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If I followed the river just from where I am now to where it merges with the sea it also is I would be where I began. It feels so simple, can it really ne right, so come through ordinary space to the one I really am or was supposed to be? No wonder water shows the face of one wbo stares into it. Space and self and time--these three are one.

1 December 2021
“Basta they said when I ws a kid, enough, go home, leave the book alone, sit in the backyard and watch the old fence until a bluejay lands on it, basta, enough of thinking, go home and watch how much goes on when nothing’s happening.”

1 December 2021
I’ll tell you a story
about a woman
who stood on the tip
of a rose petal,
dark red rose, a little
faded, and reached
up and touched the sky.
And another story, this time
a little boy goes to the park
kneels in the bushes and sees
the ants build their temple
so close to him and let him watch.
I’ll tell you the next story
tomorrow, when the dove comes back.
1 December 2021
In that church the organ plays by itself, shadows make holy pictures on the otherwise bare walls. No candles needed, but bring one anyway, rest your busy eyes sometimes on its flame. Needless to say prayers, prayer is all around you, that’s what things really are, you knew in the cradle, cherish it now.

1 December 2021
The images flow down the fingers, keys more awkward than the pen but after a while the rhythm, so that rith/UM takes over and the images spill out right again and the song says:

Something like that, and we learn new tricks. The rhythm runs it, thought half a mile behind.

1 December 2021
Discern.  Swooping rocks of the anticline, the strata swirl. This is how girls think and how they bless. Everything intact, all part of one movement.

2. So he said. And the audience quivered with resentment, how dare he suppose how someone else supposes especially someone as far from him as a girl could be. or anyone. Up at the lectern
he could feel their anger
and knew his work was done,
smiled the long smile of making
people mad enough to think.

1 December 2021
I sing what they say me
or other way round,
listening is the hardest language

sometimes the meaning is waiting,
or waiting somewhere not far,
another tree, a stone over there.

1 December 2021
Imagine your feet bare, in twotiny ships, and your shirt stretched out as a sail, you will be voyage then, and only up to you to keep your balance as you go upright, radiant on the golden sea.

1 December 2021
Don’t talk about mirrors.
don’t talk about glass,
nothing tht shows
the fave of the one who
looks at it, into it.

Talk about only the colors,
the ragged, the branches,
rusty metal, the things
that show us, let us
peer deeply into the heart
of the other. Talk about dry
leaves on the doorstep—
hasn’t anybody come in?
talk about gravel to walk on, 
good enough for riverbeds, 
hood enough for us,. Take care, 
watch out for shards of glass 
broken long ago, half 
at home already in the ground.

1 December 2021
Randomly, like a roundelay, turn things into music. And why not? Your mother told you to be quiet, but how long does silence last?

2. There were children on the lawn, too young for cell phone, each with only their body to play or play with, sunshine, shadow, dangerous things. And mother spoke of them too in ways no child can understand.
3.
Near Venice we walked along fieldy flatlands with streams and a canal, reminded me of my home town. We carry too much with us when we go. Or I did. Do. Takes work to forget.

4.
You’re in a movie theater long ago. You turn to chat with the girl beside you but she’s a birch tree now, smooth white and hard. The screen’s gone. To your left
a rod running towards Cochecton, rain-soaked red clay, slippery. Stay home. You never can tell. One day the vie might come back.

(1 December 2021)
But the strife comes with the stone, and the tree’s sermon calms what it can. Call a taxi, leave town on the up train, the City is always way ahead. Meantime be busy at the train window with your arts and measures, count the phone poles, count the cows.

2 December 2021
Suspicious as ever
the archipelago
explores the sea.
How far do I have to go
to be me?

2 December 2021
Why is it easier
tp look down than up?
Is that a clue
to the whole megillah,
this scroll we can’t
go back to the beginning,
captured by our fascination
with what our poor feet
will tread on next,
rock or sea or woven wool
while the sky desperately
tries to get our attention.

2 December 2021
MONASTIC

Prayers to say
dishes to do
dark to share.
Monk means live
alone but do it
together. Marriage
is a monastery,
temple of the living God.

2 December 2021
Consider the pelican
perched on the rail
at my left side, sea
beyond it, red sand
beneath us. Miles.
Patient bird, willing
to share this wooden
little elevated bench,
he below m his usual,
me a few feet over mine.
Florida puts nice things
on its beach. And today
(day of the pelican I mean)
nobody there but us.
Years now that bird has
been at my side. Things
don’t just go away, things linger  Smell of a mouse dead in the library, dead behind some books but which? A bird at Flagler Beach that never flies away. Here, share all this lasting.

2 December 2021
SEQUITURS

The taste of somewhere else lingers, sleepy eyes, blue skies, the quiet rapture of the real.

2.
Light does this to you whether you see it or not. Ocean of Light, Apollinaire might have called it, we can swim with closed eyes.

