

4-2019

apr2019

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Recommended Citation

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FALSTAFF'S ARIA

When I was a page to the Duke of Norfolk

o Norfolk is a lovely shore
but my duke did not live there

we all have sinned

John Brown's *Stabat Mater*

this choice collection
of the unchosen
I spill before you

morning has a name for that

what is man that calling animal
we hail with someone else's silence

o who owns that

old miser Time

hear me ticking as I talk

what did we say
that brought us here

motive power of the word

o woe

Lightning flash in a sinner's eye?

o go
she said
and I was gone

but we seem to gleam with truth

when things stop hurting
you know you're in trouble

obsolete brand names
antique signboards stored

museum of the breath

**the breath knows
more than mind can hold**

**sword fight heard on radio
long ago and even longer
a clash of what we are to think**

steel

**Damascus road
mud river
source of the Delaware**

beasts prance in Rain

**come dance with me
and teach me how**

**at 'The Pinner' in Wakefield
danger
never lose her**

a wife is all you ever mean

**Gloucester Cathedral roof in late snow
then through the Somerset levels
digging down to find the sea**

**imagine a chair
simple wooden sturdy yellow maybe
set it in a meadow
in the middle**

now queen it there

come teach my flocks

**Esso billboard on 9W
forest of Broceliande
marshes of Brooklyn my home**

gone places

mind things

**the voice of lost things
louder than death**

certain evidence of a mind at peace

**vexilla of the Legion
prong of onward
Caesar's last campaign at us
when we were Gaul**

Gael

**stumbled naked into battle
with gold rings round our necks**

see here is one

**the museum says,
its words on a piece of paper
shaping what we see**

with our own eyes

the nameless picture on the wall
suddenly a Botticelli

the Virgin Mother with I swear Saint Luke

self-portrait of an archangel or, or,

that fish we toasted on that fire by the lake
he made while we were fishing

no other such was ever eaten

over the field of rye just barely sprouting
long shadow of a Russian maiden
stretches towards evening

dinner, opera house, drive home
just a few snowflakes
here and there through streetlight flicker

I want this to be music

but who is she?

**logjam on the river
embroiled by eddy**

**do you feel lonely when I talk
do you shiver a little
look left and right and wonder
who I'm really talking to?**

I saw your eyes tender pale and wary

**a waitress moves table to table
a glass carafe in either hand
decaffeinated and pure coffee
(from Ethiopia to begin with,
Rimbaud sent it home, after
the Greeks had called it *molu*,
favorite of much-traveled gods)
sound of her filling an almost empty cup
and smiles all round, mystery of *supply***

**manna
came down from Heaven**

**polyphony
19 vocal lines interweaving**

how many?

**words lost into music
bloodless opera**

**children in the street
uncommon in these programmed days**

schoolyard polyphonic

stranding at the gates

at the foot of the cross

grieving women

my first job was consolation—
have I succeeded

mere words dry tears?

our obligation is to console one another

enduring pain is science too

try to taste time as it passes
as it slips down

bridge to elsewhere
cross it to find out

each glance a giving
each glimpse a song

but where is music?

I was fatter once
and then ggrew lean

how thin the bone that bears
all the doings of the day!

I wrote this in Latin
so I would not forget

climb the stairs to sleep
the words are up there waiting

alternate sources of energy:
stare into the cup
watch the little river carefully
all the water passes
but the river is still here

simpleminded with amazement
everything astonishes

the cat just seems to be asleep
the rock wall talks

trunk of a tree that fell
in a blizzard five years ago

still jammed among the rapids' stones

everything trying to go home

year after year the ink flows by

this is an opera after all
love scene below the tower
a duel in moonlight
to which the duelists
strangely do not come,
only their seconds (bass,
baritone) are left
to fret so tunefully

anxious audience

where is the sword?

but at the coronation scene
a dove flies down
a voice is heard from heaven

rich patrons chatter in their boxes

**the king drowzes in his gilded loge
wakes at the final chorus**

**What has happened?
he asks his page**

Nothing, Sire, we all are saved.

1 April 2019

MY LOVE'S TARTAN

I imagine her
warm in the familiar
of the cloth,
rhombs reticular
in muted colors
interweaving
as if to catch sunlight
falling through leaves
in the dense forest
where we walk together
in the ancient pattern
called hand-in hand.

1 April 2019

TUNE

**You can't help it
when music happens**

**you can duck
or open up or stand
dumbstruck as Rachmaninoff**

and still the tune comes through.

1 April 2019

=====

**The body at rest
in dance
is the organic silence
at the end of lines
in poetry.**

She stood still and spoke everything.

1 April 2019

(Thinking about Yvonne Rainer at the Judson)

ALSTROMERIA

Alström

found her in Peru

the lily

table-wise, color

clutched in

gentle tight

as a baby's fist.

Flowers

from the market

Swedish nobleman

dining room table

sun.

2.

I will not try

to name the colors.

particular

to the languages

of the Andes.

Clear,

on the horizon

of significance—
and do you know
what you mean either?

3.

So I think of them
as Schubert's last sonata,
giddy lyric longing,
skillful, hauntingly
private.

No one
know what flowers
really mean, in
and by themselves,
though once on a time
we sent each other
messages by bouquet.

4.

But that was our
alphabet of lusts
and anxieties
we made them serve—

they wilted sooner
when we meant them.

5.

All that aside,
a song on the table.
Part-song
for pale voices
strong in unison—
we must go buy milk today
and bring some flowers home.

2 April 2019

=====

**Once when we were all surrealists
we thought that poetry
flourishes without number.
but number could not live
without poetry. How right we were!**

2 April 2019

BISMUTH

as if a taste
of metal
from a book on the shelf
a jar in the shop
where remedies
gather dust
waiting for their diseases.

2.
Germanish somehow.
Ancestors
on the shores of the small sea,
old Troy on the Finland coast.
The poet's business
is to save us from
the stories we have been told.

3.

What are those grains of
on your hands,
tiny blueberry seeds in my teeth
forgive me for eating.

3.

This gold pen
you gave me
is where it all began,
green ink
the only color
we could find
on the island,
green of the sea.
And so I said the sea.

4.

Small craft,
five vessels
an even smaller island—
see, it fits in my hand,
the ink still flows

washing along the pebbled shore,
everything reeks of sea air,
ozone, everything reeks of its story.

5.

I followed a word
it led me to a pen
the pen took over
and drove me home.

Peel a tangerine
no metal needed,
fingernail dig in
and find a diamond.

2 April 2019

=====

I struggled with my self
to tell you something--
I thought I said my soul
but who knows where
that unlikely animal is sleeping?

I thought i told you
but it was just me, my struggle
to be clear about not much,
just me and thee stuff,
two rickety clanking machines--

but I make more noise than you do
and that makes me wonder why.

3 April 2019

=====

1.

Wasn't dream a leafy
pasture? Wasn't dream
a cleanish hotel, a friend,
a thank-you note
scribbled on the only scrap of paper?

2.

Dream doesn't have much paper.
And waking is noise, noise,
tree people with their chainsaws,
ceaseless Baroque lutes on the radio —
O day is so much listening,
too much, maybe,
be with the sun instead,
warming weather at last,
sleep with her,
sleep in the sky.

3.

**As if it were Myth all over again
the cars rolling to work
like green barbarians hastening to Troy.
So day is battle now, work a citadel
never altogether fallen.
Kneel at Priam's knees and beg forgiveness.**

3 April 2019

Yesterday:

10 rhapsodies by Vorisek
4 impromptus by F.P. Schubert
1 piano 1 CD
1 woman with a German name
the good hour

3 April 2019

=====

**Tempest-tide? Hot wind
expected from the west,
fear of brush fires.
Cloud but no rain.
Why is there a future anyhow?
Does it come
just to dilute the past,
the cold old lava that brought us here?**

3 April 2019

FOR CAROLEE

Every death is a giving,
generous, your last gift.
Now you belong
to all of us who knew you.
Belong completely
in the unbreakable embrace
of knowing, making, doing,
showing, arguing, caring, love.

Each of us
has all of you now,
the promiscuous miracle
of holding you in mind,
heart, dancing with you
through the living day,
a presence in us,
a memory, yes,
but a memory with a mind of its own.

