with love’s gospelling, the girl who rode the unicorn,
the priest who marries them
in blue October, deep inside
the drunken forest where
the oldest dragon teaches men
to conjure bronze and steel.

*

If you can’t make music
pictures will do.
Even if I can’t see them
I know they’re there,

just as you are, there,
somewhere just out of sight,
a child of distance and desire.

*
Then he put on his shoes
hurried out into the street
empty as usual, checked
the mailbox, admired
a crow swooping by, said
This is my republic after all,
this is all there is
and more than enough.
A passing jogger
even smiled at him.

1 October 2018
AGAIN

This is not about being lonely or together or together alone it’s about being again.

Again is a town up in the hills west of Laramie or Again is a glacier frozen even in June

Again is an all-night diner with a hostess sitting on a stool weeping softly at the counter

or a community college course in Ancient Greek.

1 October 2018
AFTER VERY BAD DREAMS

Dream inside dream
and nothing more.
Animals we are
waiting for the thaw
when all this will go away
and we will be simple again,
browse the meadow,
dreamless sleep.

2 October 2018
AUTUMNAL

Omens frequent in seasons of doubt. Desire falters, pumpkins are given human faces, set on the steps outside to ward off ghosts. But all the phantoms are inside already, their house is the head.

2 October 2018
Dream me better,  
elk horn, Parcheesi  
board warped by rain,  
Coney Island Wonder  
Wheel or the one  
I rode in Vienna,  
played chess all night  
long and hated it,  
tepid cocoa at bedtime,  
Copenhagen, anything,  
Staten Island ferry  
to the zoo or at least  

let the dream have intermissions,  
trips to the lobby, Milk Duds,  
bathroom, water fountain,  
pretty girls, usher in mild uniform,  
fat white matron patrolling  
the kiddie section, then let  
the show begin again, we settle  
back down to dream and be afraid.

2 October 2018
Trying to write terror out of me without telling it, don’t want to spoil your morning with my dream debris. At least give me credit for lying low hoping to hide the truth in the mountain of my sleeping form.

2 October 2018
If I were a glass
I’d just break
and that would be that.

But we Irish are born
with rubber hearts.
stretch with pain

but never snap,
ever run out of feeling,
just keep beating.

What fails us is breathing.

(I’m no more Irish than you are—
all this genetic stuff is just a boast:

there’s more to me
than you or I will ever see.)

2 October 2018
Health is incurable. 
The leaf said so 
the girl left in her book. 

I think it was hers, 
it lay on the ground as if 
placed with thoughtless reverence 

the way we do. 
But what did she mean by letting it fall 
or I mean by picking it up, 

shouldn’t it just lie there 
like geology, always under us, 
always true?

2 October 2018
Cured of fear
the window stands
clear and closed
like a bishop
snoozing all through
the canon’s homily.
Rained all day,
flooding maybe
for the morrow.
How long after all
have we been on earth?
Aren’t we home yet?

2 October 2018
Her thighs are different from those of all others, longer, leaner, shapelier, muscled with light, the kind of light you find in stone sometimes, alabaster. She has held herself and the world erect a million years counting from yesterday. Aphrodite, wave-born, stand at my side.

2 October 2018
Words to see by—
hold the sound of them
against your skin,
lick them a little, even.
How gross we are talking
mouths full of spit,
ears full of wax, ancient
amber of hearing, hands
crawling with germs.
And yet something happens,
something fine, even,
leaps from self to self
too quick to be stained
through the contaminated air.

2 October 2018
And I said in the dream
(but to whom?):

the most sacred space
in tragedy
is the proscenium, proskenion,
the wall on which the shadow falls

it multiplies and enlarges the actors’ gestures—
it is the temenos of the play,
the charmed circle—
that is still preserved
on our stages, and somehow
even in movie theaters
   (the screen as single window,
floor plan of the event,
   telescope though which we see
comedy and misery)

but eroded in telebision more,
and even more
as the moving image
folds up in our pockets
and seems hence more like a private daydream than a public statement of the speaking body.

Will the images finally survive only inside, as in this dream of ours or children’s reveries on the way to sleep?

3 October 2018
A day
    has got to be different.
There is a rule
of common language says so.

Daylight means
that much at least,
a twelve-hour aria
I have to sing,
a new one for every opera,
an opera is a day,
the audience always
impatient to begin.
I have made
too many mistakes
not to make more.

All I’ve learned from experience
is how to experience more.

I used to be an adult
till I realized this,

then all the wrinkles fell away
inside, and left my old face
quivering with light.

3 October 2018
All the
saints I used to know
I don’t know many now,
Francis, Mary, John
I still talk with in my way,
we all speak Humanese together.
blood has a dialect of its own.
and what they know I try
not so much to understand as
simply know, wordlessly,
the way you know the weather.

3 October 2018
Shafer
Casting a grammar
over the simple
physics of an experience
whatever it is
you think your work is done.

Pygmalion rested by the stone
sure it had no more to tell him

then the music began.

3 October 2018
Guesswork.
Pick a card.
Queen of Something
you name it
not black not red
snow around her feet
a great bird outstretched
close over her head.
Pick another.
Another Queen.
and then another.
They all are, all are, they all
are, there is no one in this
forest but the queens.
No on in the deck.
You can whistle all you like
but you’ll always waltz alone.
Paragraph by paragraph
painting her portrait,
thick lines of Magic Marker
in lavender pale as soap—
and there’s a name on the green map,
a dinky town called Eden
the picture has to account for
why people would call it that,
soft wilderness. Little
by little the lines of her jaw—
have to be simple about it,
a portrait has to be slow
to be true to the time of her face
young as she is, or was when I began.
But this is no story, it shows
and shows, somebody else’s face,
pretend Picasso with a piece of chalk
a gecko climbing up the wall, pretense
is vital in the visual arts, pretend
you are looking at me, pretend you see.
The town was named for her mother’s tribe,
her dad a no-account immigrant, 
still trees [?] tried to listen to him 
and so the town got built, never been there 
myself, too busy painting pictures 
using the unlikeliest materials, gerundives, 
crushed optatives, a lick of rose, 
calendula blue, a twist of nasturtium, 
dreams like that until the sheet is full— 
I sell my pictures to the busiest churches, 
their gods are all different but the face 
I paint is always the same—sometimes 
the ministers add whiskers or ;ipstick 
of their own to make a gender statement. 
Use them as they like, I don’t care, 
Americans do weird things on Sunday anyhow.

4 October 2018
Don’t let it answer, 
don’t let it spoil 
the silence of the question—

a question is not just a thing 
with an an answer to it 
like a tail to a dog.

A question is pure energy, 
a wild forest, a gemstone 
glittering half-buried in the rock, 

a question is a hand stretched out 
and all sorts of things can come 
touch it, fill it, maybe satisfy 
it a little even, its hunger, 
for a little while. But a good 
question lives forever.

4 October 2018
From the bluest sky
an understanding
settles around us

shaped like a woman
standing there,
quietly. as at a table,
moving subtly
inside her simple dress—

her body’s movements
make the dress move too
but the moves are not the same

d this is how it moves
too, the whole of it,

the inside moving
inside the flowing
shapely stretch of the outside,
only there
tell you to wait,
wait,
    give me time
it whispers as you watch,

like weather,
or history—that name
you give to things
you think you remember.

