The spell casts back
the sun rises.
She spoke to the bishop
her mother listened
at the forest door—

a day, a day
is a domestic drama,
the missing husband,
the frantic child.

2.
I play that role.
I wander through the music
looking for friends.
I play cards with tree leaves,
I get tipsy on shadows,
I cry my heart out
and laugh happily
because no one hears me.
3.
Sometimes the bishop sends an answer—
a silver robe to wear,
a white bird to perch on the roof—
gull or dove
what the devil difference does it make—
all birds are from heaven.

4.
Then the ink sinks in,
the letter lingers.
I sneak a peek at it,
more fame, more money
but two extra hours
in every day.

       The year
has tilted on its monkey pole,
time has changed.
5.
And next morning again
on the phone to the bishop—
everything normal again,
the bird comes back,
the internet is working,
language still helps,
mom’s cat teaches
even mothers how to sleep.

I wish I were a better student—
I drowse over my Etruscan Grammar
but can’t find the Irish word for dream.

1 August 2019
A play a day
keeps death away.
Tempest me no Tempests,
I’m still at Romeo.

1 August 2019
Offering is enough. The swallows at evening snatch the light away over the pond, reeds so full of life, the silence that lives in water beneath the sound of it. Silence of the sky, the system. No wonder the augurs trembled with interpretation, frenzy when the sky spoke. Thunders, winds ever, the script of bird flight across the visible. And in their beds at night the priests still wonder why does everything, everything speak?

2 August 2019
Wilson helped but England did it, wreaked the two empires Ottoman and Austrian that somehow held half the world in peace. Since then the scattered remnants of the two are still fighting with themselves and not the other. Then Britain’s pieces fell apart, as if in imitation of the hyper-Balkan frenzy. Now all over the world the little bandit presidents can rage and violate their people and their neighbors, squabble while the distant autarchs smile.

2 August 2019
SPELL

Come back in time
from where you’ve been
or when,
    come back in leaf
and eelpout,
    song and trestle,
hurry over water,
    burrow upright
in arches,
    civil as sunlight,
appear, appear!

2 August 2019
Sedulous inquiries
from weary scholars
who still at recess stand
in front of mirrors
over the wash room sinks
combing their long hair,
brushing it smooth,
twenty strokes on either side,
comb the loose hairs from the brush.
Then back to history—
all its mysteries
are meant for you,
you are what it means.

2 August 2019
Things happen so we have something to understand—why not believe it, why not trust the world is evidence of something more?

(The Eternal Question)

2 August 2019
Everything is in the poem
everything is in the poem you’re reading.
Everything is in the poem you’re writing.
Writing is reading.
That is the secret dream taught me.
The dream said everything
everything is in the poem—
that was the whole dream
and everything is.

3 August 2019
(Das Wunder der Heliane last night. The music began in the second act and got there in the third. Strange inversion—so many operas are richest in Act I.)
7:53 quiet as a Sunday
nothing stirs.
We’re all saying Mass
quiet as we can.
Each breath a prayer.
Restless children
are theologians,
working out meaning
muscle by muscle.
But not now.
Now is stillness
as if the Mass had ended.

3 August 2019
Learn Latin
with your head on my lap
so I can hear you murmur
my mother tongue
the ses taught me
and know you sleep easy.
For language
is the sweetest dream,
the furthest west
of all our sailings,
crisscross longitudes,
the song on fire.

Sleep well,
the limb of a friend
your best pillow,
where the words
are spelled correctly
all through your dream

so you wake
with a beautiful babble
everybody understands, 
sleep well, sleep deep 
dear friend, 
my lap is soft and warm, 
learn language as you sleep, 
oi had to learn it 
from a hard book 
made from a harder tree 
but yield it to you now 
easy, easy, 
both of us glad 
in something like sleep.

3 August 2019
There are foreigners in the trees
disguised as empty spaces
between the native leaves,
you can tell them by how dark they are
until the sun comes up and they
put on their bright disguise,
Venetian carnival of every morning.
But they are foreign still,
emptiness clothed in light,
welcome migrants, we need them so,
urgent messengers from silence.

3 August 2019
Early enough for a swim
if I swam
or a run if I ran
or a walk if I must--

my father used to say
go for a spin
that means in the car,
go out and drive

slow down unfamiliar
roads, past houses
unknwn, and fields of crops
we town-lubbers can’t name.

drive through the woods
past cute churches of the wrong
religion, empty schoolyards,
a little bridge you’re scared to cross
and then the spin is over.
I grow nostalgic for yesterday afternoon or was it Thursday, wheat fields of a neighbor county.
MEANING

for A.G.

What does it mean
to say things and it be art?
What is the other side of meaning?
You tell the interviewer all you can
childhood on the grass,
the horse, the monocle,
your aunt’s patchwork quilt,
the book by Kandinsky,
the weird man who talked
about Rudolf Steiner’s color theories
and put his hand on your knee,
what does it mean
to touch another person,
does it matter where,
is that the place where meaning
happens? Can you put that in a picture?

2.
You told the truth--
the root is in the sky.
Just look at it deeply,
but shyly, it will
tell you who you are.
And color is a glorious
accident of your identity.

3.
Your brush is busy
  on a big sheet of masonite
getting redder by the minute,
yellower, deeper, until
space opens into the realm
of the lost, the land
you’re always remembering.
Dremin. People pass
behind you, murmuring praise.
You hear them, you say Of
course I love you. And (this
is vital) you don’t turn away.
4.
Because what you see on the wall
(you’re sending your seeing onto the wall)
is what they’ll see, Abd all they see,
and what they see will give them
all manner of things—including you.
What more could they ask? Or you give?

3 August 2019
HIBISCUS

We want to keep looking.
Fireflies, the tendency
of Sharon’s roses to veer
frm blue to pink in rain.
And who is Sharon anyhow?
Don’t give me the ,Bible--
there’s a woman out there,
a woman who invented roses.

3 August 2019
can you hear me
and if you can
tell me why the leaves
keep turning red in autumn
someone must know
it can't just be chemistry
they didn't teach that in my school.

3 August 2019
I'm speaking in the hope that what I say will go out and find you, your house, where you live in the forest of your imagination where all the books you've read go back into the wood of trees their shadows stretching out across your skinny little roads that run from darkness to darkness, to give you truth that looks like leaves. I hope that what I say confundrum can live with you can keep you company be there in the morning, I hope you find your way to answer me, me and all the others need you you who are the living silence of the world.

3 August 2019
AUGUST ANSWERS US

for Anne Gorrick

1.
Circle by extraction
unicursal blue
how are you Anne today
I’ve healed my shadow
and stretched it on your lawn

2.
Be careful where you dine
the text is shallow here and there
the cliffs can crumble into toast
and there all the Oregons won’t help
seeing a hawk leaves
a sour taste in the mouth

3.
I’m really trying to help
because we haven’t seen
each other in the moon
or even stars, a float
on Middle Lake has
teenage population
you can tell by sound.

4.
Ear I mean
the thing you’re so good at
so good the tailor
comes to you for thread
and the way you flounce through every door
every day a birthday party

5.
Because you know the tune
it all holds together,
Methodist manners and Bolshevik verbs
a loaf of bread quiet
on a white painted table!
What a picture! Kadinsky,
Beethoven, Westinghouse!
6.
I really mean it
we have a window screen built in
you know to slip the mesh
bold as bacon speak your way in,
irresistible! Insinuations
of pure meek energy
enough to spin the globe
one more time before.

7.
Remember when you pulled
Adam out of a hat
and wound the toy train up
in Eden? Remember
stovepipe junction and the girl
you hated for her shiny hair
but grew to love
you both fell in love
with tennis on the asphalt court?
8.
How strange remember is
a paragraph with no punctuation
blue as my eyes used to be
reading smutty textbooks late at night
don’t deny it I was there
sometimes I turned the pages for you
when you wearied of licking your fingers.

9.
So it’s been too long
no cookies no cheese
maple’s not the only tree with sap
my wife and I often go to the opera
so we could meet there in the lobby
humming what we though we heard.

10.
Or if that’s no help, golf.
Most anyone can hold a stick,
a ball rolls by itself.
Come in the golf cart like a goddess,
serenade the silly men
in Madras shorts and yellow sweaters
they call it Chennai now
but who knows why.

11.
The takeaway’s a long hello.
The chariots of Flarfistan
roll through our timid streets
swishing away at mere intentions,
free of sermons the good wind heals,
bows away the guesswork of desire,
a word’s enough to live in
isn’t it and three of them make a city.

12.
I thought I was finished
but the sky said No.
Much study needed before
silence is legitimate
I’m still fumbling at the door
the library is closed for good.

