

12-2020

dec2020

Robert Kelly

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

IN THE COUNTRY

It's only you
I need
the song began

then the breath grew stronger
freshened to a little breeze
that played with the skirt
around your knees

vast shaved field
lifted getly gently to the mountains.
the wheat all reaped

or was it rye?
the song can't tell
so lost in your eyes.

1 December 2020
(hypnographic)

=====

**The colors
have come home
a little shy
from where they have been.
What happened to them
on that downpouring Monday,
pools of rain still
on every lawn?
What happens
on the other side of light?
Let me accept
whatever answer's offered,
word or deed,
bird of photosynthesis,
phone call from a friend.**

1 December 2020

=====

**If I just talked about the weather
would you still love me?
I'd be particular and exact,
interpret every cloud, every
shift of wind and spill of rain,
word after word, would you?
It's always there, always happening,
what could be truer
than what always is
and is always changing?
This cloud above the tulip tree
shouldering the blue aside,
don't we need to speculate
about what it's bringing from the west,
what it really means is what it
remembers?
Vast and featureless
as if it came to teach me silence.**

1 December 2020

=====

**Played too much chess
when I was in school,
used it all up, now can't see
a chessboard without
a little apprehension--
what if that queen captures
me again, and I must believe
the dogmas of her bishops
and spend my time
moving troops around,
poor little pawns who mean no harm?**

1 December 2020

STICKS

**Looking for
what I have already
I am found.**

**The whistle blows,
the game begins.
I am an empty field.**

**Enough to promise
and let the sun
fulfill. The mean the skin.**

**Alone in the sound
I am heard—
there must be you.**

**Hope
is so slippery.
That's why we have rough hands.**

**The indoor sky
heals the eye
tired of thinking.**

**Watching the street
wander away
from the still pilgrim.**

**I saw an ad
for this very moment
and fell for it.**

**I leave science
to my body--
it knows the way.**

**Reflection of a lamp
in a window looks
like an autumn tree.**

**I can't help
saying
what is so.**

**Begin at the end
and work
even further forward.**

**The palm tree
yes, by the sea.
Or a rose.**

**Thought
was an afterthought
of music.**

**Originate
the obvious
all over again.**

**I bought half an acre
of sky and the luck to find
veins of silver in it.**

**In the story metals
usually mean
all the kinds of truth.**

**Scattered waking
couldn't hold
a thought so many.**

2 December 2020

SPARKS

when hammer
hits it hard.

word lost in noise,
what said?

car roar
snow tires louder than,

but the sparks speak,
metal always does.
do you believe?

I believe geology, the crust
and the topping, the walk and the wild,
the air;s long incredible permission

that we be,. I believe in the air,
you. You too. We must,
we are sparks from the same iron,
hypsy-pilfered from mountains
hammered hard,.
into form. I believe in form,

**you. You too. The habit of being
clothes us with thought.**

**I mean what goes on in what
seems to be inside, we seem to want
to make it out, believe in word,**

you. You too.

**Every loss
is a miracle
waiting to be found, the preacher
said. I said I want
the rock the ore the bird the hand**

and you. You too.

**Loss is a sad song until we hear
the other side of emptiness.**

2.

**Was that enough? Sparks leap up.
does this? You do,
I have seen it, thought sudden**

become space. you penetrate
the possible, pay-dirt.
bluestone of the Catskills,
build church on this.
On you. On air,
word waft,
 going is gospel,
true being is being gone.

3.
Didn't want to go there
Wanted to wit and watch
te s[arls shoot up.
hear the sharp clang
of their liberation from the metal,
iron to iron and they're free.
We go where the sparks go,
yes, after brilliancy repose?
But we have work to do along the way.

4.

When it

comes down

t it

it

is all theology. listen

to the tires singing

slippery rough music

on our dry road Quench

your thirst with sound.,

a word is omnly after all,

a word is only a kind of sound,

or really only a part of it.

And where would we be without going?

2 December 2020

DELIVER

**once meant
nimble, featly. skilled.**

Deliver, *délire*,

**then a Turkish phrase
you once heard
from a stone you stood on**

**yes, this is where the cattle
crossed the motionless river**

**yes, this is Asia
the always answer.**

3 December 2020

=====

**Writing my way to daylight
as if each letter
sucked the dark out of the sky
until the page was thick
and the day was clear.
We would-be magicians,
our little minds busy writing
one more love poem
but the words,
the words themselves
have other ideas, bring light back,
hoist us from our preoccupations
and say See what you said?
See what we made you say?
See what we made happen?**

3 December 2020

=====

**When you're riding in a car
you look like everybody else.
Fact. You belong to the machine,
the machine to the road, the road
to the traffic and there you are,
not you anymore, but a silhouette
fleeting, a shape inside movement,
a simple citizen of going.
Mostly we only see the car
and guess your spiritual nature
from what we see. Audi or Chevy,
sporty coupe or SUV.
And always we'll be wrong.
Because (as philosophy explains)
the same is never the same.**

3 December 2020

THE GRAB

**Grab something
a witness any
the clocks are working**

pull silence over

**over you and wake
inside the vast stillness
of a single word**

**still in the act, fact, tract
of veing spoken,**

**you hear only the middle
so grab the middle**

pray for the end.

2.

**Grab I said but wait
works too,
not all clocks chime,
the little cuckoo flies out
and never comes back,
the old woman comes out
and we call her a wirtch
because we do mnot understand.**

We do not understand.

3.

**mnagews on the wakll
we call dreams
and think they're in us.**

**Words we hear shoyted
and think they come
from outside.**

**Out and in and myths,
pure myths.
Only the middle exists.**

4.

**So grab it while you can.
Like thuis: hands closed,
arms crossed, eyes
halfclosed, feet patient
on your mother's carpet—
blue and sand and scarlet
maybe, from Isfahan,
or green broadloom from Sears—
remember Sears? Now
you almost have it. Relax,
the grab is in you now, reaching,
touching. Do you feel it?
One hopes not. No feel to it,
it's just there, like any having.**

3 December 2020

====

**Waiting on the porch
a package, wishing
in the living room a child.**

**This is sort of, enough of,
a flower for a winter day,
quivering petals of I hope.**

4 December 2020

LAMENTO

Noncommittal skills
of the high baroque,
cleverness of flute,
insinuations of the oboe
and all that bouncing
up and down, to admire
but feel nothing
but that admiration,
the heart safe a mile away.
Not all of it but most,
all right, not most of it
but some, and that's what
's on the radio, the only
instrument I can play.

.

4.XII.20

= = = = = = = =

**Something smaller
something on the other side
a policy of Spain, the Vatican
on a roll again, and we
west of anywhere consent
mostly to the colors of the sky,**

**citizens only of the weather.
all the old kingdoms rolled out flat,
sludge of politics, buzzards overhead,
history our favorite adult comic book.**

**And all the while love leads the mind
through the defiles and arroyos,
the hungry mountains until the sea
starts us up again, all
over again clean and free.**

4 December 2020

=====

**The strange thng about a book
is you can read yourself to sleep
and it will still be there in the morning
unless some jealous lover
sneaks it away to make sure ou have
only him to talk to when you wake.**

4.XII.20

====

**Use your hands
to say your words**

**leave silence unbroken,
the meaning clear**

the solitary absolute.

