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NEW YEARS LETTER

1. Trying new dangers amoebas in friend rice. We mercenary men goth’d our way west until we unraveled all rhe languages and used them all up. Then pity poor butterfly voiceless as light.

2. As if we selves are selves as pathogens. Dark audience, they collect our dreams and publish them in an anthology called today.
3.
Something like that
at least.
Something is happening to me.
Albestone
dropped from my hand
but not lost,
ever lost,
it glistens in the shadows we call music.

4.
See, naming things already,
who gave me this near year?
The stricture relents,
Bach’s English Suites—
I would have been a piano
if I could, such
love I have of touch.
5.
Fingers, fingers,
not rhyme.
Specifics of geographic location—
Orpheus in hell,
Eurydice’s face
at last from that unsilent company.
In this age, women have all the lines.

6.
This isn’t talking, see,
this is lurking in the shadows.
Cars without headlights
weaving home from drunken parties.
Scary out there—you’d think
I was a deer
or someone frail.
And you may be right.
7.
Forgive the form.
This encyclical
has to go
to everyone at once,
someone left out
would be in peril
of the trivial.
Poetry has to work hard
to understand
what it so blithely says.

8.
Yes, you, darling
in this ____
in actual fact
every human being
is a poet—
but so few know it.
9.
So read me with your pen
I pray, only your rich answer
can make sense
of all my meager questions.
Ah, slim wrists, ah, chubby fingers,
leave the guitar in the closet
and kiss the keys good morning
one by one until you touch an alphabet.
Or gouge it in paper with your lucid pen.
Matter incessantly forgives our mind.

1 January 2019
Honor is in it too
being close to the tree trunk

is also to be shielded
from above. Find the tree.

1 January 2019
After one touches another
with a wand of ultrasound
the sky seems lighter.
We know so little
of where we come from,
long nightgowns billowing
round maiden knees,
shy young men
unshaven. Cocks
crowing, crows
calling, deer waiting
in the trees for
anything to eat.
Hespera men ēn—
then it was evening,
the great cycle of Athenian
oratory begins.
But who is listening?
It tastes like salt
but what is it
really? Maybe a well
has roots deeper than we know,
subtle channels, earth investments,
swirl the tap water in your glass and pray. Life everywheres itself.
What did the doctor tell you?
You’ll be better soon
pray for peace by standing still.

1 January 2019
It's what I want
That counts
not what I get

The spirit
Has its own treasury
where images accumulate

Lasting and true
From then a world
Of energy and beauty comes

More than I could ever hold.

1 January 2019
Hoisting the host
Suddenly
What the arms are for

It knows
Upward
In the priest.

And we
just as suddenly
are guest.

1 January 2019
for Billie, answering

This fish
A flame
That lives in water

water being anyhow
Our mother

Bless your nakedness.
Your willingness
To cleave to the tree.

Birch bark
Branches
A poem
Caught in your hair.

1 January 2019
To dine on tomorrow
the way a child

or blue sky your Wednesday
just because

there are towers hidden
in the trees to us

Saint Sagacity
finds them for

anything is
enough to begin

2 January 2019
I should be a farmer
and plant horses on the hillside,
some people make up secrets
to make themselves small,
some people trim clouds
to fit their bay windows
and why not? you say
because you haven’t been listening
all these years
we’ve been whistling
in the belly of the whale
on our way to one
more city we have to rule
we live for the next.
I have to do
the things that make me
me, and you too
have a charter to pursue
the accreditation
of every mortal hour.
Some by nakedness,
some by song
some by carpentry,
chemistry, theology,
all the lovely ways
of being wrong
and having it all come true.
A new day!
When the old
is still humming
in my head—

write a novel
about a girl on a bus
a boy on the ground,
the birds pay their taxes
too to the reigning sun,
quivering wind.
Not a novel, a *roman*
that needs translation—

I’m instructing you
to write in a language
you don’t know
and see what happens.

Something always happens—
that’s how you know.

2 January 2019
When the pen is loaded  
the rodeo begins,  
is that your horse  
hopping over the hill?  
Is that your wine-glass  
shattered on the boulder,  
your straw hat perched  
on a saguaro,  
how wise you are  
to carry a desert  
in your purse  
so everywhere you go  
you can at need or at will  
suddenly have space,  
huge space around you—  
is that your slender hand  
even now drawing the horizon?

2 January 2019
It wasn’t enough
to wake the sexton
to borrow the key
to the abandoned cathedral,
dangers of falling masonry,
secret places in the design,
mosaic pathways.
You had to go inside,
and find the living thing inside
and bother it with seeing
until it spoke
the dark language of color
that you, so few,
 can understand.
The inner organs of stone buildings
wait for a new gospel—
now what will you do
to answer them?

2 January 2019
Sweet contraltos sing my breakfast—
not that I’m hungry,
I can wait my turn,
but start whispering at least to ease
the opposite of appetite that only music can cure.
Sing me whatever as you once told Caedmon asleep by his cattle.
I sleep by my window.
OCTAVES

1,
Touch the Baldwin,
remember,
extra keys at the top
make the high notes
sound fuller, truer.

What name did they give it,
Acrosonic? Ultra-something?
I saw one, a big white grand,
in my dream, no one
playing it, just there, dark room.
But you could tell
just by looking
how it would sound
beneath your fingers,
how everything would feel.
2.
Extra harp strings on the frame for notes you would never play.
no scores command them,
but their resonance, their presence on the instrument makes
the played notes in the highest octave sound fuller. Proximity effect. As if I spoke truest and clearest only when there are others beside me. Language is the other.

3.
But what about music?
Music is touch.
Fingers or lips
rhythm of breath,
Gould humming into Bach.
4.
So the white piano
turned into a naked woman
on her elbow beside me
articulate and chaste.
I forget what we talked about
but it was talk intelligent,
prospecting fresh ideas
to investigate, new species of now.

5.
So when I say ‘turned into’
I mean got replaced by.
What else could I mean?
This is not a fairy tale,
it’s an ordinary workaday dream
given by the mind to itself
to study and be guided by,
tyo be delighted by and to forget
into the bright shadows we call waking.
Sometimes as with fancy candy
the box costs more to make
than the nougats do. A dream
is like that, its images far more
interesting and useful than
the meaning you weasel from them,
Dr. Smartypants. Give me plain
my wombat, my rose, my cathedral.

3 January 2019
Tumescent cloud
beyond bare trees
lean as pen strokes

the sky is painting
Dutch today,
no need for brushes.

I present this landscape
in my latest book:
*What You Can See Only*

*When You’re Not Looking.*

3 January 2019
Arroyos, barriers, canyons in the land itself keep us in place.

Wise if we stay here, no Viking, no crossing. Water is to drink,

bathe, delight us in it and in the sight of it, it mothers us, is in us.

Don’t cross over. Rivers are to lead us, wise folk follow them.

3 January 2019
Is it too late for America?
All our rivers have been crossed,
thus crossed out as guidelines.
We are bewildered by bridges—
a bridge denies the deep
meaning of our geology. And maybe
a boat was our first blasphemy.

3 January 2019
The whale tooth
scrimshaw
the waiting game
we play with things,
dear things!

I am apostle
of the miracle
of matter we are.