5 August 2019
A SMALL BOOK FOR BRIAN WOOD

The line meets itself
we come around
and meet ourselves departing

o white sky of dawn
silence is the longest opera

*

Sometimes things have a way
of being in two
places at once
the forest and the sea
the castle and the emergency room
that is how love came to be
a tuft of frizzy hair around the heart

*

Learn the magnetism of without desire.
The horse you ride may be your mind
and God knows where it carries you
prairie pusztá grasslands steppes
sometimes I can feel winter in your bones

*

The hardest thing of all
is trying to make sense of sense.

*

A foot away from the eye
a magnifying glass
turns the world upside down.
Fact. God send us distances!

*

People inside our bodies
mill around chatting
philosophies and other fashions
of the mind. Leave me alone
I’m tempted to tell them
but then I would be alone.
Alone inside.
When we were kids
they put us on horses
smiled and took pictures.
The horses are still there
I see them in your drawings
the fierce muscular empty
spaces between the lines

Lying in the field
on my belly I thought
the roots of little plants
were great trees
between me and the sky,
seemed a jungle, God,
sometimes the size
of things breaks my heart.
In the darkest part of night's crystal
a pyramid arose, speechless,
waiting for us to speak to it,
say anything, say Mass on its bones
as once, once we-- but that’s
another story, another night.
How did you learn so much
about the world that isn’t even
there yet despite all our yearning?

*

A harp
her hands
strum-m-stroking
along the strings
high out there
to low in here,
hands unzipping
a skirt. Or just a coat,
fawn colored,
leather.

*
Mushroom giving a sermon. Vegetation is so religious, no wonder we stand around in cold stone churches pretending to be flowers. Or carrots. Or winter kale, wounded by mythology.

* 

How serious a line is! o thin you’d think it would be Vienna frivolous but no, it’s solemn, an anguished melody wrenched out of Sibelius, a simple line. O ink of the world, how you sing.

*
Hair swept back
we meet the wave.
From so far away
it has come
to curl up at our feet—
you’d think we were Romans
accorded the obeisance
as we are of so many things.

*

Memory wields a weird pencil
ever since Conte got the lead in
means graphite really
a little stick to rule the round world.

*                (5 August 2019)
I am the other.
The I I bear
I bear for you
so you can know
me and know
yourself known.

* 

And that was enough to say. I woke me with it, a card of identity, a foreword to anything to be said, first page finally written of a huge book begun long ago without it. The word catches up with itself.

6 August 2019
Something about the breath,  
something about history  
and girls walking down a southern street  
in a painting on a post office wall.

Something about the moon maybe  
and the cinnamon bun on your plate,  
a book in translation but from  
what language did it come  
over what seas?  Something  
about watercress humble at the edge  
of streams, something about danger,  
Roman ruins, copper urn full of lilies.

6 August 2019
Ever since most adults stopped smoking cigarettes there has been a huge quiet upsurge in barbecues outdoor grilling steaks and burgers, charcoal sacks, and costly gas-burning rigs on pungent patios—in fact a huge unnoticed *nostalgia for smoke* has overwhelmed the middle class. And what will winter bring, in po-mo villas with no fireplace?

6 August 2019
Now better back to bed--
these days the moon
rises in daytime, someone
has to right the balance,
turn day into night.
the Z’s of slumber spreading
out above me like the deep
crown of leaves on walnut trees,

6 August 2019
Glancing
I think better than romancing,
a smile on the street
worth more than a month in the sheets.

Be quick and be gone
and leave the other free to be
other and other and another.

6 August 2019
I hope the sky hasn’t run out of rain,
I hope it writes all over us today,
the intricate grisaille of all it says.

6 August 2019
[MORE F OR WOOD BOOK]

*

Hair swept back
we meet the wave.
From so far away
it has come
to be here, here
is the furthest place.

*

It takes more than trumpets and drums
to turn a dog into an army--
what kind of person would let a dog
anyhow? Open spaces feel for a way out--
all that music like that does
is stifle the sound of our own blood.

*
In France the hedgehog nestles
in the tall grass of the berm
along the Roman road.
Cute and prickly
like the thought of home.
_Herisson_. Or a child at a table
alone on a sidewalk cafe.

*

You can’t help
what you see.
The eye is a feather
that tickles the world
until it talks.

*

Out of the storm cloud
an immense rose
descends over the village.
The townspeople cry
and laugh or hold their breath--
will love come with it,
will they smell it in their sleep?

* 

The reproductive organs
of a square
or any geometric figure
are clean of germs
as we used to call
agents of distress and dismissal
but even Euclid knew better.

* 

The saguaro cactus
outside the minor league stadium
trembles to the roar of the crowd--
our games are tough on the natural world.

*
The pen never left the paper
till the world was done.
Shipyards and queasy diners,
a girl walking along a cliff--
it’s all in the Bible if you look hard enough.

* 

Kite over the Hudson
Morningside Heights
those Japaese!
But then I remember
rivers do all the work
and we float here and there
signless kites in pure atmosphere!

* 

Achilles in the story
kills Hector and degrades
his body. Makes me wonder
what really happened.
The little boy saw his father
fall then fell himself.
We must do all we can to get out of the story.

*

my father’s Pontiac empty, windows open, side rod, field of cabbages far as I can see, sixty years doesn’t last long, wrong verb, same sunshine beating down.

*

I hold these lines clenched high in the air every message you can imagine tries to squeeze its way through to you, to you.
Boukranion
the sacred bull horns
of Krete
all they needed
was some god
to stretch strings
between them
and lyre away on them
till even we can hear.

Suppose a sister
sat on a sunbeam
on your lawn
and she called it
from the sky--
what then?
what color
would answer that?

*
Silver shillings in Scottish purses
and an animal of some sort
pees out of its den,
small, small, pika or chipmunk,
liberty is always on the other side.

*

Pick up the wheel
and carry it
it still will guide you
where to go--
all our destinations
are stored in our achines.

*

Cyclone weather
a basketball crushed
beneath a fallen bough
an old word signifying poetry
Theline says read me
says need me
but we all say that

I saw a wolf once
we were walking north
and he passing south
we watched each other
respectful. a yard between us.
There are still neighbors
left in the world.

and I alone
am left to tell thee
meant Ishmael
and yet the whale’s mouth
opened like a flower
upright, a calla lily
gasping from the sea.

*

Strap yourself in
roll up the windows
and drive through the tunnel,
tht long one at Saint-Die
miles of it under the Vosges
grey smoke of all our goings
leaves wreaths of almost
meaning we drive through
and almost is a pretty place

*

War was coming when I was young,
it came and killed and went away
but never all the way away, hate to say it
but it’s like a song once heard
Americans can never quite forget.

*
When lines I mean
fold in upon themselves
anger happens.
the street fills with people
wearing the wrong shirts
and women fleeing from
the shadows they cast as they run.
When line meets line
a ntension twists
matter into new spaces,
shouts in the street, bright
blue buses pump out exhaust.
Damn it, we’ve made ourselves
a city again, when all we wanted
was to walk with a friend on a hill.

*

Come Upstate ad dream the city--
this is best. It tastes like cough syrup,
sweet and sharp at once, remember
Cocillna? Probably not. A groove
runs through the cranium inside
divides past from present, and over it
a bridge stretches, narrow, narrow,
and the toll to cross it is terribly high.

*

Just before the storm
a white deer
stepped down the hill
to where the bird seed
spilled from the feeder
then as the trees darkened
went back up the rise
stood white then unappeared.

*

Between two lines
a breath of wind
add a third
and music comes,
four makes a beast
roar gently in
your own sweet woods,
Every white space is an animal
every line is what’s on its mind.
Thinking scars he surfaces we see.

An altar rail sleeps between
the doing abd the done.
At it it is said we receive.
I saw a picture of those distances
space coming down the stairs.
Evening wants to come again
you can hear it sighing
all through the morning--
it sounds like a piece of paper
lofted by the wind. It sounds
like a line on the palm of your hand
or your mother's hand
when once you found her crying
and asked her why, why?
And she said Because
the nights are all gone.

*

A line is a summary
of all absent things.

(7-8.VIII.19)

*
She is *simurgh*
	thirty birds
	self of all selves

don woman woman

don this woman

don this this means

to locate her
by the lake
lake meals

don wet spot left
by the moon’s
drooling

don the ale of evening
means wherever
she stands
be close be close
so her shadow
drenches you too

river of her
river of meals
this one is

all there is.
7 August 2019
Ink spots on the fallen leaves remember?
Linden does it best
or maple, heart or hand
you choose, just
let the wet words touch you as they dry
and all your thirst will fade.

7 August 2019
Cloud on a ladder,  
dog on a pole  
the carnival is in town  
soon as you close your eyes—  
shut the door and shout!