4 December 2020

=====

**The little long poem—
that's my music now,**

**to say a lot and still be small,
three ppage epic, Bible in a quire.**

4 December 2020

=====

**Ribcage
of an idea,**

**the shadow of tomorrow
falls across the waves—**

**vertebrates, vertebrate
my world, then sleek
shelters of the sea,
those shells, will not hold me,**

**air whishes through the ribs
and stirs the heart,
that old four-cylinder sedan
we drive in the dark—
am I here yet, are you here**

**at all, is it al a wonder pf bone,
a motion-free machine?
And yet the ca,el slogs across the dunes**

human as me, almost, or close
enough to be my legs, my small
understanding of the wilderness.

Anybody knows more than me—
I write that, scratch it really
on soft stone with hard stone
that must have come from you,
O lord of definitions, lady of exact.

In dark in wind I keep polite:
To whom am I speaking
I say and I say. And if
I'm right the moon will rise
or have we all already risen?

4 December 2020

S

SCHUMER'S LAW

**Error enlarges research.
The typo or mishearing
poems a door, shows
a new path, lets
new light in.**

**I got distracted
by all the implications
so I missed
the precise formulation
of the law**

**so here I have to represent
an instance of its
exhilarating validity--**

mistakes make more sense.

5 December 2020

CHINESE LEFTOVERS

imagiste poems
of 1905
trying to be Li Po,
Greek gods
in Bactria,
Babylonian precepts
aswim in the Bible,
everything tastes
faintly of something else,
o we are poor afterlings,
we misery mites,
predetermined ones.

2.

And yet there is an animal
gorgeously ignorant
crashes clumsy
through the branches of now,
through the thicket

**to stream from
which no one has ever drunk before.**

**3.
Thirst is our blessing,
the roadmap,
the angel.**

5 December 2020

= = = = =

**Bare feet in *Parsifal*
bare human feet
on a wooden stge
gives the watcher
that little *shrek*
that yanks the sphincter tight,
and then it passes
but you wonder
why a pilgrim
of all people
would have no shoes,
and no road but music.**

5.XII.20

WOMAN WALKING

The bath the bayou
and together,

flourishing mild-life
at the country's rim
where town begins
and animals have consciences,
some of them, sometimes,
and the churches try to stand
taller than houses.

Water is not the same.
Brooklyn water
far tastier than Manhattan's—
that's the simple fact
and everybody knows it
but few admit,

The marshes I grew up near
were Adriatic, empty,

only a few blocks away
were subways and cigars.
I think cigars are the most
secular of pleasures,
far from the incense of cigarettes,

oh memory stop distracting me,
I'm trying to invoke
a Christian woman in the swamp
and it's not easy,
never been there myself,
why would I, water's
the same everywhere--
am I forgetting something?

So then:

 she's walking by the bayou
whatever that really is,
she sees a crow flying due north
and vows to follow it.
All roads lead to Jerusalem—

or was it some other city,
some other time?
In Provence I stumbled
on the road to Rome,
human bones were poking
out of the roadside berm,
so white only time
could have cleansed them
of their native wound,

I bowed to them
as to my ancestor
and who knows?

I'm trying to keep the woman walking
till she gets here
or near enough to hear me shout
random lyrics in the key of me.

But when she comes she'll walk right past
for it is not music
that draws her north, no,

it's the crow, the winged intelligence
somber-clad and merry-minded
that norths her now,
to reach the place
the lights come from!
With all this water I had forgotten
the aurora,
the green liquid light
you see these days
mostly from red-eye flights
you see them sleepy out the window
from thirty thousand feet
crowning the north sky,
light leaping from the ground,
hands sweeping through the night,
pale green of an everlasting tree.

As I watch her disappear
ever on her way
I thank her for reminding me of light.

5 December 2020

LETTER I FOUND WAITING

Shoe the mare
rev the harvester
watch the mayor
at the holiday
refuse to sing
wait for each animal
to answer you back—

this is country life,
here before you get
born, waiting for you,
shave the sheep,
ransack the corn,

do whatever they tell you do—
wise pigs pay no attention,
they know every moment
is sacred, likely to be their last,

shoe the gelding,
wash the stalls
but leave it to her fingers
to milk the cow.
maybe in your later years
you'll be worthy of such trust.

5 December 2020
*from earlier enote)

=====

**Tell up from down
a woodcock helps
flustering beneath his bush
or osprey overhead, white as rain,
a fish in his beak,**

tremendous.

**Or seagull any time,
once a cavern in Franconia—
I held your hand
though you weren't there,
I clutched your hips
and thought of trees,**

**no one was there,
in memory you're all alone,
umbra in mente,
sword in your hand
my god my god always alone**

**not even an enemy
triumphant or cringing before one,
before me, before you,**

**these pronouns sicken me,
I've lost my taste for identity,**

**let it be random, let it be sweet,
someone's hand in the dark,**

the dark knows and that's enough.

5 December 2020

SUNLIGHT.

**Safe to mention it.
Some things make me wrong
to say. But this
belongs I trust to everyone
a minute at a time.
No bank for light.**

**Fragility of infrastructure,
skinny wires by which we see,
speak, listen, cook, warm
ourselves, little wires
tremble under a sparrow's feet
And then come crows.**

**I worry about these things.
All things, the bookcase topples,
the stairs collapse,
we live on a fault line as it is,
a leaky roof holds heaven off.**

**What a catastrophist I am,
born in Herculaneum
and waiting ever since.
And through all this confession
the sun still shines.**

6 December 2020

=====

**Blue glass bottle and a polar bear.
Two degrees above and who am I?
Never will the grass turn red
despite the persuasions of the maple.
Still some leaves left here and there
but what about that bear?
Aren't things that come to mind
equivalent, equal-value to things seen?
Not even one cloud in the sky,
no likenesses there to comfort me,
it all has to come from inside
as we strangely call the mind—
the mind is all around us
only our ears and language
catch glimpses of it, and we say.
Not a real bear, you insist,
and I agree—but can you trust me?**

6 December 2020

=====

Everything seems
so long ago,

the plaid shirt
I wore Wednesday
draped over a chair
seems like a relic
from ancient Rome
worn by a barbarian.
Was that me?
It's all so, all so *ago*.

And that's not funny,
I wonder where now is,
hiding in sunlight,
in bare branches.

6 December 2020

=====

**there were no more law
what would the answer be
and if there were no law
how would the rock
tumbler on the mountainside
how would the child find
its mother in the crowd
and if there were no law
how could the tree support
the whole sky in its bare
bramnches and if
there were no law how could
my hand find my chin
when I feel run down and need
to rest just a little. rest
my head on the hand,
my elbow on the desk, desk
on the floor if there were no law?**

6 December 2020

THE CANTUARIAN

1.

**The word comes to mind
and mind must meet it,
match it, make
sense of what it hears.
Hears? No, just
out of nowhere
suddenly knows.**

2.

**It makes me think of Kent,
Canterbury, Chaucer,
makes me think I hear
someone complaining
Can't you air me one,
or are you Aryan?
But who could that be?**

**And what have I
that flies through the air
except a word or two,
this word I can't reckon with?**

**3.
Looked it up
like anybody else.
got the meaning
I had first assumed,
But what I find
doesn't tell me
why it came to mind,
at this hour, this cold morning,
shivered out of sleep?
And can I even trust
what others think?
Books disagree--
that's why we need so many.**

4.

**Brixton High Street
runs arrow straight
miles and miles, rises
gently to the Weald of Kent
on the far horizon,
my friend explained,
we stood facing south
in this comfortingly
non-Aryan neighborhood,
how close the forest
if that's what 'weald' means
to tumultuous London,
how close the sky.
'Kent' rattled in my head
as if it meant something
special in me, but I crossed
the river back to those
parts appropriate
to the one I thought was me.**

5.

