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== == == == ==

**Sunshine makes shadows.
Remember this
when you walk among the shades.
Find the great Light
from which they falter, form.**

1 December 2018

=====

**Evidence enough, the morning.
Coast of Ireland, Skellig maybe
seen in dream.**

**A milder winter,
a mother land.**

1 December 2018

=====

The water evaporates,
leaves behind it
a sheen of pastness—
Wittgenstein listening to Schumann,
say, when his brother still had hands.
Or not as sad as all that,
but sad. A surface is always
sad, it is where light falls,
takes color, shifts. It is
where things happen, happened.
Drink from this empty glass.

1 December 2018

=====

**Give me back
the color of my hair,
the color alone,
it could be on the horizon
just after sunset, could be
on a stone washed over
all day long by the creek
and still kept color,
just the color. Let the hair
remember—humans
are good at remembering.**

1 December 2018

AMBER

1.

We are caught in each other.
That is how we last,
how we say our long
complicated everlasting sermon,
how we know.

2.

Sermon meant conversation—
how dare you write it down
ahead of time? And there is no way
to get ahead of time,
there is no such thing as time,
time is the shadow of the space
between you and me, how long
it takes to get to one another,
the million miles we last.

3.

But why does amber have a German name
in the Slavic shores from which it comes?
Burn stone, stone a-brim with warm light,
stone like an owl's eye, a wolf's
alert regard. Amber—sounds like
Latin *ambo*, meaning both, as in
ambiguous, both of us, the single
you and all the infinity of me's.
Sounds like *ambix*, alchemic
vessel from which a new
life may come to those ardent lovers
the ones old treatises called The Wise.

4.

A chip of amber
fatter at the bottom
than at top—
it is still liquid, it flows
thousands of years
slow, like Syrian glass
you see in museums,
flows like our thoughts

do too, I suppose,
north to south,
desire to fulfilment
to new beginnings.
Athanos. Deathless
vessel too. The amber
still flowing. We flow
from life to life, minute
to minute in this little
life with you in it and me.

5.

A friend gave me four ancient
silver coins. Some of them
I could read, some not. One
had an owl on one side, huge
eyes, and three letters alongside,
AΘE for Athena, with her owl,
when E still stood for *epsilon* and *eta*,
the letter with five fingers, the letter
like a hand, her wise hand that holds
our hands when we write or read
wide-eyed in the thrill of book.

6.

But when it lies
against the skin
it says a different thing,

not about the goddess
or alphabets or birds,
a simpler thing to say

maybe, but all our culture
comes from it, , and war,
cathedrals, aqueducts,

it rests against the skin and says
in a whisper *I am yours,*
a thing can belong to you,

*just you. I was a tree, I bled
my spirit into time, you came
and found me, or someone*

*put me in your hand. I am
what can be owned, I am
the kiss of ownership*

*and I demand your love—
only by loving me can you
ever hope to love the world.*

7.

But I think love means have
in that honey-golden language
of the stone that is no stone,
thone of The Wise that flows
through ordinary air and touches
our fingers with a touch
like nothing else ever wields,
a soft excitement, a lie
more valuable than the truth.

1 December 2018

=====

**Monochrome suasion
November yard hill hut woods
tattered leaves abaft dull grass
going nowhere. Gentle
gentle the drift of light,
one color everywhere
what color is it? What
words have I failed now?**

2 December 2018

=====

In this season see
the little river rush,
see it from my window
before I'm even dressed,
as if it were a part
of my house, or mind.
The longer a man lives
the harder it gets
yo tell inside from outside.
Or the water from the well.

2 December 2018

=====

**Unmeasured scripture
of the bare trees
scrawled close together
the little light
between the letters
is all there is of sky.
This is the Talmud of December,
immense commentary
on an almost vanished text.**

2 December 2018

RANCID

He loved butter. When there was no toast or bread to eat it on, or even saltine crackers, he would eat a spoonful all by itself, or if there were no spoon handy he'd smear a thumb full of butter and suck the thumb. His father disapproved of this and used various arguments to explain how bad this was. It was bad for him because too much butter can make you sick. But ti never had. And butter was fattening, with all the milk fat in it. But cheese had that too, and his father never said anything against cheese, and there was always Velveeta in the ice box right next to the butter, and sometimes even big triangles of cheddar cheese cut from the huge wheel by the nice man at the A&P on Avenue S. Then his father pointed out that butter was very expensive, and he was eating more than his share of this expensive delicacy. But he was eating less of other things, the costly canned tuna fish and salmon that he seldom got to

taste. Finally his father explained the real danger of butter: it turns rancid. What is rancid? Well, when everything sweet turns sour, and good tastes become disgusting, and rancid is like rotten, and butter can turn rotten overnight and be rancid in the morning. It had something to do with the oil in the butter, became like oil in the car engine, it could make you very sick. He listened. He was always interested in differences and diseases, how things change. The next morning he scooped some soft butter onto a piece of toast and took it into his mouth. It suddenly felt strange, tickled a little bit the gums above the front teeth, made something like a smell happen in the back of his throat, a taste. He began to feel nauseous, and the word rancid leapt into mind and he spat out the mouthful into the sink, his ribs aching with an effort to heave or vomit. He never ate butter again.

2 December 2018

CRÉPUSCULE DE SOIR

Twilight. The blue hour,
hour between dog and wolf
hard to tell apart. The last
light. My father called it
tge gloaming, his favorite
time, the winding down,
have a last look at the garden,
time to be home. The gloaming
of the evening. The time
to remember, not just the day.
The whole long day of ours
since the very first light.

2 December 2018

SITTING

Nothing to see.
No one to be.
Sometimes the cushion
under you knows
more than you do.
It at least
is held firm in place
but you are nowhere.
It even teaches
a little, reaches up
like a subtle guide
nudging you a little
right or left,
back, forth, all
the little tricks
of gravity. That's why
you sit, to be
a child again,

**to be the weight
of yourself again
in a world of matter.**

3 December 2018

MORNING MEANS

The glory moment
the glow
of sun sudden
through dim trees

and a cloud like Crete
out north,
 and Icarus
survived! still skims
the blue sea of sky

and history down here
unrolls its maps
tries to tell the truth at last

we got everything wrong
the stories all have
different endings
from the ones we know,

**the shadow of a flying boy
passes overhead, birds
imitate our aspirings,
soar and plummet—**

**we are Atlantis
still singing, never sunk.**

3 December 2018

BY THE RIVER

**The specifics
undo us,
the tattered
flag rattles on its mast,**

**the harbor
hungers for its Vikings.**

Time has run out.

3 December 2018

=====

Coming into the taste of something
the east of it
where it rises to be known
sunrise in the mouth? No I mean Chartres
or Ely floating over the plain,
piano talking over the orchestra, no I mean
a heart is something besides a valve
a heart is habit
to hold, to keep the taste of someone
long in what is that strange
dim storehouse, not mind though mind
knows it, not heart though heart
admits things to it and holds them there,
some other term or terminal,
a godown on the weather front,
when you hear a name, a word maybe even,
the vault springs open and
all the one or ones you ever loved are there.

3 December 2018

=====

The unusual is usual.
By that it meant
everything is
to be expected.
Here is the dragon,
his footprint on the lawn,
and see, the moon maidens
have hung their washing
on your apple tree.
You get the picture—
laundry is universal,
like dinner, anxiety, repose.
Now turn the page
and guess again. The glass
you thought was empty
is not quite. The book
you took down from the shelf
is suddenly in a different language,
even the alphabet is weird.
And you're not the least surprised.

4 December 2018

=====

The thing about friends
you never know where they are.
Yorkshire. Petaluma. Berlin.
They flit about like fruit flies
over a cluster of ripe grapes.
You are the silver platter
that shapes their journeys
you fondly suppose.
You call them *your* friends
but they belong only
to the distances. Sit there
on your ottoman long as you like
but you belong to the distances too.

4 December 2018

=====

**Come we'll go fishing
he said so I put
away what I was thinking
and grabbed a spool of twine—
nautical, waxed—and said OK
señor but use no hooks,
we'll trawl this string of ours
along the water and we'll see
who rises and wants us to
take him home, or her, or it.
Give the Other a chance—
isn't that the very core
of postmodernism? He agreed
so off we went and still
sit quiet on the river bank
happy as philosophers can be.**

4 December 2018

=====

Let me say it simply.
You're a tree.
Seasons quiet, seasons
laden with fruit.
Now leaves, now none.

Your roots go deep
into all there is.
What they fetch up
from earth's marrow
sustains you
more than you know.

And sustains us too,
the others who walk
nearby admiring your crown
up-thrust, or maybe dare
to rub against your bark,

or even lie down in your shade.
What you are and what you give
is always happening,
even when you think you're barren.
That's not what the sun
thinks of you when she rises,
and the earth is grateful for the way
the mind of you milks her
meaning by meaning, apple by apple,
word by word, into the time we share.

PAROUSIA

I pray that Christ walks up behind you when you're shopping. Maybe in the vegetable section, you're looking at kale, long leaf or curly, fresh, organic or not? And he leans against your shoulder with his shoulder, as if he were wondering about kale too, And kale is good for you, very, cooked or raw, fiber or juice. His head is close to yours, he's not looking at you but you feel what you take to be his thought. What does he want to tell you? What does he want you to do? Lord, lord, you say, I look at all this kale. It's clever, the word could welcome Him, or just be an exclamation. What if He's not Him, just somebody else? *Could you tell the difference?* You can almost hear the question aloud. His question. Who are you? you think hard, almost say. *Who do you think I am?* That's not fair, is it, to answer your question with another. So this time you ask out loud, Who

are you? He doesn't answer. So you turn, almost fiercely, to look at him. ready to complain or argue or. Or what. He smiles at you, an ordinary friendly kind of smile. Anybody you meet could be me, he says, I could be anybody—but you know who I am. You do know, don't you? And you do.

4 December 2018

[I INTERROGATE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S SISTER]

[In the dream, I encounter Ben Franklin and his sister; we meet in the wide bright corridor of a postmodern collegiate building. After a few words, Ben pleads a prior engagement and goes off. I try to make conversation with his sister:]

Me—Were you in France with him?

She—No, I was here, earning my keep.

Me—How did you earn it?