5 October 2018
Sometimes his name falls out of the caption and you have only the face to think about, or the first time you saw him, or a ball of wax he handed you saying

   Now you have to do it

and you did.

5 October 2018
One word more
or maybe less

a river is an altar
a crow is always waiting.

5 October 2018
FEE SIMPLE

They find a diamond mine beneath my house,
I own it, all down to the center of the earth.
The diamonds are still in liquid state, it’s left to me to compress them
squeeze them into hard, hard, transparency, word by word until they reach the surface and there you are.

5 October 2018
The totem pole
we used to call it
the beast and bird in us
stacked up into the sky,
--I am the animal I see,
--I am the bird that sees me.
I crawl beneath the post
wanting not to be me
or anyone, someone
no animal has ever seen.

5 October 2018
As if they were waiting for me
the spinning top, streetlight,
names of things. I knew the face
from somewhere else. Colors
on the top’s top as it spins.
That’s how things happen, riots
in the streets, the long war for peace.

The nation had been involved in wars and military
actions for 50 years. Most of the conflicts were lost
or without positive result. Still the nation fought on,
all over the world, its targets always trivial,
seemingly random. Men and women died in
considerable numbers, not enough to be noted by
the population at large, enjoying as they did the
benefits of an economy built on such continuous
warfare. Observed could foresee no end to the
warfare.

A tree stands in the forest,
knows the soil, the wind.
The DNA of the human soul
has so far eluded theologians,
who differ sharply on its sequences. 
As long as there are religions, plural, 
there will be wars, continual. 
No reason for it, just the way it is, 
the tree says.
What does a birch know 
about a maple’s pan, 
does the oak really care 
about the berry bush near its root?
Yes, he thought,
they were waiting for me, 
knives in their teeth, 
like pirates in comic books, 
like crocodiles in dictionaries, 
all the different ways 
we spell the same word.

The sky, brighter now, 
gave him hope, why? 
Half a mile away 
a bear lumbered out of the old woods 
by the coach house. 
This must mean something, 
he reasoned, like the skirts 
on a ballerina or the ice-boats 
scudding across the bay
come February,
only one winter away.
Not a leaf was moving,
time, time was the first mistake
of so many.
Somewhere in the woods
there is a dark tower—
it is a decent person’s obligation
to spend a life looking for it
finding it, locking
the sinister [?] door of it
so no one else ever will fall in
or be trapped in there
humming with anger
like the sound of a factory
turning out airplane engines,
or groan of trees crushing through undergrowth.
As he falls back to sleep
he asks if he remembered to lock the door.

6 October 2018
Things go on.
We are mortals
after all,
for a while.

6 October 2018
Write out all your distresses—the script may help someone else. Write out is White-Out, words erased by being said.

6 October 2018
Deny the evidence of the senses—it is your only chance for liberty.

6 October 2018
To sit in a chair
and talk about walking—
 precarious. To walk
along wishing you weren’t
makes a pilgrimage
of every step. Now find
the saint whose shrine
you so slowly approach.
Look closely at the sky—
you may find help up there,
never mind how the trees laugh.
They call us humans to begins with
because we live on the ground.

6 October 2018
EXAUDI

Listen to me all the way down through the canal that runs from the Old Mill through Jamaica Bay all the way to Merano by Venezia where the brick bungalows dot the wetlands and the train takes us beyond these petty distinctions to the definite thing, the absolute, the sea.

6 October 2018
1.
I too am from Africa
but by another way.
In the great ravine
a shadow fell,
took root, grew.
That was me—
you judged me stone,
I call myself a man.

2.
Someone picked up the stone
and tossed it idly
up in the air,

it fell

far off, somewhere
on the east coast
of Atlantis,
the island they call America.
3. But I still remember the other place, dark inside the light, light inside dark, the cries of animal drift down from the clouds.

6 October 2018
ADOBE

Adobe was Egyptian
to begin with—
the word certainly,
maybe even the thing.

But we can do
without the thing
can’t we? Isn’t
the Knowledge enough?

6 October 2018
I have lived
as one segment
of your orange—
now eat me
free of your skin

she said
but I did not know her
or see her face
only her voice,
only a sense of female
presence, words
from a song.

7 October 2018
I sat defiant
in front of a mirror.
Turn me
into myself
if you dare.

The glass shivered
but did not break,
I began to cry,
the tears made
my face soft again,
younger a little
even, relaxed
with abandoned hope.

7 October 2018
HOW TO SLEEP

Chambers are charms,
rooms are runes.

He rewrote his bedroom
so the walls aligned
precisely with the compass
and his bed aimed due north.
Cardboard walls with cellophane windows
canceled out inappropriate angles.
Now pillowed along
earth’s magnetic flow
he had no excuse
for not sleeping well.
My inside and outside the same!
he cried, and slept profound.

But in his dream
the savage beast Irregular
appeared, crawled
on its four elbows
out of the thicket
of forgotten obligations.
Our man slept on, yes,
but would you sleep
like him, aligned
with only one idea?
The sun laughs at right angles.

7 October 2018
At 9:22 the sun
came in the southeast window
I walked to meet her
always trying,
sleepy as I was, to learn
how to behave like a gentleman.

7 October 2018
She saw a cougar
stalk along the ridge—
later we followed its huge
footprints in the snow
right up to the little
cliff by the old stone bridge.
The tracks followed the smaller
wedge tracks of a fleeing deer,
both vanished at the brink.
No animals in sight.
The world is very big.

7 October 2018
Walking barefoot
is a circus trick
a mother learns it
from her kid

then the gauzy
curtains part
she looks outside
outside looks in

her child though
is still asleep
so where could
the world be now?

7 October 2018

[Composed using Stephens Turquoise Ink, a thirty-year old bottle long ago dried up, a lingering scab of ink moistened with a few drops of water.]
Old ink
do old palimpsest—
desires re-inscribe themselves
along the timeline of the heart—

he stood on the el platform
watching the wind
play with trash along the tracks

years passed, trains
came and went, he
came and went with them

but still sees candy wrappers
old headlines tossing in the wind.

7 October 2018
Sometimes we live for the past
like animals headed home,
burrow down before dawn.
NAZI ECONOMICS

Hunger abates
when listening to chamber music.
Theresienstadt
an experiment in feeding captives less.

7 October 2018
Anything could happen.
It could snow.
The world is a big spoon,
a horn you can actually blow.

Years gone by the old poet
was describing a young woman,
metaphors came to his mind,
were offered, understood.

The young woman grew
real out of her likenesses,
a ship steaming out of fog
into harbor, home! Herself
and no images! But I digress.

8 October 2018
The important thing is unity. One talks to one, a sparrow flutters past her knees, he shreds a wedge of sandwich, tosses it near the bird.

They listen to each other, the bird flies away. This is politics. This is all we can really do to change things. *Una alla volta,* one thing at a time—one person a time. They even sing so in opera, and opera never lies.

8 October 2018
READING THE REMEMBER

Analyze the ink.
Stare into her eyes
to see what’s behind you.

2.
Congratulate the seashell
twirled nautilus
for coming home, dry land,
to be with us
other exiles from the sea.
O pale curve, dark
swerve of cavern
leading always in,
help us to remember.