**You did and dared and were
so much
and now you are inexhaustible
in us,
we sense when you are talking,
when you point out
new paths to being new,
Now you are really, really with us.**

**3:30 AM
*4 April 2019***

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

**Wait for the window.
Clock on the wall
has bird voices
to say the hours.
Wait for the window.
The tensor lamp
shows just enough
to tell A from B
and so the alphabet
began again.
Wait for the window,
we are Chaldea,
every Abraham
gets up and flees
pretending a voice
told him to go.
And he comes
his wives with him,
the letters of the alphabet.
Wait for the window**

it has a voice of its own,
it comes to you
at the end of the hall,
it carries the sun
back to her
home in your heart,
wait for the window.
Wait for the window,
it opens and closes,
it pronounces the wind,
it parses the street,
wait for the window
it wants you,
it worries about you
when you look
our look away,
wait for the window
it mothers you,
it opens your eyes
and puts you to sleep.

3 / 4 April 2019

WAITRESS

I do not see myself
in those glances
you keep tossing
at me as I pass.
I see another person,
a woman on your mind
who'd be there for you
within your reach.
Sometimes I wish
that I could help you
endure your lonely touch
but there are so
many of you
and I am only me.

4 April 2019

=====

And it came home,
lay in its crib
and waited for me.
I looked last
in the obvious place —
Greenland, say,
when it was Greenpoint all the while.

4 April 2019

(lost pen found)

AT THE CHAPEL

Tell the farrier
whose horse you are
so when She comes to ride
your coat will glisten
and your words
breathe sweet with apples.

4 April 2019

== ==

From far away
everything sounds like a flute—
as if there is no music
anywhere but only the trying
gasping for it, trying to breathe it
out into the world.
And maybe this hard trying
is the only music,
music is effort trying to find peace
urgent, to lure
silence down from the sky.

5 April 2019

=====

**Bandwidth a behavior:
the lines—phone, power.
internet—swoop across
the air, the birds are glad,
skinny chapels for their
moments of repose, everybody
needs to settle down and pray,
cats do it all the livelong day
but birds just now and then
fold their wings and understand the wind.
And all the while their wires talk to me.**

5 April 2019

ARCANE REMONSTRANCE

Someone is blaming me
on the other side of the woods
of the river of the mountains
of the air. Someone
knows what I should be
and should be doing
to ne me. I can feel it
far away, voiceless, *Change,*
change it says, *Look—*
a bird flies over you
and even it knows how.

5 April 2019

APRIL SNOW

the shimmer of it
through the trees
the water in the stream
rushing by as if

as if nothing came down.
Quiet music,
Silvestrov;s 5th Symphony
dreaming its way west

as if a woman walking
further and further away.

5 April 2019

=====

**How could I answer you
when the question never came?
Your eyes have no words,
just color, moisture, darkneses
to tell. But not to ask--
what could i say
to all that intensity?
You laughed, a little, at my silences.**

5 April 2019

=====

**Cro-Magnon man
meets nice Jewish girl
and Manhattan is born
over the sea-arm
in Brooklyn. As if I
am the real New York
born out of absence.
I am my own child at last.**

5 April 2019

=====

for Silvestrov

Why not be beautiful?
Why not let the pleasure
happen again?
Why not let the music
know us, without
our having to do all the work?
Let it come to us
on those familiar streets,
come close and kiss us
even now? A kiss
is always new.

5 April 2019

THE CONFERENCE

Now there is a place
where everything is false
but we walk there
on our real feet,
mixing our bones
and flesh with what we think.

2.

And I went there last night,
some conference, learned,
at a big upstate hotel.
The place was filled
with ancient academics
in grey suits, stuffing
themselves from paper plates
after the boring lecturer
declared a merciful intermission
in his tedious monologue.
I decided to leave early and drive home
but I had lost the key to my room
or lefty lit locked there

with all my clothes and gear,
and nobody around to let me in
and I hadn't had a cigarette all day.

3.

That was the weirdest of it all—
because I don't smoke
but I was hungry
yet wasn't eating anything
of all the stuff the geezers guzzled
though I nibble a soft roll
and stole one green grape.

4.

I have no idea
of what the conference was about
or who the squirmy speaker was
though he dared to talk about
Gregory Corso as if he had
ever read a line of our dead friend.

5.

So I couldn't go home,
car keys and all my stuff
locked away in the room
though I rattled the door
and called in the hall.
So I was forced to wake up
into a normal world,
our own bed, and all
yesterday's snow had melted—
it had been pretty
on roof and lawn
after it stopped feeling ominous.
I woke up and recalled
three lines I had been thinking
before I blundered into the dream:
*There is a place where everything is false
but we walk there on our true feet
mixing our bones with what we think.*

6 April 2019

=====

The years since,
she lives in me
the way we do,
later, later,
after the after.

7 April 2019

== == == == ==

I keep forgetting you're a girl,
a goal, a center of the spin,
a fold in the cosmos, valley
in the brain, rainstorm on the moon,
a street lined with markets and fruit stands
and puppet shows, a sun rising all day long,
cathedral all lit up,
candle burning in the lake
quiet sea at evening, brick wall warm in late sun,
I keep forgetting the outfield you rule,
the rapture, that you're a slinger of the spirit,
a bridge over my transgression,
I keep forgetting you're the meaning of the news,
the friend of small animals, the one
who laughs at my fox mask
when I try to bite, I keep forgetting
you are the woods and the wind in them.

7 April 2019

=====

I wake up and wonder
is anybody willing
to be me today?
Just for the evening maybe,
dinner with friends but I
have to confess
a hankering for elsewhere,
else-hood, but they
won't let me in
because I'm here
with me and in me.
Is anybody willing to be me?
It won't hurt and you'll
be done well before midnight.

7 April 2019

=====

The thing is
you need a picture of it
before you can breathe it in.
It's like opera,
all that gorgeous fuss up there
to let the fat tenor
sing a single C
that breaks your heart
or do I mean wakes you up
or bring you to church
again after all these years—
all the ludicrous behavior
just to let you
breathe in what you hear.

7 April 2019

=====

Dream sample:

**a blonde in fish nets
lecturing in an empty hall.**

And this is what she said:

“I think you are not here because I am. There has been a revelation in discourse, in how we are allowed to speak with one another. No names, no identities. We call out _____, voices in the woods, birds piping up to see what happens. We speak to see what happens. Our bodies come along for the ride, portable landscapes, beasts of prey, you never

know. We call and call. We call by laughter. We call by being silent, like the spaces in a poem always asking for more. In my grandmother's time people whistled on the street, men mostly but sometimes women too, for there were women and men in those days. Now nobody whistles. Whistling a tune on the street would be too much like telling, like calling. Like crying. Nobody cries anymore, no need to, we are all sad the same way. Who knows the answer? We call like frogs in the pond at springtime — do we mean it? Do I even mean what I say? Am I

even me to mean it? We call. That seems to be
enough. We call. Can you hear me?"

7 April 2019

=====

**How warm the opposites!
Notes, just notes.
And when the cornfields
turn their wild yellow again
and the big sky spreads
over the four corners,
by then I'm home
to lift the pitcher
from the well, and dig
one daffodil,
or do they call them
jonquils nowadays,
pure white in the shade?**

7 April 2019

=====

**This is getting nowhere.
I'm already there.
Everything has been said already —
now it is time to begin,
this is where the real song starts.**

7 April 2019

=====

**The Clove
the cleft
is deep
green-free
except the dark.**

8 April 2019

=====

That miracle enacted me,
an epistle from St. Dark
were all is waiting. All.

The trumpets upstairs,
the sky bright hubcap whirling,
the world and ad for itself

solipsistic cynic-free
beauty's gold transparent
mesh a shawl enshouldered

dare I wake you should I speak
even the foreign language of the day
I felt in my shy phalanx,

distal, distant, determined,
impressionable as a sleeping cat
are you awake there, yet?