7 August 2019
Being sure
about the answer
is such a quick song
can’t help loving
for instance you
the music’s short
the song is long
what can I mean
by saying that?
a leaf comes
only from a tree
that’s what the cathedral
is trying to say

O poor stone bird.

8 August 2019
ARIA

Not the whole machinery of narrative stage scenery costumes light make the opera. It is the *aria*, the solo song or tense duet that springs out of the goings on and reaches my heart via their breath—no wonder they call it *air*

8 August 2019
An ordinary graham cracker
nibbled in daylight
has the taste of a tidy
bright cumulus cloud, puff
of white coming over the trees.
Try it and see.

8 August 2019
WITCH HAZEL

You can buy a bottle of witch hazel easy in any drugstore in the U.S. Not so in Europe. Yet where else do witches come from? Did they all come here with their wise branches of hazel, seeds of wisdom? Some days I’m proud to be an American.

8 August 2019
for Barbara’s Bday

There was a little lake
that had a pretty lady
who soon beside it
set up her queen-size bed
to hold her husband
and all the thoughts
that water brings.
healing the hollows.

And when she set
one foot naked in
the water told her
Now you are in Spain
ad Africa, Cambodia
and that funky spa
in Thailand where
never mind, never mind.
i cover all the world
and when you’re in me
you’re everywhere.

8 August 2019

= = = = =

for Barbara’s Bday

There was a little pond
that had a lovely lady,
it told her: Come sleep
beside me, bring your bed

your queen-size bed
to hold you and your dearest
and all the thoughts
my loving water brings.

healing the hollows.
And when she set
one foot naked in.
the water told her:

Now you’re in Cancun, Crete,
or that funky little spa
in Thailand where
never mind, never mind.

I am yours and I am water.
I cover all the world
and when you’re in me
you’re everywhere

Small print is revised version, 17.8.19
Mourning coffee?
Take the ness
off happiness
and blow it in the sea—
a rock to stand on
and be beautiful—
is that too much
to ask of daylight?

8 August 2019
THE XII LABORS OF HERAKLES

The twelve labors of Him Who looked at his name.
One day he sees
he is meant to add luster to her crown,
not just praise her the way silly priests and poets do,
but do, do
things never done before and do them for her,
to blossom his renown.

(All sleep I wrote, lines and passages, they're safe inside now, safe from being written down)

(This is my labor for her
to bring new deeds to light painting the wall of the skull
the never-ending light)

One day he sees.

He picks up the palette the painter set down and walks to the wide wall. Paints on it the image of a bull vast horns, comely body stretched across the length of the wide room. He kneels down before it and prays —

Forgive me, lord animal, lord of meadow and shore, forgive me for I have slain you by describing you with colors meant for coal and flowers, blue as thunder you stand slain into visibility from the infant forms of life you are inside.

He steps back from what he has done. Seeing is subtraction—
one more thing
to take inside
and hide
among my secrets,
snatched from the world
into me
he thought
and was right to do so.

I am religion and I know.

Know these things if not all things.

He left colors on the wall
and went out
walked in the country
miles and miles
until he saw __ like boys
fighting on the ground
wrestling and screaming
He stood above them
and they stopped
looked up at him
angry, perverse
as only kids can be,
he laughed down at them
and their anger ceased,
they felt shame instead,
would have kissed
but for shame.
They jumped up and rain away.
This was the second
labor of Heracles.

But none of this
is what my sleepwake said,
what I tell you now
is just a replacement,
a substitute for the truth.
But everything is.

A strong wind last night
a big branch fell from our linden tree.
He came and picked it up,
made a staff of it
to lean on in boggy going
or when he’d walked too long.
He seldom rode.
But once shared a cab
with a girl I know
to the airport
on his way to Crete
(she was off to Scotland
but airports go everywhere)
and she told me how well-behaved he was,
courteous and silent,
tipped the driver,
puzzled them both
because he had no luggage
but they too were
too shy to ask

And going all by yourself
is the third labor of Hercules—

I use his Roman name now,
because I feel close to Italy
where I was raised,
at least in the language of
and he was my gombar.
So Hercul- or Herakl-strides through the island until he meets the lion in the Prospect Park Zoo. Stands at the cage, reaches out his hand to stroke the rough fur of his friend’s mane. I weep at your captivity he said. Not so, not so, the lion said. I have found peace here in this strange monastery where each of us brings his or her own god, we say our own prayers and they give us food. And people come by and looking at them feeds our dreams. And we are happy, sort of, the way monks traditionally are, not much to do and lots of time to think and go look at the joyous seals
leaping sleek in their pool
and always wet!

(But none of this
is what the wakesleep said.
All of this was just hiding in the sky,
easy enough to haul it down in words.
(Not much credit to me, but I go on saying.)

And leaving alone
is a labor too
the lion said.

Herakles was fascinated by trucks,
big white 51 ft. vans,
noisy, sluggish turns.
He took a job driving one
from Herkimer to Fond-du-Lac,
interstate as much as he could
but sometimes, sometimes
slow, slow
along country roads
like his hand
softly caressing
a girl’s arm
his rig had to go,
slow, slow,
under the trees,
white and noisy,
dreamy white
on green roads—
and then the highway
helped again
and so he came
to where the magpies are,
quit his job

Letting go is a work of its own —
he spent three nights in a nice motel
never turned the TV on even once,
slept a lot and dreamt dreams
white as traffic on a silent road.

He found a wheel and spun it,
it rolled along beside him as he walked,
his fingers guiding it, using it gently,
a big wide, nine-spoked wheel,
light and easy, companionable,
rubber tired, quiet, as if some bicycle
had other things to do.

He rolled his wheel!
My Wheel, my Wheel, my Wheel
he thought, dear friend,
teach me to keep moving
but never change,
teach me to be the same
wherever I go
and all I am is going,
just like you.

(You’d think he was a pilgrim!
But he had no goal.
Or his only goal was going.
Does that qualify?
Is his life and are his deeds
eligible for pilgrimage?)

He asked a river once
(the Susquehanna, actually)
and as usual it couldn’t decide—
but its watery uncertainty
is itself a guide,
(...tu sais?
the French priest said
in the Wisconsin diner,
mopping up the last of his soup
with a not-very-interesting slice of bread
that did look better
ripe with the tomato smear
and they used to spell this place Ouisconsin.)

The next job on line
was teaching classics in the Hadramawt
in a pricy little school
for sons of emirs eager to read Aeschylus.
He barely remembered his native Greek,
rubbed his temples to bring it back,
no wine to help him in dry Araby.

To teach
what you don’t know
but get it right—
that is the greatest
maybe labor of all.

9 August 2019
HERCULES REFLECTS ON HIS INFANT EXPLOIT

Snakes enough in the desert but should be left alone—forgive them for scaring us, they only do it by mistake—they are frightened of us so much lying helpless limbless at our feet, their fear is so intense it radiates so we feel it too. Leave them be.

9 August 2019
A woman in the audience raises her arms to heaven. Heaven answers. An uneasy silence suffuses the concert hall. Music was never like this, one whispers, who wrote it? Silence is too difficult to score—it must grow from our skin, another guesses. Or from beath.

9 August 2019
Fisher
Ship on boundless ocean
forgets where it’s bound.
Destiny is always now,
one sparkling, joyous,
curling wave at a time.

9 August 2019
Fisher
The soft forgiveness built into things.
The second movement is usually quieter, sadder maybe, the way things are
But then we change our minds allegro con moto
and reach up to the sky.
And the why says Why?

9 August 2019
Fisher
I would like to try
a new tree
Not for it to
climb me, just

Stand there
the way they do
looking east
to see the sun

whatever else
may happen
in all our branches
she always shows up.
Whenever you pick up the pen something happens. This little lightning-rod sucks something out of heaven.

But where is heaven? Is it in the sky? Or inside you? Or in this Grail, this little jat of ink.

10 August 2019

( woke dreaming that.)
Dreamt the leaves were turning already, on this street you drove down to meet me. Just a few buy showing red—I wave wildly to tell you, as if my arms could shout.

10 August 2019
Tell me I was wrong to sleep so long. A whole eight hours while the busy world drifted out of my control. Tell me sleep is the rapturous enemy, the Mata Hari of our poignant history. Keep watch! they cry but I dozed off and every night the enemy comes closer. Or am I wrong again? Tell me, please tell me I’m all wrong.

10 August 2019
Cool air this morning and nobody bothers me yet. The email is all ads, the phone silent as a deck of cards. Only the air comes through the window and I do like air—a trait of my species, and the air knows it, loves me this day (I hope the whole day) for reasons of her own. All i can do is be grateful, deep gratitude, and breathe in. Not just the lungs but the skin. Not just me but the trees. This morning air loves us all.

10 August 2019
It’s not easy to be a pagan.

Every single thing has meaning,

everything you see is a sign.

