

11-2018

nov2018

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "nov2018" (2018). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1419.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1419

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

=====

Writing the dark
in the igloo of the mind
snug in false certainties
against the wintry otherness
that really is.

At least you try.

You wake. All Hallows,
the dead are all around you.
But they always are.
You make the sign of the Cross
above the loaf of bread
but fear to break
a piece of it off and eat.
The dead are driving
cars and trucks up your street.
Was this worth waking for?
There once was a city
where even you could sleep.
Boulevards and libraries
and other things you vaguely recall.
Amenities. Smog outdoors and clear
in here. Where it is so dark now,
the morning.

1 November 2018

PARENTHETICAL

(A cheery soul,
I save my gloom for poetry)

1 November 2018

=====

Let it alone
it will love you no less.
False Conclusions
will be your book—
you are a leaf
fallen from a tree,
a maple, a girl
gave one to me,
said see these
tiny black spots
in your red and orange?
They are little universes
lost inside you.
Girls talk that way
where I come from
and boys can't tell if
I means you.

1 November 2018

=====

Dark quiet morning.
The 7:52 AM garbage truck
took all the sounds away,
they stuck to its roar,
followed it up its road.
Now the serene trees are still,
carved out of jade.

1 November 2018

=====

The need for more
dances through the Baroque.
No song sustained, no
long melody. A tune
chopped into dance steps,
jiggety-jog. I need
the long song, stretched
from heart to heart,
recessive even, lasting
longer than death.
Dance is evasive—
sing your way to me.

1 November 2018

=====

**Sketch (upper right)
of a flame in brownish red.
Strike a match
and touch it to a new idea
to make it permanent.
Burn your Bible
to make it come true.**

1 November 2018

=====

Candle in a cleft
the rock breathes,
flickers. Light
thickens till we see.

1 November 2018

ON THE CONTRARY.

**The womb of light
brings so much forth
we stagger
from manyness, blue
shadows doubling
the forms of there.**

**Where has all this come from?
Some say stars,
some say chemicals
leached from stone, sea, atmosphere.
C,O,H,N,
the high priest's tribe
is all we are.**

So all the books
are lying.

That's
what books do.

2.
IF I repeat myself
often enough
I'll change,
the message
will flicker,
spirits
will hurry from the woods
drunk on new meanings.

1 November 2018

=====

Bands of color
know the eye.

Miles away the train goes by
the rice paddies outside Patna.

This is grievous, this is distance.
Girls don't go there,
boys read about it and are afraid.
The train. Vapor of its passing.
The rice remembering how to grow.

I hide my eyes, as a child
under the comforter,
as a man in the dark.
Dark enough for you?
We ask in the street.
Stumble over lamp posts.

Grievous,
everything we see awake
has been translated from the dream.

Fact. It's all a translation.
What did the old German in slippers
whisper aloud to the Russian girl
playing her accordion in the street?
We lack the middleman, the dragoman,
only the translator knows the truth.

But we know colors, after all,
colors continue us,
the right path, the Great Trunk Road
across the subcontinent, Delhi at dawn,
everything but elephants. Grievous,
her backpack weighs a week,
bent low under sheer going,
she turns her back on her way
into the marshes. *Morass. Marais*
where we saw the shadows
all creep by themselves
along the street
as if they slipped
seal-like, eel-like out of the river.

It is too far, I say,
let me stay here
a little while longer,
you feed the pigeons for me.

I'll take care of the blackbirds here,
 bluejays, cardinals, waxwings, crows—
 their parliament is still in session,
 we need more translators, many more,
 this is grievous, this is Europe
 in our faces here, China in a box,
 the South Pole in every playground

everything is far away.

That's what colors say—

only we are here.

All form is fantasy

c lose your eyes and see the real.

Grievous. No wonder
 the children are frightened
 in us and of us,

no wonder,

no worship,

the theologian said,
 her robes pulled snug around her
 to be warm against the chill
 of untranslated truth.

**Outside the greens are yellowing at last,
late, early November, grievous,
teach me to distinguish,**

**but only color matters
or color is the only matter,
everything that you can touch is just a dream.**

2 November 2018

=====

Glad foretellings hunger us—
the kids uncross their legs,
stand up, yawn. The day is over.
The Mass is over. The book
flees out the window, the teacher
slumps over his desk, the priest
sinks to the altar steps, it's over,
innocence is spoiled again, they run
out into the bushes to smoke, pee,
come to life again, O life
is hard when you're young,
when you still believe,
still want, still feel.
Run away while you can,
grow up slow, or never,
mail yourself a letter
now and then, one you'll get
a few days later,
study it and figure out
if you are still who sent it,
pray to truth you are still you.

2 November 2018

[NOTES OM EURYDICE]

(for and from DZC)

Vastness is pastness.

When you are vast enough
you enter death—
living or dying,
in either case entering the underworld

which is the real world.
It is the under, the foundation.
On it everything else is built.

Of that world, all of this —calendula
by camel by glacier by every footstep—
is thje shadow.
We die to come alive.

That, or something like it, is what Eurydice
told her lover, who loved her
for what she could tell,
what she could make him tell.

**That is why the people called Orphic
took Orpheus as a god—
because he knew how to hear
and above all knew who to listen to.**

**A god? A god listens.
The very word meant
the one *we call out to*, o hear us.**

1 November 2018

THE TEMPLE

the shadow-barn
where winters are stored
the dream reported—

1.

It is something to remember.
The fisherfolk of Delos
walked underneath the sea.
Looking up, they saw the Sun
refracted prismatic through living brine.
They came back on land
and wrote down what they saw.

2.

So language was born.
And every night we do the same.
Take my hand and three deep breaths.
See how long we can go
without breathing a word.
Let it all store up inside
so if ever we come to land again
we'll make articulate report.

3.

Sun blaze. Common language.
 Cornerstone intact, the temple gone.
 Strange that temple's used only now
 by Jews, who have a faceless deity,
 formless and everywhere at once,
 no need for a stone box to inhabit.
 No statues. No entablature of grace
 dancing through human forms.

Still

the temple stand

secure in our vocabulary,
 waiting every morning to be rebuilt.
 Or turn that eager clause inside out.

4.

Once in Kentucky
 I lingered in an old tobacco barn—
 empty, no leaves stacked there for aging now,
 the farm had been unworked for years.
 But the smell of the place! the dry heat,
 the deep incense of all those leaves,
 those years, so dry, so warm, intoxicating.
 I was alone, the wedding party chattering outside.
 The barn was silent. This is temple enough for me.

5.

The gods asleep. Every
temple is like this,
wordless, exciting, no image,
no prophecies, just the silence
from which everything is born.
Who cares about temples?
We have outgrown the gods
but need them more than ever.
Walk the bottom of the sea with me
until we get it right.
We are the temple where the gods are stored.

3 November 2018

TRHE AURIGNACIAN ANIMAL

rebus of the human heart
humping away in the chest cave,
its eyes glisten from our wet streets.

Why won't we see who we are?
They knew long ago—what made
us forget?

We get every
myth, every story wrong—
wake now, love, and get it right.

3 November 2018

=====

1.

Where the tree sticks
there let it flourish,
bible-wit and sprawl of branch,
leaves *dazu* of course by season.

I want you in your native language,
mamaloshn, Mutterzunge,
I want you in your mother-tongue,
that's what orphan Orpheus
was seeking down in the dark.
Down there in Vulva Zemla,
the land below the sea,
beneath the skirts of everything we see,
the primal language
we are all born knowing,
that schoolteachers are hired
to make us forget.
Where would you go to find a mother?

2.

You who are all father and deciding,
press the magic spot along the skin
and we go in. A single body
we can enter together. The only way in.
And there the fig tree grows upside down
inside the arch of living stone.

Every cavern is haunted,
of course, but even every
slight indentation in the rock
has its ghost antelopes,
its Lascaux shamans,
its gospel to disclose.

Visit the interior of the earth
the wise woman smiled
you'll find the hidden stone.

The men heard and misunderstood—
thought that earth meant something else
and stones could fly. They did not grasp
that all of a man
not just his instrument
must go in, all the way in.
And that the stone is hidden
only where nobody bothers to look.

4 November 2018

A WORD

I tried to say and almost could,
a word like *yes* or *thirst* or
where red mud *edges* the Delaware
almost, longer, longer.
The word is a river.

4 November 2018

ANTISTOCHASTICON*for T.P.*

Call a boat *Vermeer*
and sail past Delft.
Find the sea – every
city has one,
even Denver, somewhere,
spell it Van der Meer
the way it really was,
like the only pitcher in history,
Johnny, to hurl two no-hitters
in a row, when I was a kid.
Delft looks like a nice town,
maybe a little stuffy, a little
like Catskill across the creek
as seen from the Coney Island
Ice Cream outpost –opinions
differ about its quality—especially
nice sheltered from the rain
when the human brain works better.
Fact. I wrote it in a book.
This all started when I noticed
white spots on a white surface
and thought of Malevich, which
naturally brought Mondrian to mind,

though they spell it Mondriaan
in Dutch, and there is a tourist boat
sightseeing the canals of Amsterdam
called *Mondriaan*, I saw it many a time
along the Herrengracht, and canals
of course brought Delft to mind
and the haunting pictures of Vermeer.
So now you know. But what
so you know? And who is the *it* we mean
when we say it is not raining?

4 November 2018

=====

The little house of far away,
trees know how to get there,
lead the way, little
house open to the world
but hidden from the sky,
a human place, haunted
as all humans are
by animal spirits, ghosts
of the gone, phantoms
of the yet to come.
*Build a house without walls
and live forever—the wise
woman said that, slipping
away smiling through the trees.*

4 November 2018

=====

(Towards Eurydice)

Eurus is broad. The sea is broad:
Tibetan *Gyamtso* – ‘wide lake’ = ocean.

Os = mouth (*Os, oris...*) in Latin.
Os = bone, differently declined.

Os is also Nordic, a form of *Ás*, god, as in Asgard, the god realm (God Yard).

Mouth Job. The speaking.

Singing. ‘Real music’ comes from a sustained tone, tune, The tune goes on, a continuous line formed in the sky of our hearing, continuous, tone into tone. As in dance, the body is continuous, must be, its glory to be. The body is a song. Song seeks to embody. To be continuous.

In one hour, twilight, the rose of Sharon went from gold to green to almost black. Did the wind do it? What we see is all there is.

Che farò senza Euridice? is the question every poet must ask, handle, try to answer.

But the fennel stalk? The *Benandanti*, the Well-Walkers, the good spirits who walk by night, in Friuli, do they use stalks of fennel, or do they fight against malevolents who use them?