2.
Or do I mean
more than I think?
I think I do
but that’s just
thinking again—
what did that
ever get us?
Feeling is all.

3 January 2019, Kingston
for Gabriela, who interrupted me just in time
It doesn’t do
to be old,
to be told
you can’t do
this
    or even that,

each breath
a victory,
each step
an argosy,
the daily quest
is getting dressed

when all the while
a mile
    away
the mind’s
aat play
among the birds
of spring
still learning
how to sing.

4 January 2019
EVERYTHING TRIES TO TELL THE TRUTH

When you run out of rapture
run back to the mountain.
Cross the river, it’s never far.
Go climb halfway up, no more,
just where the clouds come down
to lick your lips, hem of her robe.
This hill is all you need of heaven—
didn’t they teach you that in dream?

4 January 2019
LANDSCAPE

Sunny trees
Sienese
winter gold
,  
art history
in my window screen,
the air
at freeze –point
held, breath still.

Seeing is being
all over again.
Each of us
a soft museum
strolling the visible.

4 January 2019
The only difference between land and landscape is looking.

4.I.19
Your whole countryside
covered in salt
beautiful, three inches deep.

The natives call it snow
and drive their deer across it,
but I know what I taste,

I know music when I hear it,
the generous curve of sound
around and around,

music is always walking
ahead of me, now and then
turning round to see me,

if I’m still following.
I always am. I need those
shimmering footsteps.

I need that salt.

4 January 2019
A song by Mahler
I haven’t heard in forty years
a woman singing now
from a little round device,
o and the years, the years,
those vast and sudden meadows
ragged with golden flowers,
hedgerows, roads over the hill,
and the music sounds as ever
differently the same, her voice
lifting as much memory
as it can, so much sorrow.

I tap my fingers slowly on my desk,
the device changes its tune,
speeds up, my fingers too, Bach
is happening, that mystery cult

we all are born to be initiates of.

4 January 2019
If a religion had me
which would it be?

I knew the answer
but I wouldn’t tell him—
we evangelists are
that way,

read my gospel
and leave me in peace.
Now the miller sang to his seed:

Be many, many on the way to being one.

4.I.19
Love is on the other side of something we can’t say

or can you, with all that wise Egyptian beeswax in your lips.

the goddess of writing who invented the alphabet is also the goddess of surveying, accounting, counting,

knowing how many things and how big they are, and where they are,
you see the sinuous
shadow of her shape

tumble down the fore-slopes,
the Blue Mountains.

In their shape I first knew love
I thought,
and tore the paper up.

4 January 2019
MONOCHROME MORNING

I said into the window
eyeless in Gaza
at the mill with slaves
it answered right away

yes, Samson, *Shemesh* sun god
she trundles round the sky
yes, no sun today,
     I hope
that is all the answer meant,

my eyes are poor
I love my mill
I love you still,
and I’m the only slave left.

5 January 2019
EVE OF EPIPHANY

1.
Dark indeed morning
the wise men
almost at their goal

soon they’ll lay their gifts
at the feet of Reality

then bury back east
where the sun is waiting
to hear their stories

and come to us.

2

. Myth makes me keener—
less me, more us,

less veiling, less alarm,
breathless truths
suddenly gasped,
3. Here I dare to argue with the truly great Dr. Jung. Any story decanted into a child’s ears becomes myth, genuine, real as Hercules, any gift laid at the crib is gold, is frankincense.

4. Myrrh comes later, myrrh is breath, breath of the other, neighbor’s daughter, preacher’s son. Or myrrh is the resin of the furthest tree, the one around the corner, the one next door.
I’ll need a pseudonym to publish this, no one must know I’m me—identity is a major cause of death

I’ll call myself Red Deer or Boniface the Innocent, who else could it be?

The myth is stamping its hooves outside my door, the story is impatient to begin and all it wants is to tell you the edges of itself—shuttered brick church, angry crowd, lazy bishop miles away, then a stranger in an overcoat shows up, opens the doors without a key, leads everybody in, turns his overcoat inside out, turns out to be a chasuble how, he says Mass, gives communion, smiles and disappears Of course
you know the rest, you know
an angel when you see one.
Who would believe me
if I didn’t lie?

Don’t boast
(his voice came down the nave)
you couldn’t tell a lie if you tried.

5 January 2019
Poor St Patrick’s, Catskill
SYMBOLS OF SELF-RULE

An apple unbitten, 
cloud overhead, 

fox on daylight lawn 
and in daylight too 

an antlered head lifted 
*deer at gaze*

stream hurried past, 
key cold in your pocket, 

singing then stopping 
fingers tapping on tabletop 

palm rests against cool plaster wall.

5 January 2019
Urgent onset
I spoke English as a child
but learned to talk later—

knew something about the clouds
and what lived inside them
and only there
in all the world.

Children have to know
all by themselves—
there is no one to tell them
the things that matter,

no one at all.

5 January 2019
Leftover brightness
the sea’s own
the river has it now,

guide of all my years.
It rose up before me
when I was very young
in my father’s car

*North* it said
on the little wooden
sign beside the road,
*New England and North*

but I knew it meant
Know England
and Go North,

and England meant a book
because at that time
there were no books in America.

5 January 2019
SILVER

There are no rhymes for silver.
silver is the holy one
silver stands alone

all the other metals have
rhyme words of their own
tin and lead are common,
gold has many,
some of them quite sad,
even holy copper has a few
but silver stands alone.

The holy gentle smooth one,
milk of matter,
half ocean and half sky,
morning over norther forest

Wear silver on your wrist
against the pulsing vein
to open up the furthest dream

5 January 2019
A DOOR FOR JANUARY

There is someone at the door
there is a woman at the door
another voice says no
it’s a man at the door
go ;let them in

there’s a child at the door
let them in
does she have a dog with her?
no, he’s alone

is he hungry?
no she says she’s eaten already
eaten enough

why are they here
go let them in
they’ve come to know me

they come to know you –
do you want to be known?
go let them in
she’s waiting at the door
I hear him breathing
why doesn’t she knock
he called out already

didn’t you hear him?

there’s only one door
it opens only once a year

it’s always open.

5 January 2019
KAIROS

I opened the door
and she was standing there
the whole year
dressed all in weather

Come out, she whispered,
the time is right,
it’s the right time at last,

5 January 2019
THE NOMENCLATURE OF HEAVEN

breeds a strange biology. Impalpably alive—means you can’t touch them but they’re there. There means here. Hard to remember. Dangerous to forget.

2.
You especially know the ones I mean. You sleep with them at night, spirits, sperrits, ghosts, afreets, nimble daimons of a brighter time. What a zoo you are of cosmic entities, like a page of Rudolf Steiner, a million voices chattering through earthbound words. Zoo you are. And those who love you are fed by your desperate guesses.

6 January 2019
Go on, laugh at mirrors, 
stretch tape measures 
out of true, make 
one mile feel like ten. 
I had colors once, 
and fur around my collar 
and a door to guard, 
a pool to gaze in. 
The astrology of spider webs 
was not unknown to me, 
infinite is a word much overused, 
and there were foxes in the brief meadow 
between the trees and winter. 
I understand the pain 
you must never let yourself feel— 
an abstract pain is best, 
deep-gouged bark of an old locust tree— 
pain is the avenue of what we see— 
in this dry paper bag 
is all my broken glass.