3.
We’re speaking here of evidence,
real science, numbers
chalked on the sidewalk,
children hopping
uniped from square to square.
4.
And we’re taking risks.
Time is a knife.
It stabs as well as slices.
Right now in Omsk
a scientist is measuring
the words I’m speaking
against the calendar,
history cracked in half,
dark of the moon
heavy on my shoulders.
I groan like a pilgrim
and there’s opera again.
My true love, endlose Melodie.

5.
We walk past the fisherman’s house
to get down to the sea.
We go quiet, he’s been out all night
and must get his sleep.
Through the bushes, down around the generator,
quieter now with all the solar power
(mirror-tilted up the hill
I dream of light)
and reach the road.
Cross it to the pebble beach.
There, that is my secret.
You can walk there
if you can think of it,
dragon-guarded, sea-mist robed,
you can walk
to any place you really mean.

6.
But where’s your evidence?
That’s what we need,
and not just in Omsk—

you assert that DNA
is what the ancients meant by soul,
‘anima’, the eternal
breath that breathes you,
the rule that runs you.

We see in our time, you say,
a revival of ancestor worship,
“23andMe” you cite, our blundering
measurements of what it is
that came to be me, you say.
I look at the seashell
Crichton brought from Buffalo Bay,
it looks like my ancestor too,
smooth curve of unknown womb.

You say antiquity
is coming back our way,
photos of grandpa
enshrined, charts
of family history
(they dare to call them trees)
all over the wall,
distant cousins called
out of nowhere on the telephone.
In that way learn
grandma was a Methodist—
what more could science ever say?

7.
How long this song!
Ancestor worship
is worship of the self,
praise the gods
who were wise enough
to make me me.

O mind, shield me from such vanity
or the song will go out,
not even like a candle,
leaving not even a curl of smoke behind.

8.
Forgive me, I’m using
the smallest vocabulary,
I left all my fancy words
in my other pants,
the ones with ink stains by the crotch.

9.
The world is a spoon, I said,
it is something to eat with
not something to eat.

Evenings these days by the river
we seem to be driving
into the clouds. The clouds,
the clouds, we cry,
amazed by their massive
geometry of form,
resemblance, certainty.
Amazed by all that’s given to us
to use,
    to change us with
if I may be awkward
for a moment,
    plump soprano
in perfect voice.
    Color to come.
the clouds came close and hid my doubt
and it was gone when they lifted,
another day, morning on earth, now.

10.
Little lines
that stammer the truth,
purgatory poetry,
he loved
at least
what she
looked like.
The seen has a way of staying.

I felt so sad to see him only remembering.

8 October 2018
Legendary, or enough to tell a mountain on a map, the scale of distances. Cars climb it easily. We on the other hand on foot. Do not.

Say the obvious on any map your home is *north*. That’s where you’re always knowing.

8 October 2018
Mrs. Lovely by the hand
he took and led her
where the young were dancing
smug in their mobility.

She groaned to be old—
why bring me here, she asked
the dancers are sneering at me.

He had no answer,
only his hand,
warm on her pale arm
just above the elbow,
squeezed gently

then she knew,
    there are other,
so many other,
    ways to dance.
But the images
were waiting,
milk in the churn,
buttering maybe,
crows in the corn.

These are the pictures
we grew up decoding,
poker deck, old uncles
sucking on cigars.
chewed butt ends
still smoking, the dog
next door, tawny,
with three legs only,
slimy inner tube
floating in the pool—
no wonder I can’t swim.

8 October 2018
Resemblances pale before the actual sky.

There is deceiving in what we say.

Links are obvious: men want. Things are there to be desired.

Long ago they called this state of affairs the ‘devil,’ district attorney, prosecuting angel.

We are witnesses for the defense. We shiver in our libraries, museums, brothels waiting our turn to testify. Alas,
the testimony
we are about to give
may implicate us.
Our books are so long,
so confused.

_Xan I love the world
and not get caught?

Every good child wonders that.

9 October 2018
NOTES ON THE WAY TO NOWHERE

Every children’s book is a grimoire.

A bed is a thing to hide a wolf beneath.

Evidence on every plate
piled high with dying.
We kill animals and plants. We eat..
That is why the teacher said:
Eating itself is sinful, our original sin.

Sometimes it gets
too late to be now.

Elect a fool
or you’ll have to take his place.
Once I was weather
then I was pain.
Now I am yourself again.

Warmer today
trees so pretty still green
everything girls it out there.

Boys it in here—
nervous, ready to jump.

 Soon it will be now.
 But not enough.

Do people really
rotate in their sleep?
Zoroaster said something
finally a little like that,
a song maybe, *Lie With the Earth*,
Czerny or Chopin or Hugo Wolf,
earnest, romantic, flooding with change.
Hard enough to do the other thing:  
sleep like an arrow  
headed somewhere  
while everything else spins round you?  
But no, it’s you after all,  
those feathers barbed to your shaft  
whirl you as you go.

That’s why we never really wake up.

I saw the picture  
before I saw the thing—  
that makes me the richest  
child in the garden.

God’s footprints in the soft jade moss.

Invictus someone wrote,  
“Unconquered”  
then he was gone.
A canyon broken by the sun.

Impasse – figure at the end
dark down there
beckoning?

Mallarmé taught us
a space is as good as a song

but only the way
a sing is good—
Zukofsky said “after bread”

or did I think
once some song
sung to refute that?

9 October 2018
The mirror splits
in two
    the truth
comes waddling out.

Never trust
beginnings.
Endings too
deceive us.

Only when something breaks
does the actual manifest.
All the rest is dream. Sweet dreams.
1. Cosmos
   city is a world
   but who my city is?
   Will be? Is that
   the other name of you?

2. Some policy here,
   thought police is
   anybody’s door,
   “sport the oak
   to seal the deal”
   the real

3. For I was entangled
   and at need. The night
   for one girl needed me.
   She spoke my name
   and I came running—
darkness always makes
the same mistake,
forgets my name
everywhere but on her mouth.

4.
Flashback to Sweden,
war comes running,
a princeling from Karelia
abducts her hospitality
What is a town?
A town is a tower.
She watches from the ledge,
snowflakes and fighting men,
but why, why?

5.
They are uniformed with anger.
She wants to be a city—
every child needs that.
I’ll be a subway and a reservoir,
a riverbank full of foreign vessels,
a street full of department stores
she thinks. Men listen, already they’re quarrying the stone that will be her.

10 October 2018
I am the night again. I hurt with hours. I listen to myself breathing—this is what fear feels like, to be the only one there, here.

10 October 2018
One tries to fade—why not?
I have enough grandchildren
to build a city from if only they knew who they really are. And I am.
then they would, and would tell me.

10 October 2018
It’s getting light  
as I write.  
Am I not a wonder?  
And it’s all my fault.  

(A miracle of *Post hoc ergo propter hoc*)  

10 October 2018
A few drops of ink
write a week’s worth of words.

[still this old Stephen’s turquoise]

10 October 2018
Carry nothing
and be everywhere.
Let the long line of your attention
unfurl across the ill-named continent
until it finds the Deep Excluded,
motherlode, the first real.

10 October 2018
1.
Getting ready to look at something else.
Look at coins on the table, silverfish, oldish, hard to read, get out my loupe my wolf sees clear in the jungle of the very small.