In the Keramikon at Athens, the potters' neighborhood, an altar to Prometheus rose, his hand carrying a tube the people took as a fennel stalk, fire coming from its tip. From this the legend of fire stolen from Olympus, carried down in a fennel stalk. But the altar really was to Pramantha, Indo-European god of fire, who invented the fire-stick, the fire-from-friction Boy Scouts are still taught to summon. The Greeks were not always good spellers. But they told good stories.

But hardly ever really understood them, their sources, their real meanings. That's left to us. In my university, we specialize in Remedial Mythology.

We learn to discern the genders of Eurydice, the cellar beneath Orpheus—he too has an underworld, the taut, torqued musculature where the words are born, stored.

Greek *orphi-* an orphan .

Orpheus seeks the mother. To be born again. Shall I return to my mother's womb and be born again, asks the skeptic in the Gospels. Yes is the answer Orpheus hears – does it come from Eurydice? Yes, always yes. Enter into rebirth.

“the world outwardly as a kind of prison”:

We all live in a prison, the self. Cell-f. Prisoned in our selves. Eurydice leapt from her prison, leaving the girl in the meadow idly charmind, and became down there the bride of the Unseen, from whom she systematically returns, to bring us to life.

Orpheus = all of us.

Eurydice is pure *verb*.

Woman is verb—
that is liberty.
That is her power.

A woman is a verb – but most men in their dim confusion imagine her to be a noun. Nouns can be possessed, made chattel, determined, defined. Verbs cannot.

\

***Benandanti*, the Good Walkers.
And when she walks, walk with her.**

**When she turns her back on you,
that means : follow her.**

Silence in poetry works because it is filled with what has already been said. The silence between lines is loud with meaning.

(4.XI.18)

DREAMINESS

*A mouth in marble
carved in quartz
Our dear pilgrim
never had such fare*

The dream said,
as if (I woke thinking)
the world consumes us
if we let it
and we let it.

'Fare' was 'food' first
but seemed too plain,
how could a dream be plain?
And 'world' when I woke
I first thought 'earth'
but that seemed like dying,
but the meaning
night had in mind
goes every day onward
and leaves us living.

2.

That was the toll of night,
the tale the dream told—
and that was all there was
to the dream, just words,
and a dim sense of a shape,
shadow-like a stony cavern
mouth open in pale light,
just a sense, not a sight,
more a maybe than a mouth,
not an image, just the feel
of having seen something
that only the words remembered.

3.

You make too much
of broken dreams,
communiqués from nowhere,
echoes of no sound—
that's what they tell me
and I almost agree.
But the quartz teeth
in the stone mouth
glisten now, later,
having seen themselves
in the mirror of *what is said*—

how can I look away
from their fresh exactitude,
pretend that nothing's changed?

4.

And I still have to learn
who is that *dear pilgrim*?
Where is he coming from,
and towards what shrine bent,
cross or crescent,
Athos or Everest?
And yet I hear him singing,
jaunty serious like young Mahler:
"I've got the Grail in my pocket,
anywhere I am is where I strove to be.
Earth opened her lips and set me free."

5 November 2018

=====

Reading the fallen leaves
in the 42 second video
the wind stirs gold
leaves in the bird-bath.
The leaves skim over water
and over each other.
Text keeps changing,
keep watching , the water
also is moving,
its own musculature so
sleek, so different
from the sinew of the leaves.
And the wind seems to roar.
It is all about changing places,
mixing the alphabet of forms
into a vocabulary that says
be beautiful, be quick to see ,
fold on fold, color's all you need to be.

5 November 2018

=====

**Carry it further
past the insolent politics
the smears the racist
denigrations, fears
orchestrated and
thought suppressed—
carry it further,
build a country where no one
wants to rule, no one
profits from another's labor.
It will not come by party politics.**

5 November 2018

====

I dreamt a single
blue mark
upright
on a white page.
Good blue, firm and clear,
from a ballpoint pen
and wondered why
can't I have one
that writes so dark,
definite, easy to read?
A little mark on paper dreamt
makes me doubt my whole
morning at the desk procedure
fountain pens and jars of ink—
what would a whole word do?

5 November 2018

THE GAME

**Meet me on the soccer field
when no one's there.
If we stand at dead center
we'll be invisible,
so no one will see us explain
to each other, slow
and patiently, the breath
of ordinary things. I'll explore
the spaces between the letters
of your name while you
demonstrate how high above me
your outspread arms
will let you rise, fly, so I'll see
your shadow dwindling
and then grow large again as you
come back to me again.**

5 November 2018

=====

All round us the wind
makes trees applaud,
that rousing sense of
excited satisfaction
music brings. Noon
comes to fetch us out
into the everlasting
goings on. Trees.
Wind. The deep selves
that have our silly names.

5 November 2018

=====

Sometimes the norm
or all the time
arrives. The river
keeps moving,
its banks block
pur journey over.
Things have edges—
first thing to learn,
where a thing ends
then where it goes.
Some times even
are a river.

6 November 2018

=====

What else can you see
when you look at me?
My grandsire's sword.
my mother's diamond
blue in the deep clear,
a mountain in Donegal?
A broken roller skate,
a church on fire?

6 November 2018

=====

I can feel fear in me
like a separate sky inside,
grey as daybreak, silver
birds on message wires.

6 November 2018

=====

**The invention of the revolving door
changed the way we think about hell.**

**There must be a way out
if there's a way in—
and somehow they're the same.**

**Churches seem to avoid them
perhaps for this reason, but Riverside
Church on Riverside Drive. Gothic
hugeness has a revolving door, Gothic,
made of wood, with little leaded windows,
at least it had last time I was there—
a sign of hope! Optimism even
here in Protestant America.**

6 November 2018

PERÌ KOSMOU

**No one says so
yet it actually is.**

6.XI.18

====

**Me and Bach
alone in the rain.
The sound comes
out of nowhere,
his mind is everywhere,**

**is it still raining
where you are?
Slipping from the eaves
here note by note,
the pitches of the real.
Thank you, John,
it is time now
for everthing to begin.**

6 November 2018

TRANSLATION FROM THE FUTURE

Identity was a grape
green tart sweet I
plucked it myself
from what I thought

my own vine, it held
a mirror up to my face
I followed it faithful
where it led. It said
over and over who I was
until I understood.

6 November 2018
Kingston

====

Traffic loud
city song or from
birds jabbering
from the wires
explore parameters
of sound, the twelve-
tone shout over
the known world.

6.XI.18, Kingston

=====

**We may be saved
by ambiguity.
The muddy battlefield
slows the dragged cannons,
the young priest's
memory is sharp.
Not one of us can tell
though where we all
started out to go.
That's a mercy maybe
we'll know the place
when we finally arrive.**

7 November 2018

=====

**Blue Wednesday sun
merchandise weather
go talk to people about
their problems hide your own.
Or have none to begin with.
Or leave them in the stream
the way the Jews in Brooklyn
used to throw old pots and plates
into the East River on one of their
interesting holy days and I was young.
Problems ate sins—toss them,
let the river bring them to the sea,
let the sea dissolve them away.**

7 November 2018

BOTANY LESSON

**Still plenty of leaves left
to dance around in the wind
or does the sun sparkle also
make them move after three
days of rain? And every leaf
a letter has on it, and every
one a letter is maybe to you.
Stare at a live leaf or one already
fallen asleep all gold or brown,
read the letter meant for you—
it means whatever comes to mind.**

7 November 2018

=====

Led his horse to
but he woke—
I climbed the hill home
to get some cheese
for sudden dinner,
saw half a dozen
men in tan work clothes
and caps digging I pit
big enough to hide a car
in and the car was in it,
I was praying as I went
tightened belt, breath gasp.

8 November 2018

=====

The angels seldom let me
blow ny silvery horn.
They must have a reason
so like a good citizen
of heaven I comply.

It seems
when you make certain sounds
something happens to the sky.

8 November 2018

=====

Put the name
above the door
clearly written

before you go in.
A name of course
changes where you are

and who you'll see
when you go in—
and even who you'll be.

Be careful, easy
enterer! A door
remembers the tree

of metal lode iy's from
and every memory
hints the end of the world.

8 November 2018

=====

Imagine it otherwise—
that's sometimes enough.
The bracket holds the kettle,
the fox waits till after dark.

But I live in a town of time
where no one's supposed to
know about foxes or gravity
or even weather.

People imagined otherwise
and it all went away,
no place to fall,
not a fox for miles.

9 November 2018

=====

I don't think that
was what I meant to say—
pause a little
between words
and let the sense evaporate
until you know
no longer what you meant
or anyone by saying them.
Silence heals
meanings. Silence heals.

9 November 2018

=====

I want to tell a tree
a thing or two too,
about girls and subways
and early morning Mass
and all the stuff you learn
growing up in a city
without much money.
But they know already
that free things are best,
or things like light
and air and nourishment
we pay for by our lives.
They know all that
and ask what boy or man
can ever really understand
the desires and expectations
of a tree? I shiver at the question,
abashed. Honesty is terror sometimes.
What does wood really want?

9 November 2018

ODE

You must have a reason
to sing. Otherwise
the words fall out of the tune
and children giggle as they hum
the things you meant so hard.

Sometimes someone you love
is reason enough. Or sometimes not.
Clouds cluster in the hither sky
as sun sets perfectly clear the other way.
You get to be your own rainbow.

Now see what new words
come out of your mouth
all by themselves, about
love and grief and emptiness—
I thought 'ode' meant singing.

9 November 2018

=====

**Middle of the brook
a stone to step on
no turning back**

**kingfisher dives down
fast like every
blue word from heaven**

**say it, say it again
you're almost at the beginning
the water waits.**

9 November 2018

=====

All this music
headed somewhere,
Verdi then Wagner
then Mahler, Bruckner,
Strauss. Beethoven
Bach. I followed
all my life and they
led me here. Where
is here? One more night,
one more nocturne.

9 November 2018

=====

1.

Only asking
if there is enough resistance,
200 ohms her speaker system
gynotechnjally aloud last night
made every note explode in the surround,
not loud, yu sais, justwhelmingly itself
in proximity, pressure, passion, lust.
200 Ω her cable said
and women wept to hear such truth.

2.

Because a dream knows everything
but tells it wrong. Or some say
it's the other way round, the dream
knows nothing, is orts and scraps,
but somehow lets the truth come through.
Which one are you?

3.

And all that's left
is a resistance rating
and a memory of sound.

Hard enough to wake
without such gravel
in the mouth that might

after all be diamonds
or at least star sapphires
gleaming with desire

4.

But that's what we always want,
red tree, sunny afternoon
just enough mist to make
your long hair glisten.
Open the door, open it again,
I mean really open it until
it goes out or you come in.

5.