No leaf without its message.

10 August 2019
Blustering with meanings
I rush through the door
bruising the doorpost
with my sore elbow. That
is now instruction comes
if you trust adults to do it.
How about leaving children
all together by themselves
in a brightly lit room with
things all around them., words
on the wall and numbers on the floor
a bird fluttering around, a globe
to spin, what about seeing
what happens when you leave
the grown-ups out in the hallway.
Maybe the kids woould never grow up.
Maybe there would be no more war.

10 August 2019
Asmiring the enemy is a sound idea. Mostly the enemy is itself an idea (independence! satisfaction!) come humping your way over the horizon. Desist. Leave alone.

An idea is a big nervous dog more teeth than intelligence—let it run past you, admire its lines, but don’t bring it home.
This is what happens when I wake too soon. I start saying things instead of listening. Or is saying listening too, listening with your lips?

11 August 2019
TISHA B’AV

The day the temple went down twice. The day the hierarchy came to an end. Never. Strange. Celebrate the day when God became not a place to visit but a place to be always, in and out, reality. The true temple is everywhere.

11 August 2019
SURVIVAL KOANS

Desire knows no object but itself.

*

Now is the only time there is.

*

The wall doesn’t have ears. But it has a mouth and speaks clearly enough.

*

A stone listens hard but speaks softly.

*
If you can dance to it, don’t.

*

Only a really empty bottle floats.

*

Music happens to the air we’re trapped in all our lives.

*

A flute has no shame.

11 August 2019
Fisher
Walking there and walking back different feet for all the years--do I remember myself back then? He could easily be somebody else since I remember him being there same way i remember the place itself and what went on there, the thing I call myself back then is just part of the same memory, part of the furniture. Same way i see my legs stretched out before me now. I think it is me. Just as i think it is now.

11 August 2019
Tree. Sea.
Or see
the blue
shoulders of the sky
rub against
our quiet being here,
the haunches of earth
press against us,
urging us to stay.
Giving. Forgiving.
And a smile
floats downb the sky.

2.
Or all these years
I have been falling
to be in this place
where you can find me.
Fine me. Tree. Sea.
3. Or live nearby,
your phone number
I read in the lines of my palm.

4. Or always live nearby,
no further than a kiss apart,
crows stagger down the sky—

I know these things,
I have an immense mirror
at the end of the hall,
narrow, narrow, but very tall.
I see the whole story,
how it falls from the sky:
you come walking across the lawn to me.

12 August 2019
THE FRIENDS

No one out there.
Their voices are all inside.
Turn pff the phone and listen.
Reach out in the dark and touch.

12 August 2019
We say “You mean the world to me.”
But in fact you mean the world.

12 August 2019
Stribg quartet of grey sky
less light below the leaves
we live in the wood the sound
stores what little light we know
Haydn or Mozart how brittleside
happiness is, unmarked grave,
royal patron, busy bored musicians,
walk beside me till the end
that’s the only thing i know,
can i call it a song?

13 August 2019
Watch that cloud.
Which one?
The one you can’t see.
So, I’m watching.
Can you see the color of her eyes?
Bluish greenish. Ashkenazic hue.
Marry her right away.
I did I do I said I do.
There is nothing more you have to do.

13 August 2019
Maybe there really is
a universal morality—
rise with the dawn
and all will be
well as it can be

*

Guesswork, pieces of late,
scrimshaw the years
engrail on our faces,
or not, or never,
dyed hair of sunrise
gifting (the merchant
word) the old day.
Am I there yet
or can I sleep?

13 August 2019
Idle energies
I saw once in Wyoming
rock leap
and ice sing
and all of it still
waiting, waiting.
The human
trituration is lacking,
more men,
more women!
And then
daughters and sons__
will make their revelation
and we turn
wise, you, even me!

13 August 2019
The birds wake Sherry up at dawn chattering outside her tower window and making her cat go wild with hunting frenzy and there she is, eyes wide open and not even full daylight, what to do? Get a friend to write a magic spell or send the cat on pilgrimage to some other holy place to learn the privilege of the stationary. Cats hate to go. They run fast as they can to stay here. No, won’t work. The magic spell or nothing. Or hide the tower in a cave or with rubber-tipped tweezers pluck each bird from the sky while it’s still a block away and all you can hear is the little river trickling by.

13 August 2019
As if the beginning
then there were
whales on larboard
horizon in the head.

*

Where did yu come flying from
to be so hugely here?
Aren’t the marshes of the neighborhood
without needing you to be sea?

13 August 2019
One skips
one scatters
one sits dangling
legs off the wooden
bridge and fishes.

One clouds
one climbs,
one looks in the cold
oven and takes
out a loaf of bread.

One slips
one slides
one opens the window
but no bird flies in

one stands
one staggers
one leans on a tombstone
and waters the day-lilies.
One shouts
one shimmers
one takes a bus home
right bus but wrong house.

One searches
one stitches
the garment one wanted
was always already on one’s skin.

14 August 2019
Caught in a cloud
one is born again.
(One I know
wants to be two,
a kite
captured in a cloud)

Caught in a clod
the worm
praises creation,
life has space for everyone.

14 August 2019
Caught in cloth
the minister
sets down the chalice
after everyone has sipped
and wonders.

14 August 2019
SOB STORY

We keep wondering who we are until we’re not.

14 August 2019
Plenty of people love me—
they just don’t know who I am.

14 August 2019
Great music
is a wound on death’s hide,
music can be closer
than your own thought—
even some tune can unsay doubt.
Melody fingers the mind.

14 August 2019
No reason to look here for what is there—but here it is all the time.

14 August 2019
Catching the form of something
pressing it in clay
baking it hard and firm and clear
talking to it every day.

* 

A word hovers over its thing.
It tries to tell you something—
are you listening?

* 

Why should one’s voice be husky at waking
when one has been talking all
night in one’s dreams?
What is that other language
that needs no breath?
I wonder if it will rain—
but wonder is always wet,
always a fisherman
untangling his net
hoping that stuck in there
is not just flotsam and plastic but a real
live fish. The fish
hopes otherwise. Hope
is a happy habit
but a habit, a theological
habit but a habit.
So I just wonder if it will rain today.

15 August 2019
VESTIBULE

1.
the little room
before the room
within,
the entryway,
the Galilee to the great
redemption work
of being here,
of living
on earth, in a house.

2.
In churches they call it narthex,
a way to go in
before you go in,
a little shrine room of the liminal,
Goddess Limen, the Queen of Between.
3. I thought of the vestibule on Brown Street up the brick steps from the street, the vestibule on Anawan, brown wood and glass and all the spaces where clothes are hung betwixt and between, outdoors and in, both, raincoats, scarves, umbrellas, walking sticks, the silent traffic of going out and coming home.

4. I wish I had a vestibule—not just in my house, I wish there were a vestibule in me where I could doff the outer trappings, “identity,” and be at home. And where you could come civilly to visit me, take off your attitudes and just be. Then a house would be a true place, a hovel of heaven.

15 August 2019, Twin Lakes
A millionaire of willow trees
weeping for joy,
and cornfields everywhere
and Magali Noel sang
Hurt me, Johnny
on the other side of the old brick wall,
every brick of it a ripe
sunset of its own.

15 August 2019
Twin Lakes
Things blur in the morning.
Lost names! Movies
no one has seen!
A book in Portuguese!
A doctor specializing
in an unknown disease!
Maladies of Conscience
it says above the door—
is it a phone booth,
a confessional, orgone box,
a steamer tunk
that will gobble you up
and spit you out
happy in Tahiti?
Every thought is a trapdoor.
Especially dangerous in the morning,
floor slick with the dust of dream.

15 August 2019
Twin Lakes
ASSUMPTA EST MARIA

And everything happens
again and again
the years make nony
sense of our nows,
our vows.

2. The shepherds
are old now, think
they’ve seen everything before,
the virgin and her child,
the wise men footsore or
did they really come on camels,
we can’t remember, were
camels available back then,
and what about the voices in the sky.
why can’t we recall the words,
just the sound. But this is new--
a full-grown woman,
mature and wise and well-provided
rising slowly into the sky,
our only sky and she’s up in it!
3.
So much for shepherds--
leave them to their sheep,
their wooly memories.
This is the day the other
of the world goes u, in body,
her body, this is the day
the queen becomes the sky
and ever after. i look up
at the cumulus billowing
around her over the Taghkanics,
our hills her home
her everywhere.

15 August 2019

(And in the night before or in the next, my
mother died in her 88th year, in her sleep, on
Long Island, near the sea she loved, 1990,
when i was far away.)

= = = = = =
The caution the care
the thews of intelligence
rehearsed against
the lubberly world--
that was good thinking.