She—The way young women without wealth always do. I was a governess.

Me—What or whom did you govern?

She—Silly’s children.

Me—Silly?

She—My brother, of course. We always called him that.

Me—What became of the children?

She—My, you ask a lot of questions!

Me—You’re a woman. Women know everything.

***[woke from the dream at that point
, 7:15 AM, 5 December 2018]***

=====

**Casting renewals wherever she goes
Our Lady the Sun has something to say
but I am not worthy of hearing it yet.
Wash my ears, o wind, scour
the scurf of years off my wits
so I can hear at last what this
day alone is shouting at me.**

5 December 2018

== == == == ==

it had to have something to say
in its mouth, a meaning, a map,
how can you say a picture, how
can you say a thing with lines
angles stretching from the zenith
yo the thing beneath the bed
the creature who makes dust,
the salamander who makes dream,
the broken cup you never extricated?
Yes, it's all a question, pottery and truth,
metalware and lettuce leaves, cider
vinegar, antiseptic soap. We need
our needs to tell us who we are.

5 December 2018

SLAVONIC RHAPSODY

I have to be here
because elsewhere is an animal.
So many mouths!

2,
I thought it was Russian
music and I was right,
they know the way the heart
works, how the rivers thaw
in April even, they have watched
the birds so long the sky
settled down into their eyes.

3.
Yes. sentimental. Excessive.
Exuberantly sad. Extravagantly
gloomy. Brazen silences.
Moody marshlands.
Twilight all day long.

4.

Can't help what you love.
Shall I rebuke my tenderness,
scorn my heart, say kaddish
for my feelings? They are
holy, holy holy, all I have
to guide me through this music.

5.

Spirit guides? Yes, one of those
please. a *daimon* friendly to my muse,
chapped lips and tender arms,
a sunset fallen maple leaf, bright eyes
that don't quite meet mine. Enough!
they cry, they say I have enough
to last me all my life. They rub
my face in it, the early evening air.

6.

**Such weather. Wear a sweater.
So little worth or wise
in what your mother didn't tell,
just a few things out there,
you can barely make them out
loving soft beyond the glow
of the dying campfire. Stay
safe in the dwindling circle of the light.**

5 December 2018, Shafer

[from Ovid's Getica]

Our gods are not your gods,
your gods live in the broad sky
while the gods of my people
course free on the wide plains
over the mountains and beyond,
no sea hems them in, no tempests
annoy them, they are free and joyful
and teach us to be free. Thus spoke
the tribal king they call Bright Mind
and when he had spoken he sat down
waiting for a Roman to answer him.

*

There is a river there whose mouths
are as many as the Nile's, marshes
and harbors and secret groves abound
and sometimes when one stands
at just the right spot where the river
gives its waters into the Euxine Sea
one thinks about the seas of home,

**where Scylla stirs the waves down
where all true language comes from
that one day may come to chasten this
arbitrary barbary and make it sing.**

5 December 2018

=====

The argument means more and more ,
wine spills, strangers
at the door—not Wise Men,
not revelers, December spirits
coming to confess.
Their beautiful sins,
their wanton holiness.

2.

That's what winter means—
the green is you, the sky is blue,
opal, not sapphire, and all
our strangers slink back home
to be us, us as ever,
gaudy now, with crystals
sparkling in their hair.

3.

I thank the dream
my living teacher,
two friends dispersed
in argument—a Bach
chorale between their
petulant contradictions—
music makes small
matters magical.

4.

It wasn't singing of course
it was just sleep,
short breaths
of a quick dream—
wake [make?] of me
the music said,
wake what you can,
now I wake
you to yourself.

6 December 2018

=====

**Wood of the True Cross
the one the whole
world was taken down from
so that He might live.**

**He rode our pain
out into miles of time,
there is no time
and so we live**

**longer and longer
in the paradox of space.
All of His suffering
flensed in our Now.**

6 December 2018

=====

**Language pervades.
Every use of language
shapes, influences, affects
each subsequent use.**

(I woke from a bad dream to know that)

6 / 7 December 2018

=====

Cantiari / Canterbury

**the cathedral chases us
all through the night—
what a friend to have!
a safety where you ride**

6 / 7 December 2018

=====

**Suppose your name
was the same as the dark.
And every time the light went out
you felt you were being called.**

**Night is like that, a room
full of everyone. Underneath,
your hand finds a piece of paper
glowing with desire. Write.**

**Just write on it in the dark.
Don't bother reading
what it says you said.
Everything is answering, anyhow.**

6 December 2018

=====

**Rhyming like gospel—
tell your neighbor
the good news your tree
told you by standing there
forty years. Tell
the mayor all the news
the geese told you
by flying south.
Everybody needs
information.
Imagine you are
the only mouth
and get to work.**

6 December 2018

=====

When the news is not
and the animal
will not wake.

Knots in maple wood
calves liver on the flesher's scales,
words brought us here.

You think those are stars
glittering up there
they're guitars playing under the sea

Echo makes everything
happen (words
brought us here)

you light the candle,
you start to remember
what the sky meant

**you to do and you begin
all over again, the war,
the wanting, the coming home,

the moon is gone.**

7 December 2018

=====

Does it get darker in the dark?
The girl in the pale skirt, tulle
they called it, waited by the chimney
for the wind to answer. Fireplaces
are good oracles, wise places
to ask questions. there's always
someone up there, down here.
I wish I had one. She waited
while Troy burnt down and Rome
got tired of ruling, and Saladin made
a few friends among the Christians.
But finally around the time
of Lavoisier an answer came:
*The dark is tired, let light come
relieve its tattered mysteries.*
As I say, I wish I had a hearth—
next time I'll ask the girl
to ask her dark to give me one.

8 December 2018

=====

**If this were a story
what would happen?**

**But it isn't, so
nothing does. Does it?**

**I lie when I think
I am the only one
who can decide.**

**Even now the story
is walking towards you,
gently, on tender soles.**

8 December 2018

=====

**Opportunity is a horse
but I never learned to ride.**

**He spoke sadly, toying with
a heap of diamonds in his lap.**

Some people are born right there.

8 December 2018

=====

**Ornate everything,
make a verb of things,
especially cheap things—
cabbage, toothpicks, pigeons
are still waiting to be verb,
why cant they be like spoon
or book or pig, alive already?
Wake everything! Make speak!**

8 December 2018

=====

**Broken like a stick but find in the jagged gap
the Gothic spires of green wood
where a thing unjoins itself. The gap
in what had been intact. The hole in whole
through which sudden wisdom springs.
Didn't some Sufi argue that this gap
was like the chambers of the heart,
gasping, filling, voiding, so with
every pouring out a new world floods in?
*Break the stick said Jesus and find me there.***

8 December 2018

**in primal Indo-European.
No one has gone anywhere.
We all came from Eden, that small
subtropical micro-clime
at the western end of the Bodensee,
Constamce, lake at the bottom of the world.**

8 December 2018

DEATH

He was sitting in the living room upstairs, not in his favorite old green chair, just on wood, black, and the radio was on. He was reading. The radio said that his father's favorite singer had died, far away and never came back to sing. So he had never seen him but had heard the many records his father owned and sometimes, bit too often, played. Songs mostly, and quiet arias from operas he heard the famous names of, but didn't know. So many things he had never seen or read or heard. And now his father's favorite singer was dead. So many times his father sang, and some of the same songs, and his father's voice was very like the famous singer's, and he liked it even better, not just because it was his father. There was something loving and tender in the voice that he couldn't hear on the records. Maybe records couldn't hold that sound. But what should he do now? Should he tell his father about the death when his

father came home from work? Death was an exciting and terrible thing, nobody he knew well had died, only the President once, and a classmate he didn't know at all who drowned a year or two ago. All the old people were dead, and young people don't die much, except in war, and the war was over. Should he tell his father? If you tell a story, don't you become part of it a little? Even if the story is true. His father would be home in five hours. What should he do? His father would read the paper on the train, but that paper doesn't have that kind of news in it. Maybe his father wouldn't know. Maybe he should never know. But wouldn't it be terrible for him to go on thinking his favorite singer was alive and all the while the rest of the world knew the truth? Even he, his son, would know something his father didn't know. That seemed terrible too, maybe not bad as death, but bad. What should he do? So many hours to think about it, to decide.

8 December 2018

THE VOICES

Christ so often
talking at the back of the room,
crowded room,
sometimes you hear
the actual words
or at other moments
only the hum of him.

So many voices!

2.
Open the filing cabinet
of the heart, haul out
those dusty folders
—why are they called
manila anyhow?—
and spend the afternoon
with these pleasant ghosts,
phantoms of the living,
warm hands of the dead.
Can you tell them apart?

3.

**Because the voice that has been speaking
all your life is somehow yours to hear.
That's why people cry out My God!
in moments of wonder or fear or mere palaver,
omigod still has 'my' in it, never
stop hearing the voice that knows your name.**

4.

**Every window in your home
has a different voice in it.
You hear it with your quiet eyes.**

5.

**Hanukah is over
and the cruet is still full of oil.
I think the cruet
meant the heart,
the oil meant love,
the deepest voice inside you
they called the candle flame—
the undying answer.**

9 December 2018

=====

The winter color
subtle, weary
of pretending.
The work goes
on inside.
We too
are part of its
thought,
whoever it is,
the long thinker,
the motherer.

9 December 2018

=====

Table, chair,
lamp. Fable,
choir, loom
of day through
Gothic windows
only remembered.
Here all our
glass is square,
no points to it,
no color, no
ascension.
But we do have
a table. A chair.

9 December 2018

== == == == ==

I think exchairs were rare.
People stood
to do their praying
as if to get
the whole body
into the prayer.
All the empty churches now—
that great steeped one
by Billie's home in Catskill,
you see it from the river,
its spire the only worship left.

9 December 2018

=====

Hard to know
if I'm finished
or not. I'll have
to read it
tomorrow
in this paper
to find out.

9 December 2018

=====

**Can it word again
and renew
those who hold it in their hands?**

9 December 2018

== == == == ==

Three deer on the lawn
birdseed on the driveway—
as if some old words,
lovely old words, came
back out of the woods
and let us speak them,
hear the sound of them again.