That's what the dream taught me,
the angel author of its lystery—
you see that little cloud up there?
no bigger than that. But that's
what I think we live for, live by,
cloud messaging, tug of the sky.

10 November 2018

=====

Brilliant afterlude
as if by Liszt,
one tree of all the rest
is russet now.
Colors, they play
with out emotions,
light magics us
all day long, manipulates
--rose-fingered dawn
is the least of it—all day long.
This tree across the way,
the gold young maple
by the garage—I have to
shut my eyes to see
who I really am in this story.

10 November 2018

=====

**The images make sense
even if the words do not.
And the other way round.**

10.XI.18

ARMISTICE DAY

**When the war outside is over
the war inside begins.**

**Know Your Enemy—
engrave that on your mirror.**

10 November 2018

VOYAGE

**The hollow cask rolls around the deck.
The youngest ensign sets the cannon off.
Billowing smoke alarms the kittiwakes.
Slumber comes easy after breakfast though.
What sound is this that breaks the music.
Could I be the one the flag proposed?
There is delicacy inside some fighting men.
Seek the borders of the last experience.
Pluck the cork out and drink moderately.
Hold a belt in your hands before wrapping it on.
Consider yourself one object among many.
Insidious arrivals await at the embarcadero
You can't trust your emotions at times like now.
The peach pits your uncle carved are safe.
Imagine a monument children clamber all over it.
Not everything is easy as you may start thinking.
The rumbling sound sounds just like words.
In the Hamburg café they fight with knives.
Meek dignity the Lutheran minister endorsed.
We go back to sea every hour after we drown.
Multiples abide by singular rules if void of fact.
The dying admiral liberates his cage of doves.
Speak to me frequently I'm trying to hear it.**

I don't know how I came to be aboard.
The emigrant couple waved to the empty dock.
At cockcrow even the slowest barge cuts loose.
They watched her playing with her marmoset.
Close to shore we thought we saw a bungalow.
People were living there, they had fire already.
With stone tools we hacked lianas down.
On the horizon a whaler went its greedy way.
Weren't you hungry after all this daylight?
Infamous street preachers begged for passage.
The engine throbs all day all night all right.
The captain reads a prepared statement to the crew.
Marriage isn't legal between high and low tides.
In the hold are many more of those things you like.
Carrion dropped by gulls intrigue the ship's pet Scat.
Bad luck is our middle name we'll get there yet.
Have you ever been to Port of Freaks he thought I said.
I stretch out and watch the sailors work the sails.
They only let me come aboard cause I spoke the lingo,
The whole time I thought it was just a kind of singing.

10 November 2018

MAMALOSHNI

**Finding the mother
in the man
is easy,**

**like a torch song
just hum the tune
her arms open up in him**

**but find her in the woman,
find her in you
is hard,**

**she hides
behind him, whoever, you know who,
hides in the shadows
of the cathedral,
hides in the prayers you used to
now refuse to pray,**

**hides in Christ's body I
lifted above the altar,
hides in the Ark,
hides in the dusty smell
perfume in the bedroom,
tabernacle of the bed,
hides in the sheets,**

creases in the pillowcase
like a lost cuneiform

and still you speak it,
the mother tongue,
we have no other
for all the other tongues we learned,

reading weird books in Fraktur
or Cyrillic or Greek,
the script turns
in the old, old
eye of the mind back into
her scared A to Z

no choice,
your mother is your language.
And all the while
you bowed to her and said My Father

and tried to find her in thinking,
in remembering,
o dear Christ the scent
of those gardenias she loved,
the rose bush, row boat,
her soft arm waving

awkward on the dock,

no, not there, not in the brain's
greasy old snapshots
but in the crystal
language,
you find it all round you,
clean in shabby newspapers,
luminous in the trash of politics,

the ;language. It is she.
It is herself given to you
before you even began to be,

she gave you the labguage
a thousand years before she was born,
she gave you what it will become,

gave you what you will become,
the word you speak,
the word you are.

10 November 2018

COGNOSCENTI**1.**

**Scholarship in the reeds
boy-love and roast
fat-tailed lamb
how far have we come**

**from Orient? The plague
of meaning is still in us,
in our clothes, our wishes,**

**every tubby little hilltop
insinuates Acropolis.**

2.

Le soleil se lève

in music

we are literal

the sun lifts itself up,

music is the most

literal of all,

saves us from sunrise.

3.

Because music is always
trying to be
that *other place* called now.

4.

But a wind is in the reeds,
sand is in our eyes,
Egypt, Judea, Arabia,
the deserts never leave us alone.

5.

Go read the book.
The old poets could not give up
love, love for boys, girls even,
love for things, weepy companionship,
heartbeat, syllable, heaven,
all that habit of frozen desire called Belief.

6.

They left us with the names of things
profound Talmud of the obvious.

11 November 2018

=====

I read my wishes
deep in the grain
of wood, old
stair treads
in my house, the oak
of memory all
winter leafy still,
our haunted ash tree
went down in a storm,
In the wood grain
the fact disclosed,
nothing changes, we
even we when we grow old
don't change a bit,
the grain persists, age
is an alembic where we
distill what we have always
been into what we are.

11 November 2018

====

**Sand in their loafers
they teach young persons
to write about art
because art sells, and words
only pay when they link
to commodities like
paintings, statues, memories
of tortured childhood, war.
We are poor atheists
in a desert we have created,
and money is the manna
that we learned to make
when what came down from heaven
melts in us like autumn snow.**

11 November 2018

TAFELMUSIK

**I stayed, stood
it long as I could,
flute's endless
over and over agains,
daring this self
of mine to endure
what does not please—
to survive these itchy
irritating squeals
makes me somehow
a hero, a hear-all,
gasping at last into
the holy grove of silence.**

11 November 2018

=====

And said nothing
all night long.
Or if it spoke
I didn't listen

or if I heard
I soon forgot
or put it somewhere
safe out of mind

where I can find it
maybe someday
when what it said
suddenly makes sense.

12 November 2018

=====

They say white is all colors at once
nuy black is the silence of light.
They say God said Let there be light
but I think his words meant *Light should be*—
no 'let' involved. no permission.
They say languages say the same thing
in different ways but I think the Moon is a boy
even though they call him *la luna*.
They say it's dangerous to walk in the sky,
think of how far you'd have to fall
but all my life I've hovered over my house
no worse for wear. They say that everything
meeds to sleep. But I remember a stone.

12 November 2018

=====

Listen while music sleeps,
silence is sensuous,
intricate,
 full of lurid promises
true as can be—
even now the cows
are coming home.

12 November 2018

INK

**looks purple in the bottle
black on the page—
travel is like that too,
coming into a new city,
dancing at a wedding.**

12 November 2018

=====

Gold from all my travels—
here, you're entitled to it,
I brought it home for you,
followed the mountain's instructions,
filled mu pockets,
waded the river
came home to you.
U fiund you reading outside
a book about trees
you watched the birds, you sat
in the shade of a young maple
this day in autumn.
And here too everything is gold.

12 November 2018

=====

The brain a rhombus sometimes
corners to get stuck in
walls to bounce off back
to the beginning of
what were we thinking.
I want a rough knob of ginger
to peel and gnaw and
stimulate and bite me back,
a lingering taste to flavor
what comes next. Knock
on the wall. Let me out.
Or do I mean in? Brain
bruised. Night on all sides.

12 November 2018

EURYDICE VARIATIONS**1. *Cenchrus***

**I was Eurydice
walked in a meadow
a snake bit me
but I didn't die.
I went to hell.
The hell was high school
and being ruled,
scheduled.
I turned my back
on all that, broke
free into the upper
world of other
people. But change
had found me,
I was a man
and still am, ever
after, ever seeking
desperate in women
all kinds of women
to touch the infinite
beauty grace the sheer**

knowing intelligence
of the girl I was.
Sometimes I sign
my letters *Orpheus*

2. *Cello*

He pressed her breast
firmly to his chest
while his left hand
behind her pressed
his fingertips against
particular each bone
of her spine, vertebra
by vertebra he found
the tone, the pitch
while his right hand
drew a cello bow
back and forth across
her bare bottom.
And o how she sang!
And how they applauded!
But later, later, when
the audience was gone
exhausted, he fell back
and dropped his bow—
and then her song
really took off,
clearer, louder,
full of intellect and truth
so everyone could hear,

even he in his stupor
tried to get it, grasp it,
but it slipped out, up,
beyond him, out there,
out here, intricate,
grand sweeping lift
of song, you hear it
still, wind in the trees,
surf on the shore.

3. *Emperor*

Octavius threw his arm
around Orpheus's shoulder,
,an to man,
emperor to poet,
kind as could be.
What will you do
now your wife is gone?
Shall I make you a sheriff
of one of my new towns,
pretty girls of the borderlands,
weird languages to play with,
swans on a dark sea,
a whole new life?

I want my own
the poet growled.
Or groaned, we can't be sure,
so long ago.

The emperor
grew serious, looked him
in the eye, brown eyes
to blue eyes truthfulling,
said: She was never
your own. You were her own.

**She left you the sense of song
and the power to use it.
Now take this gold I give you
and follow the long road
where it leads you, her
song will always bring you home.**

4. Queen

Eurydice met Elizabeth,
curtseyed to the queen.
We are alike in some ways,
we both make poets sing,
I from inside, you from out.

The queen did not recognize
this stranger who dared
to speak of resemblances
to majesty. Where are you from?
the queen enquired. I
am from an island
and I bring it with me,
my brow is pale as yours
but I seek justice
from no country,
things are always as they are
but I carry music
in my lap.

The queen, thank god,
was used to poetry
so these words
did not alarm her.

Instead, she pressed
the other's hand
and smiled, then passed
along to the next
visitor waiting so
respectfully in line.

5.

Dance for me
the Tetrarch cried
to Salome.

I'll sing
instead, she said,

she still is singing
still 16 years old
though Herod has been dead
two thousand years—
how can this be?

Ask poetry,
it knows how things began
and where they'll go,
it knows the secret
name of everything,

it wakes inside the dullest
body, gives the dead
something to do, lets
the old king still
hear her song,

**makes him think those
pale autumn leaves
falling in evening twilight
are naked women
dancing just or him,
for him, for him.**

**12 / 13 November 2018
2 – 3 AM**

=====

The road
is bare as the sky.
Tell me a lie,
tell me our little
stream is Pactolus
glittering with gold dust.
tell me Lydia
is still alive.
The barren street
repeats old grief.
Insolent sun
keeps coming up.

13 November 2018

=====

Switch the order
of the vehicles—
let the verb come
first as it does
for Irish and Jews,
leave the lush
grass alone, teach
dogs to sleep and
catch to keep watch.
Then what the crows
are saying all the time
will be clear to you
at last, and you can tell me.