**We are bound by what we learn in sleep.
I am not free to disregard
a word that comes
all by itself
out of the dark.**

**I heard the word, I knew vaguely
but accurately enough what it means,
'native or institution of Canterbury'
but who was that person, why
did he or she walk out of my sleep?**

(7 December 2020)

NEAR WEYS CORNERS, LOOKING EAST

**Children have no dignity
so why should I?**

**nothing but the natural
animal dignity.**

**pee anywhere, run around
roll in puddles, make
angels in the snow.**

2.

**Natural dignity,
the world before man,
when there was only woman,
woman and the law.**

3.

**All the leaves are gone now
but the Sun is with us.
In a neighbor car
there's sine slight commotion
on the dashboard—**

**I watch it through its window moving,
not hands, a cat maybe, or small dog
waiting for the owner,
waotomng for the Great Return.**

4.

**Come back to me, my love,
I am a beast
forlorn in absence,
lost in the hungle of myself.
No leaves left?
A billion leaves,
each one a word,
each word a promise.**

**Come back to me, my love,
I know it's only half an hour,
you're at the doctor's,
I'm waiting in the car
for you, forlorn
in sudden busy small-town solitude,**

come back to me, my love,
being alone
has nothing to do with time,
alone is an absolute,
like thgr ground beneath your feet.

5.

Laws were written
by men
to hide the Law.

Come back and Ill tell you
what it is,
the one Law,
though you must know it already
from the way
of being who you are.

6.

Dignity. Dainty.
What is the etymology of npw?
The car is warm

enough for two.
A car rolls up
and two get out,
stiff-legged, then smooth
crossing the parking lot—
what a miracle that seems.
we learned as children
how to do it,
watching other kids
penetrate the magic
density of sheer space—
wearing clothes!
walking fast!
And suddenly I understand.

7 December 2020

=====

**Only the weather
rukles the mind of *semchen*,
mind-havers, sentient beings,
including us. The weather
we see and measure
is just the gaudy or quiet
robes the world mind uses
to shape the way we think.
Not in any obvious way—
sunshine can be criminous,
thunder a blessing. In some
way we don't understand
the photons of thought
(noeons?) sink through the air
and find us, gape-brained
and ready for what they tell.
Study what you think in weather—
that's the only science we can do.**

7 December 2020

=====

**The hills worry
a cloud
scratch some rain
across the river
dry here,
a funny kind of light,
like music so soft
you know it
without bothering to hear.**

**2.
Waking
is such a relationship.
The marriage-broker
deep in dream
decides the day.
Dresses the bride,
sobers the groom,**

**calls the priest, gathers
the witnesses.
And here I am,
another day, another life.
Who was I yesterday?**

**3.
It is an age of recycling
and here I am.
From the try-works of sleep
I have been remade,
brought forth,
new as this minute
but will last a little longer.
Like you, *you*
who are holding me now in your hands
said Whitman. He knew you too.
As new as you.**

4.

**That's why the weather
is so important,
it is the marriage contract signed,
pinned to the sky.**

**A little blue, a little white, a little vague--
who could ask for anything more?**

8 December 2020

LIKELIHOOD IS VERITY

enough I plead,
the shimmer of the form
moving towards
or away from me,
accepting what is said
or only heard
as answer and the right one.
So the snow says yes.

2.

I am ominous with
how about you?
The road grey ten
minutes back is white now,
no doubt, the truth is out
walking the sky again,
we live in the echo
of what we never heard.

3.

**Agreed: I am the only
color here today
but who am I?
Please understand the “I”
in this account means
anyone who comes to mind
or comes to read,
just ask yourself
what I must mean,
what color you carry.**

4.

**Snow falls.
Bird flies.
Something for everyone.
Only one
at a time.
Headed east,**

**small, high.
I tell you this
in confidence.
Find the verb
that works for you.**

**5.
Mostly I want to close my eyes
and sleep. But words fly past
or settle on the lawn, the grass
paling minute by minute
as the snow intrudes, no,
too harsh a word, the snow
insinuates its innocence
between each blade of grass.
Can I sleep now? I ask
the word--who else could answer?**

6.

**I have teased the weather long enough,
time to thank it for its candor,
its unfailing changefulness--
which is a good description
of music too. Or whatever this is
we spend our lives composing.**

9 December 2020

THE LEAP

I saw the bull across the field
wanted to be an ancient child
to leap its horn, somersault
over the rugged back. Wanted
an animal's spine, animal's
force, to stand there holding
the whole earth in place, four
columns pressing down. We
are the enemies of gravity,
two hundred thousand years
we've tried to hold the earth
in place while we go up,
haven is pure trigonometry.
Still haven't done it. Still
looking at the bull. Oh we shoot
rockets up and planes and we
at times dare—or deign—to tide
in them up, up, only always
to fall back. The bull of Crete
tries to help—stand still, he cries

to earth, and let them go.
But the geology we call our mother
is reluctant to let us leave.
The girls of Knossos leaping
over the bull, I think (or pray)
that one or two of them never
came down, but rose, strong
from the flesh they overcame,
and there they are up there still,
coaxing us upward, come on.
come on I hear them cry.
Sweet mother let me go.,

9 December 2020

=====

A timid time,
tremble at the tip
afraid to touch.
I saw it in the street
alone, at night,
just the big windows
looking on.
It moved ahead of me,
ten yards maybe,
if I hurried I could
have caught up.
But windows distracted me,
like someone talking
to you when you're reading.
and when I looked back
from the crystals on display
it was even further ahead.
I reached out
as if my gesture

**alone could slow it
but it reached the corner,
turned and was gone.
A moment later I reached
the same and nothing
to be seen. Things vanish.
That is what things do.**

10 December 2020

= = = = =

The height of trees
agrees with me
I thought
watching the delicate
highest branches
of the tulip tree
taller than all others
across the way.
The road leads up.
I tink that's what
I think I mean,
stand up straight
and say your piece
or even better
sing the other.

10 December 2020

=====

**Real estate
is called real
for a reason,
sometimes it
takes a lifetime
to know why.
Linger. The land
lets you.**

10.XII.20

CHERCHEZ LA MÊME

**1.
in a world
of other
you made,
the same
isharnd
and far away.**

**2.
The same is like snow
on Christmas cards
on cozy houses
set well-apart
in pretty towns--
pretty much the same
we say to mean
almost, almost there.**

3.

**The same is a woman
you pass in the street,
she keeps her eyes fixed
on her cellphone
as you go by.**

**The same does not know
your name no matter
how many times you whisper
it among the trees.**

**The same is a locked chest
in your grandmother's attic-
it feels empty when you lift it,
heavy as it is, then let it fall.**

4.

**Wedding bells? Maybe.
The march
from Lohengrin? Perhaps.**

**Joint return on income tax?
Jamais. Never. Not allowed.
The same will never let you
claim it as your own.**

**5.
So the same is a songbird
you hear from the lawn,
three or four notes
then no more. But you know.**

**6.
The sane's a red ribbon
you wrap round your thumb.
People see it and exclaim
So that;s who you are!**

7.

The same looks like a mirror
but is really a door,
hollow and dangerous
as everything is.

You try to walk through
and everything's other again--
the meadow looks the same,
the glacial ridge still goes up
but nothing is the same
and you know it. You know
so many bitter things.
And still you go on searching.