2.
And do I see? What looks back at me? Head of an emperor, Athena’s owl, face of a goddess, a tree on Mars?
3.
A coin is an autobiography of someone else.
Pomegranates purchased.
Ice rink skated in,
pack of Gauloises (yellow, taste of Maryland),
spare change, bus ride,
subway train five decades late.

10 October 2018
MORNING ANTHEM

Everything will be OK
if I just do everything normally.
The trees are yellowing
blue breezy sky.
Just do the things
you always do,
nothing can go wrong,
the priests are playing
golf with the president,
and on the kitchen table
the cantaloupe is slowly ripening,
faint aroma already at its bellybutton.

10 October 2018
Watch me closely
as I climb up the stairs,
this geometric cliff
the old house holds.

In each step a landscape
opens in the grain of wood,
oak I think, I stare down at it
and I have seen, have

said this many times before.
Because stairs teach us to repeat.
Make the same move again
and again and you’ll get there.

And at the top step a little window shows the stars.

10 October 2018
I think of the book I once saw
on my mother’s lap, a book of mine,
the most recent, her eyes sad,
her fingers on the closed book.
Will you ever write, she asked,
something I can understand?

What do you suppose that did
to m polyglot canto-bellowing polymath act?
A mother is the world
you’re born to—

obey the world.

10 October 2018
Coins of no country
coins of pure image,
what can I buy
with a picture alone?
An owl or a lion,
an odd one, with a man’s face,
and what does he say,
roar like McClure on a gentle stage?
And that tortoise with a tiny head,
I marvel how he sustains
this whole earth spinning on his shell,
Her shell. Coins have no gender
or get the gender wrong.
Coins clatter on the table—
a sound we’ve heard
for two thousand years—
as long as wood and silver
danced together and men
studied attentively their every move.

10 October 2018
A tomcat is a very male cat.
A tomboy is a girl.
If you think the world is crazy
wait till you open a book.

10.X.18
Blunder some
opening the word.
Tried to say it
some other way,
breath broken on a stone,
crazy young girl with a bible—
rain floats these things away.
*Do you know what you’re saying and even repeat?*
Landfill property all streeted already
but no house has.

2.

There is however
whenever you listen

a conspiracy against quiet.

They fear quiet
because in silence
ideas might come
and ideas are bad for the king—
or whatever we call the sexless goon
who rules us now.

Ideas are bad for autarchy.
3.
But I know nothing about that.
It is always silent in my stone.

4.
I lay there, imagining ways
of seeing Gothic cathedrals as ugly,
cruel monuments to fixed beliefs,
grey, grey old stone
defying decent gravity,
hideously gargoyled, chained
to martyrs, scorched
by the fires of heretics, Leyden,
Rouen.

    Tried to unsee their beauty
then I thought the stone wave of steps at Wells
and oak-towered Ely, and I wept.

5.
I didn’t have to decide.
It was waiting outside
like a tree, or a salesman
going door to door
eternally. Noise
of a week-whacker maybe,
or a madman machinegunning the earth
in a rage because his mother died.
Meantime my brother hangs on his cross
on so many walls all over the world,
and how little I have done to ease his pain.

6.
Long lines of wild geese
cross the sky

and you hear them too,
strange code of their honkings

what are they seeing
or deciding or fearing

or giving away tone
by tone some urgent

message from the heart?
How can we hear them

so clearly and not know?

11 October 2018
Midasly holding one’s own—
a book of poems
gold only in the hands of its poet—
we deceive ourselves to glow,
we perish to be permanent.

11 October 2018
When the young is older than the old, play in rain, quaff coffee gratefully for the tree signs each one of its leaves with veins, we read, it is Thursday, it is this planet only, we wait patiently for forever.

11 October 2018
Kingston
DANS LA CARTOUCHE

Name of a king.
He ruled for a while
then the river flowed.

11 October 2018
Kingston
CREATURES OF HABIT

1.
We have our habits
we do what we want
a habit is a thing
like liberty in chains.

2.
On a corner in Baltimore
I stare across the avenue
at the pasted-over windows
of an ex-department store
an ex-relative used to own.
I was as usual waiting for a bus
that as usual was late as I
as usual was getting out of town.

3.
And there too
birds flocked overhead,
city pigeons not country geese.
Towns too are creatures of habit.
4.
There was a tiger
in a zoo nearby
(another town, another tiger)
white enchantress.
I looked into its sleep-keen eyes
and waited for some magic al
person to appear at my side.
They always do. It has
something to do with zoology,
astrology, hot smell of fur.

5.
Always is a funny song,
sad sort of, like an Irish
come-all-ye, river flow,
autumn come. Always
is full of old friends
with new faces, tigers
and coconut palms,
silver coins in my sweaty fingers.
6.
Habits have it.
Have us
in their GPS’s
tell us to turn
in six hundred feet
left on some
street you can’t
catch the name of
but you turn.
Habit has your measure
and you know it,
has your name on it
so everybody thinks it’s you.

7.
Dip the pen
start again—
this is an opera
the overture even
isn’t even over yet.
8.
Look at those
clouds out there!
I think the alphabet
is our darkest habit,
scribbled all over
the sky. No escape
from what is written.

9.
Last and least
my name
that leash,
I hear it
in your fingers
tugging me on.

10.
O dear love
you are gravity
oldest habit of all,
I will answer you all my life.

12 October 2018
NEED

Get up and need something right away.
Need doesn’t wait.
The thing need needs hardly matters,
just be quick, right behind you breathes another need waiting to be fed.

12 October 2018
Rejuvenate the evidence
see it again
for the first time—

The paradox of looking
amazes me always,
always another
wave cresting
motionless in on us.

12 October 2018
Wind tumult
in one tree
all the others
moveless—why?

Each one a being
must be, each
sleeps its own sleep.
I see a tree dreaming.

12 October 2018
Lost my touch
taught it away
willed the chink
in my mindscreens
closed but the wind
of what I didn’t
know blew anyhow in:

over the vast meadows called
The Meadows a people called
The People anciently roved.
Everything came after. Division
of languages, feathers of
a single bird. A crow of many
colors flew far back in the mind.

In sleep we try to find again
the place we never were, the true
American inside this weird mistake.

13 October 2018
So much of dreaming
is finding your way home.

Now blow your horn—
the thing about music
you have to pretend
to be awake to play it
embouchure, fingering,
pedal control, all that—
you can listen as you sleep.

13 October 2018
I’m tired of sneering
at my desires
and your habits.

I just want to be Irish
again, half-human and
half the earth we stand on,

come from, die into,
wind over marshes, gorse
hedges. salmon in the stream.

13 October 2018
When one is earth
one sneers at nothing.
I want to be a meadow
again, with flowers
if possible, the wind talking.

13 October 2918
It helps to see the joggers run*
they’re not going anywhere but
they helping the earth to spin.

I have relatives down in Australia
who do their footwork too—
doesn’t matter which way they run,

the earth is an excellent translator.

13 October 2018

*A Saturday question:
do joggers blog?
Do bloggers jog?
Are we a divided nation?
My problem is
I’m always saying something.
Shut up, Roberto,
let the language talk.

13 October 2018
And sometimes remember what we mean. Pther suns the day is mocking our pretenses to identity. *Nous sommes vagues*, indeed, we are waves aperient and disclosing sudden gaps in the single sea, momentary caverns we think of as ‘me’. We still are water, mineral, can find our way into every crevice, and what we find we fill, and what we fill stays wet.