Ya nichevo na znayu
heard in my head as we drove
I know nothing
is the best thing to think
best thing to say.

To know anything is to be at risk.

15 August 2019
The impression lingers.
two deer, no, three
step out of the trees.
We all share vowels,
we move by breath,
sometimes breath alone.
To tell the truth. Deer
have harsh voices, We
cough in our sleep.

15 August 2019
Not so much the fire
as the flame,
not the language
but the single word

leaps out of the magic
of someone’s moth
and says!

And we hear
whether we understand it or not.
Understanding is unimportant—
hearing is all.

16 August 2019
Big truck goes by
sounds empty
as it hits a rut.
What a strange
life the driver knows,
driving space
through space,
a fierce encapsulator,
seven yards of emptiness
going fast through the empty woods.

16 August 2019
MORING ANTHEM

Hurry downstairs and do what you can, nothing more anyone can do, and passing traffic will shout out trumpets praising thee.

16 August 2019
We tend to think
the ancient Gods
are still asleep.
How wrong we think!

They stir our bodies
to love and war, they let
us talk and write and take
my wife by the hand to bed.

16 August 2019
Erase the ledger
and start the tree again.
There. A river.
And there a meeting house,
clapboard, empty,
maybe some religion left within.
I mean inside. Where the veins
still leap up to the leaf,
remember?

2.
I think there is a game
of throwing human words
through time to see
who catches them. Old game,
not much public interest,
like court-tennis or curling
pretty stone pots along the ice.  
And apples still fall from the tree.

3.  
Or give way to levity  
and dance at the fallen grammar  
the world map on the bathroom floor,  
chase the chickens out of the house  
and see who comes to take their place,  
smiling, book in hand, knowing your name.

4.  
The older woman in the brick-red sweater  
gets into her white hybrid  
and sits at the wheel a while  
evidently thinking.  
North or South. Chicken or veal.  
Dartmouth or Yale. Memory  
is toying with her now. And with me too  
since I can’t recall her name.  
She starts the engine, turns  
on the radio. Public voices  
talking fast. Still sits there.
Could she be waiting? Could I?

5.
Always room for one more
says the girl on the elevator.
The higher we go the more people get out
and at the top floor
only I am left to tell thee.

16 August 2019
A SET OF
FUNERAL DANCES MOURNING
GEORGE ECONOMOU

George George Georgios
worker of the earth—
farmer? Fabulator!
Of such narratives as hold
the earth in their hands
and slowly, over ages,
give the earth back to us.

And George told.

*

Remember remember?
For us in school it is always
September. We listened
and smiled at learned jokes
and made ome too.
Professor Nelson teaching Spenser.  
All day I sat reading the Faerie Queene.  
We smirked a little how the wise men talked,  
Professor Nelson teaching Spenser,  
I sat all day and read The Faerie Queene  
We walked out and coffeed where we could  
Professor Nelson reciting Colin Clout  
and you remembered, remember?  
The hall I sat in was called Philosophy  
He explained the rustic, Tudor yokel, to us  
to you who knew full well  
how pigs eat rattlesnakes  
and how far the diner is for Sunday brunch,  
Professor Nelson taught us Spenser  
All day I sat and watchrd them come and go  
You imitated him sweetly, you knew the land,  
the urgent erth that makes us speak  
all day I watched them go and be gone.  

*

In the islands they dance  
at funerals, to please the land  
(there is so little of it)
to please the land with music, that makes sense, and bodies shaped and shaken by the air they dance to, to give the land a gift and plead with it to take their brother in or their lover their mother their children in or even now and then a poet given back by the sea.

*

Late Middle Ages Early Renaissance that was your dance, so many pages butterflies fluttering by over the grain fields of Montana where the Renaissance is still awake, the Reformation
any minute now, and one-sixth of the whole Canadian frontier shimmers just north of us he said, he said and I believed him because it’s always wisest to believe a dance. I knew a dancer once and as I watched I saw that dance can never lie.

*

Not Athens, Kalavrita. The real Greece is inland where philosophers fear to tread and the churches dealt more gently with the older gods, the ones who came in male and female and in between, the gods who knew about beauty and gave it to those who knew how to take. the dance of taking, Inland farmers who studied the earth and listened to what it says, farmers
no Gnostics, no Sophists, no restless Odysseus, no pale Alexandrian pastorals. Earth is work. Georgios means the one who works the earth, who stands on the land and holds his wife, stares the weather down and listens to her magic spells.

Thank the gods you married well.

*

Now I must go down and feed the crows who teach me how to dance to such long sluggish lines by being quick. The child of anythis is something else—the crow taught me that. And explained that all we really have to do is change our minds.
Just let me talk to you
I don’t even know who you are
the language will find you
if you say anything at all
I’ll get to understand
the wheat fields of your native country
and the sound of water
peculiar to your river
the little one on its way to the big
just let me talk
in your neighborhood
even your silence will tell me
something, even silence
can help in times like these
and I don’t even know when it is
you could sing to me
if you wanted to, I know
you know so many songs,
I know you know the pne
about the blackbird and the moon
the one about the church of the panthers
the waterfall of crystals ever flowing
or be silent still if you choose
all choices are yours
and this time your silence
(silence in song time)
will mean different things
you can’t help it
you’re always meaning something
that’s why I want to talk
so much to you, only to you,
you understand everything
I have to keep talking
my silence is broken
it falls from me word by word
it’s two hours before dawn
the night is warm
I sit here with my broken silence
wondering about your name
names are important to know
but I barely know my own
and you haven’t told me yours yet
a name is like music
you can hear it over and over
never get tired of listening
to how it vibrates and echoes
and changes subtly every moment
is it too much to ask
will you tell me your name
even listening to me
is a kind of description
a name is a description
please let me go on
just let me talk to you.

17 August 2019
HOW TO WRITE

Don’t say tree
say Japanese quince.
Dn’t say flower
say rose.
Don’t say rose
say Blushing Pink
Slovakian Rose
(Rosa fornicaria).
Don’t say word
say noun.
Don’t say noun
say child,
but don’t say child
say Joseph
say he’s lying on the ground
staring up at the stars
he’s trying to see
through the leaves.
Don’t say leaves,
say fronds
broad dark green
of the Egyptian palm
growing 36 meters from the Nile
and he is crying.
Or don’t say that.
Say tree.

17 August 2019
Close to the outlet
the dreams run
free and fast
down the culverts
of language deep
into you and me.
Then sharing happens
that terrifying stain
where thine becomes
mine and the dreams
rule our gaping world.

17 August 2019
On the screen
a crowd of language
shouting to be free,
what does that ask
of me? I sit and watch
helpless. the way
I’d watch the wind
in the trees, all
I can do is feel. Feel.
Deep in the cavern
of my heart I light
a stupid candle and pray.

18 August 2019
It tries to find me
it searches around in the yard
the gravel the tile the patio
it even ransacks the shadows.
I watch from the window--
I know well what doors are for,
it can only find me
if I so much as touch the knob,
not even turn it, just the thought
called ‘open’ may let it in.
And if it finds me I will belong
to it, hours, days maybe,
and certainly the nights.

18 August 2019
The union of linden tree and full moon is high summer. Ink and brush to talk about that in archaic Chinese. We all knew how once but then forgot--stare into the pond and try to remember. Marriage is everywhere.

18 August 2019
THE MANNEKIN

I’m trying not to think about a monstrous being I saw last night, one made to be as evil as IT seemed, a lifeless black man scarred all over to be a beast, eyeless, castrated, erect as he could be under branches crushing down on his head. I squirmed with disbelief. How could anyone bring such a thing into that special form of death called art? A thing like this can leper us. I went away thinking Burn it, burn the poor thing, maybe it means to bear all our sins and fears and pathogens into the healing smoke of being gone.
(And she who made it set it up in a shrine and led us in one by one to worship it. Now let me wash my hands in Isaiah’s songs, and beg holy Francesco for a healing kiss. but mostly I look over the frontier and see Lama Norlha smiling kindly, saying “So stupid!” about the dreadful thing, but also at my fear of it.)

18 August 2019
Everybody sleeps late on Sunday except the poor priest who has to get up and get ready but he’s happy I suspect looking out at the meadows or the empty boulevards, for a little while he has God all to himself.

18 August 2019
TAKE MEANING BACK

for Rebecca Wolff

Look at the crowds in Hong Kong
Moscow Caracas, listen
to their outcry, the cry
to be free, which means to be
and be themselves,

take meaning back
from the government
from business from capital,
from men in power, men as power,
take language back
and cleanse it in poetry

only in poetry
if anywhere
  can meaning be safe,
water you can drink,
grain safe to eat—

all poetry is language poetry
only in the cry of the individual
ill-silenced by the words themselves
only in the lone voice
the almost personless voice of a poem
can the crowd’s word be heard

all poetry is; language poetry—
only in poetry can language be healed,
heard, give meaning back to us.