9 December 2018

=====

Keep it in the attic
let it sleep a dozen years
and then put it in the paper.
The wine of what you mean
improves with time.
Sentimental notions
expire soon. She wanted
what you wanted. And that
would obviously never work.

9 December 2018

=====

Measurements made—
mild after,
won, begun.
A monkey in a tree
sees me
from inside out.
I know this weather—
we came here together,
born of the same father,
cold Vesuvius!

9 December 2018

=====

I caught I thought something. Not clear but no fear, so I left it in hand and waited. Wanted, what did I want? A maiden touch, a singular reflection, virginal idea. Do they arrive? Not often. In Paris once, Boulevard Raspail. And in London, Seven Dials so gentrified. And under the locust trees that line our avenida south a quarter mile. Deep-channeled bark and somehow even unleafed in winter convey shade. There,. that's an impression only, what can I do but tell what is true. Or seems so. I ask the body to help me decide.

9 December 2018

NON SUM DIGNUS

He knelt at the altar rail and stuck out his tongue. His heart pounded, the priest set a white wafer on his tongue, he closed his eyes and almost fainted. This is the body of Christ. Lord, I am not worthy, he thinks. He says. But Christ said to his friends at the Last Supper, was that a Seder like some of his own friends had, Christ said This is my body. And gave them wine said this is my blood. The priest did not give him wine, blood. And in the mass book it says This is my body. But it doesn't say This is my blood. It says This is the chalice of my blood. He wondered what the difference meant, not the blood but the chalice of. He didn't think it mattered all that much but it was interesting. Interesting things can be dangerous, they take the mind to weird places. What mattered is that he had taken the body of Christ inside him. Now Christ was in him. And Christ was in all the others too, beside him, waiting on line behind him,

walking back to their pews with eyes cast down, Christ in them, in each one. And if Christ is in me, he thought, then I have my own Christ, and I must do what he tells me to do, even if some other person tells me otherwise, even if he has Christ in him too. Because each person's Christ is the same Christ, but works differently in each person. It must be like that. Otherwise how could we fight with one another or have different ideas about things when we all go to the same church and the same priest puts Christ into our mouths. But then he thought, it says This is my body. Maybe Christ's body is different from Christ's mind. That was a terrible thought. He would not think it anymore. He was not worthy. But Christ was in him anyway.

9 December 2018

showing your hand—
from German *melden*,
'to announce, proclaim'.

But in our American ears
it sounds like melting,
reminds us of colored wax
dripping slow down the candlestick,
crayons, mixing colors,
blending.

We think it means blending.

I I hear the German word, though,
and know it means
the Hidden Deity
is proclaiming the actual,
this visible world.

Madrigal is harder—
is it the strict
polyphony of creation?
All our loves and sciences
to chart, chant, cherish

**the trillion voices of its structure,
and maybe colors are
the melody we hear best?**

**Madrigal I froms *madre*,
the matrix, the mother,
cosmos of all living,
the womb-song,
wild hymn of what we are.**

She makes us hear it in the swirl of now.

10 December 2018

**NAMING CHILDREN—
what do they mean,
the names we bear?
Not the etymologies
(my fame is no brighter
than yours, señor)
but the *why* of them,
the *who* the givers
want us to be.
If I had a child
(other than you,
chère lectrice)
what would I name it?
I would give her name name,
give him no name,
let him be my most beloved pronoun
she or he
and let her call him/herself
whatever comes to mind,
their mind, later,
when they become
almost who they .**

10 December 2018

=====

The eleventh of Remember
I spoke a sparrow
from a neighbor cloud,
it left a tiny egg
among my autumn leaves
unswept—

 it hatched
into ce strict music
a little dry maybe
but indigo with soul.

All month I listened—
wouldn't you? Sounded
sometimes like Messiaen,
experimental sacramental,
sometimes more romantic,
Sibelius or Josef Suk.
One little hatchling chick!

**Grew bigger every afternoon
(I'm a late riser)
until by the 3rd of Annuary
it was as big as a cassuary,
ostrich, storm cloud overhead,
huge as a word recalled in dream.**

11 December 2018

=====

**Time erosion
catastrophes within
the geology of daily life.**

**(See the doctor
waste the afternoon**

**I apologize to time
for all I've spent
giving nothing back)**

11 December 2018

=====

**But let Time answer
if it can
itself the question.**

**Star-shaped idea
cyltrop'd in the mind.
Can't get loose enough
to stretch your arms out
and touch the stone.
Touching it
would be enough
you think.**

11 December 2018

=====

There is wondering
needs to be done—
a cello suite
rehearsed silently
only the hands moving
in all the blue air.
Lord have mercy
they were chanting
somewhere near.
Wander close
to people praying—
that serves best.

11 December 2018

=====

Wantonly,
as if the weather
itself and no contradicting it,
the green shaft of light
bends out of the cakra
and seeks its beloved out,
There in the credible distances,
comes rattling on the church poorbox,
pigeons strutting on the manor [?] steps—
we have been imagined
by one another
wantonly, no neighbor
without loud music,
the zippered secrets of us all
chosen by (Dante would say)
Another. And to that other,
passionately should
wantonly attend.

11 December 2018

=====

United in a way
a day.

Tugboat, Uncle John
captain the bad dream.
Lord Buddha, save us from families,
the curse of Abraham.

Rise up
against the afternoon's
blue policy,
no one's listening,
this is poetry.

2.
So he's after something
not just ranting.
Philosophy crumbles
when you try to eat it,
What you swallow
is not much like what you see.
Try to distinguish

**karmic buddies from karmic pests—
yes, I know they are the same
but try anyhow.**

3.

**Ranting again—good
that nobody listens.**

**The world needs lots of people
who talk to themselves,
not just trees.**

**Eventually they'll learn to listen—
sweet apocalypse,**

opening of the Gates.

12 December 2018

=====

Casting towards noon a shadow
plaster kept the shape of it
a cat or sphinx by origin
become a tussock of dead grass
dead-leaf-complicated onto this
back country lawn. I live
for shapes like this, the mind
staggered by resemblances
rejected into the original New
new new. I thought I had,
Nick stammered, thought I was
but no decent citizen would ever
say what he or she or anybody
ever thought they had or was
or saw in the morning sunlight
shouldering through bare trees.

12 December 2018

=====

**To Artemis
of course**

**whose sleek denials
soothed my youth**

**the hips of her!
her thighs closed**

showing the way.

2.

**It was because Actaeon was a hunter
that she let his own weapons, dogs,
rend him. Not because he had seen
her bathing naked—that sight
could have cured his life, saved him
if he had been just some young kid
amazed at beauty and her intensity**

**and willing to give up everything
to win the sight of her, and more.**

3.

**Not to breed, not to kill—
can we understand that even now?**

**Closed thighs, naked tenderness,
weaponless, subject only
to our beautiful need?**

4.

**Kill nothing, kill no one.
Thrive by touch
alone, the knowledge
of where things are,
the knowledge only the other
can give you freely
flowing from their eyes,
the knowledge.**

= = = = =

5.

**In another time the wise
called this the Silver Road,
the one-way street that leads
in all directions. See her,
arms widespread, welcoming
you, to be deep nourished
by the sight of her alone—**

**the wise claimed she has many breasts
to feed us all at once who look at her.**

12 December 2018

=====

Let a word in
my mouth
you-wise.

Let it speak
like snow
soft and all over,

let that be
my good spell,
morning silver
evening gold.

13 December 2018

WINTER DAY

Being cold enough
to be somebody else.
Anybody!

 Seize a word
to warm the mind
like the monks of old
distracted by scripture
from the Gothic cold.
Sorry for the rhyme—
they happen by themselves,
a hint of something right
just out of sight.

13 December 2018

=====

Don't wait.
Of course you could,
things do,
 old records,
O-keh, shellac ,
still do, why not?

2.

I was a bird in that firmament,
I spent all my money
on a girl I met on a bridge
and I don't even remember the river.

3.

Samothrace, the three
divine figures,
I know their names,
they swim like triangles—
scalene, equilateral, isosceles—
in a sea of glimmering spheres,

and I heard them often
intone the word I think they mean,
it came before Greek,
I wish I could recall it for sure.
Sometimes when I hear you speak
your native language I catch
a sudden sound and think: That's it!

4.
So you can wait
for me too,
you know the touch
I lent you
 meant to stay
with you, in you, ever.

13 December 2018

HOME IMPROVEMENT

Stove top
three cold pots
one boiling—

water bubbling
is it for tea?

Now I cut the gas
let that pot cool

now four of them,
stand there cool
utterly waiting

scripture for a quiet morning.

13 December 2018

=====

**Knowing
is the other side
of having.**

**That's truth
enough for one
morning, now**

**what does it mean?
A kingfisher diving
flash in a dark stream.**

14 December 2018

=====

Everything then.
A mortal memory
exposure on the rocks
along the bay

a figure guessed at
wrongly. This is
not heaven
exactly.

She steps
on glacial debris
delicately.

Only
the name is wrong.
Identity will be the death of us.

14 December 2018

=====

**Why can't I ?
Ask the moon
lonesome traveler.**

**Nobody can,
ask the leaves,
ask everything
that does not talk
your easy language.**

**They all know,
their meanings
undefiled by words.**

14 December 2018

=====

Sound of a cello
in the woods at night.
You are alone
with the sound.
You thought your way
to that place—
are you content?

2.
Don't go.
Simple as that
the thing we meant
to tell you.
You are here
already, so very
much, where else
could you find here?
These stones
are Africa enough,
our few arms Europa.

3.

**I'll never tell you what I really think
because then it won't be thinking anymore,
it would just be one more meaning
defiled by words, a sonata fading fast.
already the first theme gone forever.**

14 December 2018

=====

**Now I know
everything else
ever again,**

**diamond ring
and old sitcom,
I'll sing
till it's over
and it's never over,**

**no more than a stone
could ever stop talking—
hear me or I perish.**

14 December 2018

=====

**Baroque
or what it means,
the answer comes
always just before
the question.**

**the green leaves of Sankt-Gallen
curving olive round the ornate ceiling,
curly as the twirl of an oboe,**

**this oboe now,
hinting a heart
at will or at want
somewhere off
unpicturably close.**

14 December 2018

=====

A.

**Saying a word again—
that's all you do all day,
talk pennies in the poor-box.
Where are your five dollar bills,
your big ideas?**

B.