14 October 2018
What a strange
life my little
life has been

everything ordinary
everything weird

Is it so too
for you, messieurs,
Mesdames?

I’d wager
you’re stranger
than you know.

14 October 2018
IDLEMAS

the feast
of bidding
quietly at home,
watching the birds
and let the light
do all the work.
Our litany
is breezes
in the trees,
in ancient language
slowly slowly
come to know
just enough to smile
and fall asleep.

14 October 2018
I have less to say than I thought, I’ll have to let the words do the walking all by themselves all the way to you.

14 October 2018
SONGS FOR GYÖRGY KURTÁG TO SET

Less of an animal
than a storm cloud
over forest but who knows

Willkürlich in another
language and why not

Go all the way whom

Admire every
is the only way

Specifics are the saviors
of every situation
a season is a symphony
so touch me quick
Sing it away
day by day

I was a clock
got tired of running
floated down
river of instead

tops spin
but who?

my first love
was gravity
and I fell

I remark the white speed
along the blue road
how soft your petals
a child startled
did from a sad potato
planted a green stem should rise
and a flower come

history
has no hands

I hold your book
as you read,
you hold my breath

Melisande
lit a candle
burns under water even now
a quarter after churchbells
on horizon
a field of colza,
flowers but no crows

Even the sloppiest
art is precise
we are made that way

one finger
on the moon
the empty crowded room

urgencies enough
to dip a paintbrush in
and then begin

can you make fire
after all
by muttering the sacred name?
who planted this wall
who built this tree?
every child is an ancient mystery

pregnancy in men
long ago
abolished by philosophy

reindeer on tundra
or is it my eyes
watering the dead?

language shrugs
its shoulders
we call it verse
it turns it turns
us around
Cross it out
before you write it down
then listen!

maybe memory
is the real
danger only

Black beef cattle
on a rainy meadow
I think me too.

15 October 2018
Were they waking
when the tundra shook,
meteorite arrived,
message from a star?
Oh those theosophists
the reindeer with mossy antlers
read and understood the sign.
Went on doing what they do—
whither else would Wisdom guide?

15 October 2018
I don’t want to lose you
you are the song
I sing to myself
at night, or when at dawn
I see a single cloud,
small, detailed, particular
in a deserted sky.

I don’t want to lose you.
You are the sweet touch
one hand knows how to lend another,
sentimental maybe, but the heart
knows how
to translate such tropes
into profundity.
I don’t want to lose you,
you are water table and equinox,
remote fantastic things,
the horse’s mane, the peacock’s eye,
the smell of cinnamon

I don’t want to lose you,
you are the house where language lives,
you are the reason for my arms.

16 October 2018
The level field
the light ascending
once I knew your breath so well
(how dark it is inside your clothes)
I’m used to being important to people
but I’m not important to you—

autumn has come
to explain the differences
(I try to be on the other
side of the sheet always,
a smile from the sidewalk
waving through traffic)

how much truth need a day have in it?
Isn’t the vocabulary of the hours
philosophy enough?
Don’t burn Bruno again,
set the midground free,
that’s where the mind works best,
between creeds and credentials
a free space, pure
as a child’s eye,
I need to be important to you,
why else the water fountain,
the opera house, the silver
coin left on the bar?

16 October 2018
AFTER HÖLDERLIN

where take
when winter
the shadows?

These leaves
leave. That
is what they do,
call a thing by what you are
they do?

There is precision
in every mistake.
I watched you washing
your hands, how
one the other
knows and does.

Once there were long clouds streaming
across the uninterrupted.
Birds flew fast, apologizing,
minimizing their intrusion on
that which must be
always the same. Midnight at morning
I thought I heard the men say,
you picked tow small fruits
from an unknown tree, brown, like cherries, hard. those leaves smooth spears.

The shadows he missed mostly that alphabet of light, celestial graffiti scratched on a complex earth, forests, brick, seas and the same inscriptions cover all. But when the light dims the song goes to sleep. Where shall I take my music when the words desist?

17 October 2018
The color changes
the answer doesn’t.
The child on his pony,
the child on her horse—
we are accent marks
grave or acute
on a ridden world,
patient world,
the world.
Every morning beg
forgiveness of the ox I ride
into the exile of the ordinary day.

17 October 2018
You have to know where you’re coming from to know where you are.

Whenever you look up you’re almost there.
REVENGE

revenge means to come again and again, seeing always the same,

a mirror the best revenge.

17 October 2018
Sun in sun out
the October day
answers by leaves.
Messages everywhere
I’m too wise to read.

17 October 2018
THE MUSCULATURE OF IT

mercy town name  alder English  tree
I spied a centaur  speed walking like a tree
thee  asked for remission to take a touch
firmly  on the bezoar stone  soft bedded
crepuscular within the system  of
ardent naturalists of another time  encomium
amoris  what else can we do but  love

2.
spillway all over again  hydroelectric alongside
phoenix flushes  rouse from boscage  to renew
sparrowhawk!  chalk farm  alphabet it
till it horizons up and sings  stings with color
snipe under hedge  woodcock island  yes, sing
I meant no other  side of the river  where the
and the other departed  bivouac eternally

3.
so it became known  transpired in the talk of that town
Tiberside  gulls pounce on fish trash  even so far
inland seals on the sandbanks  voluptuously lithe
even motionless  even when god looks  the other way.
17 October 2018
It is never another time
the dog barks now
anguering the trees
shadow-vexed by lucid dawn.

Everything can hear,
everything has feelings,
I am I suppose an Animist
as Europe used to call
us savages who think
everything is alive,
everything has soul.

18 October 2018
Aren’t we all echoes of one another? (Even the single-godded Jews thought snakes could talk and burning bushes issue stern commands. I don’t mean to mock those holy stories but to catch in them a lingering sense of our share in the infinite trembling net of being-feeling-knowing-telling we are.

18 October 2018
The world too
is a word,
a text
that you can revise.

18 October 2018
You should need a driver’s license to read certain books.

18 October 2018
I’m full of opinions this morning, 
deadly consequence 
of beef gyros and collard greens. 
Or was it staring out the window 
or brushing dried mud off my shoes?

18 October 2018
Sometimes I wish it were easier to be me.
But then I remember what an immense effort a bird makes from tree to tree. Only our pets discover idleness. Would I dare to be someone’s cat?

18 October 2018
Respell me
in brighter clothes
to look like
one of us at least,

too many accent marks
on me as it is,
shirt all tattered and gappy
and no skin shows through.

I want to be a better
impostor of myself—
is that so much to ask?

18 October 2018
There are animals waiting in us—
am I a country
or am I just one cup?

Listen to them whispering—
folk songs of the inner planets, Venus mostly,

my human brain Bartoking away single-minded threading through their counterpoint—

and when I speak of myself I very much mean you.
SALOME

Forget the music for a minute—
Oscar Wilde had to write it in French
I have to hear it as I wake
in German, John the Baptizer
denouncing the king and the queen—
their daughter will fall in love with him
and kill him because that at last
 alas is our native language.

19 October 2018
When a man is faithful to the trees that grow around him, folklore begins. When a woman answers the water in her well, stories spring up and tell themselves through us. A story is forever.

19 October 2018
All the stories ever told
add up to a pigeon
on a park bench in Brooklyn.
I mean a crow in your back yard.