6 January 2019
Sometimes it isn’t waiting,  
the word.

Spin the top,  
speak Viennese,  
you’re almost there,  
rondo in the Gypsy style,  
come on, word,  
I can feel you on the bone  
I call a brain, come on,  
say yourself, be a good  
Christian, Jew, believer,  
sneer all you like,  
just say I’ll play  
this damned zither  
till you speak.

6 January 2019
I have a good memory
but memory is overrated.
I wish I had no idea
of how I got here—
that way I’d really
know what place this is
and who I am who stands here.

6 January 2019
How few the farmer,
eloquent his seed,
his terse mind
fills the field with rye—
any week now,
to feed his lumbering herd.

6 January 2019
BACK TO THE SHUTTERED ROOM

The Flume
I ran through in New Hampshire
at my memory’s beginning,
Minerva my teacher,
Nora in the sea surf,
some old stone man.

2.
No need for more.
In the first five years of life
the child receives
(donations from reality)
all the impressions needed
for a whole life. All
the rest is vocabulary lessons,
graham. Which used
to mean magic.

3.
Of course I am there,
still working it out.
Precise [?] location is itself escape.
Escape into numbers,
names. The bridge
over the Isar, downhill
from the Conservatory,
spread your arms,
pretend to be a hotel.

6 January 2019
The worst skin disease of all
is absence of touch
I came into the house
from winter, sat by the fire,
fingertips numb from the cold.
I rubbed my hands together,
rubbed my fingers on my thighs.
Your thighs. Where were you
when I needed you. Half
and hour later some feeling
had come home. *Maladies
de la peau*, I remembered,
a beautiful book
I translated once
some poems from
long ago. Too long ago.

6 January 2019
If you need more evidence
count the trees around your house
and divide by me.
The result will tell you
more than words or numbers can—
all diseases come from touch.

6 January 2019
WOUNDED CENTER

The years
gave you flesh,
the beautiful flesh
made language
all around you
now let
the wound talk.

2.
All these years
it’s wasted.
Let it speak—

it may even
be a song.

3.
When the center is wounded
the circumference glows
with an eerie light,
attracts predators,
con men, lotharios.
All the old words
sometimes salve, never cure. Never help.
Only telling breaks the circle, lets the meaning out.

4.
Because a wound is a meaning too, a lost war, abandoned province, a mountain beyond reach. Only the wind can reach it, only the breath can understand what the wind says. Tell it. It’s the only truth you have.

6 January 2019
As if a long ago
was now, scent
of incense, high B natural
of a dead tenor
floating on the distances.
All the distances we are.

6 January 2019
Amber
every wear
pale throat
Danube passing
irrelevant but beautiful—
the sea so far,
the mocking clouds
remind me to praise.
Praise.

6 January 2019
Look into the ear
listen to the eye
take the taste
into your hands
and offer it to the gods.
This is the real religion.

7 January 2019
The sun is over the house now just enough so the far trees take color from it. In between it’s darker. Not for the first time I constitute an obstacle to light. I’m still working on transparency.

7 January 2019
This Epiphany,
yesterday,
the Kings did not come by.
But their gifts are everywhere.
I stand on the highway
and study the distances
into which they have gone.

7 January 2019
When you can’t drive anymore, your era changes.
These cars I see out there driving to work could be from a different age, past and future all at once. *They do what I was.*
Sometimes the shock comes back. I search for what can be found only when all is lost.

7 January 2019
I’m getting personal again. Next I’ll be telling you how I’m an owl or a crow. And you had better believe me. Of all my lies, this has more truth than most.

7 January 2019
Ways I betrayed
my generation:
didn’t do drugs,
hated pop music,
gave up drinking,
gave up smoke.
Preferred to live out
the clarity of mind,
any mind
I could find
in me or all the words.
Will my time forgive me
or has another time come,
a time out of mind?

7 January 2019
FARBENLEHRE

Pieces pf color 
lying on the deck 
some say the ship 
is bearing them 
to some land wilder 
than Borneo 
though close at hand. 
Others claim colors 
are just one more 
gosh-darned religion 
we should have outgrown 
by now but no. I tiptoe 
through flecks of blue 
wanting it to be true. 
I kneel in scarlet 
at bedside every eve 
but the boat keeps 
tolling, tocks me to sleep 
before I even stretch out 
like a green lawn in Cathay 
where metals kept
all the colors and the trees
hrew black and white.
So tell me I’m dreaming—
I’ve heard worse, and dream
is our natural condition, yours too.
And mind you don’t step in yellow.

7 January 2019
I catch in the mirror
a glimpse of the television
working away in another room.
Something is happening.
It could be the start of war
or an ad for soap. Light
has a way of shrieking so loud
you don’t know what it says.
I’m afraid poetry can be like that too.
for Susan Quasha on her birthday

I’ve been watching you
since we were building cathedrals

but not together, we always
had slightly different religions

you built your high towers
out of pure water
running and still,
mine were of ice
hard-carved and hurt

and sometimes after work
I’d come and lean against your walls
and stare straight up the tower,
beeline to Polaris

and if I leaned close,
my cheek against the upward flow
I wouldn’t need to shave that day

no wonder I keep coming back to you
delighted with the distances you keep,
the taste of everything in my empty mouth
but best of all’s
when I come by
your edifice at night,
see the articulate colors
all streaming out
through the stained glass windows in your side.

7 / 8 January 2019
THE WEATHERS

1.
Say what you like
the weather knows everything.
Fall asleep by the ocean
wake on the mountain.

2.
I knew Nietzsche when I was young,
surly youths we both were,
fond of silences.
But then the caged
animals did their work
and breath did all the rest.

3.
Tops remind us earth splns.
Earth reminds us we stand still.
I have come all this weary
way just to tell you this.
4. Marvel at my impecunious religion
room in it only for me and god—
how dare I even listen
to such a word as “mine?”

5. Lack of evidence is evidence—
who said that? Some dreary
policier tugged out of memory.
Look outside and see the snow—
that should be enough for both of us.
Who did you say you were again?

6. La cosa mas importante
is staying small. Low
to thje wind, mumble
when you speak, preach
by silence, pray
when you sing. Mum’s
the word – a word
that also means our mother.
7.
Yestreen Duncan’s hundredth birthday.
He sat in his pajamas
at my kitchen table
by the window
writing with his Parker 51
and it was snowing then too,
Greatest poet I ever knew.

8.
But then there’s you, of course,
and me, and the girl next door,
the blue jay at the feeder,
the big buck at midnight
just past the skeletal hibiscus—
talk about evidence!

9.
Triangles were the best
in geometry class,
great names,
scalene, isosceles,
easy formulas,
pointy angles.
And they all look
like hollow shadows.
Or pyramids.

10.
It’s getting lighter as I speak—
is that cause and effect?
Angels laugh at such a question,
such presumption, sometimes
punish, sometimes just send
a mouse to skitter across the rug
to put me in my place.
But isn’t that what you are for?

11.
Miles and frowns,
smiles and towns—
nothing is too far away—
there are reasons
built into distances,
they think it moves
but it is still the sky
a polished lapis sphere.
12.
Things could go on like Telemann, triumph of energy over narration. From what I never even thought your hands are suddenly filled.