11 December 2020

=====

**In this cafe
wounded feelings
have lenient applied
and broken hearts
get glued together.
The TV above the bar
shows the future,
the music is unfamiliar,
weird, but comforting
because it has no name--
names can be painful,
and here there is nothing,
must be nothing, to remind.**

11 December 2020

====

I went to a country
where dragons
guard the bridge
and make sure
those who use it
do so reverently
—-crossing a river
demands reverence.
And at night,
when no one passes.
they guard the river.
its ever-changeful water
and in the sparkling
city lights reflected
they can read
the gleaming
neums of that music
only they can hear.

11 December 2020

=====

**The architect calls
all through the night—
we think we hear the moon
waning over the hemlocks**

**but it is he, his faded plans
rustle in cold hands
but only the wind pays attention,
shadows writing on the lawn.**

11 December 2020

=====

Headlights

**scream through the trees,
white and black, white and black,
do you hear a piano?
I had a little plaster bust of Haydn
when I was twelve and played
my lessons with forgotten fingers.
All gone now, all gone now,
only the trees remember.**

11 / 12 December 2020

=====

**A cloud I will be reading today
seems the size of the whole sky
but there seem to be words in it
if that is what difference means,
density and dark, language is
all about difference, yes?**

2.

**So what is the difference here?
What is the first word?
Curve of a dolphin's back
prompt from the Aegean,
bend of a swimmer's hip
over some same sea. Lute
lying on the tabletop
mercifully silent except
for the glory of its shape.
I mean its story. "A story**

is not what happened.
A story is how it is told.”
I read that on a scrap of paper
stuck under the lute, listing
towards a bowl of cherries
I ate once in Clignancourt.

3.

The second word is brighter,
has no history in it,
no palpable geometry.
It tells me the mist I see in trees
is meant for me-- almost a secret
I should try to keep. But you know me.

4.

Still, I'll try this time I'll be discrete,
wait, and let the word
in its own time settle on my tongue.
Language is to keep secrets in.

5.

**Looked up there again and read
a simpler explanation.**

Everyone has something to hide.

Pistil of a flower.

6.

Remember Swift,

diamonds cut glass,

words written on the windowpane.

The window knows writing too,

says This much of sky you see--

work with that, forget the rest,

this is yours, the task the sky

uses me to make you see.

7.

**I am embarrassed by its generosity,
this little box of sky and what it says,
what it lets me copy and repeat,
as if there is no end to difference,
to end to music. A man walks
across the cloud--I knew him once
and will again. He plucks
a dark red cherry from the tree
and offers it to me. Whose story
is this anyhow? Who is talking me?**

12 December 2020

=====

**I flew a plane once
when I was twelve
only five minutes
while the pilot laughed,**

**but for those minutes
I was at the controls,
no take-off, no landing—
I just drove the sky**

**smooth as a Chrysler
on the Belt Parkway.
Then he took over
and down we came**

but I had ridden the world!

12 December 2020

RITUALS

Turning out the light
touching someone in the dark
touching anything
touch
the apple tree.

The ash tree fell
the linden sprang up
the time that passed
was no time to a tree.

Turn the light on again
never fear
what if the touch comes back
what if the cloud

wash those fingers
anything you touch is holy

**sanctified by touch
all the Sunday mornings of the heart**

**rinse your face
gentle round the eyes
they must be ready
for what comes to be seen**

**one shoe after another
then walk into the going**

**have you ever been like me
says everything you see
I was your mother and you were me**

**the way things talk
no sense but difference**

he studied the window
till he thought he was there
he was there

and then he remembered
the girl hiding by the apple tree
then he was nowhere

nowhere means *now here*
now he takes the subway in his dreams
no other way to get home
to an earlier time

bronze pierced subway token
Roman coin
leave it in the poorbox

dip your fingers in the sea
it all begins again
faith starts in your fingers
touch the stone
simple as can be

you know it full well
everything is an answer
but are you shy of questions?

strike the wooden
kitchen match
then wave it out
the ceremony is complete.

13 December 2020

FROM THE PERSIAN

**Take me by the hand
into your house
where time is wet with truth**

**or I force my way
through every door
though you leave them all unlocked**

**we probe each other
touch and tell**

**I probe by pressing my words in
you probe by being there and listening.**

13 December 2020

== == ==

**A pelican flies by the window
a letter lies by the door**

**it is a translation from the old German
about monasteries and their mules
and why a pilgrim should linger**

**I think my transition is inexact
there are no camels in Bavaria
the last pilgrim left for Spain
weeks ago and none too confident**

**do I mean camel? mule? monastery?
pelican? words flutter up
wherever human walk,
they scare us so we say
*My heart was in my mouth***

**or the pelican is at the window
or a letter came that U can't read
something about democracy
I can tell that much
from the blood stains on the envelope.**

13 December 2020

= = = = =

Caught in the dark
or 'by the dark'
it may have said first

in any case the poor it
was seized from all around
the way a man is by the words he speaks

but I appeal to the longitude
to light it the way
sun soon down the stone shafts of solstice

I think poor it is time
and we a part of it—
time is walking along a rocky slope

east to west and never two stone the same
and o my poor ankles
where time takes hold to save itself

**of time fell would it be really dark
or would we be serene
in pure space everlasting illuminated?**

**Guess again, paleface, says a Martian,
we tried that game
and now we are nowhere everywhere.**

13 December 2020

= = = = =

**When is a thing,
is it gravity?**

**I think of snow
when the weather
lies down around us**

**(gently so far today,
tenderly., not so cold),**

atmosphere becoming thing,

is that how we began?

**Modular morphs
in a critter world?**

**I think of the women of Venus
who swim our minds their sea,**

**do they shape us too,
shape us to stay.
stay a little longer
before the melt?**

14 December 2020

=====

**Getting it
and getting it right
sometimes the same.**

**It came to me
as I tried to remember the name
of a big street in California,
I bought a pair of sneakers
half a century ago--
the name, the name?
The shoes are somewhere
in the dsrk cellar too.**

14.XII.20

====

**Whoever lived in Tintagel
whether Uther or Arthur
whether Merlin built it
overnight or some Roman
with six hundred workmen
and a year to kill, the name.
name of the place, carries,
carries the story, the story
carries us still. There was a man
who ruled justly, and whose heart
was set on something just
a bit outside the world. not wealth,
not power, an empty cup instead,
a cup that had once been full.
Find what filled it and drink a sip
then share it with everyone there is.**

14 December 2020

== ==

**Big broad rhomb
of a redbrick building downtown
maybe ten stories, every wall
covered with fire escapes
as if from a much earlier era
as if from almost every window
people could make their exit
from Doyle Hospital (two tiny
signs said the name) but one
patient was leaving through the lobby,
no emergency but in his thought,
he was in bathrobe and pajamas
lightweight cotton, but barefoot,
he asked a nurse to bring his shoes
she did so, he gave her a \$20 tip.
And that was all. We flee
from what almost healed us.**

15 December 2020

=====

**Women used to have lots of names
starting with I—**

Irene, Irma, Imogene.

Now all the names are E-names,

Emma, Emily, Elizabeth.

But Isabel is coming back,

and two women I know

changed their names to Iris.

Do vowels rule the world?

15 December 2020

=====

The scraps lay on the floor
mind picked them up
and it began.

Polis

was a heap of stones,
a cairn we clambered up on
to be safe. Go up
and go in, we said,
the castle grew, stretched
down the hill at last
and was a *town*, a fenced-in place.
a momentary peace
except for what we stirred
up and then scraps settle down.
Civilization means picking things up,
a rug between bare feet and reality.