13 November 2018

=====

As you all know
the world is flying away
next week
to that Mexican beach
where nothing happens
in strong sunshine
and everybody comes home
in tears of disappointment,

as you all know
it's a bad day for music,
good news for silk gowns.

As you all know
the chipmunks
are trying to sleep
not quite hibernate
but I can't explain the difference,

as you all know
I'm not fond of animals
having spent too much
of my life and money being one.

**As you all know
Wednesday is the day of messages
spoken loud no one can understand,
just as Thursday's the day
of doing what you're told
except we never do,
as you all know.**

**As you all know
people fall in love
with the strangest people
the way countries choose
bizarre presidents and weird flags.
Not even a patriot can draw,
drink or sober, rubbing
with the crayons of his child,
tears in his eyes.**

**As you all know
there is so much weeping
along with mere grunting
editorial dissatisfaction,
and I only care about you
because you play the cello
or look so noble**

standing on a cliff
or speak Swedish in the snow.

As you all know
we are hard to please,
quick to take umbrage,
slow to forgive,
yet I have tried all my life
to forgive you for being you,
so far away, so fixated
as you are on all that is not me.
So as you all know
I will never give up talking to you

14 November 2018

=====

Does anyone answer?
Is it the fault of morning
that I hear a cello
humming through the dark?
Not Bach, perhaps,
but something kin, quiet,
meaning well.

 Like the sound
a man hears
under his ears on the pillow,
sound of his blood
passing this way and that
inside the country he is
he will never enter—
Distant music
but not music

14 November 2018

=====

Sleep moves us
the other way.

The people I meet there
I don't meet again
and never met before—

but they are real,
realer than I am in the dream.
I would know them instantly
if we met.
But we do not meet.

14 November 2018

=====

As if I were anybody else
the fear comes calling—
faceless, eventless,
pouncing on my breath.

Where is my bravery
in this grey sky. And why
should there be any need
for such emotions, *notions*
of the soul they said
when they still knew
we had once to be moved.

Why am I *apprehensive*?
To *grab at* something
before it is here?

The future is a roaring beast
only I can hear.
I used to worry about everything.
Now it's just now.

15 November 2018

= = =

for Crichton, on her birthday

I have seen you stepping
fully clothed up out of the sea
bringing seaweed to teach us,
I have seen you in a dusky living room
lean against an harpsichord
in a haunted house, singing a tune
some ghost taught you because
he thought you were his sister.
I have seen you jut your elbow
into the pale sky, directing confused
adolescent clouds how to speak
the lines the sun intended for them,
I have seen you kneeling on the ground
weeping, begging Zeus to bring the dead
back to life, then remembering another
goddess is in charge of that work.
And once I even saw you arched over me
speaking so loud that even I could
hear and understand and from your voice
learned how to give people words to speak.

15 November 2018

=====

for Charlotte, any day

So few things I know
so few I can tell you,
I say the names of musics
hoping you'll understand,
I prate of fugues, andante
insieme, rising ninths
or say the names of cars,
old ones, Horch, La Salle,
Lark, so that you'll know
I want to go with you deep
into reconstructed time,
the world we came from
and bring with us half
confused by what we carry.
not memory but the real
made real again, the actual,
o Christ no way to say it,
colors, crimson, scarlet, red,
all the differences love makes
such gorgeous mountains of,,
wine free of alcohol but still

lucent with ecstasy, clocks
that say a different word
every hour ever so you never
know anything is passing, nothing
is passing, we are here together
and I make so sense, just cling
to the immense meaning you are.

15 November 2018

=====

Resources equivalent to arrivals
immigration of the light
sun shining on the snow

a *wonder* happens round us like a wound
whereas a *miracle* is something we see
stare at, remember.

But does it touch
my hand like a shy friend
when sun sparkles off the snow?
It does. It does, the anaphora is complete,
the liturgy—work of the people—language
suddenly quietly begins.

16 November 2018

COMPOSITION

**Here I monk it
at my winter window
transcribing what I think
scriptures being given
minute by minute
echoing down the cold
hallways of the soul.
But who knows? I may
just be scribbling
in the margins of a text
yet to come, or lost already
when my back was turned.**

16 November 2018

=====

In this tiny amphora
of porphyry
a single flake
of ash, all
that's left
of the giving
long ago,
the receiving.
Or is it dust.
Or is it snow.

16 November 2018

SONG

**Good children
are often late to school,
they find things of interest
along the way.**

**The mind at play
on field and street
grows idle among
rows of desks.**

**Best left them drift
in late to class,
given them a book
and set them free.**

16 November 2018

A MEDITATION ON SYNCHRONY'S TEASES

for Emma O'Donnell Polyakov

I had written a poem called *Cello* the day before, and the day before that a poem with a glaring image of a woman, Eurydice, being played like a cello. Then your letter came with the startling news that you, 'self-taught' play the cello 'roughly.' What a Montsalvat of mysteries that opened, the company of knights and maidens who play the cello secretly or used to play, or keep the genial wooden body somewhere in their house, back home, dusty room, blanket over it. but the sound of it never far from their ears. The cello, of all instruments closest in its tessitura to the range of human speech, boy and girl, patriarch and goddess. How strange. And of course I have always wanted to play it, a cellist once, noting the way my hands naturally parted between third and fourth fingers, the letter *shin* hand of the Kohanim, said I could be a good cellist. I never did, never was. A poem of mine from years ago, *The Resistance*, spoke from and to a young woman cellist at Bard, who wrote poems enough to catch my attention, or the cello did, or her father, a Dante scholar, who did not name his daughter Beatrice, though she tried to be.

Tell me the secrets of the cello. Not the Bach suites or cello versions of Marin Marais, or Saint-Saens's swan or Shostakovich via Rostropovich, not even Jacqueline du Pré bent forward in her fluent gown, bent into the Elgar, the same concerto that Hilary , the Welsh composer wsho taught a while at Bard, Hilary Tann, she was a cellist indeed, and had as a girl sworn an oath that if she could not, by her thirtieth year, play the Elgar concerto she would take her life. She lives still. Even when I let myself listen to that concerto with all its associations of Mother England and women bearing the intelligence of the planet, even then where my mind lives)(my soul, if we were still allowed to have one) is in the rough silk of the instrument, fragrant as long hair, the growl of passion and the tittering of children as they laugh at their grandfather's snores. The sound. The sound of the thing itself. No other thing has so much sound in it. No other thing bears in it, shares in it, so much of us.

2.

Your letter had spoken of the long drive to and from work every day, three-quarters of an hour each way, the drag of traffic. But you had discovered a side road or detour that led you through forest land, and how in that domain the mind of the driver could be alert to

road and surroundings yet also have, as I understood it, an inner peaceful chamber where what was seen and what was thought could profit from each other's company.

When I read your letter, I had just that minute come home from a good long talk with an old friend, the poet Charles Stein, I've known him sixty years almost. His life has in recent months become what would be for me a nightmare of travel. Every week he has to drive four hours to Pennsylvania, stay a day or two, come back, take a train to New York and come back the same night, drive on weekends to Gloucester to attend to the affairs of the library and archive of our mutual friend, the poet Gerrit Lansing, who died in February just shy of his ninetieth birthday. At first he was burdened with all this driving. And then, he says, something strange happened. He began to like it, enjoy the silence (he drives alone for the most part), make use of it. He is a Dharma practitioner of a slightly different school of Tibetan Buddhism from the one Charlotte and I practice and study. So specifically he used those otherwise vacant hours to meditate. He used to use them, may still sometimes, use them to compose, speaking into a pocket recorder. But now, he says, it's mostly a serene and enjoyable meditation. As I think you know, there is no pleasure in the world quite

like thje moment when the meditation opens into the sudden glory of the actual.

3.

See what your letter brought to mind? And I haven't even answered it, but will, but will. In the meantime the things you made me think, the things you brought to mind, struck me, as you can see, with the way they integrated into the mind-life in and around me lately. I'm still trying to persuade Michael Ives (poet, consort of Mary Caponegro) to go back to the cello – it was his first instrument, set it aside because he wasn't 'good at it,' took up the vibes and marimba, played them professionally, now can't, medical issues. No success yet. But speaking of persuasion, your letter made me want to urge you strongly to dictate thoughts, poems, imaginings, fantasies, recollections, as you drive. Simple pocket recorder or even smart phone—amazing how much we can write when we think we're jusyt speaking. Amazing how the mind loves being unleashed, in the confessional privacy of the moving car,, to say what comes to mind. What comes to mind—that is all we ever have to work with, and it is more than enough.

Me, I luckily don't have to do that anymore, since my schedule (thanks to Leon) lets me have my mornings

free to write, my best time (then, and late at night – now in fact). Back in the days when I had to drive back and forth to Boston, I did use the dictation strategy, and it worked well. It often took me by surprise, to find what I was suddenly willing to say, connections the ‘confessional’ let me make and avow. Brought to mind.

16 November 2018

QUESTIONS ON VISION

***And where is the Moon,
in what quadrant of the eye?***

**Everything we see
is stored inside us
already, otherwise
we could not see it.**

**That is why we have eyes,
to remind us of what we have seen
what we know, what we comprise,
what we are.**

**Is it that the blind
know all that already,
need no reminders?**

**2.
In the evening we watch television
dully-desperate to find out who we are.
Switch channels, change your mind.**

3.

So is that why I love cloudy days.
 like to study the linguistics of the clouds,
 love to watch, to match the cloud text
 out there with the infinity of changing
 clouds inside, forms, accuracies,
 to spend a whole life reading them all?

4.

Gutta serena, 'a drop of evening,'
 sweet name for the terrible
 opacity that stole Milton's sight
 but let him chant his bitter beauty.

5.

Night is a test.
 In dreams we analyze
 what we have seen
 changing it to fit our need,

what we have seen
 of us in us
 all day long
 night churns round in us

to make us see more.

Wake hungry—
a hungry man
forgets what he has seen,
empty of vision,
wants, wants more.

Eye an open mouth.

17 November 2018

=====

From weather
I wonder

to be
is to be different

from all the other
limbs of light

that show the world,
as we wonder

what he was thinking
he makes us think it too.

17 November 2018
Catskill
to Mendelssohn's Trio

CAUSES

**Causes: Greek coins
columns and owl eyes
big look at me,**

**a cause looks at you,
makes you do
the way a coin
leaps from your pocket
into a stranger's hand**

and he gives you a pear.

**Causes are fruits
full of seeds,
more like pomegranates
bitter with sweet,**

**See, we are the start
of something still,
Acropolis rising suddenly
out of how we picture it.**

We hear her owl still.

And when the leaf comes to fall
a cathedral rises,
can't dodge the connection,
everything touches,
rouses, comes real.