Write the poem. Take meaning back.

18 August 2019
IN KINGSTON

Under the image of Artemis in the King’s town, the woman of all women rebuking the mere man of me but still her arms spread protect even me. Her breasts feed all.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Besmirched by sun,
baptized by rain
the asphalt parking lot
dreams and dreams.
So many journeys here
began and ended,
so many ebraces
on backseat trysts
and lovers’ partings,
so many weary
walkers on their way
to jobs, so many
wearier still
on their way home.
And here I linger
waiting for the rest
of my life, I mean my wife
and on cue the church
bell rings the hour.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Tall man little dog
leashed together,
dog lags a little,
little legs, feet
quick but still
always at the level
of the man’s rear leg,
the stride.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Church bells on the Dutch church
play
hymns, they’ll make
all of us Protestants again,
Lord help me find my way away.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Web absent spider
without Penelope.
Web of wire,
so you are the spider—
lines of sense
strung across a town,
an eruv for the goyim—
dare not leave
the precincts of this signal.
The internet is your numerology,
no web means no you.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Listen to the lingo
of the leaves—
only mid-August
and they talk about leaving,
most of their work done.
There is a kind of joyful
melancholy, their slow adieux—
it’s kind of them to let me tune in.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Can’t read, must write. Can’t sing, must think—music is closest of all arts to the mind—pure neurology. Can’t travel? Keep the sea nearby, we have a slice of it, ripe and gorgeous, a fjord full of it between mountains and our plains. O River of the North, come ocean me!

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
The huge crowd listens with one ear. No song. No sound. The windmills spin noiselessly, babies stifle their whimpers against their mothers’ chests. Someone is a pink shirt angles through the crowd tormented by music only he can hear.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston) revised 19 August 2019
A blue car passes slow
down the one-way street
before the Shrine of Artemis.
This is still the world,
a lively, summer wind
stirs up the bushes.
A red car parked
beneath the Goddess's
outstretched hand
revs up, quivers and goes.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Sunroof over me
and over that a pale
stretch of phone lines
slicing through the blue.
Precious visible,
the skin of time!

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
Waiting is a line.
It runs through thought
as if it knew.

(14 August 2019 — Kingston)
revised 19 August 2019
= = = = =

I wouldn’t dare  
I am a married  
to the earth  
man—true,  
there is divorce  
but where to then?

And yet I try  
to interview the sky—  
why did ancient folk  
think the gods came  
down from there?  
Could all that brightness  
be just our faces reflected?  
But sometimes don’t we dare  
reach out to touch the blue?

19 August 2019
Try something else
the fer of difference,
iron the soul needs

we hate nutrition, we like food
hate philosophy, just want to be right
hate how far away everything is
but want to be there anyhow
the beaches of Loca Coca,
gilded domes of the furthest –stan.

but no, stay at home
and read your Plato
take B-Complex capsule
don’t scratch your mosquito
bite, dab vinegar on it
acid draws the poison out
and hope for fair weather.

(The meaning of this poem is
Don’t do anything yet.)

19 August 2019
Then come back to the big island wearing your cloud.
Swagger a little up along the ruin Broadway has become--
why not, nobody cares, we’re all busy dressing up and down for the endless Identity Parade
I am no one at all but what you see
i am my seemong and my costume
the cross or star
or pearls around my neck
My soul is locked away from me in a place called My Identity--
I will never know who I am.

19 August 2019
I’m too old
to be an American.
They aren’t born yet,
so they hate other people,
people who were born already,
or people like me
who’s being born
even as we speak.

(16 August 2019)
revised 20 August 2019
AMARANTH,

the homecoming
and the river
you never heard of—
why short of breath,
why wave and no sea?
Amaranth, come
live in the Word,
love or something like it
always waiting,
be my friend
my fingers find
the sleek softness
of your time.

The new hour,
the bower,
the Amaranth Hotel
where no one ever dies
(amaranth means never-fading)
but where the dancers sleep.
And where does music sleep?

20 August 2019
Inland
be animal,
almost,
crush of citizens
around a bad idea—
shun that. Flee
into me,
bend
the bow,
the bow is stronger than life,
and aim is all.

20 August 2019
LASTING METAL
for Charlotte

Write on me quick before the light goes away.

I looked at Solomon and he too blinked his amorous eyes.

I am gold
I last more of forever than anyone but you.

20 August 2019
A WORD WOKE YOU

So look it up
it’s there to be kissed
like any word
hiding in the
o no you can’t find
the dictionary

thank the lord
for little blessings

so make it up instead,
what does this word
mean in you? A baker
or his daughter?
Tree top or bird in it?
Maybe it means
something not in you,
not a memory, not even
a thing outside you
in the tender precincts
of the known world,
maybe (did you think
of that when you woke)
it’s not even a word yet
just a scrap of vowel music
hummed out of sleep,
a sound that needs
to be a word, a word
the needs you
to make it up, make it
mean, the way we try
tp give meaning to everything.

20 August 2019
People who get up early have long fingernails. Fact. If you think this is silly, look down at your hands and try to remember. Who were you once? Are you the same one now? Or similar? Or as they say a shadow of some former self. Or was it even a self, back then, when you woke up early, saw the rising sun gleaming on your fingernails, your hands stretching out to grasp the world?
All I want to do
is say my prayers
keep them purring
in the cavern of my breath,
keep them singing
in the tavern of my will
where words drink up
new meanings and dance
intensely in that space
called time, time inside,
hear my non-self praying,
see my silence dancing too
until the mind slumps
smiling into peace.

20 August 2019
77 degrees
inside and out,
a harmony
at last!

I imagine
the sun is just now
leaving her bed,
I imagine that I
am waking up
on earth, I imagine
there are such things
as pieces of wood
to build with or burn
or just hold in my bands
and hope for rain.

21 August 2019
People wait for the other side of everything. Where I stand waiting for them.

21 August 2019
Picture it: a gull
as if on a trapeze
swooping low
through the river air—

thank God for gulls,
they mind our rocky
shores give us
not just the sea
they come from
but the sky they own
and lend to us,
a lake of light.

21 August
How much can we ask
of the farmer--
do his cows respect him,
does his well
never run dry?
We’re tortured by doubts
but is he? Isn’t he
on the side of the earth
the lasting, the friend
of us all? Yet when I
was a child I saw them,
craggy faces grey
with what looked like pain,
was it? Was it just age?
The look of them scared me
as if the earth took vengeance
on those who plowed
and dug and pulled living
things out of the ground.
I am an easily frightened child.
EYEDROPS

Eyedrops refresh the eyes
then the eyes water a little
and I think they’re tears
so I think I’m sad. A kleenex
wipes the false tears away
but who’ll wipe away my sadness?

21 August 2019
Reverse logic. Trazom. The keys rattle in my head, I have a door too, we are all houses of one kind or another, Jagged mountain peaks snow slopes August we landed in Innsbruck Mountain music. Trazom. Sun in the leaves. Who are you talking to, and why? Don’t you see, every leaf is a tongue, every tongue has its word, every word mens you, so how can you sleep? Trazom in the trees, it’s only natural, it’s nature, that’s what’s wrog with it, with me. I am a prisoner of my body, I am logic, the music sinks me deeper
into myself. Trazom. Reverse the flow. Men are hammering on a neighbor house, nature, the demon of improvement, the demon who persuades men that noise is virie, good for business, helps the flag fly in this listless sky. Trazom. I turn on the radio like a man keeling before the Virgin, o Lady intercede for me, tell the music to cure me, tell it to tell me what my problem is, it’s nature, isn’t it, the river that sweeps us along forever.

21 August 2019
Would you even know what sorcery means if I relented and admitted I am a sorcerer?

Easy to admit the truth when truth is the furthest from anybody’s mind.

Yes, I am a sorcerer, a canal runs through me, silken ad sinister ideas float by, gaudy or gloomy, all kinds pass along, pss the cathedral of my head on their way to the grotto of my heart.

You get the idea, the picture, yes? A sorcerer means anybody with desires, anybody with anxieties, fears,
knowledge of the past. These idle words you hear from me are my spell, I’m casting, casting but not on you, don’t be afraid, I don’t even know who you are.

21 August 2019
And things come after
and the wve eas up
reminding her
of the one who once
came from the se
to save her from
the country of men
Not a man himself
and not womn, white
energy tht sid This
is all you need.
And the face f the sea sparkled like wine

21 August 2019
WISHING WELL

I wonder
is it still there
the [enny I threw in
when I was five
in the White Mountains
a famous well,
bright copper penny,

and well means good
to do things well
or wish people well
or say Be well,
companion,

so good must come
from water, water
from the ground,

look down there, see
the water sparkle
and they told me at night
you can see the stars down there  
but that's too late  
for me to be out,

and all the pennies  
down there, nickels  
too and even a few quarters,  
o America is a rich country  
I hear them say,

we must be living well.  
we have wealth, which sounds  
as if it also comes from well,  
from a well, from being well,

and isn't being  
itself  
being well?