15 December 2020

=====

**The breakers
off Oahu
enough to remember
or the cliff
where the updraft wind
would hold almost
a man against gravity—**

**poetry, he said,
is what comes to mind,**

**quoting me, his hands
wet with the ocean.**

15 December 2020

ON BEETHOVEN'S BIRTHDAY

Sometimes it's better
to look away from the world
to love it better,

seid umschliungen

the music cries, tries
to embrace all the millions of us,

and *this kiss* he slows down to say,
is for the whole world,
not just some self's face in it
we selfishly love,

no, close your eyes and be everyone
again,

listen and learn how.

16 December 2020

=====

**Whatever's in the mind's
worth explaining
but not necessarily to everyone.
Choose your students
carefully, wash
your blackboard frequently,
and always use the same white chalk--
colors make you think you've said
more than you've actually said.**

16 December 2020

=====

**The question of knowing
summer Sunday
kids mostly kids
walking home from church**

**ordinary neighborhood
edge of the city
sun.**

**You need a key
to start a car,
what do you need to go?**

**Kids in tee-shirts
equally casual elders
a forgiving religion**

**no church in sight
but they keep coming
until suddenly they're walking
the other way so I know**

**I've passed the shrine
they're still coming from
going to their now southward homes.**

**South. Sun. Light traffic.
And all I am is going.**

17 December 2020

=====

**By increments
a move on—**

**it is comforting
to obey the law
have no noticed?**

**laws of nature,
laws of mathematics,
laws of some back country sheroff's court
a hundred years ago stillo n the books,**

**comforting
to fit behavior into language,
so your hypotenuse
always fits your upright aspirations
and the base line of what you are**

**law, custom,
one has guns
and one has frowns**

**slip between them both,
obey is to get to beyond,**

**where one one notices
so you can anybody you like
all over again.**

17 December 2020

GEODE

**Grotto
is to go in**

**the teeth of the mountain
parted to let us in**

**the xave mouth
is shallow, the walls
glitter.**

**no water
but in our eyes.**

17 December 2020

START AGAIN

1.

Start again
the world is waiting
always, it isn't
about me, about you,
it is a different grammar
of the same language,
'stand what I mean?
Like the news--don't look
at much of it all at once,
only know what you can touch,
help with your heart.
I spoke and the screen went dark.
Something wrong
with the proposition.
Sing your own song,
ignore the weather?
Is that what they meant by going?

2.

**Resilience, a copper coin.
transmutation.**

Roman silver, Irish mountain,

**Took the Pope's shilling
and got a piece of bread.**

**But oh such bread it was,
a stone house to live in,**

**a sea to interrogate, bathe in,
feed from, dream.**

They called it Earth and we moved in.

3.

Sanity is exaltation.

**Undeluded, the rational mind
spits out the pill.**

**As if desire mattered
and then we sleep.**

Ignore all explanations!

They lead you from the fact.

Stay with the fact.

4.

These things they keep telling me,
they know the way,
they've been there before,
before the lights were lit,
before the mountain split
and we learned how to make
white sands of Muckish into glass,
and such glass as cuts the light
and heals it as it passes,
turn your head to make the colors come.

5.

Why do they call them breakers,
swelling waves curl in upon the shore?
They only break themselves
and fall into self-renewal
rushing back to sea, to be
another happening again.
Is there something in us too
breaks into such rapturous continuity?

6.

That is as far as these
glasses let me see.

Slight overcast, maybe soon sun.

The sound of another language
finally pressing through,
bird by vowel by empty sky.

7.

Be simple.

But no more so
than a flower.

all its particulars

to its structure

and all we see

is color, mostly,

as we look down and see it

in business in the grass,

windowbox, flowerpot,

**Know I am a flower
by what I say
and what I say is color
and this color can be you.**

**8.
You need long legs
to reach the ground.
Simple as that.
In the church of the obvious
everyman's a priest,
his morning cough a prayer.
Gradually we come to know it:
language is pure liturgy.**

18 December 2020

= = = = =

**Determined on joy
as if there might be
a natural law
compelling us to happiness
appeal to that court
and dry your wastrel tears.**

19 December 2020

=====

**It is still morning
the grammar still works,
things connect and separate
and the little alchemist
in each one of us
 marvels at what he doesn't understand.
The light increases
and in three days
the world will start to feel it,
see it, after the Sun
pauses, takes a new breath
and starts again.
Then all our bones
are Stonehenge stones
and it all begins again.**

19 December 2020

=====

**Anxiety silences poetry.
Fact. Language needs calm
to work against and break loose
into the wilderness of song.
Otherwise tremulous silence.
Woe. You need to stop
before you can go.**

**2.
Bad children make good adults.
Is that what I'm saying?
Who would dare to whip
a hippopotamus? And yet
they seem contented in our zoos.
Or is it all a dream, including us?**

3.

That's better. Logic
is an ancient Chinese bowl
galxied with tiny cracks,
craquelure I think they cay,
all those possibilities,
intersections, interruptions,
passages of poure unbroken white.'

4.

Go in between anxiety.
Feel the thread that from
outside looks like one ,more
crack. Follow it word by word
until the answer comes
to the question you fprgot to ask.

5.

All better now. We can get closer.
On snowy mornings gaze on old
water colors of red roses, tinge
of green around their stems.

**Everything is waiting for you.
They never punished you for thinking.
If they only knew! Sailboats
all over your pond, prate vessels,
dragons speaking Cantonese—
you didn't have much but you
used what you had. That too
is a definition of poetry.**

19 December 2020

AMONG THE TREES

Meet the tide
tell it for me
I was ocean once
but now am landed,
moored, grounded.
wooded all round
with what I insist
are words. Words
I must say, And when
I say all o them,
everyone, I will
be free again,
I will be sea.

19 December 2020

GENETICS

He must have stood
right here
where I am standing

and he watched.

We become
what we see—
there is no other way.

20 December 2020

*]This text pervaded my sleep, finally woke me at
6:45 to write it down.]*

=====

I wondered where the light was waiting

and then you spoke

something about time,

numbers meant to soothe

I think, the way they do--

is that why we count in the first place,

dark as it was back then?

Where is the light hiding

i asked again out loud,

so even it would hear me

wherever it was. The dark

as good ears, that much I know.

20 December 2020

=====

**Dawn over snow
the light looks surprised
startled even
by the pale contradiction
it finds below.**

20.XII.20

EVE OF THE WINTER SOLSTICE

phos augei

**they said two
thousand years ago
to mean God is born
I mean the light
increases,
 the light
swarms all over you,
prying into your hidden
valleys the clefts
you hide your feelings in
till the light knows
more than you do,
you breathe deep
and close your eyes
to seal the light inside you,
love, and some of it
stays. Some of it always stays.**

20 December 2020

THE STONES

they stood
up still stand upright.
Why should they fall?
Earth is not to greedy,
it lets a finger stand up
pointing or reproaching
or reminding, teaching
us to use an alphabet
of things that look like
bones or skulls or parts
of what we are, the *m*
of our closed lips, the *i*
when I stand uyp. Even I
can imitate a stone, I think
a man is Stonehenge,, a mound
of bones standing around
waiting for the solstice,
the sun herself to come
breathe light into his core.