Smoke in your eyes.

The coin though
does not forget the hand,
wend through the orchard,
palms, apples?

We are still on our way
there.

17 November 2018

= = = = =

Chaste cloud
I hope
the more less

rainday
leave me out of it
hope the more

though less is licit
spell it like
your father did

spes in gaudium.

18 November 2018

=====

Some can sing at night
some by meridian.
I loaf abed
music dormant.

Let me be your radio,
turn me on and make me sing.
I promise you a music
neither of us will understand.

18 November 2018

=====

**Cowbells and why not,
cowrie shells from tepid seas,
I can come back later if you need**

**because my need is long
and tough and rubbery as kelp,
it coils around night or day,**

**I'll just lie here listening to the bells
imagining churches, imagining gods
and praying to them, reach out**

**to them until you're ready for me
if it is me, with jangling bells, shells,
the tinkling of tiny tender propositions.**

18 November 2018

WITHIN

**Behind the clouds
it's bright,
behind the light-filled atmosphere's
blanket of photons,
the stars are,
bright in the endless dark.**

**Time to look at those stars
that are not hidden
in daylight. By sheer
knowing know where they are.
Find the stars and study them—
their intricate array discloses
all we really have to learn.**

18 November 2018

LOOSE CHANGE

The afternoon wore on anyway, the way it always does. It always does. The person was waiting by the fire house, the big doors were open but the fire engine was out. He could see the brass pole down which firemen were said to slip in their haste to leave the upstairs quarters where they slept on rows of narrow beds and hurry to put out fires. No, he himself wasn't a man, not yet. He was a child and stood by the fire house looking in at coils of hose and the shiny brass pole. It was hot in the day, cool air seemed to come out of the huge doorway. No one was in sight. He could have gone into the cavernous place and played or studied the layout or fondled things. He loved things. Things had a way of talking to him that people hadn't quite mastered., Not yet. Maybe people would learn, after a while, how to talk to a child. This child at least. But he stood in the shadow of the fire house, just looking in, wondering when the engine would come back home. Cars and things kept passing quietly behind him on the avenue, so it was nice standing here before the dark doorway and the bright pleasant street with cars of all colors zipping past. He listened to the sound of them coming and going, the slish of tires on the asphalt, because it had

rained an hour before, summer shower, and the street was still wet. He liked the sound of tires on pavement. He liked most things, even things like that you couldn't pick up and handle or investigate, things that just came by and were gone, things that just were.

A man came out of a doorway inside the fire house and stood in the big entrance looking at him and smiling. The man was wearing sort of a uniform, an official cap, a sort of blue shirt, suspenders, dark pants, it was a warm day, he didn't wear his jacket, the boy was reassured. Want to come inside and have a look around? the man said. The boy was tempted but didn't want to talk, didn't want to have to be with people when he wanted to be with things and places and objects in relation. No, thank you, sir, he said, I have to go home. So he walked away down the avenue, walking in the shade of the trees as much as he could, stepping on the smelly ginkgo nuts that made the shadow stink when you stepped on one, still, he liked the shade, his mother had told him the sun is bad for the skin, he didn't know why but on a hot day it seemed smart to listen to one's mother. Tree by tree he made his way the eleven blocks, short blocks, to the corner where he turned tight at the white picket fence and walked the last two blocks, long ones this time, to his home. All the while he walked he did two things: he catalogued

in mind the things he had seen in the fire house, and then he also catalogued the things he passed on the way home. It was pleasant to think of the two sorts of things together, the ones that stayed completely motionless, and the things that moved, because he was moving through them and past them. He clutched the thought of them tight, now he was at the gate of his garden, now he was home, where things were different, they were his and not his, there and somehow not there for him all the time. These new things, the thought of them he brought with him, would fit nicely in his room. They would help him sleep tonight.

18 November 2018

=====

A season when they kill Osiris,
and baboons chattering at dawn
over the Nile mourn him,
and we all grieve, for him
and all the slain *embodiments
of humanity*. If we
are gone, what would happen
to the animals? The trees
would lose their springtime
if we are not there to welcome it
and winter would be always.
And who are they who kill the best of us?

19 November 2018

=====

Far away
as we can be
a pelican
in her piety
emblem of self-
sacrificing,
from her breast
a drop of blood
to feed her chick.
Piety looks up
and down at once,
feeds the past
also, the ancestors,
those who wait
in heaven for
then to be now
again,
 and the young
who wait for everything.
Sleep a few
hours, babe,
and wake the sun.

19 November 2018

DEAR UNKNOWN,
I know the shape
of your shadow,
I have seen
your coattails flying loose
as you spun around in the wind
to look my way
like a dancer,
but you're not a dancer,
you faced me
but I didn't see your face,
clouds were round the moon.
Your collar lifted in the wind,
then the bus came
and you got on,
left me only
with the shape of your going.
I'm guessing that's all I need,
whatever happens is all we have,
a gesture, a movement, a shape,
a sense of something important
having just taken place,
like a church door
closing softly behind me.

19 November 2018

=====

When nobody had
anything to say
the day began.

It was almost light,
still night,
and cars were beginning to move

swiftly, up empty roads.
I watched them,
puzzled by sheer earliness

(as O'Hara might say
if the beachbus let him live),
where are you going

and why, so silently,
only your engines talking,
your sleek rubber wheels

on the sleek wet road?

19 November 2018

=====

Remove the schoolhouse
the bear in the woods
coon in the pantry
how things used to be
firing .22s at beer cans,
from the woods wise
deer look on—
dismay is general in the kingdom
children study
where did my cruelty come from?
What we do to frogs in biology class
pretty white rats in the pharma lab
but still at evening
the cautious deer come down to play
with the food they find,
women feed them sometimes
pretending scoops of dry corn
are for the chickadees.
Night forgets it all.
Mostly the guns are quiet then.

19 November 2018

=====

The truth about God.

**Some say God is the name
of what is best in us.**

**But the very first thing you ever
heard about God
when you were a child
is probably true.**

**The polyhedral nature of Divinity
accommodates all views,
we only from all angles
would ever see complete.**

**How many faces
to that omnipotent uncertain Certainty!**

19 November 2018

RAIN

What the rain lets happen to the streets is another thing he cares about. Sleek as a harbor seal, no, a *Zalophus californicus*, a sea lion, he saw in the zoo, black and shiny and slippery as rain, rain on ice, rain on an early winter street the streetlights made glisten he loved. There are many things to love, Seals, shadows, reflections in car windows, reflections in shiny metal of car doors, he once saw a goose attacking its own reflection, oh mirrors are wonderful his aunt's blue mirror left over from a war before, blue mirror table top too, with rings from drinks on it, rings. Things to love. People are harder—why can't they be like seals and mean the same thing all the time, like birds? He loved the mirroring of wet road tonight, how the car headlights reflected off the asphalt as they came down the hill, so two cars were coming at once, belly to belly, fast along the glistening. Love that too. Wet things are best. He remembered the Girl at Coney Island, how dry and fragile she looked as she walked down the sand, how amazing she looked a few minutes later coming up out of the surf, wet and streaming, her white bathing suit bright as a gull, her long brown hair almost black, streaming. The sea cured her. What was the disease the sea could cure? He thought he had it too, a kind of

dryness. He licked his lips. See, they're dry. They need something to moisten them. He loved the word 'moist' – it sounded like most and meant he'd never be dry. It sounded a little like joy and hoys and Joyce, but he didn't know any woman named Joyce, only Joyce Kilmer who wrote "Trees" but he was a man. New Jersey. He had been in New Jersey twice, once going and once coming back, each time crossing the big river to get there, then get back. You had to go through Jersey to get to where they really wanted to go.

Another river. He waded in it every summer, thinking about the long ride home. The cars. The rain that came in summer even and made the shallow water dimple with light. His parents told him he shouldn't think so much. But there was so much to think about, so many things waiting for his attention. And here comes another one, a big white truck coming down the road, or two of them, self and reflection, belly to belly down the mirror of the road, strangely making no more noise than the cars did. Or even less.

19 November 2018

=====

Pro bono

but who
the public is

unclear.

I volunteer,
the pirate ship
hangs around the cove,
some gulls arrive
ashore.

It is hard to be accurate
when alive,
life is so much
a matter of approximations,

only the dead
keep the true measure—
they try to explain it
in our dreams,

hurt

*no one, help
everyone, tame
your own mind*

for the good
of all people
on ship or shore,
forgive the thieves
and hide your jewels—

and the gulls,
when you hear them
you'll know you're on
the right track,
 crows
know these things, and gulls,
and waterfowl
are still your mothers.

20 November 2018

IMAGINARY ENTERPRISES LTD.

**If you can't think it,
we can do it.
Give us a hint
and we'll shut the door.
Only the unimaginable
is truly imaginary.
Begin there, shivering
a little in the warm breeze.**

20 November 2018

ON GOING

A car came down the road
and vanished as I watched.
A road is a peculiar place
or thing or personage. I have seen
a Roman road in the south of France
with human bones sticking
out of the green berm
and I wonder now where the car
has gone.

Going
is the strangest thing
of all the things we do—
did we learn it from the herds
or reindeer shifting on tundra
or did we make it up ourselves,
this going here and going there?

Siste viator domi

I wrote that long ago,
Traveler, stay home
it meant but not even I have
managed to obey this clear advice.

20 November 2018

ZEPPELIN

Things though are sometimes far away and then we want them, When we want them. He remembers a tin zeppelin on wheels, big enough for him to ride, but he cant find it nowadays, it isn't in the house. Did they throw it away, the way they threw away that book about Napoleon one night, they must have, he woke to find it gone,m, because it had such small print and he'd need his eyes later, for law school, they said. The zeppelin was like the ones he'd seen so many pictures of, like the ones he still saw from time to time over the city, only they weren't zeppelins, were they, they were weather balloons or television blimps looking into arenas ans ballfields. Not zeppelins. His zeppelin was gone, and that was the long and short of it as Uncle Martin used to say when he complained of something bad said or done ay his lodge meeting and the upshot, never clear what was going on but it helped the man to let off steam . Grown men are very strange. Werent they ever boys, like him? It seemed so off to him that someone like him could turn into someone like that, or any uncle, or almost anyone up there in years? Cant they remember what they were? Can't they remember the things that really matter? Offices and churches and lodges seemed crazy places. They had no things, only

talk. Palaver, his father said, talk talk talk, and another word his father used to describe it, but he wasn't allowed to use that word, and didn't understand it, really, what a bull had to do with it, and how it differed say from the droppings of a cow—cowflop they called it, those circular steamy mounds in the fields he walked in every summer, never smelled bad, They were interesting things but don't get too close because youi never know. He knew about germs. And there were flies. Flies cause polio he knew, but they can cure it now. Because they have things, things that work. Not just talk Where is my zeppelin now, he thought.