**Just hoping
all those cents
add up—
that;s the only
thing Time is good for,
meaning accruing
syllable by
silence by syllable.**

14 December 2018

== == == == ==

I wake when I'm told.
The dream goes off inside me
then the darkness
makes the house make noise.
Nothing I can do
but answer back.

15 December 2018

π

marked the end,
building, backyard
of something, terminus,
terminal, wall
where you go no further
but are utterly utterly here.

15 December 2018

=====

I wanted to see
your pictures in my head
so I closed my eyes
but all I could see
was moonlight,
shaft of moon
blazing on you
in a dark blue room.
You are encircled by light,
bare to its caress.
So I see you instead
of seeing what you see.
I must have done something right.

15 December 2018

=====

Everybody seems
to have been born today.
The eight-day-old
adolescent moon did it,
feeling his oats
impregnated the dark.
And one by one we all woke up
new-born of the night.
It was a mild night too
for winter, 44° before dawn,
and here we are at last
all brothers and sisters.

15 December 2018

=====

**Romance her
so she'll leave you alone—
that is the method,
it's all about Valentine,
signs instead of skin.
Love says Be far.**

15 December 2018

CONTRA NATURAM

Gypsum beads make fish-scale pearls—
thank God for artifice
the narwhal is too rare,
hedgehog too small,
dormice in the roof in France.
Wind in the tiles—
we woke by what we've done
for we make music too.

15 December 2018

=====

Did you have that dream
iust to give to me?
I think dreams are gifts
we wrap by night
meant for someone else—
then at morning we forget
the lucky ones
we made the dream up for.
So: A house full of brothers,
three floors of them
and no one knows the ones upstairs.

15 December 2018

two-way street,
mothering us.

Mild
morning, name me too.

3.

The quiet lion
signaled to the rowdy bear
be peaceful, Samson,
the moon is much closer
than your mother the Sun,
, be good, wise up,
there is still time
to mend your noise
into honest speculation,
science, song.

4.

Hilary Hahn played
the slow movement of her
Beethoven concerto slower,
far slower, than I've ever heard,
and got more from it, so much more,

not languor but supreme attention,
slow as blood returning,
having done its work,
to the heart. Heart
is what hears. I am amazed
by the physiology of her violin.

5.
So sometimes
when you go slow
you get things right.
Names are too quick,
too short. Off in Thailand
they have names a yard long—
is that the way?
Or no names at all
maybe, just pronouns,
and not too many of those,
just 'you' and 'me'
and one that means
'anybody else at all'.
Let time sort them out.

6.

On the plinth inscribed,
a warrior stands
half again life-size
with a pigeon on his head.

The pigeon is alive,
can fly, breed, see
your every move
from the sky.

Winter sun the bronze
helmet warms his soft feet.
No matter what the inscription reads.

15 December 2018

=====

**Morning. Stare
at the street light
till it goes out.**

**Morning, nothing
seen moving, one
truck heard**

**highway near.
Everything one color,
the day a stone**

**waiting to be carved.
Am I blade enough
for this one too?**

16 December 2018

=====

How long have we been together?

Authorities disagree.

Darwin & Co. I think

what I think is wrong

but I think they all came from us

and it's better for us,

for them, to think so.

We are their parents and original.

Every beast was human once

and some still are. Look

into their eyes and remember.

16 December 2018

ΠΟЭΤΑ

I am a horn
I let them blow
even at night,

I am guilty
of noises in the woods,
noises in the street,

I startle birds,
I make mothers cry.

16 December 2018

=====

A little left of what had been before,
scruffy snow left on the lawn
a few old words lost into breath—
does anybody understand?

2.

How much I love her.
That is the sudden argument
of this midwinter rose,
breath curling from the mouth,
the universal spoken language
I whisper to myself.
like a minor deity
just failing to create a world.

3.

One more time.
The resemblance
is startling,
climbing the brick
steps of the all-
night diner, floral

**pattern, human rayon,
chattering birds still
in a see-through sky.**

**4.
See, image by image
it tries to come
into being. slips
back into vague,
a word that once
meant wave of the sea.**

**5.
So you could ne listening
to an accordion
in a Ukrainian tavern,
figuring out Cyrillic menus
with that funny h thrown in,
watching the old guys
shuffle around in a dance.
But no, you are listening
to me,my failed folklore,
fauna of Atlantis,
shocking revelations
from the land of the dead.**

**Yes, you. As long
as you can hear me
I can be alive,**

**6.
The way a stovepipe is,
coughing smoke smudge
into the clear atmosphere.
pure sky of the other
defiled by my want?
Maybe not as bad as that.
Soft sin, prosperous voyage.**

**7.
Limitless.
To hope for love
and get truth instead—
precious bargain
like a tiny diamond
blue glint deep inside it,
first light of the world.**

17 December 2018

CELTIC EARRINGS

I hope you saved
a pair of you,
silver crows
to help you hear
what only they know.
And they can speak,
Irish mostly, just
a little English, enough
to warn you, wise you,
tell you how we
slow ancient people
still cling to love.

17 December 2018

=====

**Starting from zero—
that's the longest
journey, to get
from nowhere
to the first number,
from none to one,**

**a miracle. Creation,
leap out of nothingness—
say the first word
that comes to mind—
it tastes a little like that.**

17 December 2018

=====

**Pitch pipe
guide me by
Hebrew
melodies embed
in dayish tunes,
nightish memory
plunged
with images,
breathe out,
morning, quiet
as a wire in the wind.**

17 December 2018

(Night)

**A small city in the south of Reality
they have a cathedral made of living
trees
evergreen canopy open to the eye of
God
Believe my lies—help me
find the few words that tell the truth.**

***(at Fisher, hearing Smetana's Tabor,
from Ma Vlast, and thinking of Jan Hus.)***

17 December 2018

=====

**Almost ready to be other
another. Watch the wind.
Talk to the tree.
The three good things of Turtle Island—
is thee.**

18 December 2018

=====

**Uncork the gospel,
drink. This
is the wine, the cup
you have to bring
yourself.**

That is the way.

18 December 2018

== == == == ==

**Fewer, and newer?
But old pens write best.
The habit of coming clear,
being there.
Soak me in sympathy
to make me speak.**

18 December 2018

= = = = =

The superstition lingers,
the barbary,
the not-quite-language
shadows of birds.

Nomenclature rules.
Yellow buses
clock compulsions
but learn

the secret names
of things be free—
he seemed to say,
the old man

**by the pier,
with young eyes
asking, asking
and where are you?**

**Sing this to Schubert
and why not, the heart
the little barbarian
in civic ribs,**

**make a song of every
superstition, pick
a toad up gently,
stroke a shadow,**

**spin the rocking chair
until the ghost appears
sits down, regales you
with a German song**

he learned it
from Schubert among the dead
where things unnatural
come easy

like music, like
the names of people
stay but they
you manage to forget

so when you hear them
spoken by a stranger
you think they are
but only the names of trees

because isn't it
that education
is superstition,
names are magic,

**ladder leaning on the cloud
bubbling soup pot
natural hoo-doo,
every syllable a prayer,**

**every sayable
a highway there?
So much love in winter,
fur hat, pussycat.**

**I saw a picture
of the house that had me,
my mulberry bush
a tall tree now**

**the house hides.
Things do, from memory,
things know they're not safe
in our recollection,**

**memory is a pirate ship
bare chests of cutlasses
sailing ever closer,
their grappling hook**

**reaching, reaching,
no winter the seagulls
laugh at us
loud till we wake.**

19 December 2018

KÖNYV TAMÁSNAK A BOOK FOR TAMAS

I think this elsewhere.
There is a river
stone bridges,
 a child
from sun-quarters
renewed into the west.
We people from Central
Asia keep going
till we get here.
We people
from the center.

Naturally I think
of you in your pages,
all we ever really
give each other
is opportunity—
a word or touch chunk
of gold a loaf
of bread or half of one,
a word suffices.

I suppose the river
was one I flew up once
from a dark sea
to a little spring in darker
forest, a river
past your house,
a river still coming
through the Pannonian plains,
still coming, stone bridge,
blue coats on schoolkids,
winter but no snow
or not much, classrooms
full of singing,
no need for words?
A word is waiting
only always
in the center.
We bring the word with us,
we bring the center.

Some of us left earlier
carrying so tenderly
our little Gods, our
delicate Christmases.

**A church of course
is a compromise,
often beautiful, of native stone,
or hauled down from Vermont maybe.
Or the gaunt hills around Innsbruck
or lord knows where,
Wales, Stonehenge, pebbles
to make mosaics from,
the banks of Annandale the Blest.
But we don't have to go inside.
Usually we leave our
women to that work,
they're better at being.**

**And still not sure
about that river.
All we know
is that it flows.
All we know is what flows.**

Like a comma in a sentence
a river in a landscape
puszta prairie
God's finger stretched out
in some poem
to trace the course
it should follow
to reach the frontier.
The one you crossed
to bring this piece of paper
here, for us,
usexpre all, for us to read—
we who are pretty good
at reading rivers
as you of all people know,
you collect bridges
for a hobby,
you bring them home.
How do you manage
to feed so many crossings?

We give each other plenty
just by being.
Your saintly mother,
the girl in the parking lot,
warnings, Warming,
nine ounces of encouragement,
a sup of never—
“Don’t doubt me, ever.
I am the only word you have”
it says when we wake
all our fussy nomenclature,
rich silt of all our rivers.
The trees today
more expressive than ever,
their roots are in the sky now.
The moveless tumult of the clouds
their nutrients.
Mine too, who love
to listen to what they
wordless say,
that I for all my lingos
can’t quite express.
So I lick my lips
and thank them from the heart,
sign-languaging bare trees

so many fingers.
One patch of bright sky
due North—
what your mother told you
may or may not be true
but it is good for you,
a fox barking in the trees
behind my summerhouse
told me too, beasts
are wise to us, want
to make us wise too.
Wise men leave animals alone—
or play with their long ears
and feed them rice. Don't kill.

Reminds me of Patna,
rice paddies, then
the broad Ganges
blazing in late sun.
Dear Christ, another river—
he saw it too, they all
say so, wandered in those missing years
in high Kashmir and swamp Bengal,
they knew him then, they smile
now sometimes remembering. Fact.

