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Words are not a high-school book reports about the feelings of their speaker.

Words are actions, provocations, to rouse thinking and feeling in others.

Words are for others.

In saying this, does he mean Live as far from your feelings as you can?

No, not at all. He means feel, feel deeply, but your feelings are your secret guides, don’t reveal them. Let them thrive inside you and let them teach you to speak.
A word is ink
in the witness chair
sworn to tell
the truth even
before it was born.

1 October 2019
Guilt sounds like gilt,
sheen of gold
without the substance of it.

Beyond guilt
a great canyon lies—
explore it with burro and star-map.
They keep waking me
from the dark, calling,
words, words. Listen
they say, listen then
get up and write us down.
Fuzzy-eyed at 4 AM
I thank them with my pen.

1 October 2019
Electric distance
loaf of bread long
carried under the arm
tight, taut, all
squeezing and no falling
and here it is
buzzing in he appetite.

2.
Just a road in southeastern France.
Churches are grand
for the landscape but don’t go in.
The spire says it, all it has to say.

3.
But as ever there is waiting to be done,
waking and waiting all the same,
walking is a way of waiting
because the minute you stop
you’re already there.
Some of the towers seem
topped with iron or with tin,
not like the copper green back home, 
awls up in the sky, to pierce 
the distances like messages 
from long ago to never mind, 
and we are the heaven who hears them.

4.
At night there too you hear 
the stream rush by, 
there the Dranse and here 
the Metambesen, window open 
till winter mutes the song 
or stills the very singing of it. 
But sun is autumn still and listen.

5.
I recall the bread but not the cheese 
and not the meat— 
memory has broken circuits, 
curious adjacencies, gulfs 
where there should be just 
the shadow of the girls next door. 
I wish I could remember nothing--
a line I ad-libbed in a movie, a scene in a car, my voice thin beneath the engine groan, the passenger a star I can’t recall.

5.
But France is still there, the iron tables, the summer animations, not a library in sight, just the stream behind the hospital, the UK tourists in their little cars. The goat in the field, *remember nothing* for all the distances have come upon you, wake you from the sleep of now.

1 October 2019
What makes you think I’m me?
The way I talk, the way I smell?
The church bell in the tower
knows more than I can tell—
what kind of a metal could I be?

1 October 2019
INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL

Truck at dawn by
53 feet of noise
the harder the hollower
with sudden sunray
in the yellowing trees.

*

October. You can’t
it seems export
a revelation. Here
she stands above us
in the rock grotto.
Here is the light.
Here is what it means.

*

Broadcloth and sashes
the pomps of office.
But shyly the true ones
slip through shadows
to the well, naked,
knowing that uniforms
make men blind.
A troupe of finches
scoffing overhead.

*

Decide once for all.
Determine
to be obvious,
a camel
could walk through
the gate of it,
drop its burden
at your feet.
Just build the city
the camels may come.

*
Interlude of hide-and-seek

to keep the child
in you busy
while I speak,
looking for my
meaning in or
under or behind
every burning bush.

*

Of course it’s morning—
why else would it matter?
A springboard, a monitor,
the coast reached at last.

*

Among the Mayan ruins
a chip of Spanish glass.
Our children never
altogether eave home.

*
Heard it first on the cello
then she hummed it
so I stretched it
over the alphabet
to see what it said.

*

But woodwinds past midnight
hurt to hear. Teach me LSL
Language as a Second Language.
You came first
I called out
your skin was soft
that’s how I knew.

2 October 2019
Weather waits for us like a friend in need who loves us though with a deep affection no glittering stranger can offer. So kiss the sunshine, marry the rain.

2 October 2013
I have lived
long enough to be obvious.
The dictionary
comes for a visit
but does not stay.
Language often seems
an aunt by marriage,
sexy and a little strange.
at night left alone
with a table and chair
you know the truth of things.
You have been taught
to pray but they don’t say
how, or how it works,
or where your next idea
is coming from. you run
your hands across
the table top. Good wood--
you guess that’s enough to know.
And here I thought
I was telling you all about me.

2 October 2019
When I look up at the calendar and see the year in big black numbers it feels suddenly like science fiction. How can the world still be here, truck on the road, cat running across the street? The normal is the strangest thing.

2 October 2019
HYLONOETIC MANIFESTO

Things
think.

2.X.19
Keble kept.  
Newman wept.  
Something like that.  
We choose  
what uses us.  
I think  
whatever I think  
leads me  
through my geology.  
History  
is simply gravity.  
We are what’s left.
A highway try,  
a condor on the cliff.  
The river washes  
the souls of the city  
but leaves a sediment  
after it cleans.  
I come from the city  
still, so every smiling  
jogger that I see  
seems a fleeing murderer,  
a fugitive at least.  
Running is always away from  
something, never towards.  
I sob as I see them pass.

3 October 2019
The thing I had to say was waiting in the flower not like a scent or a bee or even a color, it was like a confusion in me, a blur of senses, I didn’t even know the name of the flower, a complex infolded form shadowy in the leaves. But I knew it was there, that word to be spoken, no name, no invocation, no promise to be made.
Out there there are no promises, I thought, so why do we make them, keep them, grieve at breaking them? A promise is a lie imposed on the future. And there is only now.

3 October 2019
Sleepless, in dawn light, 
the child memorizes 
the ceiling above his bed, 
sees it just as clearly 
when he closes his eyes. 
Or is he asleep already? 
Or are we all asleep all 
the time, only in all 
the different kinds of sleep? 

3 October 2019
WORDS COME TO MIND

Languid
(you think lagoon)

iepid
(you think your aunt’s
milky tea
half an inch of it
left in the Spode)

pallid
(you think of a ghost
if they really exist
veering through your door
or a friend’s face
suddenly frightened
by lightning, say,
or something you said)
vivid
(you think of a parrot
squawking green and yellow
perched on the phone lines
corner of Flatbush and Church)

gravid
(you think of a Stone Age woman
her bearskin kirtle
plump round her middle,
she rubs her belly)

sapid
(you see a rabbi
look up from his book,
take a nibble of toast,
smile, another nibble,
smile because he’s just read
something that perfectly
agrees with what he knows
already, and what he sees
when he closes his eyes.)

4 October 2019
When a poet dies
all his unwritten poems
are instantly distributed
through the consciousness
(sub- and otherwise)
of the whole poetic community
who write them out
and publish them to the world.
There. But I cadare not tell you
any more of our trade secrets.

4 October 2019
“I can’t remember me own poem!” cried Robert Browning in the one recording we have of that noble voice as he bobbled the opening of “How They Brought the Good News” Sometimes the words flee from the mouth that spoke them after the inner ear (the so-called brain) detected them, words, out there in the multiverse, and I do mean verse. The world is the longest epic of all, and we are each one of us a syllable of its interminable music.
Come as you are
the invitations say
but I would come
as I would be

another, a brother
to the world,—
are you listening?

4.X.19
THE A TRAIN

for Isabel Rudner

Pressed against the door
feel the dark
flood by behind me

sometimes I turn round
halfway to watch
the darkness flash

*

That's my favorite place to stand
against the door, I'm tall enough
to see most of the other people
packed around me. It's always
crowded on the A train. Who are
these fortunate ones sitting down,
have they been here from the beginning,
born in Rockaway or Fort Trton Park?
I look down at the one beside me,
reading the Post, sports page, boring,
I look up at the fascinating faces all around me, all of them in the same coma I share, the going that takes the place of being, we sway in the no wind.

*

Outside we’re just integers wandering around, pigeons in a flock, no problem.