20 November 2018

COLD

I don't know who to turn to talk to, take heat from, have word from, who. It's not easy being cold. The cold wraps around the knees and says Be afraid. I'm not afraid of anything, I'm just afraid. Cold does that. They say cold feet to mean reluctance. Cold me means fear, just fear. Unjust fear. "Unjust cold," my friend called it years ago, when the universe around us seemed, or seemed more, like being fair. The way things are fair, do what they do. Birds fly, et cetera. But cold isn't a thing, is it? Isn't it like hurt and harm and happiness a tune always ready to kick in, start up, get loud, louder, till it's over. That's not a question though I meant to ask it. I don't know what this all is about, why it's so cold around me, why I'm so cold. I stand frightened at the mirror of reality and ask Is it you or is it me? I look at the thermometer (heat-measurer) and the number I see on it has nothing to do with how I feel. So it's me, is that what science is trying to tell me? That I and the world are on different tracks, follow different religions, obey or disobey different laws. I don't know who to turn to, talk to, they are warm and I am cold, cold means fear and they are not afraid. Our skins speak

different languages. I am a kind person. I will sit quietly with my fear. I would call it a cold night tonight only it might not be the night. Maybe it's not even cold that I feel, this fear that walks around in me and catches my breath and warns me not to look out the window for fear of what might be looking in. But my fingertips are numb, I shiver if I touch my own skin. Fear can't do that, can it? Quietly I pray that the cold is just cold. Cold tonight. Cold in here.

20 November 2018

==== ghb

All I am is what I write
no chance for more of me
all spent, all spent
in feeling and dream.
All yours.

20 November 2018

NAMES

Name that mean nothing
mean something.

Squeeze the juice out,
read the truth
hidden in plain hearing.

Every name is a journey
in etymology,
a hinting gesture in charades.
A phone call from Weisman Howard
woke me. The ringing
stooped before I rose
The Missed Call slot
told me who had called,
I do not know him
or them or it
last name first I guess
from alphabetic list
or else he's a Hungarian.
Or they. Or it. Weisman.

Wise man or White man?
Howard comes from hay-ward.
did a Jewish gentleman

call about my hay,
keeping it safe from hay thieves
in the meadow?
Is he trying to protect my hay
or reap it for himself,
trying to sell me something
after my money?

His number is local
my own little town,
mixing fright (he's
right here!) with some
sore of reassurance
(he's just a neighbor).
I wonder if he'll call again
and save us all this fuss?

21 November 2018

=====

We'll call this food
and make it work for s,
the little sun
shown through cold cloud

it's a tradition
this business of book
feeding on someone else's
thinking, telling,

the stories we tell—
but what would it be like
this day of life
if nobody told

and all we did was remember?

21 November 2018

MEMORIA

Even in a life without women
memory
would bne a steady girlfriend.

21.XI.18

=====

Suddenly birds
swoop up
out of nowhere
scattering
dead leaves,
reach for the roof.
Now they are
above me,
I can't see them,
under their wings
I hope for the best.

21 November 2018

QUIEN ES?

Later he went to the ballet, saw John Kriza dance Billy the Kid music by Aaron Copland from Lithuania. His gay friends all swooned over John Kriza, he liked the music a little. classical bang bang, liked it when Billy spun around and cried out *Quien es?* the only words spoken in the ballet or did he imagine it from some book with Billy's last words, in Spanish yet, Who are you, who's there, who is it? just before Pat shot him. Isn't it all supposed to be about dance? Gushot in the music, rain outside in midtown, subway home, people speaking Spanish. Why did an American outlaw speak Spanish to an American lawman? These are deep matters, matters of where we live, what the landscape will endure. New York used to speak Dutch then turned away and spoke English maybe now it will speak Spanish for a while instead. In the subway home it hardly mattered, he couldn't really hear what they were saying, even if he did know Spanish. Even if they were talking about him. He didn't care, much. What counted was this sudden question: does the land itself control the language

we speak? Is that why the identical Latin turned into Spanish in Spain but Italian in Italy and Romanian in Romania and French in France? The same Latin, same years going by. But different mountains, plains, rivers. Maybe the rivers do it, they keep flowing, talking, wiping up the blood of crime and the marble dust of art and the endless scraps of food and flesh and trash that people leave. The river washed it away, pronounces it into the sea. *Flumen*, he remembered, neuter, plural *flumina*, 'river.' The flowing one, the fluent speaker of all tongues. There are no rivers in the desert where they killed poor Billy, or are there? Do the red rocks understand Spanish too?

21 November 2018

=====

In Sweden I think the sun is dim
but much beloved by the men
far north who tend the mines
reindeer missile installations and all
the poor women they bring with them
to brighten, naked in their aprons,
the gloom of indoor life. I know this
from the movies, the way I know
that we Americans come home every
single night exhausted, hungry, ready
for anything to cheer us up, mate or movie,
bowling even Bible study, I know all this
the way you know where all this here
in coming from and why we're all so smart.
We all watched the same program, all
read selections from the same dull book.

21 November 2018

CAPSICUM

all it hot pepper
you won't be wrong,
let some angel
spice your food,
it hurts only a little
only a little while
and then you're you
again, good as new,
better, with a Latin
word uder your belt
so you have two ways
to think about what
happened. A word
is all you need to be
different. Language
is the spice of life.

21 November 2018

A GLIMPSE OF YOU NOW*for Charlotte*

It is all.

**It is the forest
we used to walk in
and sometimes
still do. It is time
around us, gentle,
a breeze, no whirlwind,
it is trees shedding
and leafing again.**

**It is the moment
again and again
when I recognize
the one you are,
the quiet grandeur,
the vast generosity
of your intelligence
and care. It is the air
between such words,
the sudden guesses
sunsets through trees
lights of the town**

known best in rainlight,
pools sculpting the colors
back to us

and you can see
see so much, so deeply
into the surfaces of things.
and make me see.
And not just me.
Everything you see
you contrive to give,
to me, yes, more than anyone
has ever given, yes,
but to them all,

it is there for all of them
to see, reckon, alongside
all the stories you have carried
into this word-world
from outside, all the pictures
you take and, as the sad
little word says, share.

It is everything you share.

You take such delight in things
because things are there
for us, intact, undemanding,
worth so much because
they are blue, or soft, or shaped
like a mother's shadow,
or a ship far out at sea.

Image. Word. Caress.
Warmth of you beside me,
your face in sleep,
the little glimpse I have
of all you are.

22 November 2018

=====

The sun at last
north wind
the shadows have come home

clouds over Cedar Hill
shaped like Celebes
Sulawesi

geography

a bird or two
bothering the sky.

22 November 2018

=====

**Making it all the way to the weather
the day-mind wakes up**

**what have they been doing
down in there, my many minds?**

**We all have them, they all
sign one name to all our letters;**

**is there any way my day-mind
could know them, each by each,**

**all of them, and get a glimpse
of why I happen as I do**

**and who it really is who stands
here talking to you?**

22 November 2018

= = = = =

Is there a word
that can listen
before it speaks?

22.XI.18

=====

Said more,
meant less?

No, always more.
EWvery word
brings its mother too.

The image of the Queen
exhibited by nature
in the pores of every human skin—

read the pores, connect
the dots: star map!

Venus of Praxiteles!

23 November 2018

=====

Someone with no holidays
walks in the sun.
He rubs against a tree,
wonders why there are no people
doing their stuff all round today.
How calm the world is,
he thinks, when there is only me!
His antlers rustle in the few leaves left.

23 November 2018

THEOLOGY

**Important sometimes
to remember
the word of God
is a word.**

23.XI.18

=====

Obligatory animal!
I reach out
because arms do—
my mind is just
along for the ride.

23 November 2018

=====

In our science
everything has a name.
What about a culture
where there are no names
at all, just 'you' and 'me',
Or maybe just you.

23 November 2018

=====

Indian carousel
made of tin,
pluck a lever
to make it spin.

We watch it,
it carries us
to the beginning
of things,

tiny children
whirling on strings,
we almost hear
their joy and fear

so fast they go
but never far,
reminding us
of who we still are.

23 November 2018

=====

Most of the evidence
is gone.
Snow here and there,
full brush of the tall spruce
across the grass.
shadows mean the sun
can rise again.
No cars on the hungry road.

23 November 2018

=====

What we see out the window
every day makes the mind.
Stings the pineal gland
to release a chemical
that makes us sleep
joyously while wide awake.
This sleep is called religion.
Or sometimes poetry.

23 November 2018

DOORS

Watching the door it never closes, it worries him what he might see when it slides open, glides he means, silently swinging on those funny socket things along the jamb. That is the word. What might come in. What might be hanging on the other side of the door and now, as he watched with terror, slowly swings into view, lumpy as an old coat or his father's striped bathroom it might be, or is it an animal, cadaver of a black panther for example hung dead and crook-necked from the coat hook. More frightening than the live animal would be, why, because there's so little likelihood, one in a million maybe, of a live animal like that being in an ordinary house in an ordinary city. Big as it is. A corpse is scarier than a living person, the way a ghost is, a corpse is a ghost's house and at any minute the ghost might come back and claim it, move it towards you with eyes closed, doesn't need eyes to see where you are, you can't I mean he can't keep his eyes closed, must keep them open, to see what's coming. What's coming. Doors are like that at night. Not always in the daytime, though if he lay down for a nap no way to be sure the door wouldn't swing open. Doors do that. Panthers don't infest city houses, but doors do, doors everywhere, squaking or noiseless smooth or

rough in their swaying open, loud or soft as they snick closed. The slam. He wants to jump up and slam all the doors just to make sure. If the door is clammed shut, it would take an actual hand to open it. A living hand. The door couldn't roll open by itself, couldn't shove into the room whatever horror it had hanging on its hook. Through studying doors he came to learn that it is not good to look closely at things in a house. Things in the house are alive in a peculiar way, can be dangerous, frightening, hurt you sometimes. Just glance at them with respect and move away. Save staring, he learned, for out in the street, animals in the zoo, dioramas in the museum, people on the street if you can stare at them without them noticing. Don't stare at things in the house. They are always looking at you.