13.
All at once things take over and we know what that means. The weather’s always waiting to disclose. Far out in heaven all the weathers themselves cast their brief universal spells.

14.
That’s as close as we could come to it. stiff with cold, sulking on the mountain slope. Intellect broad, insight narrow. just like that kind of triangle.
15.
I used to have another name for me
but I forgot. Forget.
Easy to lose things in the snow,
wait for spring to show the right word up.

16.
Great poets and great friends,
what a sacred geography lesson,
continent full of rivers,
rivers full of water, water
full of flow, full of fish
and indinite reflections passing
not one of them meant to last.
They gleam with gone-ness.
17. And we are raptured too, by song if nothing worse. Black angus cattle browsing in the feedlot yesterday, Sorrow to see their beauty guessing at their fate. Here’s Nietzsche again who glimpsed the final secret be kind to one another and all may yet be well.

8 January 2019
On elegant black horses
they herded the homeless
out of the central square—
“Go be homeless everywhere
but here. Go find a fountain
and wash yourselves rich.”

*

So dreamt. Now what.
What language did they speak
or do I? What now.
yje dream event is finished,
the aching poor are far away
beyond the gates. Even I
can’t hear them cry.

*

Is there a basic rule or law
about what happens in the night?
Asleep or awake the horrors come,
precipices sudden yawn,
doors lock themselves against you
and you fall. Or almost fall
when almost means breathless
stiff with terror. Nightmare
is an easy word, I hear
you pant with fear beside me,
I roll over, clutch you, how
can I save you from your dream?

*

The hooves of the horses
have made a terrible mess
of the stinking shabby sheets
that had tented the poor,
who dared to be poor in public.

The Consolation Clock
was tolling in the cathedral tower,
as it has for eight hundred years
a business day about to
begin in this crowded city—

If you get to heaven before I do,
tell them about this, ask the angels
overworked as they are, to come to the aid
of the ragged and the outcast. Maybe
they’ll explain it, maybe they’ll say
in some obscure way the poor
have chosen their affliction, are working
some aeonic destiny out life by life.

*

Even if the angels are right
don’t listen to them.
We have our own destinies
to work out, justice and truth,
or for God’s sake just kindness.
Kindness means the agency
proper to our kind.
Humanity, *umanità*.

9 January 2019
He dumped boiled spinach into a lady’s purse—but I’ve done worse.
I saw a stone bridge and walked across it,
I heard a song on the radio and hummed it back,
I had pizza for dinner and gave you some.

9 January 2019
One person went to sleep
another person dreamed
and a third woke up.
And they were all me.
It’s the usual morning question:
who am I today.
It needs no answer from me—
that’s where you come in.

10 January 2019
To endure
the mincing footsteps
of the meek baroque,
copycat music
from the time of powdered periwigs
I am compelled to clutch
in my romantic heart
storms over Swiss mountains
or dryads slouching through dark woods.

10 January 2019
UNRELIABLE

A door
can close too—
that’s poetry
for you.

10 January 2019
I spell my name with a K because some Englishman and I speak sort of English because a boat brought but still those pale foreigners seem like my homeland as if I had no other ever country but language alone.

10 January 2019
Om mani padme hum

I write what I suddenly must
to say what the sky says
is to say enough—
we are all translators.

10 January 2019
If you have enough triangles you can make a star or form a perfect circle to live in ever after—all you need are angles, as long as each one is sharp, each complete in itself.

10 January 2019
CONTESTAION

Sometimes the alphabet
turns inside out.
Then the cave opens
and the marvels roll out,
winged doubts and words on wheels,
griffins shredding manuscripts,
saintly women with diamonds
studded in their teeth.
I don’t believe anything I read
because it’s all true
but doesn’t need me to credit it.
Il am the isolate, the fierce Hapax,
the child of your deepest mind.

10 January 2019
Time is never wasted—
by its nature
it communicates, transfers
you to the destined place,
port of sorrows, glory chapel,
the place you never guessed.

Time takes you there, taking
as we say its own sweet time
to bring you to the door.
The riverside. The virgin shadow
of the form you will take on,

no way out of that perfection.

10 January 2019
THE STATUES

1.
The image persists after the religion is gone.
We stand the god on a plinth in the museum and wonder. Body of a sturdy man, body of a fecund woman, thousands of years. What are we looking at? What were they thinking who made this thing of stone or polished wood and prayed to it, or through it, what did they know when they gazed up at it that we can never know?

2.
Or can we?
What really happens now when you look?
Don’t stare
our, others told us, don’t stare at strangers. Staring gives them power, turns them into gods, I think that’s what the mothers meant, staring turns them into a problem we have to solve, spend our whole life studying like children the meaning of a stranger, meaning of a stone.

3. Or is there nothing to be known and all the worship just a fine excuse to look at beautiful women, beautiful men, models merely, marble surrogates for what we usually see, the dumpy uncomely ordinary?

4. Or look at Rodin, or Matisse, who turn our lumpy lovers into deities—the godhead sneaks back in admitted by the human trowel, chisel, or maybe just by staring alone
like Praxiteles looking at his Phryne
until she was Aphrodite, intense,
modest as a naked body can be—
nude means dressed for eternity.

5.
Or remember those figures at Autun,
gaunt robed holy ones
whose bodies seem to replicate
the thrust upward of their cathedral
to heaven, frighteningly lean,
rapt in a strange stasis of ascent
as if we too, all the time, are rising
with them, quick shallow breaths—
never mind religion. The gods are here.

11 January 2019
Turn my phrase into a leaf.
Let it grow a tree to live in the way an idea grows a book around itself and we read.
Now climb the tree.
Perch in the branches, try to find the original leaf.
The primal is impossible.
Climb down, go home, lie quiet, think of me.

11 January 2019
Merit?
Meretricious?
Our roots, monsieur, are under us where they should be.
Rowboat? Robot?
Accident is queen of language, the king is old and feeble.
Hard work to oar this skiff along. Alone.
This ship. Make safe.
Salute the oriflamme of the flutter flag.
If I were French now back then I’d be at home.
Whom?

Evidently no one.

Noon. The numb time when the yellow drum beats the sky
Depending on latitude some of us see it right overhead. Not me.
Powys taught us
how this hour
silences our prayers.
But saying is praying:
we weave in matter
and the noon knows why.

11 January 2019
NDH
GHOSTS

Ghosts wear sheets with holes for eyes but why? They don’t have eyes, all of them knows how to see.

11 January 2019
NDH
They might be waiting for me
when the door swings open
or outside on the lawn
where the deer are feeding
or npt for me, maybe,
but for some other, a person
remarkable fpr obscurity,
in dark socks and quiet shoes
pretending to be weather.
Just like me, I have business with the night--
the creaking door, the gnawing mouse,
these are my playthings and imperium.
No quiet sleep. The naiads and the nixies
see to that, and on the shelf above the woods
Woden and his hunters scour the sky.
And I have to deal with all that, register
their noisy shadows and cheer their gloom.
And i can’t even smoke anymore!
Or drink anything more luminous
than the black black coffee
Rimbaud sends me from Ethiopia.
Hard to be prophet when all I want is sleep.
Have I walked through the gate with you often enough to know the way? Sometimes I think about deserts, how they too have pathways, secret ones and hard to find, ones we have to follow to get there, wherever there is. And there are gates there too you can’t see but have to sidle humbly through just to begin even the shortest journey. You do know what i mean, I think, you who understand the metronome and how Bach should and should not be played. I count my breaths, you lead me through the door.