Just because I knew so long
Jerusalem at every gate
I made me small and lived in your name

and quiet pilgrims sleeping by the door
this forest of the factory
we make shadows here

send them home with you as souvenirs
old French for come-again
no men will never let no men go

yes, exactly, a day is an equation,
figure it out the way you ride a horse
some squeeze between the knees

transport the _____ back into scripture
so the unlikely has a room of its own
you call this a hotel I call it Italy

long ago, Latin still, pine trees
of the Apennines waiting to be masts
and no bad Caesar, no Korach yet,

**bible-free and naked by the fount,
wake up before you wet your toes
and have to walk on ocean ever after.**

8 April 2019

REVIVAL OF LEARNING

**Gaudy principles of earth as fire
left in time's closet clean as lava
but cold, cold, a dramaturgy
indecent as the Bible — resist the pair,
fear everything, twirl your keychain
like 1940 and wait, wait. already
Philosophy is coming to be rescued,
she's on the move in mind,
shut the door behind her,
empty all the classrooms,
hurry home, she'll meet you
with quinces in her hand
you'll hardly know how to eat
and little gold tomatoes
You can't stop eating —see,
already you both begin to understand.**

8 April 2019

=====

**That panther
still prances
the moon knows best**

**paint my wall with light
creamy green or convex mirror
let the truth lick your edges till**

**your friends think they know you
but still your secret Lascaux
it is safe inside, cavern deep as a word
and no candle flowers on that air.**

8 April 2019

DISTICHS

I ran from image to image
and every door was closed.

Sunrise after sunrise
and it still is dark —

rain day in the forest,
lines in my palm

tired of everything but telling
and telling is the only truth

“without Torah there’d be no geometry”
I wrote and still I wonder why

8 April 2019

=====

**Halfway between
me and thee
there is another
busy with becoming —
will only manifest
apart from us or after —
the shade we send
out into the world
automatically a better son.**

8 April 2019

=====

Still needs to be said
night without frost
the squills awaken
blue hillside
berm alive with them
everything is small
everything comes again.

8 April 2019

E= = = = =

**exceptionist rigor:
don't let anybody
see me today,
I am too visible —
transparent even,
faintly ocher
around my edges.
Help!**

8 April 2019

=====

Today I just don't feel like feeling.
Let the cognitive spaces fill
with information, leave feeling
out of it, today I am logarithmic,
indolent of sense, estranged
from whatever in myself or any
self it is that feels. The sky
is blue translucent resin. My hands
smell like soap. The radio
when I turned it on was ads,
just ads – insurance, old music,
motorcycles. Maybe i should
have been baroque, that era
before emotion got invented.
Then I would not even slightly
feel that I should be feeling.

8 April 2019

WHAT I LEARNED UNDER THE GROUND

I was young, I mean I was new at being old.
Stones are always welcoming— they parted
long ago to let us in. A cool cave
not a hundred miles away. Dark within of course
but I had *lights of several sorts*, some easy
to the conventional hand. I was a tyro
on the earth, a brief newcomer, my speech
ringed a little with elsewhere— Somerset? Judaea?
The first friend I met down there was Philippe
Soupault,
he wore a little wooden cross around his neck.
I kissed it reverently for new Time's sake.
He was leading a parcel of pilgrims
towards a special rock where St. John
had left a drawing, ocher and lamp black on the
shore

as he passed by so long ago. Every year
Philippe Soupault told me he leads his neo-
Christians to the place
and each spends a day or two before it
figuring out the meaning of what the Saint had in
mind
as his holy hands defiled the silent stone with text.
Or was it text? No one was an authority
on what just happens in your head when you look.
There is no weather to wash the signs away.
I went on my way above, always a little timid,
but fear gives a sharper edge to things,
just like desire. I stopped for lunch at a café,
all shiny metal and polished marble, service slow,
food delicious— a soup with kale and raspberries
built out around tender meat. Leeks.
The bread of under earth is dense and chewy,
perfect for the man it was my business to become.

CANTO II

A big blonde showed up as I walked, pretty,
taller by an inch than me, a big girl in flower dress,
appearing as they always do, unexpected, seemed
to know

each other, walked beside me telling of her plans
none of which included me. “The Earth is full of
me” she said.

She needed the bathroom and I left her there,
calm goodbye. A lingering glance.

It seems I had to go the go alone.

And it is best that way, *tu sais*, a boy
of so many winters looking for springtime
down here where flowers come from.

Now there is a kind of mist that lives down here,
drifts through the sketchy trees (haven't

done the leaf work yet) and empty streets,
a mist like the ones I love up here with all of you,
spring mist, river dense, water swirling
or drifting soft through just such empty trees
as those below. I walked gladly through
the humid kisses of it on my skin,
what little I dared bare. For nakedness [?]
is rare below the ground, it needs the sun
to summon it. Down there they pray in clothes.

CANTO III

I saw a light ahead, I mean a light not my own.
And sound — it carries well beneath the ground—
as of revelers ahead, music even
but of a kind I did not know—
sounds happy up ahead. I am scared
of simple joyfulness but gritted my teeth
and stumbled onward, picking up little chunks
of garnet as I pass— my native gemstone,
sidewalks of New York— red stones never fail.
“Your trouble,” she said, “is being rational.”
Not the blonde this time, a woman’s voice,
contralto of the cave, but where was she
while her voice was leaning on my cheek?
“The rational,” she went on, “cannot experience
[?],
or not much. Can’t feel the dissonance

sweet in actual things, all image and no meaning.”

Who are you, I asked, but meant to say Where?

**“Never mind. You matter to me, I mother you
like a daughter, help you breathe when you are
old,**

teach you language when you’re young enough.

Without language there could be no lies—

and where would the likes of you be then?”

CANTO IV

Deviants are everywhere to be found—

**I must be one of them, so many road signs
and whispers try to set me straight, the path,
the path! Who are these voices
that know me underneath the ground?**

**I decided to brave the music and plunge ahead—
I came upon a campground with a county fair
all glows and gleams and bottled sunlight.**

**Men were all in cages while the animals
prowled around, some of them on leashes
led by women, others just guessing their ground.**

**I feared being captured so I knelt down to pray,
not sure of what god is in charge of such a place
so I prayed to my own faith and hoped for the best.**

Nobody saw me, they all were giddy with music

(high horns? desperate bassoons, tin drums?)
filling the beast troughs with wine, the women
drank too, but none for the boys in the cages,
tongues hanging out, boasting of sports victories,
balls thrown, caught, kicked, hidden, consumed—
such evil things to do to perfect spheres.

Poor men! I am one but am still free, who knows
what heaven says to us us who count our deeds,
think them worthy. *Non homo ssum sed vermis*,
King David is said to have said though not in Latin,
creep on the ground all the way to the stars.

CANTO V

**But who are these voices that tell me what to do,
tell me what im thinking, tell me who I am
and where I'm going, and why do I only hear them
when I'm deep down in sleep or underground?**

**Women and animals and the occasional dead bard,
whistle wisdoms, starlight stratagems? The rock
relies. Trust granite, remember New Hampshire
where you learned to walk below the surface
clutching at last to the mother rock. Lust
lives down there too but that comes later,
when the pelicans have swallowed all the fish
and cherubim sing Thomas Tallis in the trees,
you know when—and it was that voice again
disguising itself as music. Have you ever noticed
how human voices in ordinary conversation**

**from far off can sound like instruments,
clarinets, say, or cellos? Which one are you?
Have you noticed you're the only sinner here?**

CANTO VI

**Lordy lordy as we used to say, to sin by music!
Without the bushwa grandeur of the opera house,
the jostled beer spray of the midnight rave,
just ordinary hum hum hum alone to sound
like Strauss or Mahler maybe if you're good.
Good sin! Babylonian banquets of pure imagery!
Semaphore signals by abandoned tracks,
Orpheus autographed the standing stones,
girls gliding through arpeggios, seals bark.
dolphins nudging drowning poets safe ashore,
all the stories you tried not to hear, school stuff,
billingsgate of the obvious, chanticleer alarmed,
fox in the pantry, ants on the moon, the bull fight
still going on, the mincing picador, lute in flames,
the chemistry set you didn't get for Christmas,,**

**all the dead Saracens reproaching the Cross,
domes over Transubstantiation, music pure,
music simple, music is what happens in the head.**

CANTO VII

**Could it be so easy I asked and almost fell
against a damp wall all smudged with something,
oil of lavender? moose milk? I know so little
about things though things are all I know,
all I love. Bring me things I cry to the morning
and noon sings full of substances, domains
without dimension that still cast shadows,
a shadow is how you know a thing's a thing,
not just more music. Bread and cheese,
zeppelins coming over the horizon, white
cane of a blind man, a boulder in the backyard
claiming to be there before the Flood, who knows,
things are mighty in their understanding, things
celebrate human ignorance, giggle at us, I too
have been smirked at by a pebble. Even so**

**I came down here, willingly, stepping barefoot
out of dream, in the hour of the basking shark
on the day of the unknown twins, onto the glacis
of my mighty castle, Here I am, I cried, available
to wisdom and vulnerable to truth. Only then
did I realize I was deep below the earth, happy,
frightened as usual, wondering what comes next.**

CANTO VIII

**Or was it something just real that I heard
walking in the dark road north it seemed
as from a Russian station, home, could it
have been actual music made by humans?**

**And where is home anyway when you're under
ground?**

**Everywhere, all around. Passed a little cavelet
bright,**

a poet's birthday party clamorous inside,

French noises, vowel harmonies as from the East.