23 November 2018

FUGUE

The teacher was playing the piano in the front of the room. It wasn't much of a piano, the nuns in the convent where he took lessons had better pianos. This one was small, not even a full keyboard, but was light enough to roll from classroom to classroom to demonstrate musical things. Now she was playing a piece of Bach, one he had heard a number of times before on the radio at home. She was playing it slowing, emphasizing the rhythm of the piece. She hummed a little towards them, facing the students while her hands did their work. He watched her pale old hands and thought about polar bears. Music made him think about things, real music, with no words in it, music that went on and on so he could think long thinking and see things happening in mind. The polar bear was stepping pigeon-toed and softly on an ice floe that was push along through ice in a river. The polar bear was white of course, but some yellow dinginess around the long fur. Nature is not clean—he learned that long ago from watching dogs and smelling ginkgo trees. He learned to wash his hands carefully after touching natural things. He did this pretty secretly, so they wouldn't call him a sissy. He was too strong to be a sissy anyway. He liked big strong things. Like bears

and buffalo and elephants. They flashed before his mind but he came back quickly to the polar bear, whose yellow eyes were looking at him now, its head swaying a little side to side, with a swoop downward during each swing. The polar bear stopped at this point and the teacher asked the class Did you hear the first theme come back again just now? It wasn't a real question, and no one answered it.

23 November 2018

=====

The sideways glance
brings it also in.
Hessian politics,
tin tongue talk
television terror—
turn off the news
and know what really
happens, the bad guys
have always won.
And I do mean guys—
women have other empery,
other angers, other beckoning shores.

24 November 2018

=====

*It is when you look away
from the world you see it clear*

said Caelius the Cloud-Gazer
in his treatise *On Transparency*
,

he was a pupil of Plotinus but became
a priest of an obscure deity called Love
who rules over the rise and fall of suns,
walled cities, waves of the ocean,
whitecaps on the inland sea.

Caelius knew a lot
and pretended more
thank God! (thank Love
he would have said)
because all he imagined
turned into truth.

The book (one of many
he wrote, some lost,
some known only
in single manuscripts),

**the book's argument
was simple: Look
at things hard enough
and long enough
and you'll see right through them
into where they come from
and where they are headed—
in this way you actually
can see time with your own eyes.**

**Which is why Caelius is also
called The Man who Stared Time in the Face.**

24 November 2018

GENETICS

He liked to look at the photo of his grandfather, a smiling old man in an easy chair, fluffy white hair, a face like his mother's, natural, a gentle smile. He wore a vest, and the photo had been tinted by someone so there was color in his cheeks,, background, eyes. He never knew this grandfather, or the other one, his father's father. Didn't even know what he looked like. And he had never seen his grandmothers either. All of them died before he was born. It was strange having no grandparents. All the other children had them. some even had them living with them, visiting, seeing them all the time, Thanksgiving, Easter. Learning things from them, like fishing or whittling or speaking Italian. No one old to teach him, though. He didn't even know anybody old, except the old man bent double at the waist who sold them chicken from his shop on Avenue R. He kept live chickens in a store! How strange that was, the poor old man, bent like a letter L upside down. Maybe from always bending over and over to pick up chickens. But he didn't know that man, and the man scared him a little, so old, long white whiskers. Nobody old. There was Mr. Hoffman who limped up the alley every day with his beautiful collie dog. But he had

never dared speak to Mr. Hoffman, though he loved to watch the dog. The dog always smiled at him as he stood under the pussy willow tree watching. Nobody old. He wondered is there a word like grand-orphan? That is what he was and it was sad. As if he and his mother and father came out of nowhere. Irish and English they told him. But they had never been to Ireland or England, and didn't know or didn't remember the towns or regions their own grandparents had come from. And they didn't remember their own grandparents either, it seemed. So he was a grand-orphan child of grand-orphans. He wondered if their family way back had always been like that, nobody old, nothing known, nothing to remember. How would he ever learn how to be old?

24 November 2018

=====

That maple leaf
from the little tree
new gold by the garage

is rich enough with inscriptions—
leaf vein, nibble, skeleton, stain—
to be a map of China.

The further you go in
to anything the more
detail. Houses.
people, hands at work—
there is no vacancy.

25 November 2018

CHORALE

for Arvo Pärt

They try
but they can't
take all our
words away

They slam
the doors on
churches but
God walks free

out along our
streets or
ambles slow
so that the old

too can keep
up with him
good company
along his endless way.

25 November 2018

=====

When winter came
we weren't ready,
our whole vocabulary
hung snug in closets
half-asleep.

 Music even
was half dressed,
the oboe player
gaspd for breath
and light itself
faltered down the sky
till all that was left
for us to do was to
exaggerate the obvious
till it too is beautiful
as it actually always is.

25 November 2018

=====

My little urn from Lydia
porphyry, heart's geography,
where that famous river flowed
and Croesus turned his toenails gold,
pale-veined gentle purple vessel
holds now dry beads, a few,
from broken rosaries, how
much loss in compressed
in this stony one- ounce cup.

25 November 2018

=====

What does a face look like
you can trust to travel with you
into your past? Into that gaudy
opera your nights are still busy
humming, coming from?

Every patient looks across the desk
and asks silently will this doctor
fit the silver mask he must put on
to bring them both safe down there
and back. And as for me,
I look that way at everyone I meet,
are you my Virgil? Are you Beatrice?

25 November 2018

PIANO LESSONS

His father and his uncle could, no training and no sheet music in front of them, could play anything they chose, his father straight, quiet, sentimental, his uncle loud, his big carpenter's hands striding up and down the keyboard, pouncing out the rhythm, the tune almost incidental to the humping thumping of the keys. They could play, they said, by ear. By ear. But he couldn't and they thought he should, so they sent him to the nuns. He didn't understand. He had two ears, two hands, two feet for the pedals—why wouldn't the song come out of his fingers? What was wrong with him? So the nuns gave him sheets covered with staves and notes—those he understood, he was good with signs and things you could read. He understood: quarter-note, rest, sixteenth note, ledger line, fermata hold a long time. But how to make the sounds and silences those interesting signs demanded? So the nuns sat him down in their pale clean strange parlor and made him play exercises, over and over. He had no piano at home, so he had to practice his finger moves, his maneuvers (the word, he had learned, meant work of the hands) on a cardboard keyboard that folded out to be full-sized. It was good enough. So the only time he

could actually hear what he was playing was in the late afternoon once a week, when the sun slanted through gauzy curtains into the convent parlor, and, clear as the room was, dust motes moved around in the air. He would watched them until the nun said in that sever voice they had look at your hands, just look at your hands. He was obedient and stared down at those weird pink things moving up and down and back and forth, with wrong notes coming out now and again, though truly all the notes sounded wrong.

25 November 2018

INDIGO

The dark looks blue sometimes he thought. He wondered if there was something between light and dark, what that would be like. In school they learned the spectrum, about Roy G. Biv and how all colors were summed up in his name, in that order. But after blue came indigo, and after indigo came violet, beyond which was something called ultraviolet that we can't see but devices can. So the blue inside the dark could not be indigo, which is the name he heard adults using to describe the darkest blue. Maybe they were all wrong at school. Or maybe there was something wrong with his eyes. He still saw that dark dark blue inside the black of night. If it isn't indigo what is it? And where could violet be, since he could see violet perfectly well in his mother's blouse and the flowers outside that were even called violets, and the Crayola crayon with that name right on it. Something was missing. Missing in the way that people talked about things. One night he looked into the dark and said What color are you? And then, not waiting for an answer, said Who are you? He heard no voice but words came into his mind *I am the other side of the dark. Everything has another side you can't see but you can think about. Think about me—that is the color I am.* Something like that, the

words went by too fast, but that was now he remembered them later. It was a good thing to think about. It made him feel less lonely. To think there was another side of himself, somewhere, like a secret brother maybe, or sister, or someone he couldn't imagine but who could sometimes talk to him. Or talk in him.

25 November 2018

=====

The sparrows,
I don't know,
the shadows
of the birds
move past, fast,
small and big,
I don't know,
might be wrens,
might be ones
I have no name for,
I don't know,
there is some pain
in having no name
for what I see,
only a little,
I don't know, pain
is pain, a bird
is a bird at least,
be general maybe
be at ease, knowing,
not knowing, anyhow
they never stay.

25 November 2018

====

**There are violins in heaven
and pride fades away with age.
There is a pretty gaudy waitress
works in God's restaurant.
we love her for her differences,
she smiles, she frowns,
slaps our wrists, pats our shoulders
and all the while the music
keeps playing, such wise
musicians in such a busy place
and we love her all the more
we call her Nature, Mom for short
and sit down where she tells us to.**

26 November 2018

=====

Play wooden flutes,
sentimental choices,

old photos
clog your cellphone,

sometimes all there is
is a bird overhead,

a grey sedan
fast on a grey road.

No sun today
the name of our hotel.

Cuckoo clock in lobby
never stops.

26 November 2018

GIRL

**You can tell she's Russian
by the space behind her eyes.
Her English is perfect
but the distances win out.
She looks at me, she
tries to smile but even I
am too close for her to see**

26 November 2018

SPÄTHERBST

**No leaves left to fall;
what shall I write on now?
No sun, no ink,
broken branches in the driveway
broken pencils. I belong
to time, I rest.**

26 November 2018

RAVEL ?

**Orchestra—how
do all those (mostly)
men fit inside
such a small music?**

26ovember 2018

=====

Sunrise all day long?
A town *in deserto*.
The moon a mister
sluggish at her call,
red rock's in shadow,
a child stands there
wondering where is there.

26 November 2018

LA FOLIA

They called it Madness
because it was a *tune*
and melody scared them,
a melody could lead
anywhere, you never
know when a tune
will take the mind,
trigger dopamine
make you happy
unaccountably, joy
without paying for it—
no wonder the music
business hates anything
you can take home
humming all by yourself—
the Baroque guys knew
all about this, but a few—
Biber, Vivaldi, Bach—
went against the current
of that sinister Guild
and gave us music still.

26 November 2018

EURYDICE VARIATIONS

6.

She went to the movies
and took off all her clothes.
Nobody notice, but the screen
grew brighter. The black-and-white
newsreel gave way to color,
a feature film, a musical
but the music was different from
what anybody ever heard before.

It was winter 1945, the war
was getting old, the weary people
woke up to the music, laughed,
a few of them got up and danced
jitterbug up the carpeted aisle
but their moves had nothing to do
with the music in the air, the images
on the screen, ships and parachutes
and women smiling at their kids.

But a little boy was crying all alone,
knew something was the matter

but not what. Eurydice beheld him,
held him on her lap until the music
finally stopped. The audience
got up, wrapped warm, went out
past the candy stand into the street.
The el train roared overt their heads.
But the little boy was safe inside until
the nice lady took him home with her.

26 November 2018

=====

Imagine being
awake now.
Or asleep.
It could be either
since now is
neither. Imagine
a defining
situation—
crows on cornfield
bombers overhead
appointments kept
taverns crowded—
and you are there
already, clear
as a white ball
rolling in the grass.
At any moment
you are almost
there, almost,
the beach is far,
the dark wave
blots out the moon.