But down here we are bodies. Bodies. You’re never more in body than you are on the A train, every jolt and curve and sway reminds you, weight shofting, arms bouncing off other arms, everybody too close for comfort. Unless that too is a kind of comfort, we’re all children going to the fair.

*
I used to live
near where the line
used to end,
Euclid and Pitkin,
edge of Brownsville,
edge of the Old Mill,
we never knew where we were
but the train knew
and would go no further.
so in the morning
on the way to school
I too would be one of the lucky ones
man-spread on red plastic seat.
Then I too could read, do my Greek
homework on the way, fifteen lines
a might, wish I could smoke down here,
wickedness makes learning faster.

*

And I too have stared
across the aisle
at the woman with closed eyes
who stood swaying there,
her bouffant hair-do
blocking my view of the **subway map**, all those fascinating names of places I would never see, weird subway stops in Queens or up in arctic. the East Bronx.

4 October 2019
If I were Mahler again
I would sleep my leaves
up into the autumn wind’s
vast continuum of song
so yjay a mere mild tune
would bear us,
bear us all
out of the quarry of the ordinary
into the light we can touch,
the warm skin, the polished stone.

5 October 2019
I stand before you
with open mouth
no words coming out
silenced by the size
of my audience the sea.
Now fold my lips together
it tells me politely, they don’t
need my admiration, they need
me to pronounce carefully
all their salts, sympathies,
rises, reluctancies, deep
swallowing wallowing shadows,
tides, times of day, moons of the moment,

5 October 2019
Too long
and song
stumbles,
meanings fumble
at the latches
of your mind,
ears widowed--

o don’t think
the song says,
the song says
listen in me.

5 October 2019
Remember when a masterpiece was a piece of cake you ate for breakfast and tasted all day, song you can’t forget or life in a huge museum only not so cold? Remember when the world was somewhere else and you thought you could get there on foot, even in sandals, just like the Bible? Then it was now and you have been there all the while, here, by the fountain the tower the cave, the man carrying flowers because he knows no other way to bring colors home.

5 October 2019
= = = = =

It’s the middle of the night
there’s nobody around
I have to answer. And yet,
and yet, this no message
I have to declare, roundly,
in some sort of English,
translate it later into meaning
if you dare. I mean if you care.

5 October 2019
If you say music
they start to rhyme—
it’s only when you say
silence, silence
that they start to sing.

5 October 2019
The host
relieved of making
song relapses
into gourmandise,
cheese and mocha on the *tish*—
:et them keep their blasted dancing class,
I want my supper.
And so life on earth began.

5 October 2019
A SMALL BOOK OF COUNSEL

1.
Stare out the window
stare
back in
at yourself staring out.
This is how it starts.

2.
I thought she must be Russian
from the snow in her hair,
the wolf-fur collar,
the eyes I couldn’t understand.
But I was wrong.
She could have been my mother
if I were say four years old.
But as it was she was as she was.
3. When you go out to paint the sky you tend to leave things out—the church bell ringing, the joggr with a calm dog alongside.

4. Whenever you don’t want to think about someone close down and see the ocean rolling in onto an empty beach. Calm sea, low waves over and under and over and under until you are washed clean.

6 October 2019
It’s hard
to know
where the beginning
begins any more,
it’s always
there when
I wake up,
I who sleep
later than reality,
no wonder
I wonder when.

6 October 2019
Am I a section
of something
or am I the whole thing?

Ask the girl
beside me—
a woman always knows.

6 October 2019
The generous emptiness of the world—an empty cup will feed you everything you need.

6.X.19
Irene Adler
the Peaceful Eagle
haunted Sherlock’s dreams--

in the stories he’s never sleeping
but we know better, how
once a day or so he closed his eyes
and nothing happened
for a while and then in the dark
The Woman as he called her
flew up from Montenegro
over the Adriatic of his mind,
Alps of his fatal desires, the Gaul
of his ancestors and found him there.
midway between Oxford and Marylebone,
on the left side of the street,
in undocumented sleep.
Once an eagle
gets into your dreams
you never fly alone.

6 October 2019
SABBATH

At last. All I have to do today is whatever comes to mind. And not even all of that--I don’t have to pick up the phone because I see someone’s face in the mind’s eye. Close that eye! The mind has eyelids too, soft ones, almost hear them, like waves of a quiet sea far off. I don’t have to write a letter to my sister explaining my silence, don’t have to write a recommendation for someone I barely remember. I don’t even have to remember what I remember. I don’t even have to go on writing this.

6 October 2019
Waiting or waiting
are the same.
Isn’t it supposed
to happen in sleep?
So we have the bright
lurid day to get through
before in the dark
it may finally come to be.

7 October 2019
ALBA

She thinks:
how lucky the dawn is
to have me in it!

He thanks
the day gate for letting
me through again.

7 October 2019
I am three hundred years ago
writing by candlelight
a man in the dark.
And what does he put down
on this thick paper so urgent
it got him out of his tousled bed
long before the dubious
dawn over Devon? I can’t
read over my own shoulder.
But if I go back to sleep the words
he writes may yet remember me.

7 October 2019
How to bandage a wounded hour?
Study the light bleeding into the trees.

Staring out the window (I learned this from my father) is very much like prayer, pure prayer that doesn’t ask too much of the gods.

Stare into the dwindling of the dark. The sorrowless grief you feel begins to drift away. If a bird happened to come by your window you might smile.
I can feel the light through the curtain. Sway the cloth. Sky distinct. *I will say my Mass on this brightness, the skin of time tender in the sky.* Something like that. Soak a pocket mirror (the steel kind soldiers used to carry) in a cup of coffee, milk optional, take it out in five minutes and drain the cup, savoring it, noticing no difference from the usual. Polish the mirror and put it away. The work of the day is almost done, you think. It also works with chamomile tea.

7 October 2019
As we get older
we drift back into the Middle Ages,
hair grows longer, shave less,
wear garments the moth has blessed,
several layers against the chill.
take things that happen to you
or near you as signs, omens,
we think about dead friends,
speak to them sotto voce
sometimes, see their faces
suddenly in tree leaves or poos,
recognize patterns in history,
plan unlikely pilgrimages
and often close our eyes.

7 October 2019
And there are swans there too and water birds I can’t name though I have seen them swoop down low and fetch live fish from the quiet sea. We endure so much. Killing, being killed—some claim to see a pattern and call it weaving, and dare to name the weaver. For me, I guess I trust the swans, doing the best they can to be innocent, saying nothing, being graceful, afloat. No patterb but passing by.

7 October 2019
ON THE EVE OF IT

Look in the habit
the cabinet
behind the mirror,
behind the glass
behind any thing
you can see,

Is that where it is?
A day of fasting,
shapely grieving
sorrow songs
for comfort
any bird sings
and you know.

*

Youngas the moon
maybe but it’s raining
night cloud
can’t see.
cry for your mother
your mother cries for you.
*  
A day begins at dusk,  
is halfway done by dawn,  
the old words  
teach us to sleep  
to learn our lessons there,  
the most important one:  
the sun rises from dream.

*  
Amber passed  
from hand to hand  
amber worn  
warm between the breasts.  
amber held  
light in fingertips,  
in your pocket,  
tears in your eyes.

*  
What is this atonement,  
at-one-ment?  
Is it wrong to be two?
Aren’t we two?
If there is no other
who can I ask,
who can I love?
If there are not two
there can be no you.—
then who can I be?
A scream of solitude
fades through evening trees.

*

Don’t tell me the story.
I’ll put on a red shirt
and sit on a park bench
by the river, whisper
to the pigeons and listen,
listen. What more
can anyone do, or learn
but what the river tells?
We live by water.