And this well, this remembering,  
this penny lost and everything found,  
bright penny, bright mountains,
o my love I wish you well,
a sip of water for you
from that well,
framework of branches

and all the wishes mix together
down there, the way the mind
mixes together everything it knows,
all the shiny pennies it remembers.

22August 2019
I dream of two girls
who teach me to make cheese
I am so grateful that my students
are teaching me at last,
one fair one dark, the dark
playful, voluble, the fair
quiet and smiling, they give
me a key to the place
not far from my office
where cheese is made,
I find them at it when I come,
and she looks up and says
here is where we pour the magic in.
O blessed dream where things are taught,
I wake and look the process up,
acids and rennets and bacteria,
curds and whey but I
can’t forget the happiness of their smiles.

22 August 2019
Simplify. Be obvious.
Be Schubert for a change
and let your feelings show--
but no, you want to be
complex, intricate all the time,
you want to be Beethoven’s
last sonata, the jazz of intellect
holdings all your feelings at bay
till some day they all say the same thing.

22 August 2019
Let the code solve itself. That’s what numbers are good for, they dance together all night long while you struggle through the numberless realities of dream. You wake, the numbers sleep, leaving only a few of their dancers to solve your day with.

Note: The Jews made do with 22, we need 26, and those Russians, burdened with even more. No wonder Siberia is so ig. And just think of all the stars that shine on it.

22 August 2019
STREET

The eternity of streets
the one long block
from Eleusis to Kingston
where I sit in sun
on a park bench
on a middling busy street
in a county called Ulster
after another sacred
land.

A tree of white
pom-poms is in front of me,
like hydrangea clusters,
busy, but on a lone stalk tree.
I wonder. Names are strange,
we don’t even know
most of us the meaning
of our own.
But a street is always there, here, always leading, rpmising, cajoling, a street is Eden you can never be banished from, your house is on a street, the street loves us in its own way.

I’m thinking such things while people pass by, all of them moving briskly, obeying the andiano! of the street.

2.
There is a glare on the gleam of things. Hot day. We llive in the street, the street lives in us. The women are on their mobile phones, the shrine of Artemis is a block away, listen to the oracle, it said The answer is always in the street.
The answer is the street.
Listen to it, even in America
it knows and it tells,
tells even you, who try to sit
there moveless and watch it pass.

22 August 2019
Let the clarity return,
crow over hemlock,
woman at her house door,
silver in dark cupboards,
coyote yelps up the night road—life.
The things that know us.

23 August 2019
In that kind of church
the organ plays by itself,
the pale benches are empty
but creak and groan
beneath the weight of sunlight
streaming down.

A traveler stumbles in
seeking the mind of peace
the busy forests all around
deny,
stands looking around
wondering where the altar is,
then the word ‘God’ comes to mind
and the traveler kneels down.
amd hears a voice somewhere saying
You brought me here with you,
thank you, now you may go.

23 August 2019
Spurious alternatives:
a tiger or a scarf,
a child or a triangle.

23.VIII.19
The things we say
to the stars at night
but who’s listening?
Sometimes silence
is an outrage.
a kill-fee to squash
the translation
of our feelings into
language, and language
always means, can
only mean, speaking to you.

23 August 2019
Red Hook
THE INSTRUCTION

1.
Stand in the shadow
and pray to the sun—
this is the way.

Touch is all—
so touch everything
and be known
in your knowing,

till the while world
is sunlight on your skin

then stand in the shade
and remember.
2.
Something like that.

He mumbled from his sleep
and was me.

I tried to understand
the shimmer
on everything I saw.

3.
Everything is a confession.
The fence post admits its stability,
its complicity with property,
the wall admits its work of separation
and grives for all it keeps apart.
And I stand trembling
like a child, a child
with a story book
he still can’t read
but there are pretty pictures everywhere.

24 August 2019
I sail from the general
to the specific
like some always
trying to come home.

24.VIII.19
Woke at five o’clock
don’t know why
no noise outside
no light in the sky

In my sleep I was reading
about a man who wrote a book
all about the women in his life
all full of praise,
the hymns they sang
the hips they swayed

and then I woke
with a ditty in my head
wondering what was the matter
or who I was to meet in the dark,

I reckon it must be you.

25 August 2019
I can’t understand how dark it is or even where the dark began. Why are we few and it so large? Is there really a river in the stars? They told me that when I was young—but who was I then, and when, and who were they? And does that river flow down now washing around me as I try to think? Go back to bed and close your eyes I think they said, close your eyes and find the real dark, the one with light inside it, the stars outside are only there to remind you of your business, humans are born to see through the dark.
It gets so cosmological at night, doesn’t it, Anne? Soon it will be September when you said we could meet, hour maple trees will let you go, the sweet old Bentley gear you near and we can jabber in what they call Real Time. But we know who the real time is, the one right now, the dark shimmer in the language that gets us going and sustains. We wouldn’t even know each other without the words. So here in real time (no number, no weather, just now, right now) I think my way to hear you in my head abd nake myself at home in yours. Bonjour, poète, it’s all cosmology, a sly Greek word meaning all the stuff we love to make up.

25 August 2019
And even now there’s no light in the sky—

iy’s the time Tibetans call the tho-rang, dark

when the goddess wakes.

I suspect the night is running backwards again, though I dare not accuse my dark friend of timidity or even playfulness. I’ll wait the daylight out, I too can be a child, I know the birds outside are with me, waiting to begin.

25 August 2019
And where do mistakes come from anyhow, typos and false sums, misremembered addresses, phone numbers, husbands’ names? Maybe now the sky seems ready to relent—shape of a tree shows now. Sunday morning almost, and no church. No priest but the enlightened citizen, the work of the hour is to build the day.
Put down whatever you think when they ask for your name, age, profession, gender, faith. Just write down what comes to mind even if it doesn’t fit inside the little box they give you on the form, just tell the truth, and the only truth is what you think, skylark and Passover, rye bread, Canterbury pilgrimage, silver dollar, string quartet and marry me.

25 August 2019
1. Going slow longevals us.  
A word flakes off the painting,  
a chip of truth, vermilion,  
leaves a pale cloud where it fell from,  
akward landscape of a dark room,  
America before the war. But which?

2. When kitchen tables still  
were made of wood,  
maple for preference,  
tight grain and smooth,  
thен coffee lived in cups  
not mugs, had saucers  
under them and sugar  
came in cubes  
and the Old Man of the Mountain  
still looked over Franconia  
and kept the land at peace.
3.
Are these even my own lies
or have I borrowed them
from what I think are memories?
Everyone’s ‘own’ memory
comes from, belongs to
the world outside all round,
one’s own is other people’s,
so ‘I remember’ means
You have to do this too!

4.
See, it does get easier
as it goes along.
Long life from going slow—
the turtle’s trick.
With memory’s own translucent shell.
5. The things we wake up knowing are precious things, things that some mind knew before us, things that flake out of the landscape of dream. And there they are, in our mind our mouth, we breathe and say them to our lover, or jump up to write them down.

25 August 2019
Plans are the Greek Kalends, the day between today and yesterday, the ship that sails upside down, the lighthouse under the sea, the earth adrift in space. Who pays the sun? Who plays the sinister role of Gravity? Why do we fall? Why, are we caught in someone’s dream?

25 August 2019
Flowing backwards to Uncle Source
the river escapes control. Soon
the sea will flood inland, blue veins,
arteries of salt heaven hithering!
Joy to live into such an eon.

25 August 2019
The hum in matter, 
tinnitus
of things,
the disease of hearing,
disease of having a self
and having to listen to it
all the time,

so learn to love
whatever you hear,
the ringing in the ears of things,
the everlasting Scarlatti between the ears.

2.
Nothing to hear
but what you are.

so hold the hum.
that sound like sunlight in the trees.
3.
Because what is
will not be again

or yes it will
but all the numbers change—

think how many
seven will be then!

And what we hear now
zre stars anyhow:

cpunt them at midday
with all your eyes closed.

4.
Meaning to be mindful
of what’s to come,
shale and quick rivulet
and your poor self
naked as a breath
watching a kingfisher dive.
Because if it happened  
it happens again  
till all the Christmases have come  
and the girl in the schoolyard  
reads your tarot cards  
and tells you who to be tonight  
if night ever comes.  
And you can still hear her hum.