**We all are Christians,
 he opened hell's gates,
 shut down the angry Temple,
 ended priestly butchery,
 changed it all.
 The Ganges is the Jordan is
 Metambesen,
 we all are Christians now,
 we all are Christ.
 Especially the Jews, the radicals,
 the Marxists, Maoists, all those
 who care.**

**Listen
 to the river.
 Duna, was it,
 your baby creek
 whose Swiss waters bathe the Turkish
 coast
 where Lila stands,
 up to her knees in it
 crying *Thalassa, Thalassa!*
 until the sea answers
 in the ancient Goth it knows,
 makes a sound we hear**

*as Hurt none, help all,
tame your own mind.*

**But if I were Frank
O'Hara they would let me
get away with all my absurdities
imaginary specifics
from a gone world.
But I am Me the Solemn,
the arbiter, Archon
of Annandale, not a smile
in a season, grump.
So I have to work hard
to make you believe me,
even you. We give
each other most
just by being.
Being there.
The there we call *here*
when we have arrived,
shadows of the chifferobe,
glow of the electric hearth.
Now you write the rest.**

**When the time comes.
Our time just came home
from another river, Vltava,
called Moldau in music,
German, other strange sciences.
It is loud, melodious, familiar—
but isn't that true of most rivers?
Try flying over Vienna
and not singing, even a little
counts, doesn't have to be Bruckner,
could be a show-tune, Lehar, Friml,
nothing matters but the breath
humming out of your heart
or wherever it is
that music is stored.**

**This book needs a hero
to go on—
it can't be you
you have your own
to be and to inscribe,
can't be me,**

I'm almost done with me,
a few more years
and I'll be proper born.
And none of us
is Jewish enough
to be Jesus
or know his hidden
Deeds from which we live,
and it can't be Buddha.
We all are him already,
if only we knew
and some of us do
but all of us are,
and it can't be Parsifal,
he's done with me
years ago in prose,
can't be Orpheus,
he's Jean Cocteau's
and generally misunderstood.
I've tried to set that matter straight
already, more fool me.
And I won't give up
my Eurydice
into the random looseness of things,
memory and beast desire,

Maybe our hero should be a Tree—
but who?
The tall arbor vitae
(tree of life!) by the door
of the little Iha-khang,
nibbled into spindle-shape
by deer one bitter winter,
or the big linden out back
grew up quick
after the old ash tree
on that very spot went
down in storm,
and now the linden is the tallest here,
and all the original lindens
that gave the house its name
are long gone, long,
Christ, I have lived here so long
long as a tree
and that too is a mystery,
but time is no man's hero,
time is the self-consciousness
of space, nothing more, no more
a linden tree than I am,
maybe a hero really
is a woman knitting

a pair of socks
for her bairn or to keep
her own feet warm.
The paws that bring her cat
may have shaped
his image: maybe our hero
is the clump of dust
below her chair,
grown wise from bits of fluff
from everywhere—yes,
tthat must be right, a hero
has to be somebody
altogether else,
inconceivable but describable
only by her deeds,
the shadow she casts
on sand or snow,
his arm uplifted,
her glance from the tower
down on us
from which we rise,
multifarious rhapsodes
into the brittle air
clutching our own words
as if they were

his hands, her hair.

But the usual
hero of our time
is the Other, capital O,
exclamation of wonder or surprise,
am I a dog
to keep barking at dawn?
The wind has died down a bit,
still here, still hear it
now and then, pulling the sun
up over yon trees.
The trees I want to keep
telling about, for they
tell me to tell.

But there is lingering
to be done
in hero-quest,
the dragon is not ready.
You live in a steep town,
cautious winter.
I hurt my ankle in the snow

it helps me remember—
I thought that's what words
are for—why are wounds?
Behind your house
some stones arrayed,
a little Athenian theater
for festive song
and the somber songs we sang
when the goat was offered,
slain, uplifted, consumed.
And there our hero is again,
Dionysus maybe, or Saint-Denis
where the poor live,
and darkling harlots
stand in midnight doorways
by the Roman arch
I weep to tell you.
See, our hero is fleeing
before us, skipping
like a schoolgirl, leaping
like an Irish fugitive
trying to keep
his language safe,
running like a millstream
to turn himself-herself

inside out over and over,
every turn of the wheel.

But our hero (your hero now)
won't give us his name,
gender unspecified, census form
long ago shredded
in the office of the oversoul—
what are names, anyway?
Just excuses
divinity by accident,
froth on a glass of beer.
Suds. simplicity.
“Holy foolishness” laughed
Jan Hus from the flames,
a story they told me
in music last night
the other side of dream.
History is just a habit,
music comes and touches us
as if we were really there,
Telemann's two horns
dancing like Dixieland.
We are given so much,

so much, all the gifts
we give each other
and not just by being there,
but ordinary things,
paper and tin, cookies and books.

Sunrise over the hill,
winter walking
all round our house
tousled lawn up to the horizon
and here and there a rabbit
at peace. Is seeing,
all seeing a sad music
hiding the real? Your green
fields down from the stones,
you can walk the length of it
in five minutes—
walking slow downhill,
reading your breviary,
we are washed
in the blood of the Lamb—
the prayer book a slim chapbook
of ancient poesy,
the kind we make,

**we *makers* as the Scots call
even any poets.
Even us.**

**I like to think of you walking there
on the greensward so newly yours
with the monsters over your shoulder
pretty much out of sight,
lurking there, the way the genes
for clarity and poetry and utterance
lurk in a child,**

childhood

**is a foreign city
with a distant ever-absent king,
a child will always
find a way out.
Start by walking,
river, woods, gravel path,
we met a pack of children
hurrying on the path, running towards
us,
parting like a river to pass around us
as if we were island.
We are island, in fact,**

bats fluttering past us in the evening
grey.

The blue hour,

l'heure bleue, blaue Stunde,
sing it for me in Magyar,
all language is from the river,
the first word of our human kind
ever spoke was when she saw one
flowing past, and knew
she had to speak a current too.
From river to river you came
which is how you write so well.
We share that kind of journey,
the land we're on a noble accident.

Far away they understand.
Zohar does not mean splendor
if *splendore*, says Dante,
is reflected light, not original light,
not from the *haq*, the heart,
the true within.
And we know where that is,
even if most days

**the garage door is locked
or the car out of gas.
We import our vehicles from afar.
We have an instinct that tells us
the hardest place to get to
is where we are
and our own hearts are hidden
on the far side of the Sun,
only women know the way.
Only women are the way.**

**And after music, after dinner,
after all our meetings and cahoots
the long ride home,
the miracle of one's own door.
Step inside, light the lamp,
take down a book.**

**The Bible
keeps getting bigger,
pages spread, words abound,
new stories about Abraham
and where Moses really came from
and whose was that Voice**

spoke him on the mountain—
no, we don't read that yet,
the river hasn't washed away yet
the false words so the true come
through,
the real story of the story
we never knew.

But always
somewhere inside, like the taste
of something remembered years later,
some sense of what the story is.

There are so many
books that read you,
almagests hidden in your head
already, history, habits,
old oaken table stained with chemicals,
hoofprints of desire
stain the ceiling, radio on,
chaconne, crocodile
slung from the ceiling, fire going
in the electric hearth,
cookies on the sideboard,
you close your eyes,

wait, wait, wait, wait, wait,
and then a word comes
or does the phone ring first?
In any case, answer it.
Whatever the word is
(Maier's fugue, Olson's certitude)
answer it out loud, so loud
that Lila in the next room
thinks you're calling her.
And maybe you are.
Who knows what a word wants
until it speaks—
until your answer comes.

Because you came from so far,
all the distances
at peace in your quiet speech
(nothing is done till it's done,
nothing is written
until the stone is old,
settled down into the grass
and you can read the runes
inscribed on it,
for runes you're ready

and a blue bird passes quick,
not a bluebird, a kingfisher,
darting down to seek
ce silver word.

You and I don't talk
much about birds—
Montgomery Place or Wanatanka
Island eagles.
The kingfisher comes from childhood,
mine, taught me to be quick
with words and slow beside,
no reason for flurry
till the answer's ripe.
Where did you get your wings
first? Did you hummingbird
your prey with fluttering, ceaseless
as a lesson in school,
the never-ending class, the clock
dead in its tracks, the wrong
Voice droning on and on?
Or maybe not so wrong.
We have to learn to be bored,

don't we, until boredom
becomes a quiet jungle hunt,
the mind prowls through its undergrowth
and finds the precious
story of this only afternoon.
You hear no longer
the teacher's words.
You are the master
almost of your own Voice now.
The class is over.
The street is warm with movement
despite the December cold,
Christ getting ready to be born again
and what are we waiting for?

It takes the same time
to do anything, drive there,
stay there, climb
up Blake's ladder to the moon.
The moon means you—
you could tell that last night,
blade over the Curry House,
almost harsh, journey light,
desperate light, light

**that hungers for our gospelling.
Your psalms.**

**I think
that's what all this is about,
the necessity of psalmody,
Solomon's better temple,
no stone walls needed,
no secret chambers.
The clear word alone
is mystery enough,
self-secret, the song.
We live for this silent singing.
Live by it,**

**I feel
an exaltation coming on
to share with you, fiery
as vindaloo, star chowder,
the commonest things
blaze into hallelujah.**

**Be continuous.
That's what my sky said,
just do it and be blessed,
as river be my witness**

it always works,
be continuous,
thought relapses into thought,
children struggle in the playground,
the monkey bars their siege of Troy.
Their mysteries are still unsolved,
thank the goddess Memory,
I've never seen you skateboard,
you've never seen me pitch—
I had a decent slider once,
once even struck out Grossinger
on his home diamond.
We who speak are meant
to travel and to cast—
hitting the ball
we leave to the barbarous
who like to hit things,
while we like things that bounce
back to our hand
to be known again.
And again. No matter how
many times you say a word
(saying is casting
breath out of body)
it never loses its meaning,

**its bounce. I think
resilience never falters.
Propositions weaken
the meanings of the words
that utter them**

**but still the word endures,
sturdier than granite
(my poor old man
up in New Hampshire,
my first image of God,
when walking meant
slippery passage through the Flume,
O lost Franconia),
they last and we aspire.
Have I said enough?
Jamais! The air itself
is a mountain
we climb all day
and every word we utter
aids our ascent.
Fact. Keep talking
till you get there
and you always do.**

**Always are.
Speaking as we were
of rivers, know,
they know us, know
what they know. The going on
is the only verity,
every word we utter
(even Freud knew that)
alchemizes us—an ugly
word but help me
make it beautiful,
let it all come wise,
the truth is what we only say,
star targets, rings of pineapple,
a cup of chai, there is a smile
here somewhere, yes, yes,
another language, all of them,
and all the rivers full of fish.**

17-19 December 2018

== == == == ==

Let the fuller
flee his filth—
we rise in chime
chorusing the *thees*
out there, all of them,
my dream be born
into them, my syntax
at their service.
Morning prayer.