8 October 2019
Erev Yom Kippur
IN PRAISE OF COWARDICE

Know when things are then run away.
Courage is a scar on time, an old dueling scar
played on the English horn—is that Debussy?

Crawl out of the moment,
try just once
to deceive the window.
It won’t work
but the effort
is good for the soul.
Is there a soul?
Ask Mahler—
my family always said
Jewish people are the only people to trust.
But does that include the Bible?
Poor Samson!
Those people know how to feel, know how to help.
But all generalizations about identity are dangerous, categories are dangerous. Is there an identity? Everything is dangerous. And what does family mean anyhow? Who is your mother?

A light flashing in the night.

This is all about time, that scarred veteran shuffling down the street looking for a park bench. We all need to sit down, watch the pigeons even if we have no crumbs for them—who knows what they may have brought down to us?

9 October 2019
Experience the opposite as long as you’re here.

Byron knew the place, found it a little cold. But not far away the night-blooming jasmines of Montreux sweeten the lake as you stare south at France dimly not here, stare and stand.

Let your eyes citizen this place as well as they can.

Moonlight (waxing, gibbous, cloud-sliced, romantic) always helps.
There is a dragon in our dreams left over from the Middle Ages. glossy leathery his wings and glittering his green scales. fire-tongued, innocent until proven guilty,

he is our flaming angel, our croaking guide.

It is always wise to be polite to what is found in dreams. Well met, monster! we cry out. glad to see you, dinosaur, I saw your picture in some book how pleasant to meet you in the flesh, if flesh thou art and not the spook of sleep curling up from the campfire that no one ever lit.
2.
Time to be here
is what it means.

We are encouraged
to be of catenary disposition—
droop in the middle
but get there in the end—

the voice said *love you*
*Sarah* and we hear it still.
We are *hust friends*
cuddling in the wilderness.
...

(9 October 2019)
SOME OF US ARE STILL SLEEPING

Blur. Blink.
Clear
oh there you are
out here.

Woof.
I dog the day.

*

We had a tree
a walnut once
it fell by storm
I keep a few
green furred nuts still
to save the day.

*

*
I scant
my deed.
The winds
toss leaves
while I abed
don’t even
remember.

*

That kind of day.
Meow. My growl
is not working.
Pretty clouds,
bright sun,
lively trees
but I.

*

Chamberlain
of a vanished sovereign
I guess the omens
of the morning.
Where is my lordly self this day?
Self-deposed?
The day itself
a sort of exile?

*

I know another language when I speak one.
The aftermath an interlude before,
nouns tumble, verbs stumble,
I dine on naked pronouns.

*

50,000 disappointed fans
watch Joe Kelly toss a grand slam.
Is that what language means,
what one man says does to all the rest of us?
* 

I’m trying to get it right. Snarl. That’s bitter, I wanted to be me all my life—does that make me a monster?

* 

Palfrey she rode in the long dream we call the Middle Ages, and those who dreamed her quiet passage bent their heads and knew, just knew. And this knowing was written down as prayer. Some of us are still sleeping.
Because she was all in all,
and I was no one and still am.
She taught me what the sky was for and who lived there hiding safe in the light.

* 

If I were sleeping I would make more sense. But as it is it is.
DAS LIED IST AUS

Sending or spending
the song is out,
is done
we say
and the bills come in

but we dream the trees
and apples come
gan Eden, gan Eden
we’re lost again.

Or is it all a garden
after all, and we are locked
inside Eden with the lord,
children still,
no knowledge of good and evil,
the brave and foolish of us
wake up sometimes
and try to find the gateway out.
But then the thunder comes,
rolls down the hills
down through the busy trees
and we go to sleep again.

10 October 2019
Blue bird dreaming
perch on the roof
I am a hawk I hope
but mind be innocent.
To have the power
and not use it -- that
is real power.
To starve but scorn to kill.

10 October 2019
THE DEDICATION

Tender book
all truth and promises
how can I fill
your page today?
I am a servant
of the Queen and you
are her choice
ambassador, embodiment
of the moment,
anthem, gateway,
walled garden of her palace
that anyone is free
to enter word by word.
And She will know it’s me,
She’ll hear my breath.

11 October 2019
RUNES

And they are runes
after all,
    these marks
that look like letters
trapped in what look like words.

But they are runes,
runes of pure space and absence,
gaps and silences,
When you hear a word
look through the chinks of it
where the light shows through,
the shapely light,

you'll see an ancient
shepherd boy and his girl
playing with each other
on a grassy hillside in Galatia,
his flute let fall
as he holds her in his arms.

11 October 2019
Lost in the word
he sings his way out.
Or so he thinks—
the spider web
of what it meant
clings to him still,
gossamer across his lips,
so everything he spoke
thereafter said that word too.

11 October 2019
The fading green 
of trees this fall day 
is strangely like 
the new green leaves 
of springtime—
how is that?

Steiner says the earth 
sleeps in summer 
when its work is done, 
leaves it to the trees 
and stems ad stalks 
to do their own jobs now 
and bear their fruits.

Is there sense in that? 
We know so little 
of the things we know.
Our breath
is the tune
of the sacred,
from Latin
sacer, taboo,
outside
the ordinary,
dangerous,
domain
of the spirits,
belonging
to God.

(dreamt as such, roused at 6:30 to say so.)
12 October 2019
Sky lightening.
Something frightening about the beginning of a day, beginning of anything, and rhyme itself can scare us with its sly tunneling between apparently separate things. The grief of belief. The dark hole in holy.

12 October 2019
Wegtam the Voyager:
Who are you
who walk out of my mind
in the grey light?
You are baffled
by the streetlights
unknown in your day.
Your night, I mean,
where I guess we met.
I try to speak to
what the mind says
seemingly unbidden.
I try to greet you
where you stand
strong and purposeful
baffled by our mild dawn,
hardly a wolf left,
and noise machines
growling up the road.
But all this is part
of wandering,
and you know your task,
your sacred commitment
to be here and be gone,
to be everywhere at last.
Now that I think I know
what you do, tell me
who you think you are.
Or am I wrong in thinking
we’re only what we think we are?

12 October 2019
I suppose I should say something about Columbus. But all I could think of is how or why a Jew from Genoa with a Christian name contrived to have me born here not in Donegal or Devon. I take this personally. This is still a wild continent in town and country both, you know what I mean. But what did he mean? What was the secret in him that drove him? What was he looking for? Did he want me here for some vast Talmudic reason of his own? Here I am, Cristobal or whatever your name really was, here I am,
mouth full of a glorious language
you never heard. Hier bin ich,
Hispaniola in my head, my feet
wet with ocean still, all wet
we used to say, a fool,
a fool saying thank you
i suppose, your day,
the lightening sky
making its ancient promises.

12 October 2019
Where is my leaf
says the tree,
I had it just now
and there goes another,
no wind at all
but still.

12 October 2019
Seeing the outside
of anything,
that prurient imagination
we call looking.

This leaf, that love.

12 October 2019
Spirits haunt the dawn, dying desires, the forest around us waiting for us to make sound. That is our real job on earth, all kinds of speaking.

12 October 2019
This is what it means: this stone is from and brings us straight to from again.

12 October 2019
Then the night said

*Listen to me*

and no word came.

That is what it meant.

13 October 2019
THINGS WE NEED

Need to bring with us: mosquito net and and trampoline, Limoges tea cups, a wind-up clock, a butcher block, a flock of pigeons, a waterfall (mechanical. recirculating) a cardboard carton full of skeins of wool, one stuffed ocekit, tickets for the opera in Sofia just in case (Turandot, the one by Busoni), binoculars of course, and a little mesh bag full of marbles, all of them like the keen eyes of owls.
Now take my hand and lead the way.