26 August 2019
Lift the children
up to the sun
so She can see
some of what she has done,

the energy, the work within
that comes from outside

the inside-out of all things—

that is our liturgy.

26 August 2019
Shafer
Brooklyn to Annandale
a river journey
sixty years.

27.VIII.2019
ive an account
of love’s tracings
precise as shadows
leaves on trees
cast on the ground
late afternoon.

27 August 2019
And yesterday the blue
flowers on the rose of Sharon
so profuse
were matched
by patches of that same blue:
the sky
seen through so many trees,
pure flowers of light.

27 August 2019
Tease me with space,
go on, the bear
squeezed in tight woods,
words squeezed on the page,
page squeezed in a book
but I remember: I was a child,
I looked up and saw
a plane writing words
in white smoke all over the sky--
that’s what I want,
not wine squeezed in bottles,
words as space,
friends breathing through the sky.

27 August 2019
Once I saw Napoleon
riding past my window
and once when I was on the swings
I saw Beethoven walking
through the park, his hands
joined behind his back
and he was humming.
One night Dante came for supper,
he nibbled a radish
from my mother’s plate
and made my father frown.
And once Moses came to visit,
kissed me in my cradle,
taught me a few words of Egyptian,
lion, owl adobe.
And when I still roamed
in my mother’s womb
Astarte passed by whispering
words I still almost remember,
they sounded like this:
Be quiet,
my loving crows
will teach you
all you know
and when that lesson
ends it’s time
and time for you to wake--
be born!

27 August 2019
Xerez
is a town in Spain
where a strong
wine (fortified
they call it)
came from.
And the English
loved it
    (the way
they do, dark
sweet things not
always good for you)
and they called it
by the town it came from,
the Spanish of those days
pronounced it sherress
    (as Mexico used to be said Meshico)
so the Brits heard sherries.
But there was only one of it so they said This wine must be sherry because there’s only one, and so it is. And there is still only one.

27 August 2019
Typing vs writing,
different muscles
make different hands
make different sentences
lines by lines
as if the breath were somehow
taught by the fingertips.

27 August 2019
Mysterium

left over from
stash of old magazines
strange
We read such things
or saw
our imaginations pictured
devil within,
faces and forms,
beaches and farms,
the mountains we would never climb.

2.
Is seeing a picture of Mt. Everest
in a book different, and if so how,
from seeing it from the window of a plane
when a wise friend beside you
touches your arm to get
your attention and points
out there and says Joma Lungma?
3. The mystery is in the seeing, we pay for seeing, we pay for what we see. The more we see the older we get. So stars are one thing only and never grow old.

4. So carry the old Lifes and Geographics to the recycle bin. The recycled image is halfway to heaven.

28 August 2019
TO BE BORN AS A DAY
and sleep yourself through
swimming the combers
of what comes crying, sighing,
hammer tapping on a neighbor’s roof
o the peril of empty houses
haunted by work,
rest now, you are a cloud
over the calm sea
but even the calmest sea
has waves, the rise and fall and
onward thrust of information through
the unchanging water--
only the wave moves,
the water stays. Capisce,
little child? You will sleep all day
and call it work and play
and study and all the liturgy
of public time, but by the grace
of wind and birds and water,
yes, water, drink now,
it will be sleep.

28 August 2019
And there are other fathers too
and mountains that wake up at night
and walk around.
And where they go
is determined by your speech--
they listen, they listen well
to all the veiled or vague
pesetations of your soul
you favor language with.
And then they come.
It has happened to me
many a time, and that
is why you ind me as I am.

28 August 2019
Case of conscience
help all you can
and leave alone.
Feel what they feel.
Street overhead
blanket of truth
cars know the way by
try[ing] to explain the dark
a skater on the Danube
a philosophy full of ink
speak French with your nanny
she’s really only a girl
how little you know!
the time is ripe
peel the fruit
remember the dancer
I sad danger
remember the rosefall
we don’t have chemistry anymore
I hope the door is locked
the sky is a sort of face
we came here to get away from fact
a goat appeared chewing on it
furtive flag?
Swear oath on your body
a diesel honks [?] through the dark
stay on your track
the cynic in me barks at the sun
when I have awakened enough I will sleep
sleep that long permission
a bridge, but over what?
Someday the sea comes back
so many places to go
listen to the lady
embrace the obvious
isn’t that clear by now
a question mark was just a Q.
History is pure distraction
learn from the future
most birds know tomorrow today
The view from the cry
music in your arms
are you old enough to know
painted light
thunder in the left hand
saddle sore but the galley visited
stir the edge the core will follow
the loose of liberty
a chorus of special silences
touching things that aren’t there
the law tells stories
a long Egyptian dream
a Christian conspiracy called Love
wallow in light
now change your clothes
sorting by sentences
a grove by the sea
sad woman with a fishing rod I saw

28 / 29 August 2019
After broken sleep
the repairing light.
Noise abounding—make
the best of what bothers
me I keep telling myself
but how? Groan
into music, whine
into words.

29 August 2019
You do it where you can, to hold the world together, you do it where you can like peeing in the woods or in the endless fields of lavender along the Calavon, you do it where you can, like your hand picking up a chip of stone along the beach, who knows, it might be marble, who knows, it might be just what you need. You do it where you can like shadow falling from a maple, like eating half the apple and tossing the rest to a place the deer will find it, you do it all day long if you’re smart and then give over, stop, lie down, do nothing, sleep.

29 August 2019
Or knowing
where one has been,
the irritant of sleep
soothed by the pain of waking--
mean dreams! Stare
out the window and try to be you.

29 August 2019
Every glass singing
a cut-glass song
wake and see
wake and see

The verses woke me and I rose—
what could I do
but answer language with movement?

Wake and see
means Write it down,
Look it up,
Open the window
take in the brand-new air

30 August 2019
Supply
comes down the sky
I looked it up
in a book
a woman gave us,
I was ready
and reading
is believing,

the alphabet
is proof of that
we spell in our sleep
and our dreams pronounce us,
isn’t that the case?
sleep on your left side
wake with a plan
but the book didn’t know
that or if it did it didn’t
say, some days
are just meant to be yesterdays.

30 August 2019
Ravenous for complex taste
we sugar coffee and salt
everything else, bring out
all your elements, traces
of sea and desert, tumble
down the cliffs in us and tell
where you’ve been, we know
where you come from
but what have you seen?
*In quo salietur?* He asked,
how will you get the edges back,
the sharpness, the roundness,
or feel the hand that plucked it
from the vine, kiss the fingers
that blessed you with particulars?
All you need are edges--
the centers come rolling
in all by themselves.

30 August 2019
I’m not it’s not talking
about the pain I feel
it’s not about talking
not about feeling
we’ve come too far
from the seacoast for that
inland is silence inland is doubt
grassland prairie puszta steppes
the plains are dreamland only
come away as you can,
all the fierce nomads in search of the sea--
so there is a Genghis cruelty in each me
to fight my way from the silence
upward into the live silence
where the fifth Buddha
counsels us in dream
to fear not feeling above all--
start with the prairie dogs
of Colorado, come out,
say the sound you think is your name,
come out come out and be
joyously afraid--
even rejection is
a species of relationship.
Or take a bus and get there fast,
fold your arms and take a nap--
the sky is blue just for you.

30 August 2019
And find out who is me.

Wake “me” in some sleep.

Open eye
seize trees

is this what you expected?

Or go back
into your old town

Or are you a telescope
can only see
what’s far away?

No, the tower.
Hoist yourself high
see that landscape,
see that lady
coming over it, the Sun?

have “you” begun?

is there a story
in the weather?

What makes “you” think
anything has changed?

This is still the Middle Ages
the fox still lurks behind the ferns
don’t even ask about the king.

31 August 2019
If I were near
I would be there

but I am here
a place of its own

I have to hurry
to keep up
with where I am—

sometimes here
is the furthest place of all.

31 August 2019
A share of light
to glean the day
the orchestra of silence
tunes its wings

something is out there
and needs me

they scribbled little
letters on all the leaves
to instruct me

or deceive?
Sweet if so, they want
me to believe--

belief is good for the crops
for the town

belief is to us
as salt is to the sea.

31 August 2019
Carefully one
by one lift
the cloud down from the sky
and loop it over your shoulders,
braid them one by one
into a fine shawl
to shield you from forgetting--
you feel its caress
subtly wherever you go,
you are never alone,
the world is soft at your throat
and the sky will always
bring you some
and even now your skin wants more.

31 August 2019
THE INSCRIPTION

The way we do always means you-- that’s what it said above the stone gate unless b]my Greek is weaker than it was. Or could it mean A gate always goes in and you do too? I feel the stone, a little chunk of it crumbles, comes loose in my hand. Sometimes I ask too much of language. Or not enough.

31 August 2019