**I lost my compass long ago and had to walk by
prejudice.**

And something told me I was nearly there.

I stopped inside to add my greetings

but this time I left my body just outside the door
so I could float unseen amongst them, blessing
them as I wafted through their words

O onyx labyrinth in which the beast is born

I heard the birthday girl declaim to mild applause
but I was thrilled somehow and blessed her more.

CANTO IX

Have you never weaned of the wandering hours [?],
the ordinary day-night raga we all learn to play?

Getting nowhere fast we used to say, thrombosis
of trombones, helter-skelter vibraphones

a few shy kisses in the bushes and good night?

Then you'll grasp how just me felt,

Why was I anywhere, and who were you?

I mean anybody matters, who? who?

Lonely lover's dismal owl— but I was Love

itself himself herself, aren't I, who else

wanders through every rock and lives under
everything?

Why else would I be here but to love—

know, touch, teach, worship, give—

synonymous of the godly work we learn in dream.

Lef t the party early, wanted to be in my body again.

CANTO X

Now set the stage for my departure.

I've spent my whole life walking home

—that's why down here is so easy,

no lions, few wolves, a bear or two,

and headlights passing all night long.

Anyone could be my friend, my father

come to pick me up from school. Stop

any car and ask the occupant his DNA,

who was on the throne when he was born

or she if by chance she is your mother.

O short breath of the departing dream,

that tiger-striped noise in the chest, hula dancers in

sight,

swoon of under, come to rest, sit down.

But there are no park benches down below,
no ottomans or love seats or davenports,
it's rock or nothing and you take your pick.

All right, Virgil, I slip down here to rest,
having seen it all and understood none of it
and so can still be happy, sort of, brass
pipes in shiny bathrooms, the clink of silver
in ancestral homes, a ring-neck pheasant
I loved by the Cloisters, years boxed
in decades, a seal coat in the closet,
everything is here again and I am done.

Those were the names on the contract he bade me
sign,

he said it was a poem, I said it was half his,

he said Don't worry, sign it with someone else's
name.

Staghorn pen in my fingers as I woke.

I don't get much older but my body does
and waking just left me where I was—
underground and over it the same astrology,
gastronomy, we dine on shadows and never really
die.

My body was older when I crept back in,
been sitting too long, knees stiff, sinews dormant,
I grunting rose. Back on the path, a witness,
on jury duty for the whole of earth—
Everything is evidence and the judge seems to be
asleep.

Walk, walk, safe as baseball, safe as sugar,
walk, little bone bag, walk. I heard a whistle
close, close, it turned out to be my breath.

CANTO XI

**There is no moon here, and the sun shines up from
the ground**

**I mean the ground I walk on, not the ground
above me where you are walking now.**

**Coaxing first leaves on the willow trees
along a stream so far ahead I can't
hear its purling even in my dreams.**

For in this sleep or dream there is sleeping too.

**I stared down at the sun so long
my skin grew darker and warmer,**

I felt it was consuming the light itself.

I fell to my knees and started praying.

praying was an old friend never quite forgotten,

I prayed to the soft earth I knelt on, that's it,

**I thought, *Pray to what you stand on* – that's
what she meant, I realized. But who was she?
So many voices all the same, and all differences
are just music? She was the mother tongue
that never lies. And the bird of heaven upward fell.**

...9 / 11 April 2019

=====

Things dry up.
Well in the desert
rouses. The silence
lets me hear.

That habit in the ears
is my quick blood
ascending, systole,
trying for brain

so I can know you
in now or only then
but certainly knowing
and knowing throbs too.

11 April 2019

WHISTLING

Will my message hold
I keep whistling?
People ask me Why
don't you use words?

Are you kidding?
Words will tell you
everything but I'm
just trying to tell you this.

11 April 2019

PENS

**I write with Parker
because my father
gave me on and left
me another, gold-
capped, they gave him
when he retired.**

**I use it and others
of its kind for him
to keep me working.
Never retreat!**

**11 April 2019
End of Notebook 423**

=====

When the world
was ready to begin
I waved hello.

The dark proved to be
just shadows of people
passing, women mostly
at that hour, noble,
rousing the dawn.

Shall we have rain?
I asked, and one of them,
a man this time,
assured me,
water is the nature of what comes

as if it were an ancient law
he'd cracked an egg
open and found
or a stone.

12 April 2019

=====

**Exoskeleton is history —
what's inside
another matter —
book, make sense because we die
and if we don't
who will be the stars?**

12 April 2019

=====

I borrowed ears from trees
and listened
all that the wood knew
was mine.
Now I could speak
with any voice
that they had ever heard,
Dante in Rimini,
my mother in Ronkonkoma.

12 April 2019

=====

**She is no statue —
all my life
I have been guarded by liberty,
through thickets of resentment and greed
the boy of me would tangle in —
she taught me how to look through walls
and most urgent pf all to
love my enemies.**

12 April 2019

=====

**And the leman said to his lover
be me a basket
for these shreds of me,
heart and habit, fingertips
and all my whims at once.**

**And the lady in her courage
said You are well come in me,
you need be entire, I enclose,
my health is whole,
means seeing out of me,
welcome in me and we'll be far away.**

13 April 2019

=====

We hear sich
things in the morning,
glass over mountain,
ice in the cleft
even now, roadside
and thunder, a song
nobody singing.
I exhaust the patience
of trees so
I wake enough,
bow to time,
spread the curtain,
dream the day.

13 April 2019

ISLANDER

Now forth into the whatever
like a good New Yorker
but with a babe or a ball in mind
like any Brooklyn boy —
the sea cured the city in me.

13 April 2019

*(The essence of me and of so many
was to be island — island
made us, and island all we ever knew —
the sea our project, academy, goal.)*

== == == == ==

== == == == ==

**Everything I do is right
he thought
and skipped through the door
into a room that wasn't there.**

13 April 2019

=====

**Be approximate
the world will thank you for it
they call it
getting the general idea.**

**But who *is* the world?
This one, not the vague
Toynbee Gibbon one
with precise footnotes,**

**This one, the woman
in the trees, the frightened
man fleeing for his life
from what neither of us know,**

**car in ditch,
boat adrift,
the even vaguer music
of a stranger's breath?**

14 April 2019

EL PORRÓN

for Paul Blackburn

it is not a coming,
it is seeping,
light being sponged
up by the sky

we are permeable.
You and I, torero,
I have drunk
from your wine flask

we have watched
more than one night
bleed out together
and ever and ever

we found something
to say, a string
to pluck, a tear
to wipe away.

14 April 2019

=====

**In this kind place
a different kind of light
walks through your head,
makes a seascape
out of everything, coast
of Maine, rocks of Yaquina.
The light brings you there,
the guesswork Ocean does the rest.**

14 April 2019

=====

How to fill the pen—
lie in the sun
and let it in. Soon
it will begin
writing by itself.
Words you think
you're thinking,
but everything knows.

14 April 2019

=====

**Now the day has happened
and the road is still there,
trees, fence, far-away houses.
See, it is just as they promised
before you slept. Or maybe
you weren't listening,
maybe you were already hearing
something else. And here it is.**

14 April 2019

=====

**Or let the oriole
peck at the orange on the deck rail,
an island is a pure permission.**

**I miss the waves
but the sea is always with me,
perilous beauty,
campground of the heart.**

14 April 2019

=====

Lead me hollow
lead me home.
The dirt track I follow
is so slow,
find a way for me
through air
so I can come
as music comes
suddenly there
and nowhere else.

14 April 2019

**No wonder Brahms
liked the piano quartet
of teenaged Dohnanyi—
he had written it himself
using the body and brain
of a young Hungarian boy.
Artists are like that —
we love our sudden progeny.
Children, our children!
And no responsibilities!**

14 April 2019

=====

Rain gone
nude day
city live in
wet glass
see through
hope a
darling me
river us
home.