13 October 2019
Yes, to be frivolous
as a pebble on the beach,
granite chip, yes,
a comparison is helpful
but dangerous as a flashlight
in a rainstorm, or is it?
To care and not show it--
to be in love like having
a mosquito bite, only you
can feel the itch. Dissemble.
Cloak your feelings. Rub
cider vinegar on the site.
The bite. To be frivolous
as dawn with no one watching,
as an old photo of Boston
from the air, all the houses
look the same, frivolous,
to be frivolous is to be free.

13 October 2019
The hunter’s moon
we didn’t see rise last night
through trees that are still there.

Nothing is lost. The fox
slips back into the woods.
A car goes by at half past six
and wakes me every day now,

nothing is lost, the dawn
is full of information. All
the colors slowly coming back.
And one day we shall
all live on light alone.

13 October 2019
= = = = =

Telegraph system
of the body’s pains,
old fashioned, nerves
are wires strung
through the dark meat.
The inward prairie,
clogged towns in us
getting the bad news,
flashing along the line,
No wonder we study
history, history is us,
tiem out of mind, the blur
or blaze of information,
the squeal of hurt, edicts
from the invisible emperor
chastising us. Or now and then
rewarding us with peace.

13 October 2019
I was Atlantis and the gulls knew it, brought me true reports of all my old wives, my broken promises. Then time took me in, took me down. At last I was no one, but once I was what I was. I was Atlantis. All of you were too. Just listen to the gulls and you’ll remembers.

13 October 2019
THE OTHER DOOR

Open the other door. Let the ink age in the stone until the vintage of light is right and the tree tells you again the old story of who you are and why, and why they know it but you forgot.

2.
And keep forgetting. But the trees remind you — they are at their most talkative these days. The long dream of summer has to be told,
You are one part of their psychotherapy.
You sleep late to be close to them.

3.
This dawn they gave you olives, black olives, you chopped coarsely and blended into a thick, creamy, tawny paste that might have been hummus but wasn’t. Wasn’t anything you ever tasted. Now make your pilgrimage to noon. This food will carry you all day.
4.
Nothing is changing.
Just that __
everything there seems to be.
Seeing is a shimmer
of a silken robe, wind
on the sea, a fox
runs across the lawn.
What you see (all
the seeming)
is what changes.
Nothing changes.

14 October 2019
The real reason
the chimes
over my head
the lure of sandpaper
on this old wood

Change me, change me
cries the day
and all I know how to do
is stroke your skin a little
with words and guesses.
snorts and sneezes, wheezes
I pretend are song--
do you hear them, Brightness,
do they feed you?
I give you my blue sky
and all my green trees.

14 October 2019
We had a once
a walnut tree
it told me true
by falling storm
remembering
now I find some
husks of z new
there must be,
wind and squirrel
logic lifted
Eastering in autumn
tree new tree.

14 / 15 October 2019
Now cast as if a spell
the curtains wide
to shape the random
day outside.
They call this waking
and that the world
but sometimes the difference
eludes the mind
that delicate denizen
of the dark inside
always hankering for
one more dawn
to run out happy
with all its playmates
the rest of you.

14/15 October 2019
I’m always only telling what the night said--the day has ambassadors enough of its own. They change and shift and break their promises or sometimes keep them which is worse I wonder. But the edicts of the night I type out in the dark have no time to be false or even true in. That is the beauty of the night, there is no time at all in it.

14/15 October 2019
Even in winter can’t forget the green stem, 
bone of the skull my monitor— 

learn to pick up any Yorick’s skull 
and by the soul’s newest techné 
hear all the skull’s unspoken thoughts 
inside it, 
revelations from a whole human life 
recorded in the gritty stryctyre of the bone. 

And Shakespeare told us this already 
in his ingenious sly half-conscious way. 

15 October 2019
= = = = =

Go back
to sleep
and be

while the night
still has
something to say.

15 October 2019
Alone with my language in the night almost afraid to breathe for what comes out.
the dictionary flaring angry in my head,
or is it peace all round me and for me too, the quiet? Is it the quiet that frightens me
so I must talk and tell against it, the unsilent quiet all round inside me?

15 October 2019
Let it be another day, some birds.
The French call sparrows little monks I think.
They like the lowest places of all birds and some days we are like that too.
The dust. The glamorous puddle left by rain that has on its shimmering skin the world above it, towers and domes and you, your curious face looking down. I don’t mean your face is curious, just that you are and your face shows it. Your face by itself is no sparrow, it is lofty, looks high, loves light, your face is always.
So let it be a day
when you are anywhere
and I am near,
birds optional.
a river running slowly
past is best.
I dreamt a sudden fall of snow
and I was ten minutes late for now
Words are always trying
to keep me up to date--
like blackbirds, bluejays,
cardinals. Reality
is fancy enough, thank you,
I’ll have my blanket, please,
and settle down into the calendar,
and wait, just wait.
Your face tells me
that most of this is true.
What the French call something like verity.

16 October 2019
One tree out there
overnight gamboge
already.

You read to me
about Angkor and Mahendra,
our new lost city, the tree
was listening, got old
while we slept,
and now this deep
rich dull yellow shows
that it heard. aumd understood.

And I too live to answer.

...16 October 2019
 Dot the ivy
cross the table
the hand will lunch you
when it’s ready—

you drove here
laughing your way
through a grey sky,
the parking lot
was full of space,
there was a dog
but it ran away,

so you were at last
alone with America.
Scars here and there,
a woman in the window,
the last man smoking
in this neighborhood
sits on his porch
and watches you alight,
lock the car,
stretch your back,
walk towards shopping.

Why does this
feel strange, feel good?
You are no purser
and this is no ship.
And yet, and yet

an easy song
in every step,
a whistle in the trees.
You finger your wallet
and remember you’re hungry.
So maybe it’s time.

16 October 2019
A merchant thought afloat on the Amazon:

Buy me a memory with you in it,

send me a letter from me to you

I never wrote that told the truth.

I never knew you. I will never forget you.

17 October 2019
A mind on the margin
unwraps the sky,
sees around all the corners,
wakes uneasy while the others sleep—

o those middle-minds,
all golf and science,
pink Yankees,
connecticutians all,
busybody brokers’ life
their unending dream.

I watch and wonder
but who am I to dare to be awake?

17 October 2019
A house of reeds
rede thee  hood counsel,
live in this sky
but don’t ask why.

Answers everywhere,
just ask, just ask,
unbutton your shirt
bare your breath
and wait.

    Never too long
before good counsel comes—
the house of reeds trembles
because it lets the wind in
bringing the hews.

18 October 2019
Day 13-aj
Squeeze up against me
and call yourself a crowd,
I will believe anything
as long as it talks to me.

Or lie down where
the surf interviews the shore
so you will be part of both
and your wet skin will make you wise.

18 October 2019
Listen, April,
I know you’re dead
but that makes
no difference to language,
language like Rilke’s
Muslim angels
can’t tell the living from the dead,
just this morning
I was testy with Schubert,
one of his little piano pieces
annoyed me, not like
the great sonatas or impromptus,
this was just dithering on the keyboard
and I told him so,
and then felt bad,
he has given me such pleasure in my life
and I never did anything for him,
and here I was complaining.
I apologize herewith
and hope that he,
in his fawn-colored coat of language,
will forgive me,

so listen, April,
I miss you still,
the unachieved conversations,
your dark suspicions,
your Slavic cheeks,
I don’t know what I miss,

but language knows
and says it’s April
that I miss and that
I should write and tell her so.