19 October 2018
When you cast a spell
cast it far away.
Or better still, leave it
locked in its little crystal
cabinet. Then nobody gets hurt.

19 October 2018

I give what I am given.

*Do quid dedi.*

19 October 2018
1. 
Temperate 
    takes its time. 
Cloud herding 
    my old line of work 
frantic indolence 
to guide the seeming world 
into the stable of the possible, 
my soft little horses of the sky.

2. 
Which is to say milder 
today, after yester frost, 
and maybe drizzle anon 
to ease the parched trees— 
though dryness is their business now.

3. 
O how I used to love water 
glass after glass of it, 
rejoicing when the girl at Toffeetti’s 
would bring a fresh ruddy
late-1940s pitcher loud with ice.
All of that is what it means, ago.

4.
So I dried out. No H$_2$O—
too basic for me now, I need
a little acid to make sense—
a lemon squeeze, a sugar cube,
eau sucrée in the Old Quarter.

5.
And that’s just me—
you’re in this transmutation too.
What did you use to do,
all the time and far away?
Tell us now the secret
abstentions of a busy life—
your blushes will make you look healthier.
6.
You can think of this as light opera in purple ink, telling some of the truth to make you dream. Fantasy is what works best. Close your ears—don’t you hear my music now?

20 October 2018
One of those people raised in a tropical storm came north to teach the middle-classes how to dance.

Brave adventuress! Under the shadow of Brooklyn Bridge she danced slowly from one corner to the exit—Roebling could have watched her if he lived and would have thought: the dance of the other cures the self’s paralysis.

20 October 2018
Rainsky over sunshine in the trees— just a minute it lasts—

the artist of elsewhere trains two projections overlapping on our one space then turns the whole installation off.

20 October 2018
Will anyone understand how hard it is to be so easy?

immense pressure to be a single crystal—quartz is diamond enough in this blue world.

Or citrine, my love’s stone, or calcite that grows near here mild stone, dear friend, coaxing color from the general light.

20 October 2018
Where does my next cabbage come from?
Who is my white cat?

I need so many agencies, hands, wheels, a woodchuck standing up beside the road.

20 October 2018
Sailing people are the worst,
their skeptic boats profane
the pure presence of the sea,

the sea sings to them constantly
Don’t go, why must you go?
Stay where you are,
I bring you everything I have
wave by wave I lay it at your feet.

20 October 2018
So little light
left in my sky,
I recall Duncan’s
“frying-pan with eyes”
and know the magic’s
yet to come, half
Christian and half
that other forest,
talking trees and Mary
Magdalen the chatelaine of both.

2.
Morning’s easy to deceive a self.
Go to sleep listening to Scriabin, Brahms, Beethoven,
anything can happen.
Cello Sonata No. 1,
just familiar enough to leave
a friendly taste on the lips of sleep.
3.
You had bad dreams
from which I woke
and you slept on.
I felt as if I had
walked six miles in winter.
I got up and wrote
some lines the sea said to me.

4.
And where does one go
to mend one’s broken sleep?
Or must two go together
to the same fountain, same
crystal goblet left on the copmg?
And by then it’s morning.
The water we swallowed
turns into light.

21 October 2018
Keep track of what can’t be lost.
Count the pebbles on the beach,
the leaves in the Prater,
the notes in the partita.

21 October 2018
Again one tree moves,  
tosses with wind.  
And the others are still.  
How close the wind’s  
lips must be,  
a kiss of meaning  
only that one tree feels,  
understands. Tell me  
tree, one more thing  
I will never know.

21 October 2018
Nothing frightens me.
Everything mazes me afraid.

21.X.18
LINGERLY?

I could barely pronounce it.
But that’s what she said,
the girl in the car
color of cloud
who stopped in my driveway
as if to sell me
aluminum siding or a new religion.
But before I could even
begin my polite refusals
she rolled up her window and backed out
and was gone, left me alone with her word.

22 October 2018
DEITIES

_Eros_

Everything starts again.
It is the only way it can.
High and low—
still a few miracles
left in his quiver.

_Demeter_

Her ancient marble statue
with red curly hair
looks so very like Charlotte
I gasp with understanding.

22 October 2018
And then there was a stone
I rubbed it in my hands
under water like a car of soap
till my hands
and all the rest of me
were clean.

22 October 2018
= = = = = =

Numbers fall away,
the leaves though mostly
climb to their trees.

It is good to resist—
 isn’t that what the Eden
story is supposed to show?

Resist the temptation
even to do good,
even to do what has to be done.

Go, learn another language
if you insist on doing
something with your head.

22 October 2018
Suppose time had no numbers
and it was always now.
How would I feel sitting in this chair
at this desk in this window,
studying those busy trees out there?
Would I be permitted?
Would all my guilt suddenly disappear?
Or is guilt built into the moment,
the sense that I should always, always
be doing something else?
O numbers, numbers, you are Solomon’s wives.
countless, always counting, demanding,
I run from all of you and call my fleeing now.

22 October 2018
Pick flowers from the rock,
name them one by one—
not what botanists call them
but their actual names
that come to mind, your mind,
as you touch their petals, or bring
each to your nostrils or your lips—
this, this is language.

22 October 2018
GHOSTS

can be as unforthcoming
as the living.

One stood
by the side of my bed as I woke,
neither smiling nor frowning.
She said nothing, then she was gone,
leaving only the image
of a sky-blue pelated skirt.
Was she what the Victorians
called a ‘phantasm of the living’ or
the visible spirit of the newly dead?

I call
them all ghosts.

*Geister,*
soul-minds at play
around and among us,
gaily, the departed,
or nostalgic come-agains,
specters of the rose.

23 October 2018
Sometimes I wish I were a color
but then I fumble through the spectrum
wondering which one is me.

Can’t decide. Write purple, think pink.
Love green. Put on my chasuble
of flaming scarlet for the Holy Spirit.

Pray brown to the ground to bear me up.

23 October 2018
They used to do it a lot when I was a kid, dumb advertising stunts. They got the whole thing wrong: not exhaust smoke alphabets fluffed across the blue but blue, baby, blue itself, bring that color down and write the sky in us.

23 October 2018
Colors are merciless
aren’t they? They ride us
and you know it,
know it
so much better than most,
they can be as subtle as ghosts
but they rule,
they won’t
let the eye alone.
Color has no conversation,
always shouts or whispers
in our ears Listen, looker,
there is no yesterday,
there is nothing but now,
nothing but me.

23 October 2018
Thinking of someone
is a little like
praying to them.
We have so many gods!

Or are they only saints
in a timeless heaven
and we are too?

23 October 2018
What kind of answer am I to whose question?
That is the quest for Parsifal—you know, you really know you are the one, the intended so find the place where you belong, the cave still echoing with the question.

23 October 22018
Tell time for me
my oldest song

who listens now?
Sun late poured
into the trees,

everything seems.

2.
Music is always trying,
all its tricks, to find
out what noon means,
climax, exaltation,
the now that could be always.

23 October 2018
THINGS

come home
with us, this
blue handkerchief from Delhi
tattered, this
    moon full over me.

2.
Things belong us.
We move silently
in reciprocals, touch
by touch we tell.
They come with us.
We come from them.

3.
I don’t have to tell
all their secrets,
plenty of fish in the sea,
words in your heart,
the names of things.
Let the mind close for once
on a salient fact
and sleep. This is the animal
called truth. It rushes away,
under what they call a hunter’s moon.