15 April 2019

=====

**Map on my wall
no colors no shapes no names
only the rivers are left
lines scrawled in nowhere.**

15 April 2019

=====

**The glacier walked over this hill
and left it here, a stone by the fence
sent from far north by the ministry
of time, daughter of erosion.
What is the gender of stone,
do they have sex? That's what ancient
dragons came down to us to explain.
I can hear them now. Things explain
each other: listen to the stone.**

15 April 2019

=====

**Bright sunshine drenched windows
we have to *choose* what we see.
Everything is obvious except us.
We make the difference. Corn field
lunar landing symphony.**

15 April 2019

OLD TRUCK

Noise of going past
lingers after gone.
Engines are energy
always saying goodbye.

15 April 2019

=====

**The First Breath
comes only once a day.
What do you see
when that breathes in?**

**The world whatever you
time and time again
but this is only once.
And I think is a miracle.**

15 April 2019

=====

If I didn't say it now
but waited, how
strong would it grow?
Could it run on its own
like a new-born foal,
could it speak English
better than I? *Wait*
and see they always say,
but waiting has no eyes.
So it's now or never—
or is there no never either?

15 April 2019

VERNAL

**When you're over eighty
you don't need demons anymore.
But the grass seems greener every day.**

15.IV19

=====

**And just this morning went across
to where a voice was being heard.
Who is speaking? I asked a tree,
it shrugged its branches the way
they do in any wind sand said
A kindly god has come down to us
yet again and tells and tells,
and what he tells is true, but we know
it all already and you never will.**

15 April 2019

=====

If it is morning
will it matter?
It is and it will
if I can just find it—
the habits of error
are sinewy and long.
I may have passed
the place already
where matter's made,
clash of sunlight,
metal growing,
wood singing but I
thought it was a dream.

15 April 2019

====

**Wear a hat just once
and you're a man who wears hats.
Description is merciless
that way. Likewise if some smiling
Easter morning on a whim you go to church
they'll peg you for a Catholic ever after.
Nail you to a name. I went to my friend
Peter, a Moslem Moorish Anglo-Catholic
Non-Juring Southern Sufi saint
and asked him what he makes of labeling.
He took off his big hat and tried to look sad.**

15 April 2019

=====

Bright collar
bent to the dark text,
heart's yeshiva,
to know the Law,
mandates of desire—

who be those
to whom I tend?

2.

The little boy in every girl
rouse from that hammock
comfy free into the hard
afternoon, play ball
with shadows, tackle the wind.
Because never will come to you
the ardent suitor of your need—
you must become him first
so he'll think you are his mirror and attend.

3.

And so it goes
until you know.
The teacher is like
a phony doctor
who still cures all wounds.
The bluer the sky the colder the wind.

4.

Nobody likes the truth much
so we write books
A book is a ladder
leaning on a wall,
a book is a brick wall
pretending to enclose,
a book is an open door
gaping all alone in the middle of a field
a book is a meadow
hungry for trees,
a book is an answer
to nobody's question,
a book is a silver salmon
glimpsed in a pool

while you're on your travels
in a gaunt but beautiful country,
Donegal maybe, where they speak
some language like yours,
a book is a pebble found on the shore—
look at it from every angle
then let it fall.

5.

The advancement of learning
is a danger word. Ayahuasca.
Corn liquor. Sunbeams
filtering through fish bowl
instructing the kissing-fish,
what looks like love
can tear the flesh apart.
Be careful what you learn.
Some languages can put the mind to sleep.
Or divert the fluent gestures of the heart,
be careful what homework you bring home.

6.

Leap from your hammock
and let love in,
it's always just outside the door.
Know it by its distances
even when you let it in.

16 April 2019

=====

**Simple— for time
to be time**

**we need space
to measure it.**

**A housefly lands on Caesar's nose,
two thousand years pass,**

**marble shutters.
The clock runs down.**

16 April 2019

=====

Let the birds come by
and pay for their passage—
this is your air
they make so free with,
flapping and fluttering and—
more troubling than aloft—
swooping effortless through your yard.
Who owns this land anyhow?
Don't you have the deed
tucked away in a shoebox
up in the attic, crows
beating at the cobwebbed window?

16 April 2019

=====

I called a friend
she arrived with a yell—
a spider bit her as she picked up the phone.
My fault entirely—
maybe vinegar will take the sting away.
I wonder if I'll dare call her again.

16 April 2019

=====

**I am a painter painting the lawn
with a chubby woodchuck running up the rise.
You don't see the animal, but he's
the reason for the painting.
All you get to see is solid green.**

16 April 2019

=====

Organ grinders
I have groaned,
too much the Black Forest
reading the Danube,
parcel by parcel
rivers reading a long breath
—wasn't that a book you even read? —
sideways into syllogism
proving something to the trees.
I implore thee like a chapel
wet tile, mosaic after thought
cold on the side skin,
synaesthesia the doctor smiled
as if your confusion
were his handsome fee.
Life brings months and monkeys back again.
Too true, too you.
I loved best the haunch of an idea,
you loved its ankles—
takes all kinds to flee the world.
Saturday breakfasts on the prairie,

dolphin in the fish pond, remember Merry Mount
 the blessed, Yamkeed down,, soon to wither—
 as I fnothing uglier than other people's pleasure.
 Back home in Donegal with the basking seal.
 I know it's hard but try
 to find your way through this to me.

2.

Showcase your charms, bitter root.
 Sun caught on the corners of a morning house,
 quiet eaves, no matter to muse on
 except the circumstance of skin.
 Has always!
 Lie on the hammock of the tundra
 and begin.

Thou art a machine
 and you are too.
 Combinatorial fractions, factions,
 Idlewild under grisaille—
 that's the word I spent looking for—
 to know you at the best

before the church got hold of you
and spinached you for good,
your good, maybe mine too.
Who knows, we are angels anyhow.

3.

And come again.
Visions of inside you—
clocktower, stone Roman bridge,
airport in the pampas,
lime trees, licorice—
haunt me some more.
I wanted to feel wanted—
is that so bad?
Artificial sun on the terrace
drenched the hibiscus,
plastic armchairs, glisten, glisten.
Patio of years ago.
Avocado. Drive to Mexico,
O dear Christ
is it all we are is weather?
Can't we be more,

or be between?

Cur deus homo remember the book,
for every song thee is an explanation,
an incarnation.

Be music to me all again,
I weary of my interests,
let the dolphins swim up here,
ford estuary, dear friend,
convey to the sea to me.

For I am moveless, mountain
majesty and dull, all moss and meaning,
and I need new. Need you.

See how at the end of Schubert's sad
an organ grinder valleys through the snow
fetching music through adversity
deep effort, clear tune but who hears?

17 April 2019

=====

I stand before the altar
of all I know
and swear fealty to it
and swear to fill my ignorance
with glorious guesses,
thickets of meaning,
riders on prairies, colors,
colors, cars of my childhood,
hands halfway to wings.
Awkward glamor of beast desire,
thunder at full moon!
I bend down and kiss the stone you stand on.

17 April 2019

=====

Renew—
ever lover

flag
over Tilden,

a bridge
to know you

before all.

17 April 2019

=====

**Day and night
is the only difference
maybe I wonder**

**green grapes
on a plate
yellow enough Van Gogh for me**

**eliminate the absolute!
Change the subject!
Frog swarm peeping pond!**

**there is a tumult
in any need
rise from the calendar stone**

mercy walking through the door
sturdy pelvis
no animal implied

do you still need me?
you have grown
into simplicity

no more numbers
where you live,
ruins of a Gothic abbey

deer stroll through the nave,
there was a world
here before the world

our bright fresh pastures
neighborhoods highways are
sweet ruins of Atlantis

**you don't need me
to argue that
in your lap or in your hat**

**There was a world when there were bells
now only balls now only testimony
to the overwhelming outrage**

smoke drifting from the Europe shore.

18 April 2019

=====

If I were a man
I could stand.
If I were a woman
I could understand.
If I were a child
I could hope for more.
If I were a corpse
I'd be ready to begin.
But I am none but one.