20 December 2018

== == == == ==

**And next will come
a tiny elephant
walking down the lashes of your eye,**

**left eye, cry for joy,
the world improved
at last by what you see.**

20 December 2018

=====

**I was thinking in German
and spelled a word wrong—
tap me gently on the jaw,
awoke my mother tongue.**

20 December 2018

DE SENECTUTE

All the things I once believed
still march in my parade
over the never-fading grass
while the band on the pavilion
plays Mahler and Richard Strauss.
Nothing changes except the bones.
The world gets brittle
but still smells the same.
I think I will learn Gaelic again.

20 December 2018

THINGS TO THINK

Winter Solstice
whalebone
magnifying glass
two girls at Vassar
giggling at Emerson.

Just before midnight
a long train went by
as we were listening
to John Tavener.
Countertenor.

The girls are lovers,
closer than rye grows.
Springtime. Anonymity.
Authority. But antimony.

2.
It is not, amigo, a matter
of making statements
but of being there
for them to be made.

3.

I woke at the solstice
the immense quiet of Capricorn
woke me, your breath
beside me.

4.

To see things
with a helicopter tilt
pilot your eyes
sideways to the seen.
Everything's a landing place.
Every light is the moon.

5.

How did that woman
get in my desk
he thought as he reached
for his diary—
I am, she whispered,
all you ever meant,
and all you ever said.

6.

Myths start that way.
We linger in the shadows
of what has been said.
I am Orpheus. And I know
what you're thinking.

7.

Antimony because alchemy,
book because, just because.
It was Athens, Jerusalem,
then it got lost
on its way west.
I hear it breathing some trees
under the mountains
across the river,
ancient city looking for its river,
its Baptist, its placid
fishermen discussing Plato
before any such person is born.
The city waiting for us,
over there, we drive
up and down the gullies of it

**the Clove, the cleft,
can't stop hearing it,
can't even start to understand.**

**8.
Empty boxes waiting for their fill.
Tuck them away in the mind
where space is everything—
more space, more space!
is what Goethe meant,
space to go on being.**

**9.
Hand in hand in dark
they walked after the lecture,
smiling still about the wise man
who said all the right things
in the wrong way. One hand
squeezed the other, the moon
was well-nigh full.**

10.

**If everything is a fugue
why am I sitting still
watching the rain
shine the empty road?
If everything is a song
why am I listening
to an old house
getting ready for dawn?**

11.

**It helps me
to think about rivers,
and seals in them
and one seal in Galway Bay
who came to greet us
as I stood in my fancied homeland
with my true country at my side.**

**12.
Set here a photo
of a Chinese bird,
white-capped redstart
I saw on Twitter.
Looking at it
is suddenly enough.**

21 December 2018

== == == == ==

**Without alchemy
there would be no war—
turning your field into my field
capturing mysterious Helens,
dragging them back from Troy.**

21 December 2018

=====

**The grief of ending
something before something
else begins.**

**Empty space is mournfulness
or have I seen
too many Eliot Porter photos,
too many Saharas?**

21 December 2018

GERUNDS FOR THE SOLSTICE

1.
Whispering is permitted—
wizards do it
to their indoor falcons—
faster than peregrines
but prey on no beast.

2.
Or walking to church
when there is none,
only your strong legs
going, going.

3.
Or waiting for the bus
beside a river
it will never betray you
by taking you away.

21 December 2018

= = = = =

Honey didn't happen
the bees made
amber instead.
Sea-bees we used to call them,
Navy men who could do
anything at all
under the sea or to it,
the sea is patient,
Amber is patient,
keeps the warmth of the first
hand that held it,
holds it. First body,
amber is *light conquered*
all our ordinary mistakes
—looking too long, too close,
weeping as we watch,
looking, loving, wanting—
melt down into amber,
honey without bees,
light you can wear
against your skin,
beads of light you say

**your prayers on,
rosary of sea's resin.
And amber always tells
where it has been.**

21 December 2018

SABBATH

**Call it Saturday
the way Romans did
or Loki's day
in truthful Iceland.**

**A band of sky
pure light under cloud,
north, northwest,
my axis.**

**Sleep more,
no goats need milking,
sleep more.
The mountain pastures
are sleeping too,**

**sleep more.
The church bells are silent,
the rain is drying
on the grasses, doesn't
need your help.**

**Sleep
more, the lord of lazy
is writing up his diary,
sleep some more.
I think the river is sleeping too.**

22 December 2018

CRÈCHE

Dear little Capricorn
asleep in the straw.
His skinny mama,
Madonna, drowsy
at his side. Joseph
shields his eyes
beneath his baseball cap,
but may be weeping
or just tired, tired.
They have come so far.
We know so little
about him, maybe
he alone has a sense
of all that is to come.

22 December 2018

== == == == ==

**It's getting lighter
out there—
it may be my fault,**

**all this language
drains the cloud,
weakens the dim.**

**Go back to bed—
some good dream
is on the telephone.**

Pillow head, answer it.

22 December 2018

=====

To know when things are—
didn't it say that
once before? It says again,
clear as the moon
over everything.

2.

Because we can't control
the obvious. Papal messages,
Slavic linguists, old architecture
all say the same thing.
Somebody is in charge and it isn't you.

3.

And so I disagree.
Not the first
time. I'm willing

to be a fool
in your pageant,
baby America,

I carry my own
peculiar flag,
remember me?

We met at Christ's
bar mitzvah,
you giggled at my song.

4.

Two hours before dawn
it's morning all over me,
the gritty feel of time—
don't deny it, you know it too,
you Later Platonist
waiting for the cuckoo clock
to quote Nietzsche on the hour—
anything to help you frown.

5.

Because disobedience
becomes you,
wouldn't you say?
Born in a tantrum,
your mind grew wise,

**grew calm — ‘calm’
that sandstorm
just over the horizon—
flee by night,
that’s what the dark is for.**

23 December 2018

CROSSING

Between the bridge lights
and a full moon in the clouds
I couldn't see the river.
Mother! it cried in me,
where art thou? As ever
I wait to be born
again and again. Estuary:
tide coming to get me,
fetch me, teach me,
how can I tell them apart?
It oceans me anyway.

23 December 2018

== == == == == == ==

**This is what I am
supposed to be doing
no matter what.**

**Day will take
care of her own,
my work is the dark**

**sleekness of things,
valiant essences,
quiet hands.**

23 December 2018

=====

**Preternatural catechism
asks and answers
the questions things ask us.**

**Haven't you ever
been stared at
by an old apple tree
and asked your religion?**

**Hasn't a cloud
ever tested you in geometry?**

**This book will give you answers,
buy it in your sleep.**

23 December 2018

== == == == ==

I flick on the sound,
hear an oboe
playing in Buda—

what have we done
to the distances
with all our singing?

The ends of the earth
I remember from a novel
be upon me,

what shall we do
if there is no end?
It sounds more like a flute

but now I'm in another room.

23 December 2018

APODICTICA

**if only there were an again
but that fish is missing
from where we swim**

**but still sometimes i think
o see the silver of its scales
glittering in the dark up there.**

23 December 2018

INTERLINEAR

(for Joel Newberger's 14 Psalms for Maya)

**The thwarted night
turn the beads in your fingers
amber
bright flash in the dunes**

**the burn stone
nobody knows**

**ferment of doors
nightmare jewelers
mustache of their smiles**

Methyst, leper's lazuli.

**Turn the crystal
inside out**

and the chorus breaks
into song Sanctus
sanctus singing
until, until believing

o the dear dark within
the cold oven
tempered with memories
priests in cassocks
smile at their simple loaves
cool now too,
everything done,
the world outside

Greek had no word
for the living body,
off in Colchis
their journey ended,
old men now,
autumn crocus
simple against gout

the blood she shed
Medea did
still tints the cloud
every evening,
blood of the others,

blood is the other
current in the hallways
of the self,
 body
our poor house

slender dancers
making sense of the air
thin thin
air the string
on which their beads are strung

spare waists
arms arms
quiet laps of the fallen

approach approach
the Mass is almost done

what does it really mean
that words have genders
in some languages
and not all agree?

O traveler do you know
you risk your life
every time you depart
set sail in your frail mind
on the sea of sleep?

the mother rocks the cradle
to keep it here
home
keep it from floating away
into the dream
it came from,
those two strange familiar
bodies humming

and you were born too
even you.

But he mandarin
weary toppled
off his boulder,
didn't fall, held
tight his scroll
but all the words flew off,
some of them you still see
glitter, fish-scales in her hair.

Licentious as a yardstick
whacked against a tree
walnut, northernmost apple,
the god has watched you at your play
now you are never
but only now, the god
saw to it, your hands.
your selves

all your frenzied trees
a single knowledge
called a man

a poet
feminine noun in the truest tongue

I knew the centaur
was coming,
I heard the creak
of his wheelbarrow
over the barnyard gravel,
his plangent baritone

seeds, solstices,
chords of Saint Cecilia
who holds
music up to the light
so that we hear

but angels also have cameras
disguised as the gemstones
we wear on our persons

or gaze at in envious windows
cold body pressed against the glass

the wind keen as a violin
no forgiveness there

but moonlight on the mountain
meant a road inside
since childhood
I've tried to climb
up in there
where the ancient
city's stored

who said that?
who gave me any
right to be?

bewildering
accidents of chemistry

where time begins.

23 December 2018

VOCES

1.