18 October 2019
Inky fingers
tell the truth

lies evaporate
when you write them down

that’s why people send
printed birthday cards.

Inky fingers
mean body's in the act,

the body doesn’t lie,
doesn’t know how to

that’s why we live in one.

18 October 2019
The wind calms down
at five o’clock
it knows our times
and goes with them

In this calm hour
make your way home.

*Se frayer*—to force your own way
through the thicket of influence,
make your own path, guess
when to stop and when to go—

the wind shows you how.

18 October 2019
I waited by the gate
that’s what one does
it’s the fault of our binary
nature, left
foot right foot
so we go,
we can do no single thing,
heart and mind,
the gate needs us
to fulfil its nature,
we must go through,
a leaf falls from our linden.
Gravity loves us.

*
And then the gate opens
by the sheer magic
of my hand lifting the latch--
in what Damcar of the mages
did I learn such tricks?
* 
Inside I find
a green hose coiled
on red tiles
two big propane tanks,
a well-head.
I must be home.

* 
One hand it was
to lift the latch
one hand to tug the handle.
As I walk on the tiles
my body remembers the method.
Method means following the road.
yes, I was a Greek too,
I knelt before Artenis
and held her knees in prayer.
Praise. Only
my body remembers.

19 October 2019
The tallest trees
lose their leaves first—

we see along our roads
the elms and tulip trees
balding fast—
what should this mean to me?

Stop thinking, stop thinking,
it’s bad for the hair.

19 October 2019
A TREE FOR A FRIEND

It is not bad to be a tree. A tree makes the philosopher think of all manner of deep and mind-traveling roots, stretching out beneath the common earth, seeking and sensing, ever-outward, feeding on what is to be found at its tips, beholding with awe what can be seen only in the dark. But for us, the laity, a tree is an upright person, is always on the lookout, always alert to all the moving images in the air around it, swirl of cloud and paragraphs of lads and maidens frolicking their round dance at its roots, moving, the tree sees them move, sees the swift wanderer and the laggard householder, moving, sees and feels the birds alighting or farewelling, always moving, old priests stumbling past, barely moving, but moving, all of them in the full circle of the endless horizon, moving. Move, move, move! What a marvel that is to a tree, a miracle of being able to be and be elsewhere. Others can be anywhere. But a tree sees everywhere. Now Ovid tells us of timorous maidens, god-
pursued, who as welcome refuge or sad retaliation are turned into trees. Not many tales are breathed forth by grannies or graduates about men turned into trees. And yet the walnut stands, and Coleridge’s linden, and the oak, that robur of the forest, whose chest holds the barren sky off timid earth. Yes, o learnèd ones, a tree can stand and be masculine. Or truer to say a tree can stand firm, can stand for every kind of human. All-gendered, all-welcoming, shading us all from the hasty sun. a tre for all. A tree is for all..

On the birthday of Thomas Browne of Norfolk, Robert wrote this page to offer praise for our friend who loved the movement of words no less than the movement of images, John Pruitt, on the occasion of a tree being planted in his memory.
Cruelty of time
reverse by quiet
subvert history
by keeping still
speaking to silence
listening to stone.

19 October 2019
to Shostakovich’s Tenth
Leon with TON.
ROBUST ENTERPRISE

of being.
Be a box of matches
scrape on the side.

Men shave, trees shed,
women bleed.

The unforgivingness
of time, of things
drives us.
A girl in the sky.

2.
Less liberal than panthers are,
more catholic than color.
Trees do it. We pale with fear,
dark with anger.
Why is the sun in autumn trees
like a bell tower sundaying away?
3. The face of a man I never knew vivid as I woke. I can’t recall so many that I did know who smiled at me or grinned or frowned or said good-bye. Who am I trying to fool now?

4. Try not to criticize numbers. They were here before you but depend on you to give them life. Men bleed [?] too, and women have to shrug off the burden of men’s desire.

5. Cost accounting, keep track of weather—or not studying by the window
still knew the path of (say) Canada geese Octobering out of North Bay. By guesswork alone drink from this chalice the numbers fill for you.

6.
A woman I never met makes me write music too, music you can’t exactly hear but reading it you know it’s there.

7.
Back to basics. Number theory. Ketosis. Life before wheatfields, there is an island where winter never harms, and no venom lingers. Gaze into a pool of ink
Waterman encre violette
and find it there.
Take a deep breath
and swim ashore.
Here is where you want to be.

20 October 2019
TWO NOTES OF MUSIC

Shostakovich’s 10th Symphony, a long exalted desperate waltzing train ride, crowded 3rd class carriage, rough and tumble. Kids excited, peasants and soldiers, a;; the way From Vienna to Moscow and just beyond, a snow field, weeping pilgrims, a ruined castle. Mahler to Mandelstam in one hour.

*

Richard Strauss once described himself as a first-rate second-rate composer. I suppose Handel would be a first-rate first-rate. But would you rather listen to Semele or Salome? I rest my case.

20 October 2019
NEUROLOGY LESSON

And laughing all the while
a transmitter
linked to the heart.

*

Poetry reading
a soul auction

*

The laundry room emptied
the dryer tumbling round
one light bulb happening
why am I alone?

*

When I was a kid
on the radio there was
an Answer Man
I still am.
The self is the enemy,
guest in the house, 
he wakes you asleep.

Grammar is the very 
house of the self, 
scarce windows, a maybe door 

21 October 2019
for Lila

Call you ostro
call you island

you are the middle
any island

is omphalos.
Be an island.

Stand on the green sward
and make old times new,

make all times now.
Be eternal, means

outside of time, you,
the you of you
the silent one inside
hat guides your road,

Stand here and be everywhere.

21 October 2019
GEOGRAPHY LESSON

How to Get There

Go out in the back yard, find a patch of ground you like the look of. Mark it off carefully with wooden pegs and thread or a golden trowel or just your eyebeams measuring clear. Now step inside and stand there, close your eyes and watch your breath a while then open up. You could be anywhere now. This place could be anywhere at all, and you’re here, here pronounced there, because you are anywhere
you are everywhere,
Athens, Vienna, Katmandu,
everywhere and everywhen,
a little town upstate.

22 October 2019
= = = = =

After the before,  
an altar.  
On it a sacrifice:

*something made other,*  
*sent out of our discourse*  
*into the parlor of the Other.*

Who knows what lies there  
on this quiet marble?

Stone thinks, stone drinks  
whatever is poured out on it  
no matter how quick you are  
in wiping it dry—  
always some blood or wine  
thinks its way in  
and stays there.
That is why we have altars.
That is why we have stone,
it remembers for us
so we can waltz out of every
holy place and forget.

22 October 2019
Cool autumn
brief summer
a wolf pads down
the blood stream
not even hunting,
just going along.

The fur of dawn
not far. The hard
stone of daylight
not thrown yet
over the earth edge.

I am a hand now
waiting for something,
fingers in low lamplight,
music. But whose?
My self id a lover and his lass
in one, a, mestizo child
of sky and alphabet,
still trying to learn
to speak my mother tongue.
But that’s just me—

Seventy years ago, Hotel
Brevoort, University Place,
Alma Mahler. I do not
knock on her sacred door.
But even now my hand is raised.

22 October 2019
They play with me
they toss my thoughts about
they minnow in my stream
and oak my chestnut trees.  
Prost! I cry, but they know why
and switch another channel on
in me to watch, they watch in me,
and that’s fine by me if only
sometimes they let me see
the epics and spectulars
they chisel from my memories
real and fancied, the fairy tales
from which the world was made.