18 April 2019

THE GOOD PLACE

re is a huge invisible tree that grow straight up
from the Mid-channel o the Hudson

this is on estuary, the river is in a dwelling and
glistening arm of the sea

the fruit from this tree invisible too, but nourishes
r thissecret spread through the eastern Catskills
and western Dutchess County

the people who live here came from anywhere and
don't know why, but here they are called by the
tree, and here they make music and poetry and
books and images

Muse-driven by the Holy Gynarchy of the sky,
these people are the conduits from the vast
Atlantic and the world of energy that it mirrors

yjeru ate the the nucleus of what comes next

sometimes they know one another, sometimes not, liking or disliking as they may, they inspire one another, they spread through human terms the miracle of mind, that is, they make art

and talk, and tell.

This is where it is right to be. Come to the tree.

And now I know it's so, because as I dictated (a rare thing) this text, the dictation software added by itself the word *Kedves*, which I didn't know. I looked it up and found it was Hungarian, and means comely, amiable, agreeable, nice. YThank you, Magyars!

19 April 2019

ALBACORE

or any
fish you think,
twilight quick in heaven
time's our water

too,,
tide pool maybe even—
the setting sun a cello plycked

or old anthracite
warming the debtors' prison
this world of ours,

pay back gladly
for the air we breathe,
colors we feast on,

rising sun a trumpet skirled.

19 April 2019

=====

1.

Road street highway avenue boulevard you.

2.

**Get me there
before I'm I,
the wind is just
a mother in the trees,
more cars than trucks
more talks than embassies
and yet you wonder why.**

3.

**It's all to praise—
sake of the other.
Be in me like a sudden answer.
Sounds like prayer.**

4.

Green sedans in mist
fountain by a shuttered church?
Song of the white-throated
sparrow, The thirteenth quartet.

5.

How to be coherent
yet still tell the truth.
Mystery of poetry.

6.

Longitudes of simplicity
shudder when one's fears
overwhelm desire,
Sargasso requiem? No,
no! Feed sugar to the soul.

7.

What the Gnostics knew
was not an answer
but an intimate wordy
relaxing, as if the whole
game interrupted
for a while so they could
walk around among
stones and trees
and not even know
their names yet
still be at peace.

8.

Why am I telling you this
when you told me?
Maybe you forget some things,
I know I do,
maybe you told me
all sorts of things

**so I could carry them for you
all through winter, warm,
and give them back to you
at the sign of the first daffodil.**

19 April 2019

=====

**My first master
told me:
Choose me wisely,
I am so many,
everyone you meet
may be me
or should be
or you can make him so
or recognize
me within her, him, them.
A shadow on the lawn,
the sound of water.**

19 April 2019

=====

**Why are there so many trees
and only one sky?
Or is the air too
particulate, like sand,
an almost infinity
of pure transparencies
by which we live?
The sky the well
from which they fall?
In all the universe
there is no single thing at all
except the one that says “me”
and there too there are billions of me.**

19 April 2019

=====

**Chased in the dark
the flower breaks free
into the light and air—
all that color
is a sigh of relief,
here I am again,
a momentary all-of-me.**

19 April 2019

=====

**Don't give way
iy's only now**

**and will be time
and time again.**

2.

**In the deep piano
the sounds striated
loud-soft they said
when sound was new.**

3.

**This tumult owns us,
knows us better
than we ourselves,
a broad-winged bird
flaps through the living room.
Turn out the light.**

19 April 2019, Bito

=====

Tarot cards
strewn across
the tabletop—
the *meld*.
In the kitchen
an aunt is crying
softly to herself,
sounds like a
cello far away.

19 April 2019, Bito

BRAHMS' SEXTET

**Glass of milk
in moonlight.
Beyond the meadow
a stretch of sea.**

**Barefoot—the dew-wet
grass is cold.
Far out a sail
flirts with the horizon.**

**Think of someone sleeping
warm sheet taut over body
quiet breath and wonder why.**

**You never knew your grandmother
you wonder what she was like.
You slice some more carrots
and your eyes don't quite fill with tears.**

**Rabbit? Squirrel?
Too dark, too quick
to tell. Telling
is so hard. So dark.**

19 April 2019, Bito

=====

Elohim,
they made the land
they made the sky,
did rhey make the legs
we walk between them on?

19.IV.19, Bito

=====

1.

The obstinate the cicatrix
the tattered nation
battle-hymn of the wounded
people of the people.

2.

Stand on the church tower,
see the scar
of real estate across the actual—
people have to live
somewhere, don't they?
A little hamlet between Hiesse and Neaux.

3.

Walk on the water,
come in a dream,
then we'll know.

4.

The property of eternity

is to taste now

Come back when you're wide awake

come back when you're free,

give the light a chance to feel you

kiss of morning on your sainted skin.

5.

The best part is memory

it runs like spring grass

over the uneven soil of who I am.

Who I am, you are

I meant to say,

like a whiskered Prophet in the Book.

6.

The human body reveals itself

most when it tries to stand still.

Morning explains these things—

wake up before your mind

and let the other in.

7.

Gnomic, as mime.

At the concert we sat between
an old man and a teenage boy—
both fell asleep to Beethoven—
we felt like children on a desert island
held by the glorious sea.

8.

That's because of course
we are we and they
were he and he. Sleep
tries to heal
all the scars of isolation.
So far to grow
to be immediate.

9.

**Shilly-shally of grey morning
between the rains.**

**I think of what I saw as a child,
the rigid framework inside the airship,
silver zeppelin over Marine Park—
to see the skin and know the bone inside.**

20 April 2019

=====

**Some days I think the Greeks
got everything wrong
or pretended to,
every story that they told
means something different
from how they reasoned it.
And yet they told—
bless them for telling,
bless them for being wrong.
I am the Minotaur
come back to re-mind.**

20 April 2019

=====

**Wake early
hurt the hurt,
the blackbirds
are back. What
more can you ask
than these leaves
on these trees,
sleep again,
farrier, keep
the coat glossy
on that black horse
we ride in the dark
be tender with wise hands.**

20 April 2019

=====

The wonders of circus tricks
are everyday in mind.
Women often fly through the air
and climb down from heaven,
dozens of big people
climb out of one small car,
the horses black and white
prance in magic circles
around a missing meaning,
no more unusual than bees
buzzing around the eaves
in springtime. But why?
Why does it all happen?
Ghosts in charge of living folk,
unwise books we read whose
characters pursue us now?
Am I Moriarty? Vercingetorix?
Some poor exile shivering
in the lost woods of Westphalia?

**We swoon in guesswork,
the churches say Don't worry,
Everything you do is wrong
But we have a way of fixing that.
Come ring our bells. Why not
we sob, but hurry to the couch
and pray for dreamless sleep.**

21 April 2019

RESURRECTIO

Not wise to fly yet
sleep wings flaccid still
something strict is needed,
in the midpoint of a raindrop
someone is waiting.

*

Easter morning.
All the wrong things
are leached away.
By capillary action
we are filled with grace.

Something like that.
Or how does the air's
keen oxygen slip
into the flowing blood?

*

I heard a trumpet
like a handle
squeaking open
a door in heaven.

And sometimes a smile
is someone I know,

*

Wild sea, breakers off Yaquina.
Or the pine trees south of Tannersville.
The rabbi asked me if I was
and I said No. The deep ravine
led down below the world. The cleft. The Clobve.

*

So few masters
so many men.
Or are you all my teachers
dear and wise and close
as the shadow walking at my side?

*

Wisdom scatters,
rice at weddings,
Romans rather
pinecones tossed—
or nuts, *da nuces!*
any nourishing sturdy
a bride at breakfast.
No need for a groom—
when the world began
the men were all asleep.

21 April 2019

=====

**Read my treatise
on the Minotaur
yet to be written
it's all in there.**

**Put it together for me
out of all you know
from being alone
in a human body,**

**all senses intact
and needing no one
really, content
with the thought**

**of any and of many.
Peace. The beast
meant there is no need
for kings or fathers.**

**You know what happened
in the story, it always will
until we get the story straight—
step backwards firmly though**

**that ancient doorway, see her,
the ravishing truth,
in her glorious light alone,
the Virgin Queen, mother of men.**

21 April 2019

=====

1.

**If I faced the wall
I would be a prayer.
Or a window. Or are they
the same, outlook
onto otherness.**

2.

**I love brick, courses of brick,
English, Dutch, random
of a wall in Patna
rough against shoulders.
Pilgrims. Brick walls of Babel.
Word by word and did reach heaven.**

3.