12 January 2019
Tomorrow I’ll have only the fuzziest memory of all this. I’ll be a child again grasping for an orange he had and lost in dream.

12 January 2019
Castigate my folly
I slept through dawn
I did not learn
the name of every flower,
thought it would be enough
to say you to all of them
and they would understand.
But now the flowers are all
angry with me, flee from my sight,
my sense of smell and touch,
pretending it’s just winter
that hides them from me.
But I know better, I’m sorry,
I will walk out, work hard
to learn their precious differences.

12 January 2019
If I were still in school
I would be pondering
psychiatry or geology.
I picked psychiatry I think
and wrote the soul. But now
when I look around up here
at drumlins and anticlines
I wonder if I wrote those too—
conceit comes easy in poetry.

13 January 2019
ETRE AMERICAIN

Make sure you do it right—bring a sheep dog with you everywhere, practice a phony longhorn accent, wear baggy tartan trousers, play Beatles tunes on a wooden flute, eat buffalo wings at midnight camping in the Walmart parking lot—then I’ll know you as my fellow citizen, my bro, friendly as shoe polish, sunshine all night long, cold hands.

13 January 2019
Lost the tune of the day, borrow tomorrow—

that’s better if it sounds like sense iy will be

Sunday morning the world becomes a church and goes to you—

no escape from the piety of light, the trees’

long sermon full of matter quotes books you never read,
never could,  
it’s all just magic,  
church swallows  
you, you blue  

sky, you tune  
someone hums  
you thought  
I almost think.

13 January 2019
= = = = = =

examining the evidence
all i have is you
where ‘have’ does not mean possess
but really everything there is

we live by othering

14 January 2019
A lean-to in the wind--
the mind is like that
sheltering some sense
from multiplicity--

choose the threads
you weave with, pioneer!

14 January 2019
O Sun thou revenant
come from your gracious
tomb again to give us life,
teach me to rise too
I beg, and be for others.

14 January 2019
Boat on the river
who can say why,
who can deny
the voice of the other,
the ask of another?
I hear the small
faraway sound wake me
a little more, old night,
hard sleep. River
is never far. I try
to understand, I mean
I try to answer
what no one asked.

14 January 2019
January 2019

MOUSAI

When the Muses
danced around Helicon
or lounged, rehearsing,
the sky above them
(the sky that was then)
took color, shape and
meaning from their arts.

So much we learned from Greece.
We knew all their names
but only Terpsichore
gets spoken of often, in public,
because the art she does
(the art she is)
is moving out there,
where we all can see.

But all of them are dancing,
some of them above the clouds
and some inside the bodies
we think of as our own.
But we are theirs.

14 January 2019
It wants to be me.

Careful days,
the wind and so on,

still it keeps coming closer,
it wants, it goes on wanting,
it is the blessing
the laying on of hands.

14 January 2019
Every line
betrays the beginning,
fulfilling it
at the same time,
every text
more and less
than it could have been,
the first line a seed—
but who knows what tree?

14 January 2019
In the event or other a mixture of then and now as if a procession around with images, a sailor carrying his boat making light of his burden. a ploughman carrying the whole earth.

14 January 2019, Kingston
FESTE UMANE

Because we live by festivals called working for a living, doing, being. The toil of smile, the smiles from toil.

14 January 2019, Kingston
AVOWAL

I turn my back
on every mirror
except you.

14 January 2019, Kingston
If *MShH*, as in Messiah, by root means the laying on of hands every touch blesses, every hand reaches from paradise again. So Messiah is the one who comes to lay a hand on us, or take us by the hand, lead us to the unknown beginning.

14 January 2019, Kingston
MATIONAL ANTHEM FOR A LOST REPUBLIC

Once there was a never and it stayed,

no one held it, no one there,

each citizen their own city alone all alone, no one at all.

14 January 2019, Kingston
Defiled by narrative
the dream
washed its hands all night

I was trying
to wake or sleep or some
such decent thing

but story sprawled
leaking into every breath
until I became

mere agent of its spread—
then the light came back
and things rescued me.

15 January 2019
A REMORSE

Look
at what rises
to be told.

    The ice sheets
afloat, a river
shivers into stillness and

how could I think ill of winter
ice curtaining the rock cliffs

how could I forget the glisten?

15 January 2019
Someone told me once that Dr. Jung paid close attention to how his patients drew their figure-eights, finding there evidence in balance or asymmetry or lord knows what of the condition of their souls. Since then for fear of waving a flag of my neuroses I have not even once written a figure-eight in peace. Sometimes I make a snowman, ball atop ball, but that seems cheating, other times I say what the hell and scrawl ordinary snaky sloppy loop-the-loops like everybody else, lopsided, too skinny, I’m glad when a year (like this one) has no eight in it, so I don’t have to give myself away every time I write a letter or sign a check — nervous act all by itself. Alas, my reluctance to stand revealed by my eights is itself one more pathology.
Knowing something or enough.
Lord Perhaps and Lady Could-Bee waltz around all my living rooms in and out of my trees—maple walnut locust pine—I am (like the cover of *Matter 1* so long ago) a man at the mercy of his means..
They tell me where to go and how to travel and when to stop when I’ve gotten there or near enough to walk by myself the rest of the way.

15 January 2019
Keep wanting to make changes—
where will the world be
if I get my way?
Unlikely we’ll ever know.
But on the red milagros votive cross
the central figure is an angel,
with a face, and winged like one—
an angel at the center
of all our afflictions,
emblems of all that can go wrong.
Look deep into grief,
find the angel waiting—
that’s what a cross means.
Geometry can never lie.

15 January 2019
CHANSON D’AMOUR

To put in bluntly
I am a car run down
along the road
and you are gasoline.

15 January 2019
I don’t want to type
I want to write
with my own old childish hand,
semi-legible at best—
just like the poetry it scrawls.

15 January 2019
I found these postcards
I wrote years ago
to him and her and them,
island pictures & word in verse.
Now do I dare to read
what I meant for someone else?
Who are we anyway?

15 January 2019
THE REAL

Haunt a Bolivian silver mine, speak a dialect you make up as you go along but everybody understands. Haunt crossroads, subway stations, parking lots, toll like church bells, flit through the trees scaring campers in their vans, be a phantom at breakfast glistening like the fat on bacon, stir this dream of ours from which we never wake.

15 January 2019
1. Come near to bargaining color back into the day. Explore your own etymology, find your great-grand-syllable and who she married. Plumbers take their name from lead, metal pipes they lead below the earth. How about you? Who was your magnifying Lass, your ultimate grandma, your Eve?

2. I wake hearing loud but only in my head Seid umschlungen, Millionen! This kiss is for the whole world—but we can’t all be sisters, can we, Geschwister, siblings, vassals of a friendly Sire?
3.
Time to revise your prayers—
the gods are waiting
for you to make sense.
Bring color back into the day,
say all the names you know
and one of them may be the one
the world is waiting to hear.