Children singing all through my sleep

*Pizza, pizza,
all colors but blue,
pizza, pizza,
how I love you!*

Sometimes it was *we love you.*
sometimes adults added
meaty and true,

I had to check the colors myself—
the hardest to find was green:
tiny flakes of basil and oregano.

2.

**But what does something like that mean?
No place to be, no oven, no context
but the words themselves. Presently
I found my own voice murmuring the words
though my actual sleeping lips were still.**

3.

**Woke and the colors were all gone—
snow shower, flakes still falling
amplified as I watch—when does shower
turn into snowfall? Who were
those children? Night happy hungry
little angels, real angels I mean,
maybe that's how the angel business
works, they make up words for us
to say or sing, make us think
we're thinking what we're really only saying.**

24 December 2018

=====

Having to go
places and come back.
Today the passing
cars are white, all
two of them.
Let the story
take us home.

24 December 2018

=====

A figure
out there
walking slowly
uphill in light snow,
how sad, so sad
and he doesn't
even know it.
Or she. Too
far for me
to know either—
we are reciprocals,
ignorance
is contagious.
Like wisdom.

24 December 2018

== ==

Lost emotions
down in the cellar,
that room beside the
water tank, the one
we've nevr entered.

The goingness of the gone
is still going on—
we have to leave them
to do their work.

24 December 2018

SCIMITAR

I used to say
and said my prayers
in the Arab way
with canticles to girls
or mystery-maids
in every passing cloud.

Then I found God
and lost religion.
Now I hold in hand
a piece of ordinary wood
and know myself spoken to.

24 December 2018

=====

for Charlotte

Her hands
a looking glass

she sees the stream
that rings our world

and hears it singing,
with her fingers

she sees
more than my eyes

have ever seen.
And makes it sing.

24 December 2018

SOME WORDS FOR CHARLOTTE

**These words are silver
gleaming here and there
softly on dark velvet
moss green or twilight,
and here and there
among what they have to say
these words are gold
and this long word
is a length of twine
waxed years ago with beeswax
and on it
these other words are strung,
beads of malachite and lapis
two by two, green blue green blue
until the world begins again.
And this word is a little clasp
to hold the beads in place
round the neck of the most wonderful
word I've ever heard
a word you alone can speak.**

Christmas 2018

PROFILES*for Billie*

What we see
of ourselves
what we show
to one another,
profiles,

only profiles
of a great strange
unknown face
we finally are.

Dimensions fall away
at our ordinary sight
but the true
you amazes
in manyness,
all of you
and each, we give
so little
of what we are—

how to know
the whole figure,
whole face, yes,
but the boundless
body it speaks for,
the long argument
of being anyone,

how to give
myself to another
or take or touch
the ardent body,
living bronze
of the human form,

with only our two
eyes to make a beginning.

24 / 25 December 2018

=====

I need a piece of copper here
the kind you get
from one of those machines
at the rest stops along the Pike

where you pay to put a penny in
and it crushes it so out
the penny comes
like a thin medal stamped
with some emblem of Massachusetts

but the state
doesn't matter
for what I need,
any flat thin coin will do,
metal capable
of taking up warmth
from my fingers
when I hand it to you.

**It will have something to do
with Cyprus, Venus, spells,
mines, gaunt openings
in the forgiving earth,
sparrow chariots, old poems,
all trying to say something
about love, that curious
condition with no image of its own.**

24 / 25 December 2018

THE THREE MASSES OF CHRISTMAS

(Roman Catholic priests are permitted on this one day of the year to say Mass three times. No priest, I permit myself three Masses, in three different rites.)

Latin Rite:

A quiet Mass
feeding friends,
friends made
by feeding them
this very bread.

The Mass is a meal
among friends, the Mass
is *missa*, a woman *sent*
to us, to comfort us,
we who say it
or just hear it
or taste this bread.

**In a world
made of signs
this tiny wafer
sustains the whole body
and the huge soul
that shelters in it.**

***Go, she has been sent*
to us again, go,
hurry to meet her and live.**

Episcopal, Low Church Rite

Stroke the parson's cat
on the way in.
fumble with the hymnbooks
squat and fat
Smile at the pretty
ladies' Sunday frocks,
their orbital pale straw hats.

Yje organ hums more than usual
a pigeon lost in the arches up there
gets rattled by the bass organ pipes

But we like things quiet, low,
we trust the sacrament of everyday things,
a few familiar hymns before breakfast,
somehow the Lord is with us, quiet magic,
and home we go strangely happy,
still wondering what all the fuss is about.

Orthodox Rite, old style

**Stand through all the prayers,
it's what we do
to bring out bodies into actual grace.**

**Struggle through the old language.
Priests in weird hats
opening and closing the doors—
crane your neck to get a glimpse
inside, where God is happening
again to us one word at a time.**

**Your ankles hurt
but your head's in the clouds,
wisdom worth standing for,
and she'll go home with you
soft as the memory of
wine from the chalice in your mouth.**

25 December 2018

=====

Trailer. Omen
of the day.
Mobile home—
living on the move,
if we were a stone
we would be thrown.
Ancient human technology
against Neanderthals;
David's catapult
against Goliath.
Sēma tēs hodou
the Greeks called this,
first thing you see
outside your house
in the morning, *sign*
of the road.

Auto omen.
We live with fear.

26 December 2018

=====

**Maya, I think I pull your hair
not because I'm a man
or even a boy but because
I sense you are always only
striving upward into the air—
but Lord knows you don't need my help.**

26 December 2018

NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

Leave the book in your pocket,
scratch your fingernail on the Pepsi glass
and hope the waiter brings you bread.
We ate at Thau's on Second Avenue
a thousand years ago because they brought
a big basket of bread and rolls with
one cheap bowl of soup. Barley.
Outside was weather, inside was appetite—
what else is new? —as we also used to say.
We looked yearningly at one another
and walked away. No dessert.

26 December 2018

== == == == ==

**A dark truck comes by
with snow on its roof.
There's no snow here.
More prophecy, more history—
we are up to our necks
in evidence. Every single
thing proves something.
No break in the clouds.**

26 December 2018

=====

A word the leaf
has on it—
read the red.

Looking close
through the cloud of color,
sandarac language,
wise goblins wrote

and all the scant birds
of winter deciphered and sang
I must read now.
But must not say.

26 December 2018

=====

Too many castles
on too many crags.
Build me
an invisible bungalow
broad and low as a hymn tune,
hide it in mist,
doubly vanishing
me and mine—
to live in absence
articulating everything!
And the wind is my wallet,
like any lover.

26 December 2018

=====

The trees are bare of leaves
but there are so many of them
the woods are dark
even this bright Thursday morning,
so closely written the branches are,
all depths become a single page.

2.

I remember something like this
from a former life
when I tried to learn to read
without a tutor's help
but all I saw were stars and birds
so I closed the book, went
sadly out to play like any kid.

3.

**And there the trees were,
are, again.**

**Every religion starts
and ends with a tree
don't ask me why—
ask a tree.**

27 December 2018

=====

Parsimonious bark clerk
bird on a branch
too far away
to hear him count.
That's what they do
you know, song
is keeping track
of things,
note by note,
 birdsong
just balances the books.

27 December 2018

== == == == ==

**In blue amazements
shedding false beliefs.**

**Only the superstitions
last, the ones
you can't disprove,
black cats, rocking chairs,
biology.**

**Creationists
are scientists too,
but of another world
not far from here
just out of reach.**

**Believe everything—
that's best,
and kiss the person
standing next to you.**

**Proximity is all.
An unanswered letter
blots out the sun.**

27 December 2018

ON LINE

**used to mean waiting for it
now it means
having it right now in your hands**

27 December 2018

JAMTAR

Slavic word, we'd
spell it yamtar

and think of Hebrew *yam*, the sea,
and tar, our own resin.
tesin from the rocks,

resin of trees: yam/tar, sea-resin=
amber.

But amber doesn't come from trees
from seas, from time

amber comes from the inside of the body

but the body has no inside, no insides,
the body is pure seeming
Schein, appearance, the sheen
that is so *schön*

the shine of life in which we live.

look at a piece of amber
and know what the body was thinking,
is thinking still
when you hold it in your hands

amber mala Lama brought from China
he knew I loved amber,
on its beads I meditate
the forms of mercy, forgiveness,
light, wisdom, or just
a simple hand reaching out to help.

If you give someone
a single piece of amber
you're giving what your body thought,
thinks

because all a body is, is thinking,
a kind of light we share
with one another, a shining sight
we can almost understand

because it is in some way
always already like our own.

There is a hole in the air
we call a body
and from that hole
all manner of thoughts come
some take the form of form,
of things, smells, radiances,

from a hole in someone's thinking
a resin oozes
that turns to amber
when someone else thinks it too

or picks it up
and fingers it
and knows the warmth
and where it comes from.

Reach in and tease the amber out.

There are such secrets hidden in there,
in the air, the gap
in air we make by being,
neing there,
 dumb as mountains
most of the time,
 but that too is part of us,
part of our ord,
 Hebrew *tar*, mountain,
sea-mount our *jamtar*,
a color
sticking out of the air.
 our green hill, our Tor,
like Glastoinbury

to which the young Christ came,
brought by the other Joseph,

a man who dealt with
the tin mines of Cornwall

and paid with amber.
Deep down in the grave of King Arthur

**in his unopened tomb
is a piece of amber Christ left there,**

**or maybe there is no other,
one mind whispering to itself.**

**And every piece of amber
tells where it has been.**

27 December 2018

TROLLEY

The alphabet blocks are long. From Avenue S to Avenue T was a nice walk, especially up Batchelder with its yellow leaves, and then another long block to Avenue U, where tyores were and a gas station, and the way to water. And at Avenue U the trolley came to its end, went round its circle and came back up Nostrand. Trolley cars have no steering wheels. Just a stick or handle the conduction sways to control speed he supposed. He never asked. He liked the slicing grinding noise the steel wheels make in the steel tracks which are always so clean polished. Friction. Trolley cars are hard, buses are soft, he liked the hard, the track, the clear definition of the road ahead, straight like a rocket zooming. His father explained that there had been more trolleys before, and by mistake they had been replaced by buses, and all the shiny tracks taken up and sold to Japan, where the Japanese were using

our steel to attack us. Our tracks were being shot back at us somehow. How could this happen? Who made this mistake? Every time he saw a bus he thought of this mistake. Or was it treason? Every time he took the Kings Highway bus he felt like a traitor a little. But you had to. That's where the big stores were. The trolley would only take you out of your neighborhood, far into the north, where things were different and people talked faster. But going there would still be on the trolley--the trolley is hard and bright and clean inside. Buses are soft and smell bad, he doesn't know why but they do. A trolley roars up the avenue, its bell clangs, it is fast and full of light.