**Occupy the sky,
the sudden, the perfect.
Inhabit it, seeming empty,
busy with the seven arts
copious beyond number—
and you thought it was a cloud!**

**(18 April, Kingston)
21 April 2019**

=====

The floor is wood
I walk on old trees
I never knew
but now I do.

21.IV.19

=====

I used to brood
on terraces
and sleep with heiresses

and strive against
the ordinary day
with all my might and maybes.

But then a spell
of insight trapped me
and I fell gladly

into a new-bor
suchness, so I
could be little again.

22 April 2019

=====

The numbers we count
growing diminishing
as we watch the clock
have nothing to do
with real time passing.
They are units
we make up, clocks do
what we tell them to.
But time is. And is
always somewhere else.
The head can't know,
the heart can guess,
feeling its own movements,
can sometimes tell
us how to be slow.

22 April 2019

LEAVES

The duke's strawberries,
stiffish leaves
aloft,
 hips on the rosebush
by the book-shed
where once I
in fields of vowels
plaintive sang.

2.

Miracle on miracle
sunglasses pyramids
internal combustion
the waltz. Things
the ancients knew—
we call them gods—
and knew we needed.
Cows are sacred
indeed but meat
is a secret sacrament.

3.

The Mass-book is bound
in goatskin. I blow
the shofar with my lungs.
What are bodies for?

4.

Dimitte nobis
open any door
all ways lead out,

let us depart,
hurry forward
into the not-yet

The leaves out there
tell us a fairy tale
until we fall asleep.

22 April 2019

HYSSOP

Say asperges
so from the altar
the gleaming
sprinkle of wet
sudden through air
as if some mirror
silently smashed
and all its shards
bore a face, each
subtly different
until they became
all of us now.

That kind of prayer
we think we pray
and make our words
an offering we call it
but it's really only
trying to give back
some sort of thanks
for the beauty of being.

22 April 2019, Shafer

NOTES FOR AN INDUCTION

Cloud waft. Sheer,
but no shimmer.

Photo: Standing by one's own grave.

Photo: English churchyard

Where Wittgenstein is buried.

No conversion.

Be whatever you were born
plus this other thing, this new idea,
behavior, path, practice.

Gender of the mind.

No conversion no regret.

Photo of the Dalai Lama, one stands
reverent at his side.

Induction like anything else
is a mode of thinking.

Reasoning.

Reasoning by music.

Death and the Maiden at midnight.

Songbook spread open,

virginal, or on the fluffy sofa
a downturned lute.

Regret plays its role.

Words are the sparkling surf of a dangerous ocean,
clean winds from nowhere
refresh you as you walk
drenched by that shore.

Photo: woman rolling her eyes
as if remembering.

Say: the trees are almost green again.

Say: annuzl miracle of verdure.

Photo: blackbird perched on power line.

I heard
the cloud.

Some things we don't have to remember.

Underfoot, the moors of Yorkshire
do my memory for me.

Example: telling the time by counting
the number of cars passing.

sphodels in the Triangle.

**Bad example. Tune the cello
so it sounds like your own voice.**

**Photo: tattered Xmas card red and green
printed *Peace on Earth*. In White.**

Bad example.

**Suppose all colors were yours to choose—
what color would your mind be?**

**Small translucent heart
cast in hard blue resin.**

Mine, offered at the altar of you.

**Example: linden leaf
any day now.**

Photo: grave of a friend.

**You had forgotten he was dead
and there the gravestone lies,
even with his middle name.**

**Example: remembering someone's middle name.
Or not. The sorrow of that.**

23 April 2019

=====

If I were another day
and not the day I am,
I wonder if my parakeet
would speak Portuguese.

That's the trouble
with a window,
you're always looking
out if it or in

and there you are.
No wonder.
Or anyhow I have
no bird to speak of.

23 April 2019

== == == == ==

**Ball of clay
bowl of the firmament
we rattle around**

**and while the mower's
blade is turned away
we have our day.**

24 April 2019

=====

**Sometime spring
sad as a fish
all glittery and swift**

**sometime cloud
seems just an answer
to a question we forgot**

**don't call it 'query',
nothing fancy
frayed faded ribbon round**

I can't remember what.

24 April 2019

=====

The bus from Topeka
rolls through the door
full of blond persons
and a family of Hmong—

I ask the driver What
are you doing
in my living room?
He looks sheepish,
we all work for a living,
what can we do.

Etc. I understand
enough to let them pass.
One of the kids
tosses a candy wrapper
out the door
just before it closes
and the bus takes off.

It lies on my carpet,
It's printed in Polish
I guess, and has a picture
of a fish on it
holding a lollipop with his fin.
I pin it to the wall,
hoping for the best.

24 April 2019

=====

**After Easter
who rolls away the stone?
Or reads what's carved in,
to explain what or who
has happened to the earth,
or read the word beneath our feet?**

24 April 2019

CAR RADIO

In spring live
by a stop sign
and you hear
what they love--
swoozy croony
girl falsetto pop.
the phony twang
of country & W
but every now
and then a rapper
hammersing hard
semantic sense
into pale ears.
And never a note
older than their
oldest fears.

24 April 2019

=====

**Listen to me
the chainsaws of the Lord
are thinning the forest,
the leaves blow wildly
some settle on the king's white plate
as he sits on his terrace
waiting for breakfast.
Do you recognize yourself
in this glamorous video?
Are you the one
for whom the trees fall?
The leaves fly up?
Sunlight dapples on the terrace tiles?
The servers hurry with steaming platters?
The poached egg eyes you with reproach?**

**Listen to me.
There is a meaning
even in music, even in skin.
What is the gender of light?**

**Who was the spokesman of the dark
who bored you with his intercessions
all night long? Are you still dreaming?**

25 April 2019

== == == == ==

Only one palest vaguest cloud
but the blue itself is pale
as if. No matter.
Sky is sky, a rule
to itself. I pray to it
in my own devious way,
psalms and ceremonies,
lit candles at high noon.

25 April 2019

=====

Imagine me again,
shutters on my house,
shade of an elm tree,
a coyote running up the hill.
This is what it means
to be a window.
No hands, no arms—
or is the sight of things
agency enough, itself,
a saying and a song?
Wind slaps the shutters—
everything answers me.

25 April 2019

LATE APRIL

Spring is a big green truck
carrying everything away.
Leaves meaty green shadows
in its place. Hollow
dimness inside moving vans,
remember? This
was California once,
and Scotland now, you feel it,
cloth of your bones.
Waking up these days
is like falling in a faint.

25 April 2019

=====

**The game of chess I play with myself
is herding tame goats on the mountainside.
It takes a month to make a move—
by then the snow has melted
and the lovers have come out again
from their crystal caves halfway up.
Or down. Depending on where my goats are,
my beloved goats!**

25 April 2019

=====

I climb the stairs
there is a child up there
I climb the stairs
the child may be me
there is a carpet
between bare feet and wood
brown carpet with design of leaves
I climb the stairs
I hope someone will be there,
alert and interesting, a sage
or a page from a book,
or a nymph from the forest
of mature years
who will guide me
when I get there.
I climb the stairs

25 April 2019

== == == == ==

**Write it before it runs away
the disconcerting dream
of books and flights of stairs,
19 million dollars; worth of books,
your father marshalled
in the attic of an old hotel.
And there you were together,
with third unknown, nought
in your mind but confusion
and fear. And there I am.**

26 April 2019

=====

If I were just a little
closer to the moon—
or to the sea.
Make it the sea.

2.
Someday someone
will sift through
the ashes in this urn
to see what words
they still can read.
In what language
was I written?

3.
Let it be sea
that washes flame and ash away
with equal clemency,
everything dissolves
into its strong lastingness,
the living wave.

26 April 2019

=====

**My father's star
my mother's warm seal fur—
what can I give
to their incessant avatars?**

26 April 2019

=====

**Write the dream down
before it goes
even further away inside.**

26 April 2019

=====

Dream launch.
Saw the sea
back to me,
come from China
or from Donegal—
I have jumbled the words together,
and the colors of all the flags
blaze into the single overwhelming
white of dream.

26 April 2019

=====

1.

Candle speak procession.
Violate the sleeping hill,
go deep inside
and leave your message.
Your blessing.
Your mess has meaning.

2.