24 October 2918
A new book
floating by the dock—
what a skimpy fraying line
holds it to the bollard.

So new
it doesn’t need reading,
it sparkles all by itself
content in some kind of sun.

24 October 2018
A DEFINITION:

*haronch*

1. a glass of forgetful;
2. a ribbon worn by the dead;
3. a cart or carriage full of masked travelers.

24 X 18
Glisten, partner,  
your deed’s to show  
mine to praise.

It is Wednesday,  
crisis of that Semitic sequence  
they call a week.

Now is just a little hill,  
come, we’ll climb it together.

24 October 2018
The sounds of words remind us who we are and how birds fly.

24.X.18
In white, in her greenery
or mother’s garden
or who knows where, green,
she stands, a child of maybe five,
formal as all children
are left to themselves
to stand there, still, and be
for the camera. She knows
what cameras do, give
the sight of her to someone else,
anybody,
````````it means
that what she looks like at this moment
is how somewhere she will always be.
A photo of a child is like Pharaoh’s pyramid,
enduring, locked tight with secrets—
no one can know the future or the past.

24 October 2018
Shafer
Her fingertips pressed
a hundred little hollows in the clay
so when the bowl was fired
each sunken place or lake or scoop
remembered her, and those
who lifted the bowl up
to the light or to their lips
somehow were holding her—
not all of her, just her hands, the part
of her that wants to give and be received.

24 October 2018
Shafer
Sun spurns dim—
we are at home
with that great Whom
who loves us with her light.

2.
lightly. Pounding
on the tree trunk—
the world sounds,
the world is hollow.
The world repeats
until we understand.

3.
If I walk down that alley
I want to live again
the cobbled roadway,
the bare branchlets of
pussy willow O
someday spring.

(late October, Kingston)
.24 October 2018
Day some color begins to know us.

Day feelings recur, know the body again. Day asks why every time.

25 October 2018
Had a letter from a far friend. Discipline is best, trust compels me, sleepless nights all such things—what to call it when no sickness is, but everything is wrong?

25 October 2018
Avoid consistency
it’s your only way out.

Freedom from habit
is the only freedom
most of us will know.

25 October 2018
The gnomic animal
snarls quietly to itself.
Doesn’t drink, smoke,
take substances dubious
in. Thinks
everything has to come
from inside out.
Poor beast, mon semblable,
mon moi,
 he waits
for dawn
all day long.
Nothing changed while I wrote down.
Maybe if I wrote up?
In a society where everyone is too fat, or too thin,
it is hard to find the stairway to heaven with pretty angels coming down and up.
We live without a norm— no temples for a city’s deities, no grotto neatly tended doorway to the underworld. Without a norm how long can words go on meaning?

25 October 2018
The shelf called Gravity
on which we all are stored

for what future purpose
who had in mind?

25 October 2018
Hard to read
letters, paper
has such cold hands.

25 October 2018
If it’s small enough you might get to see all of it.

25 October 2018
It has been a long time. No more than that, and no less. Come, the Mass begins.

25 October 2018
Things share themselves with us.  
I am a child,  
I can’t get over my wonder at that—  
it’s all here for me!  
And so I must also be for you.

25october 2018
Person walking on the ground
too far away to tell what kind.
Moving steady, sidewalk in the trees.
What wonders we get to see!
A passenger. A miracle.

25 October 2018
Morse code
woodpecker
on the house wall—

alas he’s not
speaking English.

25 October 2018
The look
of people
is easy,
changes
with the me
who sees them.

This is a song
from a lost genre

City & Eastern
or even longer
ago, ill-Englished
from the Latin,
maybe, somebody
far away still
knows how to sing.

25 October 2018
Red Hook
VULTURES

*for Iris*

I asked you what your country called this bird, you made a word noise I couldn’t hear—your voice is soft, my ears are hard and still those birds were circling overhead.

I asked again and this time I pretended to hear too embarrassed to ask you again. Smiled, I like vultures and told you so. But tonight I looked it up online, found the Czech word is *sup*, pronounced just like our soup only said quicker, as if it burned the lips.

So soup in the sky over us in Prague. But we are in Annandale, with birds up there, birds I love, huge wingspread, they eat the past and harm no living thing. In Tibet I’m told they carry marmots from mountain tops down to streams below to drink, then bring them home again.
But I don’t think you said *sup*. What did you say that made you look that way, smiling sideways at me as if to say *Did you like that?* Tell me one more time the word I didn’t hear.

25 October 2018
The sail
is some,
the tense
is now
little by little
we walk the verb
to sleep.

Then on father’s
lap a map
spread out
insisting, this
this is my require.
But perhaps he
too sleeps.
2.

Agency is best.
To do and do.
If not, report.
From the mines
(coal, calcite,
lady quartz)
a song comes home:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{see my} \\
&\text{skin my} \\
&\text{long perspire.}
\end{align*}
\]

3.

Pillar after pillar
of ordinary truth.
Are you my
bible yet
or still.

\[
\text{muchacha?}
\]
I am everything
but you.
4.

Resume the real.
Now sing this whole together, make one of me your scholar admirer, by your glance liquefy the mirror, pause all passing. Never mean the mind less than music.

26 October 2018
Bags of juniper,
    something on the fence
I can’t make out,
can you?
      Color reddish
like old wood
on a barn say,
a door, a gap
full of comings and
changes,
but I think it is alive
at least as roses are
or would be if this too
were springtime
and not just words.
Snow tonight they say
maybe.
      One more word
I can’t make out.

26 October 2018
Coronation,
flower or flood,
carnation, incarnation?

A march by Elgar
glooming through the grey light
eastbound in empty cathedrals.

I stand alone
monarch of a damaged silence,
smell of a rose.

26 October 2018
Look in the mirror
nobody home.
The light was off
when I was made.
This is slower even
than you know.
There is a mineral
inside the soul
beyond belief,
a child’s wagon
full of stars.

26/27 October 2018
Being awake quiets the mind
at least enough to let it glimpse
the shiny copper dome atop the real.
We were somewhere else too long
In shrill impossibly rational arguments,
noise of all the selves trying hard
to be the self that wanders the world
seemingly single in sunshine, me.

26/27 October 2018
When she comes here
with her dragon
will she be on its back
flying to use through flame,
through fume, or will it
pad along peaceably
at her heels, smoking
only a little? I know
so little about this animal
yet I see it clear in mind,
huge dignity of its wings,
a whole folklore of colors
gleaming from its scales
and leathers. And its eyes!
eyes like I have seen at times
in the mirror, fierce with love,
wild with sudden understanding.

26/27 October 2018
Elysian mistake
hawk in high gear
scours the meadow

come with me
to Saturday market
old cheese and new apples

I don’t like apples give me pears
the hawk still hovers
worries the squirrels

you hear them bellyaching.
Weather’s all we have
between us and the mind,

we live here for the trees
maybe they brought us
to admire and take care

but nobody likes being reminded.

27 October 2018
Give me a chance
to write one so-song more,
a so-song sings
only what is so,

and anything the mind knows
will tell you so
(abd to lie effectively
you must know the truth)

just try it, open any book,
open any book at all
you find a mirror—
and today that is my song.

27 October 2018
A PHOTO

Didn’t she use to be somebody else?

27.X.18
Here is a habit,
road over weather
went, want,
wait for the bird
to call you
using your secret
name even