22 October 2019
DAWN

The sky barely legible.
The words make sense, the man does not.

22 October 2019
Light without heat: 
the philosopher’s stone.

*

Or I want to buy 
a necklace for my wife 
beautiful as she— 
but how could that be?

22 October 2019
Make a mark
then spin the wheel
and see who speaks

answers are
the weather of the soul
whatever that word means

the sacred silly part of us
you have to listen
hard to hear.

23 October 2019
THE IBISES

Faltering ibises
nude the night sky
into morning--

I told you so
long ago, these moments
drift across the screen
moths trying to get in

but ibises! Scarlet
as your head
inside, the throb of knowing,
that insatiable lust.

Peace, peace, you whisper
but I know better,
there is a measure
in whose hands all things
are processes afresh

even the marble statue of our mother.
2.
Sanity often forbids.
Spell things a different way
and see who they really are--
I heard you in my sleep
ringing the changes
cartwheels on a dusty road
sudden squeak of heaven
by which the old Germanics meant
the sky before the Christians
told them who lives up there
and we try to believe.
But I suspect the God’s right here.

3.
Amorous anticipation,
hopeful hands outstretched
habit of receiving
grace before breakfast
grace before breakfast
pale crisp matzo on a dusty plate.
4.
Because everywhere is anywhere again.
That’s smarter than it seems,
a nest of robins snug
in the crutch of that tree
even winter almost hear them sing.
Time came with me to the fountains,
I watched the mermaids
pose for their painters,
sheets of silver
wrapped around their legs
to do the fishtail look
but I knew better.
Time unwraps all doubts
and unwraps what we have seen
into what is really there.

5.
That sounds smart
the way the obvious always does
when it’s stuck in your pocket
and you sit on it,
the ouch of truth
often comes out as a prayer.
Bless me father because I have sinned.

6.
October. The sweep
of color
news me like those birds,
saw them in Egypt,
on the sea, in the Paris zoo,
scarlet as your skin
brushing a cold tile wall,
as your eyelids when
you turn closed eyes at the sun.
We are not the only ones
who write on leaves.
7.
Egregious! Out of place, 
out of the herd, standing out 
making the clatter of difference, 
the noise of newing, 
you know who I mean, 
I’m looking right at you: 
get back in line.
There is no line. 
no ticket-booth it leads to, 
no counter laden with 
all we desire, sorry, boss, 
I’m just standing here.

8.
Is it time 
to call them home 
those ancient birds 
so long in the sky, 

their color must 
be weary by now 
even though their
wings are made of light,

shall we call them
home, spread out
the sea around our houses,
set a placid lagoon

in every bedroom,
whistle softly
at the top of the stairs
close as we can

get to heaven?

9.
Let it remember me too,
not all the work of Mnemosyne
be left for my tools,
where are other awls and chisels in the park,
pick one up and get to work,
remember the birds for me
and what they mean to you,
delicate awkward on legs, magnificent aloft,
color of the purest desire.
I want to fold my wings and sleep.

10.
So that in dream
one may endlessly arrive,
birds in their season
soaring out of the Nile delta,
the coasts of Africa,
all the places you can name--
each one interviewed by birds,
inspected, educated, blessed.
Or so it seems to us
who sleep on beds of artifice
and leave the gentle marshes to the birds.

23 October 2019
What will I do
with all these words
these swords
to remember love by,

these tantalus tempting clusters
grapes of impossible vines
these waterfalls
that cut through living rock

and you, what shall I do
with you?
who were to be the answer
not the question,

not the question all over again?

23 October 2019, Shafer
You don’t want to be caught in those clutches those wheelbarrows full of potting soil but who knows where the earth came from, my arms around you are bad enough, never mind the weather. Ever, because you’re indoors always in some ways, though the books get damp pages and their spines o my how their spines tell lies, there’s no election in selection, no fullness in complete and all the words get writ in gold

23 October 2019, Shafer
In Bet Shemesh the Sun’s own house
the Jews found an ancient Christian church
rich with mosaics the papers don’t reveal—
as if there were a difference!
We are always who we always ever were,

no difference. Jews baptized by rain,
Christians circumcised by time
and the women laugh through their tears—
they came before every religion—
men are the only mistakes they ever made.

23 October 2019, Shafer
= = = =

I am evrybody else.
My dream a heartbeat
a squirt of blood
pulse past the ear
lost luggage
reclaimed from a cliff
my god a cyclist
almost knocked me over the egde.
I woke with the heavy
canvas bag in hand,
a famous actor’s
with no time for us,
non serviam I cry like Joyce
but it does no good.
Dream masters all.

2.
The woman from Boulder
told me the shop was still there
but couldn’t be sure,
we didn’t know how to talk
about the town, the local
names for local things, stores,
houses, prairie dog towns.
And the ordinary people
in houses you don’t even notice.
the ones on whom the world is built,
the world depends--
are you one of us?

3.
But it was cold.
No desire,
no food on no table
solve for grace.
I usually am a kind of priest
who has no church.
Theology is the strangest gender,
always halfway somewhere else
or so it seems. Seemed.
For I was dreaming then
inside the dream, the words.
those usual suspects,
handsomely leading me around. 
There was a bush in front 
of somebody else’s parish church 
or mine when I was someone else, 
like now, a bush, I say, 
and in it bright red berries twinkled 
cute as cats in animes -- 
if I could get one in my teeth 
everything would change. 
Maybe be all right. 
Can’t be sure. sunlight strong right here.

24 October 2019
You can’t leave a girl
alone with a question
yjay’s what men ate for,
to drown out with dirty
fingernails and steel strings
the actual music of the world.

24 October 2019
I write
what I can’t read.
Wind anxious
in the trees.

24.X.19
CHILDHOOD

Childhood lingers
in the strangest ways,
pork spareribs
boiled with sauerkraut.

24.X.19
IN THE MARKET

Suppose I asked you something and the sun was shining white walls of the Uffizi glass ceiling, light arrives.

Suppose I wanted to know you better, suppose the window opened and a bird flew in, big one, a gull, screamed at us and flew out,

nobody loves me— is that what meaning means? Just be normal for a moment, don’t be natural, people are too close for comfort.

Forget you ever knew me, I’m sorry I ordered all this and now I face the music—
Rossini’s *Sins of my Old Age* (pronoun all mine).
Asterisk needed here, footnote to my mind (for the player piano)

and the bird came back and it was me.
Believe everything I tell you and we will both be free.

24 October 2019
Kingston
Always trying,
always whying.

the book falls open
to a hidden word

a shaft of light
slips through the wall

finds the word
tells it to be

and you are.

24 October 2019
Kingston
ANNUNCIATION

So now she knows
knows why
and even when
but not yet who,
who will come
of this word
she hears, yes,
suddenly hears
as if the book
she holds in her hands
suddenly spoke,

24 October 2019
Kingston
Looking at the law
rising through the trees
luttle ridge abaft the house
the leaves declining

but the law is lovely
I think, her colors
washing into all things
making them their own
by the lift of her light.

25 October 2019
By the standards of our grammar
I live in a museum
built to mark the methods of my day,
my work was play,
fiddling with the alphabet
till it broke, or spoke,
or broke somebody’s heart,
most likely mine.
Shelves crowded with what I meant.
a floor lamp here and there
so I can find my way to myself.

25 October 2019
I notice I’m writing
a lot about myself
lately, as if we had
just met--could it
be love? Flirt
with the person
I thought I was?
O laconic earth,
you told me long ago
how talk is dangerous
and only metamorphic rock
should ever write anything down.