Later, when the mountain wakes,
a doctrine will start answering,
clouds will carry
new laws down the slope
and all over town
people will begin to grasp
the new theology
the mountain made of you.
Little mountain, pale and golden,
early sun and people
humming as they think
and try to pray.

3.

**'Town' means anything
your doctrine fences in,
town means what hears you
even when the candle sputters out.**

26 April 2019

=====

I open the door
and go in
the room is empty
three oranges on the table

I give one to you
and now there are two.
But you are not there,
and the oranges are gone.

Suddenly there is one in my hand,
I peel it, clumsy, hungry,
and you are with me again.

(as if from the Kartvelian)

26 April 2019

ELGAR CELLO CONCERTO

for Billie on her birthday

The human voice
is all we know.
I hear you
despite the words we say—
there is a rumble
down below, like sunshine
glancing down a well.
Things still love us—
they show the way.
You hear best
because you are.

26 April 2019

== == == == ==

**Eight swords
tarot of the calendar:
one knife to slice bread
one knife to cut the cord.
And the son looked in
to watch the mother
at her work
of dreaming the day into place.**

**2.
That's how we know.
Look the little things
into place until
the picture's right.
Get angry at the weather
like a good Christian,
the semaphores are all on fire
37 tank cars full of oil
roar through the back yard—
and they call this a city!**

3.

We sipped our decent coffee
while the freight train rumbled by.
People in the café
get used to it, why not,
it hurts the ears and scares
you a little but it passes.
It passes. Nibble
your *pain au chocolat*, don't fret.

4.

Reasonably good advice
but I want more—
Demosthenes' persuasion,
Omar's sense of
lyrically making-do,
letting beauty
sneak up on you
and change the day.

5.

How many more kinds do you need?

Six, to sit at dinner with my friends.

Six of us empowered by a table,
words slither glad around the food,
fish, cheese, olives, lines,
the leverage of real things
taking charge of our moods and messages,
silver knives to cut the supple salmon.

6.

But where is this going, you ask,
what does a party of poets in the foothills
have to do with the Mayan calendar,
the jaguar on the books, the priest next door,
the tall steeple, the cold rain?

Ask rather why we're all so beautiful,
beautiful, each one in her own way,
his way, their way, like the palm tree
in the corner laughing at us, music screeches,
the everlasting Easter of the heart.

27 April 2019

=====

At least it's worth
asking the question.
Then the bird swoops
down with the answer,
the fox runs away,
scans comedy of
every backyard—
the fox is a cat,
the cat is a dog,
the dog is an old
man walking his thoughts.

27 April 2019

=====

Your skin
tattooed
with shadows
is a secret doctrine,
an endless evolving
book I long to read.
The body writes it
all night long
and there at dawn
new chapters are,
psalm after psalm,
every day's gospel
new I wait to read
all the way through.

27 April 2019

=====

**Christian malady
knew a man named Malardain.
Six generations of distress.
Kristen does hypnosis.
Heaven hypnotizes us
with happiness. Who
are you today?
Weren't you my other?
So many consonants
so few vowels.
It is Greek Easter tomorrow.
And everyone rises with Him.**

27 April 2019

=====

Things waiting along the tracks
for us, the missionaries of desire
who live in small exurban houses
where we in our turn keep waiting

for Someone Else. The Answer Man.
The Girl with the Golden I.Q.
The Easter Rabbit Who Can Talk.
We don't know them till they come

if even then. Wildlife at our doorsill,
deer fur rubbed loose on our own tree,
a toad on cinderblock in lamplight,
we have so many friends. Too many

many of us think. But I say No,
bring on the multitudes of love, the crowd
of atheists, the choir of complaint,
wise geezers, incandescent adolescents,

**all. For I as lonely as a mushroom
in the fallen leaves, lonely maybe
as the moon, that celebrated isolato
bumbling around our pricate nights.**

**So I went down to the railroad to see
what trains had brought to comfort us,
crates of bibles, a bale of green pajamas,
six barrels of neem juice, a tricycle.**

I wept to think of all the empty drawers.

27 April 2019

=====

Let the rain
be a brain
to think us
free,
 wet
with light we
see everything
and know, and know
this place of
ours entirely.

28 April 2019

=====

Be careful of the *natural* way,
the much-vaunted, the dangerous—
didn't nature invent death?
And yet it gives us rain—
rain keeps death away,
all Irishmen know that,
we forgive nature when it rains,
and here, among the First Settlers
isis the Day 9-Rain. Let it
(as Shakespeare says) come down.
His Scots must have been a little Irish too.

28 April 2019

=====

It depends on the pen
who writes me with.
Grammar bows low, bends
to queenly meaning,
Hope on her throne.
Hope to stay true,
say true, heart
in a handshake,
sun in your eyes.
We are just children
of the instrument
and the winds make
music of our skin,
hair stirring, fingers
scratching a few
words on the napkin,
the meanings
they make us make.

28 April 2019

=====

**Tintype face
frim a Portugal
ago. A smile
beneath stern
mustachios.
Of course it's a dream
but where is waking?**

28 April 2019

= =

Time too
runs out of ink—
a text
for Kurtág
to make
music of
last and last—
the briefer the
music the
longer the song.

28 April 2019

A REMARK IN PASSING

In Bogotá in 1912 Rafael Uribe Uribe published *Why the Political Liberalism of Colombia is Not Sinful*. Despite its claim (*no es pecado!*) the Roman Catholic church immediately placed it on the Index of Forbidden Books, and there it lingers still, its enduring fame a product of its suppression. I thought it wise to tell you this.

28 April 2019

=====

**What a relief!
To be physical
in an ordinary world,
to peel a label
poff a bottle
with a fingernail
or use the same
fingertip to rub
idly on a piece of wood
and time goes by—
if I could keep it up
I could be the sky.**

28 April 2019

=====

Finding the way back
garden in daylight
oxalis a sudden mystery
who is this flower?
little holes in greensward
chipmunks? moles?
consequences everywhere
without visible cause
I stumble on conditions,
words break me
who is that white car?
lone philosopher leaning on his hand
that's what the forehead's for,
the thinking is just lagniappe,
the brain is along for the ride?
It is our bones
that do our thinking,
and cast bright shadows
beyond the forehead.
He knows the truth
and writes it down,

but the essence squirms
out of the written words
darts back into the bone.
The ground. Chipmunk
below the bird feeder
chomping fallen seeds
Who fills the cage
with sunflower kernels,
who fills the sky with rain,
who is that white car?
When I grew up
I thought I was a man
but age did nothing
for the boy in me,
only more awkward,
forgetful, slow,
still bouncing pink rubber balls
off the mind's tall brick stoop.

29 April 2019

=====

As if the answer
lay in the grass
like an old hose
leaking a little
from the nozzle,
that cold brass
children love
to fiddle with

till they twist
and a rush of it
gushes out,
the smaller the orifice
the fiercer the stream.
And the answer
when it comes
soaks you through.
Every kid knows that.

29 April 2019
Shafer

=====

**Eating ice cream
from a dish
is a hypnotic state.
The spoon moves
by itself, no way
to stop. The mind
is far-off, chilled
into quietude,
nothing but mouth.**

29 April 2019

=====

The leaf said Listen
water drops here
and there a sky
pretending. I wondered
at the word,
doesn't the weather
always tell the truth,
always changing?
The leaf said Later,
everything is still
on the way,
still to come.

30 April 2019



A STEEPLE

It tells not only where you are
but where you're headed,
up the airy stars
to heaven. *Himnan*,
Old English. Red brick
Irish-built church.

Taller steeple than Catholics
usually. So high.
The point of the thing
is to lift us—
it looks like, of course,
a spear to lance the sky
but we know better—
it is a pure *ray*
of tin and brick and mortar
pointing down,
spreading out
to cover the town,
cover you
cover all of us
with God's old-
fashioned grace.

30 April 2019
Kingston

== == == == ==

Being certain
a wave
nibbling the sand,

a friend walks by
but who is she
really? And an old
person with a carved
cane, dragon-headed,

who are these dreams
stepping past me
in ordinary day,
mid-afternoon
coma of wakefulness?

30 April 2019
Kingston

=====

Trying to be clear
I like hearing
music when none
is playing.
Clear as fear.
Clear as rain
on the windshield
and no wipers,
each drop distinct
until the next
erases it. Same
water, different man.

30 April 2019
Kingston