20 December 2020

=====

**It is time to determine
the real meaning of colors.
Starting with you. What
color are you inside?**

**The red of meat
but what does it mean?
Blue of eye or sky or brown
of ground or eye,
are we meant to look down?**

**What did the rabbis tell you about
why so many sheep are white
or wine is purple? *I am the door*
one of them said, all
colors can come in.**

**Green
is an utter mystery,
when gold tries to reach**

**the blue of heaven it all
turns green, we call it leaves,
we rip off our coats and roll on the lawn.
I've seen you doing it.**

**Now you tell me what it means,
the sacred black
of letters on a page
forming words, words
are so dangerous,
they should have a color all their own,**

**we haven't found it yet,
bend the spectrum and give me a chance,
you can do it, you are the other
and the other is our only hope.
The other is the secret color that we seek.**

21 December 2020

=====

**Could you be the sky
or could I?**

**How fixed are our
roles really?**

**Can you walk between
the sarsen stones
and call yourself light?**

**My hands tremble
when I think about leaves,
a few still shivering on the oaks,
does that give me permission to stand
upright and religious and whisper
to you what the wind tells me?**

**The sun says: I make shadows
so you can change if you dare
the script you try to follow**

and see what happens.

All the other roles change too—

**but the auditorium is empty,
the audience has not assembled,
no one knows if you're really you.**

21 December 2020

FROM THE GAELIC

**Hips of a woman
shanks of a man—
they tell the whole story.
All the rest is a song.**

21 December 2020

= = == =

**I complained to the priest
that I couldn't see well
in the dark. Did you eat
your breakfast he asked,
I confessed I had not.
Can you even tell light
from dark? I'm not sure.
That often perplexes me too.**

21 December 2020

=====

**Dream inside dream
1943 action in the Pacific
then roughly every decade
thereafter flash in
and then I dreamed my explanation
offered to friends,
no formal lecture, no
classroom in the dream.
Not even a fireplace
for Freud to cross his legs near,
I had to do all the meaning myself
and not far away a freight
train was always passing.**

2.

**They say of course
that dreaming
is a kind of thinking.
What else could a rose be?**

3.

**All the things we had to do
before winter we didn't do
but still winter came. Obligations
are gondolas on a vast canal,
people live on all sides of what we do.**

4.

**So I had to explain it.
Have to explain it
and it isn't even there,
here, anymore.
There was a war
and it left its trace in us,
a path we follow
through the woods,
rough road, low branches.**

5.

Did I say a war?

I mean a year,

time has a genetics of its own

and we succumb to what we've been—

a good line to end my lecture with.

22 December 2020

== ==

**Long song is not wrong
its notes show both
meaning and seeming,**

**mind finds its time there,
truth comes through music—
now is its hour, its power,**

**then heaven spends
down to our ground
the light by which we write.**

22 December 2020

FROM THE ANNALS OF A SECRET SOCIETY

1.

Lodge chest velvet
old stars on it
secret society
a rat could open
be revealed.

2.

Stars
tell stories to
old folk gathered
they like to sit
in the dark hearing.

3.

Call it the Society
of the Unanswered,
it's been around
for centuries so
how did its scred

**rags and vessels find
their way into my attic?**

4.

**And I have no attic
this space they call their lodge,
each with own small scar
to remind me of my sins.**

5.

**But why mine?
Letters of recommendation
rustle dry in a tin box,
who is this creature
they say I am? Wash
my sins away and I am gone?**

6.

**In the minerval stage
when I first enlisted
in the Society I answered
all the questions right,**

knew what the sacred letters
stood for, what stars
are supposed to mean
as points of energy inside
the body. I could point to them.

7.

I could call out all my names
while they draped
the dusty black velvet over me,
hoodwinked I still could babble
and they approved.

8.

Now what can I do—the snow
hasn't even melted yet
and I am alone.
Or seem to be.

9.

Look in your attic,
you must have one,

**up the creaky stairs
and look around,
maybe you can find me
up there, among
dust-filtered sunlight
and neat spider webs.**

10.

**That will be me,
or me enough for the story
you tell when you go down
and alert your aged parents,
There is someone in the attic
you whisper, your mother answers
Don't worry, there always is.**

23 December 2020

= = = =

**If there were a liberty it would be skin like
this**

**a raptire and amarble smooth
a forgetting the time on your sandbar
and letting the creek ooze past, swan
after swan, it would and you
woiuld and it all runs to a sea
that has yet to be imagined,
somewhere the other side of water,
I meamn the real other side, the way
even further away tjan further,
capisce as we used to say in the old
neighborhood (Diane di Prima I miss you
already) ((you had El and I had subway.
A train, but you had EL, the word for God
in so many languages, though I like Yah
better, the Y is male, the H is female, ha,
the world is almost complete), liberty
is taking the elements to extremes
and then going beyond. Where no**

**traveler has, you know the cliché,
and yet we see it clearly with closed eyes,
the door he was opened and we saw.**

23 December 2020

=====

A wet red rubber glove
hangs above and drips
from its empty fingers
water into a black bowl below
in which a white lotus leaf
floats calmly, almost filling
up the whole surface of the bowl.
Tension. On it is curled
a tiny bugle-like horn
like the *tuba bucina*
of the Roman legions
as if a tiny army lay
not far away, asleep,
waiting its summons
in uneasy dreams. Or, or
not metal at all, it is a small
pelagic invertebrate, a sea-
creature, they love to take
on coils and tubular forms.
It is the smallest thing of all,

and takes the longest to tell,
so clear, but what is it I see?
There are two pencils upright
proud as sentinels—grasp one
and write out what it is or
what you think it means.
Then with the other pencil
erase what you just wrote.
The first thing written down
was right. And rubbing it out
was just as accurate, Maybe more so.

24 December 2020

[We had been looking at a painting by Tamas Panitz. The question arose as to what the meaning of the painting was. I realized that a painting of a group of random objects challenges interpretation in a way that those items in a poem would not. Panitz is a poet, and likely let his contract with one Muse influence his dealings with her Sister. So I ventured to improvise a verbal text (a poem?) from like materials and, see, it doesn't crave interpretation at all, does it? We know what it ;means.' It just said so.]

== ==

**The ones we left behind
are watching still--
my shoulders prickle from their glance,
shiver from their scrutiny.
We had to leave so many
for all that we loved or learned from them,
had to leave or just were gone
and a bleak feeling came
over us when we recalled them.
But we did not call, did not
renew their membership in our lives
for all that we say remember.
Gone. Old friends, old anybodies,
sometimes the further away
the keener the glance.
I see their handwriting
on an envelope, I rush
back from the mailbox and shut my eyes..**

24 December 2020

= = = =

**It says in the Roman Martyrology
that Christ was born in Bethlehem
when the whole world was at peace
and it gives the political and historical
details to justify that phrase.**

**What can we do this year
to have Him born again?
I assume that's the meaning of Christmas.
having Christ born again to us
and being with us all
the things He is and does,
at least remind us that peace
comes from loving one another,
even with masks on,
in bad weather, just scared.**

**Yet even into such a world
we assume He is willing to be born.**

**Or is He waiting for us
to set a decent emperor on the throne
and stop killing Africans and all the rest
and get to work loving one another,
is that why we pray on Christmas Eve
(prayer, carols, jingles, tinsel TV ads)
so that this Christmas will be
not such a long, long time coming?**

24 December 2020

== ==

**Idle thoughts
on the piano,
something like
the dim before dawn.
Right hand in the pine trees
left hand in the rock.**

**From a distant room
it sounds like a child or Chopin,
who can tell them apart,
they're both just thinking, mother,
I hope I'm not disturbing you.**

24 December 2020

== == ==

**Most of my task
is worrying
and nobody sees it,**

**worrying myself
and the world along,
fear turns into figures,**

**figures find a tune
and dance out loud.**

**I confess this now
because you're anxious too—**

shall we dance?