you don’t know.

Milan Hill Road
27 October 2018
Milan Hill,
cold rain, trees
up here still
holding against
November,
the wind writes
its breath in them
but the leaves
will not fall.

27 October 2018
Sculpture of light
across the valley—
we are shape
by what we see,
by what it lets us see.
Long ago the glacier passed—
all the rest is up to us.

27 October 2018
Even in another language
it will be true,
y*a vas lyublyu
Lenski cried, using
the formal not familiar
second person singular.
Because love is like that,
takes the salt sweet
skin of a touch
and graces it to a grander thing,
a formal exaltation,
her little finger
part of God’s hand,
God’s pPlan as the churches say—
and all we know about it
is what we are.

27 October 2018
ON MILAN HILL

It’s good to write
up here.
    place is time.

    She gave me
‘a glass of water
but from what well?

Blessed by some
saint, some chemical?

27 October 2018
Not to have
and not to care
to have.

Release.
The yellow
leaf leaves its tree.

27 October 2018, Red Hook.
THE BUSINESS

1.
The price I pay
for being me
is what?

Another place, o lofty
chancellor of the mysteries,
are you Hermes or are you Helena.
I see only the shadow of your forearm
fallen across my page

songs come too
in quires
you sing, and I feel your smile
prickle on my nape.
I wait.

2.
Because being
itself is a negotiation.
We open the door
and the story starts,
of course, our mothers
told us that,

vulva, revolve,
that lets us in and out.

Buy the price, Master, what is the price?

(The revolving door goes in and out at once.)

3.
*Myth* is an old word that once meant ‘word’
then whatever that word told.
Myth is tell-tale, tattle-tale
about the gods
and the gods we are,
heroes at least, lost
in the fires of lust and war—
is that what you meant?
Is that why we both are weeping?

4.
Hermes let me walk
all my passions off,
dusk in the marshes.
I walked till the burden
of emotions eased, I thought about nothing, was tired, found a place to sit and was told: This was the first word. Then music happened and that tiger boy from India I took him for a girl at first, through his power made me smile, then handed me a cup I drank, but only half of it.

5. The third word was an open door again back home among the chemicals I drank the childish alchemy I’d wrought and began to speak!

    Out came all the words I ever read and as I heard the words I said I wrote them firmly down.
6.
Food and drink and Sunday markets—you see the soul’s finances now.
Gaze out the window and start to chant—the sparrows will laugh at you the way they do but wise boys and girls will understand as if you were a talking mirror.

7.
That’s how we know:
because we tell.

8.
Then, only then, the music starts.
It takes three thousand years to turn the inside out into the sunshine where we can hear so we know, a little, now and then, tune by maybe, chord resound, upsoaring ninths of Richard Strauss, for one moment know what we were thinking. What thinking is. That business that goes on and on
and seems to be inside.
Now we know the myth is speaking in you, by you, your difference, every story you tell is different
the myth is the same.

9.
Look up and tell me how love is a breath,
How much does it cost to say your name?
Can I even afford to be?

Myth is the money of the mind
and silence is the mint where it is coined.

Talked my way into trouble
it what we do
then talked my way out of it again.

28 October 2018
When I come back to life
i want to be a different bird
so I’ll have to be born somewhere else
with rooks or magpies or lammergeiers
soaring the cliffs round Innsbruck
I could whistle down to Mozart again
and make our music out of what he hears.

28 October 2018
Stovepipe hat
suit jacket
(mode of 1950)
grey sharkskin
double-breasted.
This is Mallarmé.
The words always
have to be wrong
to be right. Always.

29 October 2018
Bottle caps
some are
harder than others
to unscrew

Is this them
or does the hands’ strength
wobble through time,
a stronger grasp
today than yesterday?
O secret silent miracle of things!

29 October 1018
The sea is continuous, continues us.

Wherever
water flows
that is the sea,
it reaches
into the land, touches us,
flows back again
into its continuity.
I stood in the shallowest,
boat launch ramp on riverbank
and knew the sea.

The two
gulls beside me knew it too.

29 October 2018
FORTH

This book
of the coming forth
from night every
morning writes
with my cold hands,

how medieval of me
to scribble my way
into the day, here
in the vast scriptorium of the sky.

*

But what I meant how
gentle morning writing is,
even genteel, no harsh
words or truant images
nice trees and the eyes
of friends or whoever they are
I met last night in dream.
And none of them say their names—
a name has edges,
a name is harsh.
Synergy—that’s the spirit
the day wants. Do it,
write with the trees, the wind,
your guess is almost
as good as theirs,
sometimes you can even
tell a tree a thing or two,
don’t hold your breath,
let it out, set
the wise word free.

So this is about
morning and gentleness,
god knows what’s coming next,
it’s still so dark inside the trees
still keep their leaves,
soft, soft, let the cloud
over Cedar Hill talk too,
the woods have good ears,
woods are soft of hearing.
* 

for Tamas

Whatever it is, 
don’t let it fall. 
You brought the elixir 
of midnight, carried 
the viaticum safe 
through the crowded 
streets of dream, 
and here it is, brought 
from the other side of light, 
taste a little on tongue tip, 
rub a little on your upper lip, 
let it scent the way you speak. 
Time has ended. 
This is eternal day.

30 October 2018
The song of truck
tires striving
north on 9G
like a siren
over the woods.
What is a world?
A place where everything
speaks, sings, demands,
a world is where everything
eventually forgives.

30 October 2018
HIC SUNT DRACONES

from and for Sophie Strand

We live them
we live upon them
we call them roads
or rivers,
but they are dragons,

we think we lay them out,
we dare to bridge them.
We pave them,
pollute them, dredge them
and the most patient of us
from time to time sieve
gold dust from their flow,

while the kindest of us listen
and from their fluent language,
we learn to speak, and not just speak
the things we think and see,
their language
lets us speak lucidly and beautifully
the things we do not know.

30 October 2018
The least we can do
is renew. The clock
is waiting in the steeple,
the weathercock
twitches on the roof,
the mansard window
looks towards dawn
and what are we going to do?
Every building
nails a message to the sky.
Every cotton handkerchief
holds heaven in its weave.
We are the busy spiders of this world,
time we wove, and space is what we see,
flecks of light our brains rescue
into other worlds, and other people
standing near us in the garden.
When will we do something new?
When will the sky really be blue,
blue as the lapis a Buddha gave us,
blue in its nature, not just its seeming,
blue with healing, blue with something new.

31 October 2018
ON A STATUE OF ATHENA

Something stern about her face reminds me this is human. Gods are always smiling even when they’re angry—strange I’d have to tell a Greek sculptor that, explain his own religion to him whoever he was. The smile is over us, the smile is how we know.

(That’s the trouble with using human models—sometimes we get carried away and make a snapshot of some girl and not the goddess’s lineaments)

31 October 2018
= = = = = = =

for Masha

Wordless music wakes the mind—
lyrics send it back to sleep

31 October 2018
As long as someone is telling you something you’ll never learn to wait for silence,
The greatest, oldest, truest teacher.

31 October 2018
Aggerate, heap it up
till you can’t see the sky
then you’ll know you have enough.
then sit down and cry.

31 October 2018
No wonder I wander
all day long
with night in my eyes.

31 October 2018