25 October 2019
And then the beer began to flow
in all the imagined Germanies of autumn
and men (mostly men) felt it right
to melt clarity into tumult
tune by tune and belch with beauty
but all I hear money changing hands
mothers sobbing, children beaten,
this language has no word for fun.

25 October 2019
LET THE EXAMINATION BEGIN.

The crows are ready, those monitors of meaning careful of our every misstep--they know where we should be going because they read the heart. It is humbling to walk in the woods and more so in the clearings where you’re alone with the sky, and all the beings in it.

Every whim and word gets tested, your breath betrays the least falsity, your footsteps reveal the grammar of your thought--you’ve always known that.

So often you hunker down indoors afraid of the scrutiny of crows. But they call outside--
not right at your window,  
nothing so punitive, just 
a caw off in the east or north  
to remind you that the test is still going on.

25 October 2019
But could I write this with my hand
or do I have to wait for evening shadows
to write it for me,
a little song that says today?

25 October 2019
Maybe typing makes
what I mean too simple,
I worry about being too clear,
so clear the meaning sifts out,
sugar off the doughnut,
you’re left with dull dough,
with meaning as a verb
that found no noun.
O lovely fountain though
that pours up from obscurities,
mistakes, seeds of the unknown.
Drive the pen
over the bones of the dead.
Turn up a skull
that talks back to me.
And all the dead
of every place and time
speak my native language.

25 October 2019
Farmers up here in the valley used to beat the trunks of their older apple trees to wake them in springtime and make them bear fruit. No wonder I don’t like apples.

25 October 2019
Isn’t it good
that we are so far apart?
Silence is a pregnant thing,
an agency of getting there
securely, the dark woods
of what we really mean.

25 October 2019
I have accepted the silence. I will explore absence bravely as I can in the wilderness of time, hankering always for the El Dorado of the Other but accepting, accepting this pathless path.

25 October 2019
PLAUDITE

If we got to bed on time
the ghosts could find us
easily, could tell their
own stories into our sleep
we wake up from to say
I had a dream. But a dream
is a collaboration, an opera
staged by all sorts of artists,
vocal, verbal, visual, And we?
We’re just the audience.
Now wake up and applaud.

25 October 2019
The adequation of influence upon and influence from should be the balancing, the see-saw, on which the critical gesture depends. Or do I mean the swing. Ovid read Pausanias and Shakespeare read Ovid and we read Shakespeare, we Greeks. No way out of the bind, of time. It’s oone long sentence being recited over a scant couple of millennia. Or nmaybe it’s a single word, still resonating its core vowel as we speak. The emergency vehicles of time. The liturgy of breath.

25 October 2019
There are no changes.
There is only this single tree
lofting in a meadow
answering the seasons
as well as it can.
There are no changes,
there is only this breath
(mine, yours, another’s)
going in, and resting,
and going out again
into the world. *Nothing changes* the great Karmapa
said on his deathbed,
smiling. Nothing changes.

25 October 2019
When it is almost there, a pain comes. But that’s only experience, not truth. The truth is what we cannot know.
It hurts you awake.
You rise to answer it.
You send a long letter
in the absence of desire.
The failure of fate
needs so much explanation.
To do things
only because it’s right to do them.
Civilization misery.

26 October 2019
I breathe through my fingers differently. Typing is fingers, writing is hand. The other way round also makes sense, but don’t let your living breath hear about that.

26 October 2019
A PAUSE IN HER ADVENTURE

Psyche stalls
amid her magic chores—
yes, everything comes to her aid.
But why do they do that?
Must she spend
all her love on gratitude?
Isn’t there some one thing
she does all by herself,
out of her own desire,
not necessity, not
the rules of her story?
Or is desire itself
her necessity
and all the birds know it,
and the ants,
and the walls of her house?

26 October 2019
SLEEPLESS

Waiting politely for sleep to come around the corner with a newspaper under its arm or is it a long loaf of bread or a sunray caught on its elbow? I am waiting in an empty street, the children in those houses are not allowed out to play—how strict these mothers are!

26 October 2019
Make up the tune
before you forget
the owl’s call,
the chute of rain.
Find the song though
in your own breath,
the slow hurry of it
trying to get
out of you and
back to the world.
That kind of music
is.

26 October 2019
It’s all right to do it but not think about it whatever it is.

Thinking about it is the problem—live in the moment, the moment has no brain, only a heart, sometimes, sometimes a hand.

26 October 2019
I hate it that I can’t come to you, 
Great Waiting Dream, but you must always come to me. Night has no steering wheel, the windshield plastered with dead leaves.

26 October 2019
Are these just diary entries or real poems? You decide. My job is just to write them down.

26 October 2019
PANTHEON

They are bright things given to us to play with, devotional toys, theologies, wistful dreams of meanings yet to be encountered long may we live.

26 October 2019
Dear Other Side of the River:

I have loved you since I was little,
I still want to wander through your grassland
and wallow in your hills,
you are my special hours,
lean shadows, the skin of rain,
shine of standing pools,
your roads lead everywhere
i want to be. Even now
I taste you whenever I wake.
Your stones, my bones.

27 October 2019
An hour later
I had learned to speak Russian
and could sing
pretty well sight-reading a score.
We got to the shore in time for the sea
he said, puzzling me.
Where else could it be,
or why were we hurrying,
singing so loud, clutching
each other almost frantically?
Language has a lot to answer for,
mosquitoes of the delta,
strange people walking through
dense fields of tree-high corn.
It was one of those mornings
when all the pronouns were wrong.

27 October 2019
Casting a spell
I look like rain.
My road is wet,
my tree is vague.
Music goes away after a while
the sky remains.
That’s how you know—
you don’t need a mirror,
just look straight up.

27 October 2019
An hour later it gets no brighter. And the trees still have lots of leaves. Song we used to call Fall, a season, a sensation runs quietly through I suppose the veins we say, meaning I suppose some very different network in us and out there at once, and time has the softest hands.

27 October 2019
Liberal leanings lead astray. Stay where there are benches in the park, and stone seats along boulevards. Stay where great bells ring joyous over almost empty churches, stay alone with the weather, telling each day the story it tells you until the both of you are in cahoots and you are ready at last to meet your fellow creatures. Good morrow, ladies of Babylon, gentlemen of Ronkonkoma--I was born in this island too, would you believe? Every pigeon testifies for me.

27 October 2019
To write
the stone
time wrote
already,
pry the glitter
chip of mica
out of the Manhattan
schyst, say
the city all over
again, get the story
straighter
this time, ginkgo
trees, an old Vespa
scooter not too
noisy up Park Avenue.
Which will become US 22.
Which in only a hundred
miles will take you home.

27 October 2019
Where there is no internet there is no you.
Your government wants it that way.
Yes, yours. All yours.

27 October 2019
MISSIVE (1)

Pouring into the lap of the cliff cleft the small fall soaks all green—

a scene seen no deeper than a postcard says, so I say it, send it top you.

28 October 2019
Color it suddenly
color it fleet—
overcast we say,
clouds inchoate
start thinking
about what shape
to take or form,
how to pronounce
the day they say.
The aftermath should be obvious, birds more visible perched in leafless trees—is that why south? Is a simple temple grand enough to baptize your thighs? That’s what keeps me wondering late into the leafless night when I am the only tree. But now the belt of light tightens around the world nearby, still plenty of green to disguise in amber words on their way to you.

28 October 2019
Make a notebook of the air
and gesture wildly in it
to make what sense you can
glean between your mind and the day,
or be cautious, keep a ledger,
list the ins and outs
o accountant, of this fuss
they dare straight-faced
to call reality. You know better,
partner, be your pointy self
and write it down.