16 January 2019
Near enough.
You decide—
lift the shadow
of the tree
from the ground.
Careful. Roll iy up,
carry it under arm
like a warm baguette.
This is your plan—
unroll it when you
finally get home,
follow its dimensions,
its instructions
to the letter. Every
curve and salient
means something,
probably means you.
You decide. You’ll
never find a testament
clearer than this.
This is your genesis.

16 January 2019
Listen to me—I was someone and I woke. Everything was woven tight around me, my struggle was more a letting go. I bring you the empty sound of words I stole in the shuttered prison chapel they call school, sounds wrapped around sounds, tight, tight, you have to listen so light to hear them. I stole them to bring them to you all this way. The longer I go on living, saying, the more I think I was supposed to.
No one stopped me,
even now the sounds
still speak
or is it really
only the sound
of you listening?

Dreamt 5:45 AM
17 January 2019
Lying in wait
for the word,
glamor of expectancy,
shimmer of fish scales—
when we’re asleep
we have no skin at all
a hand comes touching us
all the way in.

How can you ever
be lonely
when a word is on its way?

17 January 2019
I need a narrative
to put me to sleep—
any story after all
is an exit door
from where we are
into that other place,
hot street after
movie matinee,
the endless plain
round burning Troy.

17 January 2019
Dream:

After he had stolen the great gold jeweled binding of the altar missal, he turned to me and said: “My astrology seems to bring to me a lot of people who are fact-deniers. They say things like: A fact is a fiction that has borrowed evidence, or A fact is a fiction that believes in itself.”

A sharper tool. A keener taste.

17 January 2019
Truck big
truck the
dinosaur
of our age
how long
will last?

17 January 2019
This chthonic time
when land shrinks
away from our uses,
usages, All our fancy
words mean fear—
waiting on the bridge
and he won’t come
or she won’t be there.
*Pélerinage*, time
to be a pilgrim,
a pilgrim is always at home.
I want it wrapped in you.
That is the wrong of me,
the other side of the bridge.
Something ends over there
in old brick buildings.
The need-nature shines through
the gaps in the fabric. I say yes
but I mean I must. Yes is so polite,
the other thing is mandatory—
coal bin in old houses, heat for fuel.
Eyes look out of the portrait, clouds
articulate as much of cosmos as we see—
I want the world wrapped in you,
the autonomous autochthonous other
I find you sleeping in every temple.

17 January 2019
PORTRAIT PAINTER

The slope of your back
and the purse of your lips—
what more could I ask?

17 January 2019
Nude on the phone
but who can know?
Close your eyes,
see the world.

17 January 2019
Every day can be Friday
if you wear green.
It speaks into your skin
till obligations falter.
Happy hour happens.
You forget why you came.

17 January 2019
Too many love songs,
not enough love.
And not enough song.

17 January 2019
All kinds of things can fit in a box—
a box is volume, not shape.
Go into the closet close the door to find out.

17 January 2019
It won’t make sense until tomorrow. That’s what time is for.

17 January 2019
They are playing the shakuhachi
cross the street from the shrine
of Artemis of Ephesus.

Ten stories high she stands,
her strong hands outspread
to the west, giving the city
to the native world.

Some people cry out
great is of the Ephesians!”
as they pass below,
while others walk by
and don’t even look up,
minds on other things.

But this is what things
are for, she knows,
she brought so many of them
here, shapes and geometry,
streams, tawny
deer hiding in the woods.

18 January 2019
Half the time is past.
If time were a glass of water, maybe with a slice of lemon in it, morning, good health, it would be half full the lemon coaxed a little but not full-squeezed. Not yet. Time is easy now, still lots left to drink.
After a few sips it begins to sound like music—late Haydn? early Beethoven? Hummel’s mandolin? A few more swallows and time turns into color, subtle, Constable clouds. So much culture in a glass of water! And when it’s finished, Time’s smooth new marble pyramid is sealed.

18 January 2019
Dream

We were being reproached for abandoning two folkways we had for years been practicing. One involved keeping a basin of water on the table with petals of a certain kind of flower floating in it. The other custom, less clear to me now, involved some herbal matter—leaf or petal—which had to be affixed inside a brick teapot, kept there when water is added—not clear whether that was tea to be drunk or some kind of medicine.

(Another custom was mentioned; it involved gathering children and dressing them in some ritual way—but we didn’t have children, so bore no reproach.

The strange thing is that as I awoke I was absolutely certain we had long practiced the first two, and resp;ved to resume.

18 January 2019
The air sweeps through the alphabet we stumble out the other end through zed or omega or tav to meet our obligations: daylight, go feed the people. Can this be your food, or food for some mood or need of you sometime? The air gives, and gives us permission.

18 January 2019
Once we were children again  
and tomorrow came  
with foxes and flowers—  
the roses you’d expect  
but also mallows, water-purply,  
shadows or movements.  
Flowers followed us, I mean,  
pale skin on the collarbone,  
plum velvet blouse, who knows  
what lures the roses on?  
Guided by music  
we came back to earth.  
Sonatas, three-part inventions—  
we danced what we couldn’t understand.

18 January 2019
All I can draw
are angles—
they press
the curved world in,
an angle is always on guard,
on the watch.

18 January 2019
We had our chance. 
We made a dance 
instead of it, 
not even a song. 
Scales on the piano 
to drive the neighbors 
mad. Sequence 
without a statement 
and they groan. 
We groan too, 
ever getting down to it 
wherever it is.

19 January 2019
Frightened baritones
sing poorly. Fact.
Worry erodes the present.

The waves tell each other
stories about the land
they hurry towards—

is that shore really
the one I crave,
I need? each thinks

And the coast
trembles all night
at the thought,

wave after wave
never ending,
always coming in.

19 January 2019
We run out of what we mean. Then the king summons. Best that way, stand bare-witted before authority—honors conferred or reproaches, *uguale*, as the master wrote, a man with maybe too many meanings.

20 January 2019
Afraid of the day he slept late. But the day was waiting for him when he woke. A day is like that, not just weather. A statement to be made. An obligation.

20 January 2019
ALL THAT HE WROTE WERE SENTENCES FROM A LOST TREATISE, DIALOGUES FROM A LOST PLAY, SONGS FROM SOME OPERA YET TO COME.
Shelf-life of a song—misery of memory of repetition. Dream of an old green car I used to drive, star on its forehead, tune I can’t carry. Change stations, try hard not to remember.

20 January 2019
Wolf Moon tonight
with blood on it
that they say
comes from the sun.
I believe what I’m told,
eclipse is natural,
in frequent, should not
frighten us. But we
know better, fear
is in our blood, not
on the sun, cold
in the blood, wolf howl,
frozen river. The fear
has nothing to do
with all that. Fear
with no cause, no
occasion. What will
they teach us next?

20 January 2019
THE GROVE

You don’t trust men and why should you.
You trust the wolf in the dog and the fog in the house, the wood in the tree, the wind in the branches.
But not what men say.
Men tell lies that hurt and truths of no use.
You trust the wolf in the dog, the dog at your side as you walk through the woods, woods where no man would dare come, even if he tried the words would die on his lips.