27 December 2018

== ==

Rain on rainday
systems coincide.
Prosperous otherness,
broad fields of Elmendorf
could be Iowa suddenly,
veinless, seed.

Examine the evidence:
facial pallor
why are stop-signs octagonal
what did they
forget to teach us in school?
And why is a pyramid?

28 December 2018

MANUMISSION

The headlights
are brighter than the sky.
Something has been set free—
colors are still asleep.
Nine in the morning,
you can feel the trees breathe.
Almost all our houses are white—
is that pride or humility
in a colored world?

28 December 2018

=====

I am too slow
to hear the answer
things are always giving,

let alone artists,
architects, women dipping
water from the well

But answers
of some sort must already
have been spoken,

then the questions
went back to sleep,
the sky is very plain,

very soft. Examine
the evidence, decipher
who it was who came

**and left and left
such a sky behind,
soft day for all of us.**

28 December 2018

=====

Lust
rhymes with must
but also with dust.
Old poetry
told too much of the truth.

28 December 2018

=====

**Use place names
and they'll think you know
what you're talking about,**

**use history facts
and that'll dim their doubt
but they'll still
scoff at all your flowers.**

28 December 2018

=====

It can't be now
yet, doesn't feel right,
nothing is moving
the road is still wet.

Now is different.
now is a happeninger place,
now has a bird
in it often,
a color or two,
it sounds.

What is this strange
hour that is not now?

28 December 2018

SUGAR OF THE NIGHT

scatters me—
any me, any
personality,
sweetened, changed,
for the maybe better,
disguised,

the dark is for dancing,
even for those
who cannot dance,

give a little light and
looking at someone
might be more intimate
than a touch,

harder to forget.
Forgetting:
that great mercy.

28 December 2018

=====

**Please tell me clearly
all the letters of your actual name
so I can know you—**

***touch you* is what the dream
really meant,
reach out as if I were Praxiteles
and find you standing there already**

**fully formed, looking again
and again like someone I once knew.**

29 December 2018

=====

**Sweeping up
after a dream
can take the whole day.**

29 December 2018

=====

**No images
just words
like a Pushkin poem
whispered to you
by a boyar's daughter.**

**29 December 2018
*for Tonia Shumatoff***

AGAIN AND AGAIN

is the ship's name,
its endless argosy
compels us,

dance all we like
on the afterdeck
or perch on the bowsprit
where once I saw
Albion the Blest
on my horizon—

but where we come from
is never where we go,

2.

is it, Lila, down there
in Nola, packing
the soup tureen,
crocheted doilies,
articles of secession

ringing in your head
like Archaic Roman poetry
before they lost their
city too, lost into empire,
tarnished silver's
soft with history, lace,
a great-aunt's shawl,
gleaming facets of
acut-glass candy dish
still sticky from mints
but you swear you never
saw before, never mind,
pack up all the generations
of a house, sell it to strangers.
Sometimes you look out the window
and see nothing at all.

3.

I call it a ship
but I know better—

there is no ocean
for the likes of us,

**sunshine has to be
our instruction manual**

**keep moving, we're born
with restless legs**

and no destination.

4.

**On weekends for example
people jogging the roads.
I've never understood
what they're running from
so dreamy-smiling,
huffing, puffing, red-cheeked,
their dog trotting easy at their side.
The joyous paranoia of exercise,
the perilous disease called health.**

5.

**So that's my excuse,
lost my childhood
house when I was eight.**

**No one seemed to understand
the mystery of place.**

**Place is radical,
inimitable, so often lost.**

6.

**Somewhere there must be a man,
an old man now, who still lives
where he was born. Someday
I'll find him and sit down beside him
and ask to be instructed
in that mystery. And he won't
know what I'm talking about,
he's never felt the wind blowing him away.
But he's a nice old guy, so he'll
smile and say, Well, here we are.**

29 December 2018

=====

This master's piece
a broom
to sweep the dreams
from out behind the door

the dust of all our desires
webbed and woven
by time's fickle breezes
into these soft knots
of what we thought we meant—

and in the great statue of Aphrodite
she keeps her pubis covered
a shapely hand
denying entrance, denying childbirth too,
sealed against all but speculation

the lust that winds the mechanism

**that enslaves us so we work
in consciousness to set ourselves free.**

**It works like that, forgive me
for making a song
and dance about it, but what
do you think David was really
doing before the Ark? A frenzy
of desire, an acrobat of self-control,
his face empurpled with yes and no,
and the Lord and Lady
laughed kindly at his prancing,
thy know how such things feel,
how they rise and where they lead,,**

**cloud clear to rule
yourself is to rule heaven.**

29 December 2018

=====

Too many people
to be talking to

a snowflake comes down
all by itself
shy girl at the party

just enough to make
everything white—
what happens
colors us too,

time did this to me
he said,
but didn't mean time—

what did he mean?
And who was listening?

30 December 2018

=====

I've got to say
something to the year
when she comes in—
“you add up to 39
or up to 12, depending,
somewhere in between
there is a door
between time and space
a wooden door
with an old tin latch
to lift, open, see
what is inside,
see us standing there,
show us what you bring”

30 December 2018

ARTIST'S LIFE

Smooth white everywhere
quick snow valley,
all the cars are white again
every blessed thing
is a miracle.
O organ grinder in the sky,
let me be your monkey.

30 December 2018

SECOND ERA ABOLITIONISM

**get out of work
shun the factory
flee the office**

**everybody should get paid
by the government just for being.**

**They used to think slavery
was necessary for the economy—
how evil they were, and how wrong.**

**Abolish paid work
and let the real work begin,
people creating a new world
out of their own heads, own time,**

**everyone on earth
doinf their own work,
the work they were born to accomplish.**

30 December 2018

SNOW ENGAGES ATTENTION

**Even one flake
seen galling
changes everything.
We're no longer
in full control—
everything suddenly other.**

**We live on the edge anyway
and this nudges us over—
the sheer beauty of it
is part of the problem,
something happens to us,
we want it and we want it to stop.**

30 December 2018

== = ==

On the window ledge
little penguin
in a little snow-globe,
some real snow
seen through it,

Glass reminds us
always of something
we can't quite say,
a lucid interval
between and between.
Glass is like the memory
of music listened to
a year ago, or the space
between snowflakes,
your mother's voice
heard in a dream.

30 December 2018

HOPE

Ominous beauty
this snow
that keeps falling?
We have milk
and bread, the sky
is very bright.
I think the oracle
is asleep in peace.
Flakes fewer. Now
an actual cloud forms
against palest blue.

30 December 2018

=====

**Dendrologists
come look at me,
I claim
to be a tree.**

**Come name me,
Latin first,
then our own sweet
vernacular.**

**I will stand still
till you make up your minds,
I'll cast firm shadows
of my leaves,**

**I will stretch out my arms—
but hurry please,
I have so many other
things I need to be.**

30 December 2018

=====

**Way over there
up a driveway in the trees
there's a car that never moves
but in the morning
its windshield comes alive with sun.**

30 December 2018

=====

**Turn on your device
and check to see
if anybody loves you
today. What a strange
era we live in, truly
the age of miracles
is not yet past.**

31 December 2018

THE CONVERSATION

We tell the water
by the land, the island
made by river.

The tree grows from your hand,
this is basic,
the way things are—

pick up a glass
and watch the world through it—
capisce? Alive,
messy with differencing,
sea-glass in sunshine,
toyshop window,
maple syrup, remember,
amber?

I try to be gentle
but balls break windows,
a blue faience hippo
gets dusty after a few thousand years
but rinses shiny easy again,
do I make myself clear?

Wasn't it you who gave me a window?
Isn't your girlfriend waiting outside
Impatient on her motorcycle
while we dither about Greek verbs,
Babylon?

Loaves
of bread
when it comes down to it
are the only things
that are not glass—
you get to tear a chunk off
and eat,
no need for knives,
this conversation
is running out of ink.

But windows open,
all light and no glass—
is there a Kantian morality
hidden so obviously
in all our houses?
Wait and see what happens
when the famous light comes in—

and what was the matter
 with the air inside here to begin with?
 And now we can smell
 the fumes of her engine revving,
 impatience is a virtue in a scholar's world,

tithemi is the usual answer,
 I put something in place.
 have to touch
 it to do so.

Her helmet is on,
 you'd better go,
 leave me stifled by my
 certainties—
 people with wheels don't need so much glass

But maybe we share the light?
Es posible. In a puff of smoke
 she rides away
 and you're still here
 debating the aorists and segholates
 in these human languages
 we've stuck ourselves with.

Or did she do it,
heaven lady, Tiamat, *Te Amo*, mother?
Language is the body
trying to meet the light,
using air as its tool.
Till some fool figures out a way
to write it down.
(turn light into glass
and here we are, a written book,
a magnifying glass, a pocket gizmo
to decode the trees.

In another life

I was Praxiteles,
haunted by the shape of her,
not behavior, not mouth or touch,
just the contours
that controlled the light,
shadow-maker , daughter of Eve.

But I see I weary you
with reminiscence, he said,
I was a stranger once,
I knew the feel of window

glass against the light,
I mean a child, a sudden alien
squeezed into the light.

Sorry to be graphic,
my memory
is a constant embarrassment.
Now you'll have to walk home
and I'll be alone,
polishing my lenses yet again
in case I see
or a band of revelers
with drums and masks and effigies
comes trooping over the hill,
loud as Jericho
or is it me?

31 December 2018

=====

**When you feel
water on your skin
remember me—
for I was ocean
before your father was.
It's not so much to ask—
when you feel wetness
on your skin it is
always another.
That's why our planet
is seven-eighths water.**

31 December 2018

ANGELS

Remember, each of us
has an angel, and angels
talk to one another—
which is why sometimes
we strangely deeply know
someone we just met.
Angel work. Hurrying us
along towards heaven
starting with intimate, earth.

31 December 2018