26 / 27 November 2018

ARIA

How long should a song take
before you forget it?

The aria is done
applause winds down,
action resumes.

But what

she sang is still
singing in you, braves
the current music,
counterpoint, takes
over your breath,
she's inside you,
her song, herself,
you'll never know
who this person is
who still, minutes later,
is more you than you are.

26 / 27 November 2018

=====

It's almost now
again. The streetlights
show no travelers.
How can it be now
with nobody there?
Not even me, caught
up with wakefulness
unnatural. Sometimes
a deer steps across
the road, he too
in search of reality.

26 / 27 November 2018

=====

for Lila Dunlap

Some people have come
so far to be here,
rivers, inlets of ocean,
marshes, highways,
small bizarre cities
throng the way.
Some people are here,
have come through
all the maze of meaning.
are you one of them?
Have you come
fully clothed,
through lunatic Elysium
to this outpost
of the almost,
this language we share?

2.

Dionysus was all about pleasure,
reclaim us from civic obligations,
weddings, families, mortgages,

procreation. He came
to liberate the Hellenes
and us from family obligations,
desert barbarities borrowed
from Egypt, calendars, duties.
Free us for pure pleasure.
When he rides his tiger,
raves, reveals, we have
only the choice to be happy
or to sleep. Be happy
with deity. The sky
is blue for a reason.

3.
Did you know you were coming
when you came? Jet, riverboat,
Amtrak, Jeep, did you remember
to leave the animals behind,
the vines, the mosses,
the little fishes in the canal,
the eels of history squirming
in the culverts of dream?
You need to be empty up here,
a smile looking for a face,
a tune you whistle everybody
else can hear but not you.

4.

That's what it means
to come. To come here
out of history,
to make your own mystery
kiss by touch by forgetting.
How brave you are—
to be here with us at all.

5.

I squeeze the fresh wood
to press out the juices—
this is the spirit of matter,
succus, semen of time.
I squeeze the stone
until it too yields
brittle seeds of memory—
all time past
is planted in us,
we can't escape.

6.

I once spoke Latin
not so long ago
and we both were Africa,

Atlantis, home.
How come we're here now?
That's the only question
worth bothering with, no
who-am-I, no What-is-God,
none of those high school
enigmas. Just
how came you here,
fraught with love and danger?

26 / 27 November 2018

=====

Not too many bayous,
reservoirs, canals.
This rain today
is ocean enough.
We live by weather
alone. Horses stamp
south of Rhinebeck
on meadowsmeadows
sup from the river.
Listen! Swap
certainties with me,
two shirts wet
from one rain.

26 / 27 November 2018

=====

As often as we can
be certain.
time is on our side,
like a coach
pressing us on
to be somewhere
beyond now,
to bring this place
with me
wherever I go.

26/ 27 November 2018

ANNANDALE

**Luscious unrise—
all posed pretty
except the self
herself of light.**

**Another grey morning
in this xhip of Scotland,
happy though,
who needs colors**

**out there, our
eyes are bright enough.**

27 November 2018

for David Levi Strauss

at Solstice

When the street was busy
Levi slept. He wept
sometimes to think of those
whose hands he'd touched,
leading Robert Duncan say
in his last days, up Nineteenth
to Valencia, hand in hand,
he wept at all the words
heard then, heard always,
words of his own now to tell
how he learned to marvel at
the work of so many thousand
years before him. Before us.

We have no right
to time, he thought,
we have to fight our way
back to Botticelli, Bruno,
or the master of that cave
they call The Three Brothers
as if it were a pizza joint,

**we have to stumble
theory-drunk through time
to find the simple
sight of things again.**

**We are the Theoroes
and we stumble naked
through the dark,
knowing only just enough
to keep going, to get there,
to *see* with our own eyes at last
things we'd just been looking at.**

27 November 2018

THE BUS

The bus tells me
what to do.
Left, on, off,
walk, wait.

The bus comes
south on Fifth
from long ago,
passes art and animals,
teaches us
to look and look away.

In my day
they were yellow,
yellow and green,
green as the drivers
fresh from Ireland,
overt as architecture,
as if they belonged.

So all I knew
about tigers and Titian
the old bus route

tutored me, taught me—
sometimes the exhaust
smoke on frosty mornings
reminds me to rejoice.

27 November 2018

RADIO

Sometimes the floor answers the child. He stomps on it. On the other side of the room the Philco emits the snaky sound-shapes of a saxophone playing the kind of music he guesses grown-like. It is noisy and simple. He doesn't like it. He has views on these matters but he never speaks them. Who could he tell them to, share them with. Now a clarinet imitating a flute, noises such as wind makes sometimes at the edges of his window, whooshing, hissing, whimpering. Then the drumming starts again. The saxophone pretends to be a woman's voice calling. Calling her cows home on a frozen night time meadow. Where have the cows been? Where are they now. Why aren't they in their warm barn. he is almost cold. The music is stupid, he is afraid to turn it off, someone upstairs might be listening. So much repeating repeating. A drum noise keeping time with a flute, no a flute keeping time with a drum. What does time mean, that you can keep or not

keep it. Now a woman is singing pretending to be a saxophone, no words in her tones. Why use a voice with nothing to say? What good is a mouth with no words?

27 November 2018

MASHA'S MUSIC

It is strange, accordion, drum, sax, other stuff. It's not pop, not jazz, not experimental, not classical. You couldn't play it on AM or listen to it in a pickup. Or in a sedan. It's not going anyplace—in that way it's like classical music, always insisting on being right here, and making the listener always more and more here. In a funny way it's a little like poetry in our time—in a strange place between language that people want to read (memoirs, manuals, even novels) and language nobody notices for long, language that just happens at us: ads, candy wrappers, pop lyrics.

Real music, real poetry: You don't need it but it's there. It buzzes, gets sentimental, irritates by repetition, won't easily stop, won't leave you alone, keeps telling you something, wakes you up, surprises you with feeling.

It's not about liking it. It's that it's there, really there.

But about twenty minutes into the piece, a synthesizer-sound comes in like a tide washing away the frail sandcastle of sound that had been there. All gone, the distinctions of sound and rhythm we had been being teased by charmed by. Now it's all greasy surf, all surf, sad old rock.

27 November 2018

FOR L.Z. IN BROOKLYN HEIGHTS

Cast aloft
like blackbirds up
there is so much wonder
in direction,
 “arise, arise”
he wrote and lived upstairs,
looked out at the harbor
handily.

 Ships bring
it all here,
here means *me*,
me means everyone—
a little tune
he hummed from Marx,
we care about the other
to be done with cloying
families. Every
one is my brother
or no one is—
the high thought hovers
over the islands’ edge.

27November 2018

== ==

The poet reveals to others
things he doesn't know
just as dancers show
to others what they themselves
cannot see. They know
only how to turn the inside out,
minds, limbs, gasping for breath.

28 November 2018

WWW

**Strange they knew already
to call it a web—
knew how soon it would
spider us in vacancy.**

28November 2018

=====

Light a candle in the window
to show the street the way home,
house a mother it is always
running from and towards.
Nothing stands still in this
town of ours, forest,
prairie, the trees
run around all night, stand
at dawn approximately
where we think they stood.
Even now they sift a little,
birds help them, tell them
whether we're watching, even
tell them I'm writing this down.

28 November 2018

=====

**Morph her enigmatic
smile into a frown and back
and push it further till
the smile is rapturous and true.
Now she is ready to be you.**

28 November 2018

WANATANKA ISLAND

Not vivid
but an eagle
anyway.

We stood
at the waterfront
not watching the boats

the sky
was our mother that day
the queen of dream

edging the clouds
on a spit of land low
trees birds watched in

am I such a mortal alien
only feel at home
where nothing is

nothing but sea,
here, where the sea
comes so far inland

to meet us,
I see the eagles
skim above the water

I hear the water
explaining
everything to me.

28 November 2018

=====

**Waiting
for the other
side of now
to turn its back
and be here,**

**waiting
for time to drift
its measures,
meanings,
my way,
 my street,
my house, the little room
that stretches forever.**

**28 November 2018
Rhinebeck**

=====

I have no brother,
 no *brat*
to be but me,
alone I walked
among the silences
roaring, meek maybe,
“Other me other!”

29November 2018, Rhinebeck

=====

Diligence demands
or do I mean
a different tune,

light house on the coast
on an island just simply there?
I'm guessing everything sings.

We make it by working hard.
Bread. Honey
from tumultuous labor of bees
asleep now in their black
plastic caverns, praying
to their gods, ardent prayers
we both call dream.

Show up at dawn
and fetch the sun
from her deep boudoir,

there is only one
ocean ever, Greeks
called it river, runs

**all the way to its beginning,
continuous, meant for us,**

**it tells the only
story there is,
keep going, it is hard
to be here.**

28 / 29 November 2018

=====

Pale people waiting
for someone else
to bring the day
over the hill.

If even I look
through the trees
I see headlights
of a car heading north,
they make me feel
far away from myself,
nothing moving but lights
then they're gone.

28 / 29 November 2018

====

I can only say
who I am by saying
where I come from.
I was Orpheus
and then I died.
(The myth you know
gets everything wrong.
We need to get
all the stories right)
I died, she came down the stairs
to death, said
my name and brought me back.
I can keep going, keep singing
as long as I look at her.
Keep looking at her,
never look away.

28 / 29 November 2018 04.27

=====

**See the white cloud
between two banks of grey?
That means remember.**

**As you watch, brightness
comes between them,
turning blue. That means**

**you have done your work
so far. Now the now
begins, the archaic**

**eternity of this minute.
You are Hera. You are Herakles.
Take heart. Begin.**

29 November 2018

A WORD TO THE WISE

**It always means
more than the given
mind means it to.**

29 November 2018

=====

**Be ready for a new religion
every time the doorbell rings.
The bits of truth they bring
pile up on your threshold
like silt from amazing
rivers far away or just
over the hill. Never doubt
the power of the new—
swallow on an empty mind
before it gets cold.**

29 November 2018

== = = = =

They were looking at me
so I flew away. It was that
or attacking them with the alphabet
yet again. I rested in a tree,
larch I believe, at least
it looked a little weary to me
and we reposed together.
Later I flew back down to the ground
and pretended I had never been gone—
they pretended not to notice
my absence and return.
Wings are wonderful
things to have
inwardly or otherwise.
Tomorrow I'll show you
how to fly below the ground—
there's a sky down there
you have to see to believe.
Come with your vocabulary,
ready to take notes.

30 November 2018

=====

**Quonset huts
they used to have
like rolls of dough,
tin-topped baguettes
across the Long Island flats,
a round roof, a long
tube to be in,
your very own sky.**

30 November 2018