20 January 2019

_Nemus, a sacred grove._
I walked along the streets
when there were streets,
I huddled in the subway crowd
safe as possums in their lair,
I walked along the river
with a million other people,,
a girl was dancing in the trees,
I went to school every day
because one did, and there were
things to learn—still are
but school forget to teach them.
And after a long, long while
I was only me and where I was
and no suppositious subjunctives
disturbed the practice of my day.
I brought as much of the city
as I could carry. The rest
I have to make up as I go along.

20 January 2019
PRAYER

Anxiety breeds a siege mentality. Let me throw open the gates of my mind instead.

21 January 2019
MLK DAY

I think of him
sitting silent
in our chapel
while some boffin
sounded in the pulpit,
all of us sharing
fiercely only
the heat of the day.

21 January 2019
1. Offspring? Osprey?
   WQe give birth to shadows
   that skim the clouds
   come down to feed.

2. Follow the word
   where it wants—
   you have no other
   job but tracking,
   hunter, learner,
   pioneer.

3. We heard he gate open
   but it was a sonata
   a sound meant to conjure—
   how to tell music
   from what just happens.
4. We heard the sonata again this time slower notes the same the silences louder.

5. To say the obvious is a royal treat, a scholar’s obligation. But we poor fisherfolk under the old hazel tree wait all our lives for that one swift accurate silvery word.

6. I proclaim the obvious so you don’t think it’s happening only to you. Saying the obvious is peaceful, helpful, like church.

21 January 2019
What kind of bird
flies fast a straight line
in this kind of cold?
Just crossed my window
quick as a fly zips by
astonishing the space.
So many multiples
of its own body length
in one instant. I slump
in my chair overwhelmed
by the sheer mathematics.
as if a man could fly a mile
in one long breath.

22 January 2019
Decide later whether to learn Portuguese or skiing. Right now it’s time to decipher shadows on the snow. Find the source of everything—then bother with the differences.

22 January 2019
I am Pessoa again.
That’s why I don’t drink
even one drop of alcohol
and abstain from Africa
where I used to be born..
It would probably kill me
to be back in Lisbon
with all the dead and dying kings.
And speaking of abdications,
all my names have deserted me.
I’m working with only one name,
just a sickly child staring
at ducks in the pond in the park
but with love in my heart,
chill wind around my wrists.
Try not to blame me for living again.

22 January 2019
And offer the day’s first taste to the whole world, helping all beings in the first swallow and be glad.

22 January 2019
SLEEP

1. Call it a parkway and plant trees all along it then lie down the length of it and tell your parents stories about what only you can tell, this lost aching world every child knows and most forget.

2. You try to sink into it, down where the dreams are. Schlaf, schlaf you moan, petulant with drowsiness. But it is buoyant, won’t let you go under. Leaves you say sleep, sleep but not getting there, awake, awake. And then you’re asleep.
3.
Later (you guess) the light
is different, sleep seeps away
beneath you, tou sprawl there
soaked with it, not awake,
not anything. What is
a wake you wonder, or the brain
does that might be you. Isn’t it
something to do with the dead?
Then sleep gushes up and swallows you.

22 January 2019
Jogging to Jerusalem everybody but me. My guess was that the temple-yo-be is our own body born into the world. Love has something to do with it, and love is always right here. So I jog in place, trying to give, give to others by grieving, desiring, rejoicing. The only way to know the world is by feeling.

23 January 2019
THE SUN

that still young
girl in the sky
is the only one
allowed to say “I”,

All the rest of us
her children,
we are we,
even in the quietest
corner of oneself
flourishes plurality:
secret brother
veiled sister, child,
aged counselor.,
all that you used
to dare to call me.

23 January 2019
KAIROS (2)

Don’t wait
time, the only
right time is now.

23.I.19
I get smarter as the lines get longer
slow steady breath of the intellect
sprawl through the quick body breath,
shaped silences at the end s of lines,
joyous catastrophes! Let language
do it, hear the chaconne, crowded
piazzas, blue nightmares, cold grass,
football games, shepherds dozing—
everything knows you already,
why wait? When I think of all
the things language made me do,
glory, worry, can you forgive me?
I dive into silence, come up talking
what sounds at first just like English.

23 January 2019
Who will absolve my sins against myself?
Every person has, or is, stone tablets deep carved with commandments, no two of us exactly the same. Teenagers smash theirs then spend the next few years piecing them together again. *Live by these* the voice insists, you;ve heard jt too, the presence that never lies .The broken rule waits for my repentant hands.

23 January 2019
IN THE WORKSHOP

Be more thingly, lady,
sing things into place
among your melody

so we can understand
by eye and hand
what your meaning sings,

every thing is a key
to a door of its own—
now lead us in.

23 January 2019
It wasn’t a tree branch
it was the wing of a great bird
its shadow fell on me
knocked me down, I lay
in the snow, marveling
at the deep winter fog
drifting through me and the trees

24 January 2019
Keep putting things together

till they speak,

till they stand up by themselves.

There, that is Jerusalem.

24 January 2019
Tell the girl
to tell the boy—
maybe that way
he’ll understand.
Just stand there
peeling a tangerine
while she does
message neatly.
He’ll get it eventually
slow as he is—
her speed invigorates
his second-hand ears.

24 January 2019
IN WINTER MIST

Bible far day.
My nine words of Hebrew are silent. God speaks a different tongue today. I listen with my eyes.

24 January 2019
Ten hours of sleep!
A kind of baptism

24 January 2019
A swan in the form of Zeus
Startles the maidens of Jericho
But seizes none of them—
the gods need us
but not for that.

2.
Zeus lives in the heart.
rules atrium and ventricle,
Calms us, cheers us,
The republic of our bones
Obey his wise blood.

3.
Other gods there are
who streak through the living,
Asking much of us
but answering even more.

25 January 2019
The exiled friend
takes comfort from the snow.
The unmarked surface of things
is a mark itself.
And this mark will fade
if not soon, then soon enough.
Friendship comes and goes,
it is a truck with flashing lights
that roars by and passes in the night.
Nothing is the same after that.
But the snow will come back.
Sorcery
confined to scents
and essences.
Haunt the flesh.
Leave soul alone—
it finds its own way
through sense and seeming,
all your magic tricks
on its way
softly to the truth.

25 January 2019
A car goes slowly
down the road.
Everybody in me
turns to watch.
Slow means.
But what?
Are we under surveillance
or in the presence
of a cautious gentle
driver afraid
of his own strength?
Slow is scary,
slow might be at me.

25 January 2019
And inside the notebook find
a nude photo of a cello
standing, full frontal, outdoors,
under some trees, for all we know
the kind of tree its wood came from
that now knows how to sing.
No one is shown nearby, but half-
hidden in the grass beside its
hip
a long-curved bow to play it.
This is cosmology, this is it,
the invitation to begin. Ode
to St. Cecilia should start now,
the finches in the trees know their parts.

25 January 2019
Movement on the roads—
who dares to go
while I sit still?
Have I missed
the message again
that tells me to be gone?
I linger here on Ararat
awaiting the next move.

25 January 2019
There are pencils for all the children hidden in you, and fat wax crayons
tull of sensuous expectancy—blue!
Find saffron! Scarlet in your hands!
You know the drill. Rub this on that
and color happens. Scrape this graphite
on a piece of paper and all of a sudden
people see just what you’re thinking.
No wonder they call this grammarie—
something written inside the soul.