24 December 2020

DECEMBER IN PANDEMIC

**Strangest Christmas of my life.
Everyone alone,
every family alone,
alone in the house with Christ.**

24 December 2020

CHRISTMAS MORNING

**Christmas is the child
we were come back again,
Everyone gets born today,
the old address still works,
the old phone numbers work again,
the ancient exchanges: Esplanade,
Taylor, Bowling Green, Trinity,
Plateau. Now is then
all over again.**

2.

**The foot of snow melted overnight
in the strange warm rain,
bare earth to day with here and there a
scar of snow-mound.
See, that's what a white Christmas
really means: wipe out
and start again. The stream**

**across the road is merry,
carries everything sparkling away.**

3.

**So it is religion after all
no matter how they hide it in tinsel.
A day in fact is our founding faith,
sleep and come again,
heaven is opening the eyes.
Any day is religion,
this one special because on it
a great Reminder came
of what we are and how we do.**

4.

**To be anxious about everything
is to live in a dream.
Think of nothing and silence comes,
silence of dawn, shine of new day.**

5.

**It had to rain for twelve hours
before I got the clue.**

I am so slow

**to give up my fears and just
watch what happens.**

Things wash away.

Let the rain at least wash my hands.

25 December 2020

THE THING ABOUT YOU

The thing about you
is your intelligence
I mean the thing about you
is your kindness, tenderness,
native wit. I mean the thing
about you is how your words
shape, say, sing. But I mean
the thing about you is your
beauty, of course, I say that
again and again amazed
as I am by it, its calm, variety,
enduring. I'm trying to say
the thing about you is how
whenever I look up and see you
feel better, even happy
no matter what. I mean
you're like Christmas all year,
every moment special, every
day a sacred festival. I mean
you're more than even I can say

**and you know how I talk all
the time, blather on and on,
so many just words trying,
trying to tell your queenly
modesty how wonderful you are.**

*for Charlotte
Christmas 22020*

TARA

A young woman was washing her clothes on the riverbank. The river was high today, and rushing past from a week of rain. Reaching too far in to grasp the corner of a sheet, she lost her balance and fell in. Of course she could not swim, struggled, desperate, swept along towards the rapids and cataracts she knew were not far ahead. In her desperation, she prayed to Green Tara, the one who saves and protects. Almost at the cataract, the woman looked up and saw the low branch of a tree just ahead. She grabbed it, held on, hauled herself to safety and with her wet hands folded thanked the goddess for her rescue.

Now was Tara the branch? Had She gone back a hundred of our years and planted that tree just there so the branch would be prompt to the occasion? The

gods I think live on the other side of time, at least of our time, and make their moves as well in the past as in the future while we trudge along as if time were a straight line, hah! Or did Tata swoop down and press the branch into position? Or was it chance.

Chance is the dullest story of all. The gods don't mind if we tell it to calm ourselves, they're not especially eager, I think, to be recognized. Thanked, yes, but not too theorized about. So I'd best stop now. Maybe next time we can talk about White Tara.

25 December 2020

WHITE TARA

A man had been sick for weeks, obscure infections ill-ruled by antibiotics, fever a-plenty, weakness, all the usual. He lay on his narrow bed in an improvised sick room medicines and devices around him. One night though he seemed to wake before dawn, and there, standing beside his bed, was a tall white figure. He knew it was a woman, though the shape she bore was without contour: a tall tapering column of white light, gleaming as ice but warm.

He struggled to his feet to greet her. She was very tall, taller than any person he had ever known. From the featureless dazzle of Her Presence he began to know who she was. With what reverence a sick man can muster (and illness is always close to the other Othernesses from which so much comes into our lives), with reverence then he stretched up to touch with

excitement and piety the golden crown She weas wearing. Himself over six feet tall, his arms fully stretching up could barely fingertiop the gold of the crown. He knew then who She was even as She spoke and said I am White Tara. And nothing mnore needed t be said.

In gratitude he slumped back into sleep, and from that morning forward gus recovery began, slow, slow, but true, just within reach.

25 December 2020

====

**But was there something more—
a semaphore by the tracks,
a trestle bridge and kayaks in the cove,
bird watchers in tight clothes
you wonder how and why?**

**Was there a question on your lips
that dried there as you gaped
at the ornate crystals of the ice
on some old wood? What did it
make you want to ask? Or was it
a sudden gispel leapt up in you
to chant out loud if you could only
find the words, those busy hees
always buzzing just out of reach?**

**But I forget. It is winter. No bees.
Hardly any kayaks. The wild turkeys
strut down through deep snow—
why don't they fly? Is there another
move bird back into dinosaur?**

**They pick mtheir way, they eat
seed set out for all kjind of birds,
theyleave thick droppings,
how frequyentlly they shit, or is it
a kind of present they try to give
for all the sunflower seeds and corn?**

**But I forget—we do not credit
animals with gratitude, though crows
sure remember if you're mean to them.
I think we jbiw all too little about
these people who live all round is,
is that what the bird watchers really
want, a treaty with the heart of fowl?**

**Back to the river, watch the train pass.
signals flash, its honks its diesel horn
amd everybody looks the otherway,
goes back to sleep, or crouches low
beneath a tree, flash in hand, waiting
for the sudden message of an owl.**

25.XII.20

=====

1.

**It's the day after after
always, eve of again
but there's blue in the sky
just like Romania
and our mountains, slow
as they are, also reach the sky.**

2.

**I like the part where horses
still trot wagons
jaunty through cabbage fields
and roses, it could almost
be now, I can smell the bracing
leather of their sweat,
the reins loose in a dreamer's hands.**

3.

**Memory is a dark city,
the streets all change their names
and dreams mix up what is left.
There's no way downtown,
avenues run only up,
not a cab in sight.
And where did we leave the river?**

4.

**We live in the intersection
and call it Saturday
or Philadelphia or here I am.
The names are wishful thinking--
it is the Intersection only,
green kale growing healthy through the
snow.**

26 December 2020

=====

**Could the Sun finally be coming out?
Three days we have waited
by Her chamber door all the while
her majesty was busy with her clouds—
a planet full of vestments.
I think she may be on the way—
the trees look brighter
and the oaks I dreamed of
last night are full of russet leaves
gleaming bronze on shadow branches.
It is the Sun! The park lights up
it won't be long before humans come
spread their wings and breathe the light.**

26 December 2020

=====

**Things fall
but they allowed.
Things disappear,
it is their music
to do so, their art.
Things change
to teach us
stubborn pupils
drunk on identity.
Things have no
identity they just are.**

26 December 2020

=====

**Sleep I suppose
is the first religion.
To its dark shrine
we hurry or reluctantly
surrender, praying
for its blessing, gospel
of its silent word.**

26 December 2020

SAINT STEPHEN'S DAY

1.

This is the day when good
King Wenceslaus looked out
whoever he was
whatever he saw

I see sunlight out the door!
The glass is at freezing
but all looks well, and Stephen
was the first to die for what he knew
so well inside he could not deny
there is a sunshine in the heart
some Other kindles in us—

did the king know that?
What did he see
that people keep singing about it still?
Or was it just the looking,
that a king hands full
of wealth and power

**still was humble enough
to look out the window,
open the door, let light in
he did not make and could not rule?**

2.