28 October 2019
When the car pulls out of the driveway
something changes--
the space vacated
has a sudden magic
lasts a minute, the grey
cement turns silver,
anything could happen,
a dragon tongue lick
light along ig and a Person come,
glorious and momentary
to smile at me before
the vision fades, the car
is half a block away.

28 October 2019
I just wanted to tell you this: the Germans call a kiss a *Kuss*, tongue-tangle sucks you me at once, breaths conspire yes yes yes yes--you know how it goes, you read the book of growing, of knowing some other body suddenly closer than your own, all that adolescent idolatry, the girl in a spotted dress on that bridge across the Arno, the taste of great poetry, saliva of another’s mouth sweet on your brave lips.

28 October 2019
= = = =

I am a listless pilgrim
but I came from France
to Dover like anybody else,
following the road of should
turns into must and there I was
where language was my only street.
I could have been my ancestor
shucking Catholic dust free
from his weaver’s hands.
But I felt more like a coal field
waiting en plein air
for the crew that would dig out
whatever it is I mean--
can words do that? Or women
with quiet eyes? Or men with nervous hands?
I have come to the place
where I can’t fool anybody
anymore. In some way I must be home.

28 October 2019
The sky is clearing,  
the overcast still choosing  
shapes to take on,  
drifts asunder, blue appears,  
the day changes.  
The legislature of the real  
is back in session,  
I can go back to sleep  
and leave the day in older hands  
even than mine. O sleep  
you crowded bus in another country,  
hou marketplace with silent  
farmers standing by what they have grown --  
o sleep, how little I have brought to you  
and how much taken from you for my own.  

28 October 2019
Can it say
what I suppose
myself to be saying?
I ask this of the runes,
birch bark, ball pens,
the alphabet. One of you
must know already
everything I mean
or how could I know
enough to mean it
all by myelf?

28 October 2019
What the small blue glass flask desires is an air as slow as water--vessels yearn for the absences they enclose until someone spills otherness in them. They can endure it because heir own form is so complete. But all the while (the little blue bottle on my windowsill explained) they hunger to be themselves alone, complete, full of that emptiness men call light it said.

29 October 2019
She was good in the dream
the tawny blonde and sought her reward
or I wanted her to, to live
up to the softness of the body
by taking the form of the moment
as her own. A kiss
for instance, the judge
of the contest said, a kiss
is typically appropriate--
reward without possession
embrace without capture.
Kiss. As if he had been reading
books and forgetting
to look at the sky.
The sky kisses everyone she said
don’t think I am something special,
I’m just a color you can feel with your hands.

29 October 2019
When a man has no religion everything becomes a god. Religion is itself a protection against divinity, against the multiplicity of gods. *Have no other gods but Me* one ancient theology begins. But we were disobedient and so we live with all the gods around us, heaven and hell, and have to hear clearly the voice of all of them and every other thing.

29 October 2019
THE BARBERSHOP

*Cast:*
The barber.
The elegant beard.
The woman with short hair.
The missionary (Mormon)
The teenager lost in his device.
Rge old man too feeble to shave himself
   brought in every week by his gaughter for a shave

*Setting:*
Wall of mirrors but just one swivel chair
the raor buzzes.
The barber is Italian, past middle age.
Radio plays opera —Giordano, I think.
The beard in the swivel chair is persnickety.
The waiting clients are edgy.
The music is loud.

Do I have to tell you anything more?

29 October 2019
The evident day
so many birthdays,
birthday—the tax
that’s due to time.

30.X.19
Measure
things carefully,
groan of a truck
droning to a stop,
gearing up again,
going away.
Live by a corner
easy learn measure.

30 October 2019
wanting to be
and be more
than be me,
wanting to be
me in you and
you in me, being
everything
we can be, all
of you, all
beings speak
in you I want
to speak, speak
all the way
to being more than me.

30 October 2019
Sandarac, gamboge,
old colored names
time knows
for trees in autumn
use them
while the light lets
colors be,
lets you use old
words left in your head.
*My vocabulary* the dying
Jack Spicer said *did this
to me.* Robin Blaser
heard him and told me--
now what will I do
with sandarac, gamboge?

30 October 2019
All that a man and a woman in love are able to conquer,
Islands and continents unknown to birds of the air,
fierce winds,
oceans of milk from the tears of their eyes weeping glad truths...

30.X.19
The light track
the overhead that happens
from the ground up—
we are its disciples.
That’s what the floor lamps
and the sleek fluorescents said
when I dared to flick them on
as if I too were an horizon.

30 October 2019
Brooklyn Catholic boy
marries Boston
Protestant Jewish girl.
Put them all together
they spell Buddhist.

30.X.19
THE MIRROR IS A MONSTER

makes a monster
of all who look therein,
Grendel’s eyes
that once made men of us
now turn us wrong,
bleak-witted, groaning
with misplaced desire,
coughing in dawn light,
bruisers, losers, males.
Because we became
the monsters we were meant
to overcome. We joined
the troupe instead,
put on the antlers and snatched
virgins into green woods,
put on the fangs and bit young men
who meant no worse than
writing a sonnet or a symphony
nut we wanted blood—
when we had so much of our own!

30 October 2019 Shafer
I work in a five-sided room
one wall is almost all glass
and thus a forest of autumn
color as far as I can see.
deep otherness out there
knows me as I sit here trying
to be me and do what it is
this me is supposed to do.
But all the while the golden
outside soaks autumn into me,
soft season of far niente, not
at all the time to die. Glass
just remember always subtly
its own transformation from
grains of sand into panes of light—
any window is half nostalgia
anyhow, and this wall of glass
dissolves me in what I see.

30 October 2019
Shafer
Five in the morning
All Hallows Eve.

Everything follows from that.
All the wise advice
I ever gave or
took
no even a shimmer on horizon,
dark trees my destinies.

Close your eyes and read
the book that has not been written
it said, or no one wrote,
or Desire is a bridge--
that’s what Dante meant.

Some things are just true
but do not much good
to contemplate. Think of this
the next time you try to think.
2.
Little by little the light
grows stronger--that's
what Christmas meant
to those first Christians--
He had brought the light
and their business was
to keep it growing, phos
augei! they cried to one another

the way we still make love
to the darkest day.
Halloween we say,
squeezing the words
together, squeezing the sounds
until they frighten us
a little, and vague shapes
move among the trees.

3.
Every child knows this,
the senses are those faculties
given to us to make sense of,
every child knows
most of what we ever know

until the darkness speaks,
that mother in the mind.
Don’t mumble she tells me,
say what you mean
but don’t stop there.
Use your words, hold
nothing back, keep
talki/ng, you’re
only at the beginning.

31 October 2019
Luster of lost things
gleams in the dream.
Pen knife, turtle shell,
little stone from Jericho--
sunrise is a contradiction
or we contradict the light,
is that how it goes, the way
I dropped my handkerchief
by accident and had to watch
the white thing float away
swiftly down the dark river?

31 October 2019
Sixty degrees at dawn
warm for Halloween
though one year it was 90
and one year it snowed.
Sometimes it’s enough
just to tell the truth.
And sometimes not.

31 October 2019
THE Carpenter

Know how
to lift the hammer
off the workbench.
Everything
follows from that.

*

But did you see him
when he came this way
his hands worn with helping us?
Let me be to you
as no other did

let me be in you
as you yourself
want most to feel
or know,

let me be what you know
until I too can be
complete in knowledge

the other is the only
thing worth knowing

ecstasy of being in,
outreach of the heart,
giving out all the way in.

31 October 2019