25 January 2019
The Word wasn’t waiting
or was it? The old
white horse still stands
in the Barrytown field,
the vague clouds
illustrate the freezing day.
Words everywhere
illuminate my silences.
I saw a picture of myself
as a little boy,
smiling, confident, happy.
Maybe I’m waiting for him.

26 January 2019
CARNET DE BAL

All the names
I’ve crossed off
my dance program
the all-gone
and the too-far-away
and the ones whose eyes
will not meet mine
even in the slowest music.

26 January 2019
I have no right
to have rights.
I am an animal on earth—
what more could I ask?

26 January 2019
With the suppression of the personal pronoun the diary took a turn for the better.
And no names either. Nouns yes, and plenty of verbs, but adjectives only when they scream out in the head as the day’s events are written down preferably using the passive voice. This is what grammar is for, the huge rickety but enduring framework of syntax by which humans can flee from any self, the supposed own, guessed at other. How dense the pages fill! They sound like a river in springtime—but try to avoid resemblances. Resemblance is the back door for identity.

26 January 2019
Advising students in dream.
Wear glasses,
lose mean.

27 January 2019
Hours of dreamtime condense to this. 
The boy the girl 
the clothes they wore 
words to each, 
a sense they understood. 
Faces almost gone—
I think they were 
happy at what they heard.

27 January 2019
Polish the stone.
It’s not a stone.
Polish it anyway—
you’ll hear it sing.

What’s the best polish?
Spit on your thumb.
What is it really?
Polish and see.

27 January 2019
Once i looked like me
now I look like everybody else—

this is what comes of mirrors,
false evidence of identity

I could be anybody at all
I could be a sheet of glass.

27 January 2019
SARASWATI

She plays the vina
or the sarod or the sitar
or the cello or that violin
solo in the Missa Solemnis
or one string set
humming in the breeze
from which all music stems,
comes round to find us.
Saraswati. Her consort
plays the pe-cha
the woodblock print
the codex the printed book
the gleaming screens of tablets
darkened by clear letters,
words. Manjusri
they call him, Jampal,
lord of learning, wisdom,
memory, rapture, the word.
And how young they are,
she is pale, he is ruddy,
white and almost orange,
sixteen years old by the look
of them and they never change.
For at that age even humans
are closest to eternity, 
closest to the truth: it took 
years to get there, 
storms of puberty and then: 
the clarity. Then life 
comes along and blurs it 
into duty, honesty 
but no more clarity. Sixteen 
they ever seem, music, poetry.

27 January 2019
In the listening booth
not the flute and harp
but I think it was that
Chinese music by Ernst
Roch she liked so much,
not my kind of, still I
listened, tried to climb
through the music
into her, into her hearing,
to know her and be known.
That kind of music.

28 January 2019
School starts today. 
Numbers happen, 
names suddenly have faces 
and words spill over 
devices’ soft pale screens. 
On a table, in the draft 
from a window not 
quite closed a book 
flutters its pages at me.

28 January 2019
No one has to be told
the feeling when the bones
come walking out of the woods,
clatter of language as they come
ancestoring us.

2.
Write from deep desire
or the fires will go out—
compassion is the deepest
desire of all, yearning
to wipe her tears away,
see your mother smile again.

28 January 2019
What was his real name
I knew him only as the wooden house at the top of the hill when all the others were brick, only as a front yard with a tree but no dog in it, not even a cat. The tree was small, they called it quince, they said the man himself from his front porch could see the river.

28 January 2019
A word to stay me—
buzz of a bee
in winter midnight how?

Sound sleeps in the air,
lives there. The earth revolves.
I can even hear you thinking.
In between the rose.

The castle gateway opens up the sea.

We speak of things to make them true.

The horizon lingers—isn’t that a flower too?

28 January 2019
If they had been listening they would have heard but I said nothing so I heard nothing too.

Silence satisfies—that is how the world began, a pause, a deep breath and then. The natural resilience of silence sweeps mistakes away, silence spins the globe shapes us so we hear not a single hum of it.

28 January 2019
We are the recipients, aren’t we? Heirs of everything, this castle, that tree.

2.
Vermehr uns we cry in what we hope is language, Increase us, increase us till we are larger. than our fears.

3.
It isn’t the weather really, is it? Weather is just the daily issue of the old anxiety. But You are protected something says, Honor your protectors, honor them with your trust.
If you think about yourself
you will feel nothing but fear.
Fear is the shadow of self-awareness—
if you’re no one, there is no place for fear.
So fold your winds and go to sleep
and wake in peace.

29 January 2019
BIRDS

Capacious evidence
schoolyard full of geese
pecking at the packed
earth of all our sports.
Canada geese—our fences
no obstacle. Vegan
they are, but not
at all hard to please.

29 January 2019
BEASTS

Carapace of beetles, rough fur of opossum, they toddle to their feed on this and that.
I watch them browse—
I’m one of them too, I browse by watching.

29 January 2019
MARCO POLO

I have come to far
to be nowhere.
All the silks and golden
fluyes don’t make
me less, or more,
or even different.
All my life I longed
to be otherwise.
Now I am just me,
just here, waiting
like everybody else
to catch the sudden
smile of the Emperor.

29 January 2019
1. Find the socket the crow flies up succession without causation? Maybe. The woman with the sewing needle the song of thread.

2. Apologize to the evidence. Things are for themselves too, not just to prove a theory. Cherrywood escritoire, rubber ferule on your father’s cane

3. If I were gay I could love her glee. But as it is she just laughs at me.
4.
Spokes of the same wheel
same journey different angles,
citizens of anxiety. Travelers
in the same dream. So many
different doors.

5.
Doors can be windows,
seldom other way round.
Bird flutters past, Snow
falls from a phone line.

30 January 2019
GLIMPSES

My sister the Sun!
I can hear
Saint Francis saying.

*

Quickest calligraphy
bird shadows on the snow.

*

A mind’s a time lapse photo
of all I’ve ever seen.

30 January 2019
WATCHING MIST FORM OVER THE STREAM

Acts of reverence
linger in the air,
as the air, our atmosphere,
breathed out by all
the billions before us
saying their prayers
whispering their lovespells
into what they thought
were the ears of their beloved
but were actually all the winds
of earth, the chariots of breath—
they made love to all of us.

30 January 2019
What the old 
people thought 
was to come

*remember this*
they cried  
staring out 
into the blank sky

*remember this*
you could be a tree 
or a chimpanzee 
loping through the bushes 
you could be me

remember this sky  
this sheer potentiality,  
bright your mind 
with looking

*remember this*
the everywhere gospel  
the feasts 
of ordinary feeling
the old knew
something was coming
the new people
saw it come
but so few of us
knew what it was

was it a new
kind of knowing?
of going?
something
simply was new

remember the new
we whisper

this remembering
is all we know,
why it is so
hard to stay

hold it tight
let it go.

31 January 2019
POET’S RANT

We set you puzzles
good for you to work out
we do not carry
cheap solutions.
The simplest statement
is vastly voluminous,
hard to drain all
the water from that deep
well a word is.
Solve it for yourself
and thoroughly live.

31 January 2019
Someone will something again.
That is the premise
of every cathedral and most books.
How heavy the pages!
How light the blocks of stone
that rear the towers!
Always and always the word sinks down.

31 January 2019