**We sat on Stephen's Green in Dublin
startled by how crowded the city is,
miracle of bridges and summertime
so there was something kingly
about us too,, tourists who had slept
on Tara's hill and now came down
among the European Union hordes
to be brief citizens of our heritage—
you're half Irish and so am I
so between us we make one quiet
Celt,\unum caro, as they say
of man and wife, the Christians
forwhom Stephen gave his life.**

26 December 2020

====

**Keep your dreams
to yourself
as long as you have a self**

**or tell them boldly
in the marketplace
the street the school**

**until they're all told
and the self is gone,
leaving you alone**

with who you really are.

27 December 2020

=====

**I can't help it
if the bright sun makes
bare wood look like soap
good morning rise and shine,
can't help it that things
turn into other things, or seem
to turn but stay the same
but the same has tricks of its own.
Light, ligh! No clouds anywhere,
my dim wit is murk enough
for any landscape—
only yesterday I saw two white horses
standing in a cold misty field
but now blue sky and tree-bark silver,
heirlooms in our mother's house.**

27 December 2020

=====

**I persist in grammaticality.
Or insist. I can sometimes make
the words stand up straight
and lead to one another
but only if I listen carefully.
"Only connect!" the Muse
left it to a novelist to shout
the basic rule of all poetry,
how the Muses help each other
like sunlight wandering through trees.**

27 December 2020

AM I READY

**to see a person
walking down the street?
Not sure.
Or a cat running across it?
Or a pigeon swooping down?
What a jungle we live in!
Here comes someone now.**

27 December 2020

=====

**Deep below the lawn
the rock drinks too.
Don;t know how it does it
but all the rain seeps away
till only the rock remembers.
And water is a kind of flowing rock,
our science tells us, mineral
in notion or mineral at rest,
at work beneath our feet.
Hear me, I am the herald
of the unpronounceable,
the loudmouth of the opposites,
hylozoic, hylonoetic, peace
on all our houses.**

27 December 2020

=====

**Say the name often enough
the place might rise
through the random of geology
into your momentary neighborhood
he said, the way
thinking about ants
makes your skin crawl sometimes,
everything pottering out of mind
into the apparent actual.
he said, and I had
no reason to believe him
but much desire to
so that I might see the waters
of the Mekong rising
in Nangchen with holy
monks and lamas
smiling at what flows,
the way they do.**

28 December 2020

=====

**The wish
is always waiting,
be careful,
a brand-new pyramid
waiting for a dead pharaoh,
careful, a glass
ready to shatter,
a Delft pitcher waiting
to send its flue flowers
back to heaven again
in the hands that painted them,
what do you wish for,
what do you want?
Get ready to declare—
here comes a cloud now.**

28 December 2020

== ==

**In the dark
at the door
you wake--
which way is in?
The only certainty
is the obstacle.**

29 December 2020

=====

**In he century of the saxophone
Roma roamed cafes out loud
and everything was new
except the houses. Now houses
are prefab and no one sings.**

**Song if any comes through the air
on invisible wires of it own,
no fiddling by couples' tables,
no breathy bosoms bleating brass,
no bent old ladies selling roses.**

**time makes itself clear:
we have done with the outside,
now go in. Lockdown
in the heart. Go in, Moses.
set all people free.**

29 December 2020

=====

**To be independent
of the weather
and still be nice
to strangers and animals,
shelter like Milarepa
beneath a single little leaf
without changing
the size of anything.
Be free of time and sizes and just be.**

29 December 2020

=====

**I feel like the Secretary of the Interior
thismorning, moving my tribes around.**

**Bring Hope across the river,
send some bison to the poor
Anxious in the Badlands,
food makes feel better
as the old ones day,
and Love, Love, all
the scattered clans of,
let them wander free
and Ocean mother all.**

29 December 2020

= = == = = = =

**What I would say to you
if I could talk
is not so different from
looking out the window**

**maybe together, seeing
the same birds from
slightly different angles but
still call them the same.**

**or walking down the driveway
carrying old newspapers
to the recycling bin but
meaning every word they wrote,**

**I c an't tell you what I mean
but only what it's like
so lean resemblance comes
whispering to you at night**

**so if all goes well you'll get
a faint taste of what I mean
and maybe by morning know
me better than I do now.**

29 December 2020

====

**All the little curios
fall to the floor
when the window's opened—
how dared I set biubelots
between me and the advancing day?
Because objects are opaque
and shield us from light—
we hide in what we have.**

29 December 2020

=====

**Midnight is a kind of bird
that waits for us, I stepped
outside, 21°, make it easier
for it to find me. The gender
of darkness is not clear
but here I am at least, attending
her arrival, or his, or theirs—
maybe a bird is many birds,
each one carrying a fleck of dark.
When we were kids we stood
by the DL&W tracks, close,
watching the rains rar by.
By now the bird has cme and gone.**

29 December 2020

=====

1.

It meant me but forgot my name.
The cost was obvious, blankets
too warm, the night weakening.
Words gave way to things
but things were mute.

2.

A love song
she said
is too often
an accusation

melody
simpers
but meaning
snarls.

**Renaissance
is a story
to tell
he children,**

**dawn comes
soon enough
but the light
is very cold.**

**3.
I;m stubborn--
I sit in the dark
demanding answers
and remembering my name.
Astonishing how much identity
depends on where you are
and what time is it anyhow?
The dark knows but won't tell.
So with all my friends
I have to make it up.**

**Pick a number, hold it
to the sky and see.
No stars tonight,
speaking of identity.**

**4.
Allowing for interruptions
(dreams, passing trucks,
church bells, coyote howls)
it should take one night
to reach morning. A road map
is folded neatly between
hemispheres of the brain.
As the old song says
When can tell
the trees from the sky
the traveler knows
that day is nigh.**

5.

None of which answers the question,
granite or sandstone,
one god or many?

The purpose of night is to take
all the colors away

so we can see what things
really are, without all the glamor
of their seeming.

It said that, but I'm not sure
that's the answer I was waiting for.

6.

So I started whispering my name
over and over to the dark
like Antoine Doinel in the movie
or did he spell it with an s ?

All night the manuscripts
were changing lines and letters
as I tried to sleep, one poem
with long line kept performing

**variations on itself. My name
would calm them,
but by then even I had forgotten it,too,
I stare in the dark and ask
what side am I on?**

30 December 2020

=====

**Evidently serious
I take it from the branch--
we're talking twelve
thousand years ago--
and carve it into stone.
I have stopped iime--
this leaf will not curl,
wither, fall. The leaf
gave me permission
to keep the form of it safe,
the story it keeps telling
now, even when the sky
grows easier with dawn.**

30 December 2020

=====

**When the words were free
the child picked them up
sucked on them, hid them
in his cheeks beside his teeth,
breathed into them and hoped.
Do you remember hope?
That this word you rolled
around in your mouth could be
something outside, someone
who could come talk to you?
Nobody talks to children, remember?
Years later there's a little
plowed snow beside the road
here and there, most of it melted.
Even at year's end the grass
is faintly green, at least not any
other color would describe it.
Remember color?**

**Remember describing
things to people who look at you
with pity or amusement as you try
to say what you have seen?
And you had only the words.
Everything else was locked up outside
in other people's lives,
houses, churches, cars.
There is so much to remember.
So much to say, the words
still soft in your mouth.**

31 December 2020

=====

**Towers, stone towers,
steeples, spires.
Why. Why rise
above the plain.
To see the enemy on the way?
To make a mark in heaven?
Or just to climb up weary
step after step to see
for yourself where you have been
all these years,
your life below laid out—
can you bear to see how close
the houses are, and how the streets
go nowhere, just peter out
in unpurposed meadows?
To see it all at once
then go back down
to go on being it?**

31 December 2020

b