3.
All I mean is now. He died before I was born so I am free to use his name, ancestor, way shower, sage.
Ancestors, indeed. It’s up to me
to make sense of all they said,
all they did. And it’s up to you.

4.
Call me up and tell me the truth,
the Iliad is all about you, you
have been standing on the wall
three thousand years on the gate
waiting for the song to rise
from all the horror on the plains
down here. How can we let
children read these things,
the child in us? Call me soon
and tell me the wait is up.
5.
We ask the Sun Please rise.
Each footstep is a kind of prayer,
offering to the earth below.
All we are is what lives between,
the secret channel of the world.

6.
He nods his head
as if he’s counting
the birds go by.
A number is always
an agreement, yes?
He doesn’t look at me
but I’m always here,
glad epistemology of ho-hum.
7.
Is it time yet?
Or has some other dimension
suddenly seized power
the way clouds rush in sometimes.
Not today. If the sky’s still blue
he reasons, there must be time.
Friday on earth, day of Venus,
wear green and don’t be late.
Now the clock is set.

8.
In those days we climbed
obvet the old drystone walls
barely knee-high and found
ourselves in someone’s pasture
but no beasts in sight. Now this
space is all for us, we meadow around
to our legs’ content, always on the lookout for the maybe cow. Or horse or bull. We are city people, uneasy with things that move towards us on four legs. They call this the country as if the city is some other nation, weird subways, unknown flags.

9.
So home again to which all language flows. You can’t be lonely if you have a language, even only one. You can’t count without numbers too well but you can bring peace and justice and even love
to life in your head.
Just say the word.

10.
Call that a prayer,
a morning offering,
a little sabbath stroll.
I read in her letter:
*birds go by like beads on my rosary*
and I wonder what she says
as each goes by. Or what they say
and what she hears inside.

11.
The organization of innocence
takes up a lot of childhood.
Learn what to bite and what not.
It is the same with music--
some intervals dangerous to hear
but it takes years to understand
which ones sustain and which ones
hurt your poor little head a bit
Or exalt like Strauss’s rising ninths,
And then out of the forest
come marching the tunes,
the tunes, t' ake care, what you hear
once is heard forever.

3 December 2021
Am I afraid of something specific or just timid?
Careful means full of cares.
Scaredy-cat they used to say--remember that? It will serve I’d say cautious. You’ll say Meow.

3 December 2021
When you were rafting down the Amazon how far did the river take you into the ocean as it met the sea? A hundred miles or more they say you still see river water shushing mucky eastward. Did you go that far? Rafts themselves are safe at sea but those upon them, not sure. Did you stop all that going when you ran out of Brazil? Are you still afloat somewhere even now, not just in my memory? Tell me, for I am clumsy and afraid.

3 December 2021
Truly it takes so long to wake,
went from 40 Fahrenheit
to 42 while I tried to make sense of the shambles of dreams I recall,
bits and pieces,
trying to revise the hurt out of what got remembered.
Time moved upward but half of me was still prone on the bed
discussing Shakespeare
with my fervent pillow.
And then the sunshine spoke.

3 December 2021
How long it takes
to tell even a little
bit of the truth.
It’s not like showing
your license to the smiling cop,
it’s not like the lipstick kiss
on the back of the envelope,
not like Robert humming Mahler,
it’s not as simple as now,
not as easy as forever.
It keeps coming so keep talking.
The field is full of sunlight,
it’s waiting for an answer.

3 December 2021
RHEUMS OF A REPROBATE

1.
I almost got born today
but then I ducked,
the life skimmed overhead
and I was safe
among the once-born again.
No religion to fuss with,
just work and play, sickness
and you know what
and then the screen goes blank.
I am with the multitude at last.

2.
Something is wrong
with the sunshine
and I know what it is.
It’s out there and I’m in here. Up, up, laggard, don’t blame the Sun, clap your palms together and lurk outside instead. I speak clearly but will I listen?

4.XII.21
I have to say whatever it says, how can not?

Music is all about obedience, serving passionately the last sound heard. I mean word. O mother is time to sing again?

4 December 2021
It was winter
when I first saw the Baltic
so I walked on it,

maybe twenty yards or so
on the ice, a brave
friend walked twice as far

but I was content,
the sea supported me, I felt
it was glad at our interaction,

men seldom walk on water,
water seldom hears
those cautious footsteps
of people who use language, call out to one another. I O the sea is made of miracles.

4 December 2021
Stone small
enough to fit
in pocket easy
with the keys

has a small smooth
round hole in it
through which you see
the whole sea it came from.

_Kamyk_ they call it,
little stone, but the hole
has no name, just
hold it close to your eye.

4 December 2021
BEGGING BOWL

The begging bowl
meant I give to thee
but will you take,
each one of you
the thee I mean?

2.
So often we see him shown
seated with a bowl on his lap,
the One who Tamed his Mind
and offers to help tame mine.
But will I take from his bowl?
Will I beg for that luminous silence?
3. A bowl is to offer, to be open at the top but hold all safe the inside, fuzzy thought of morning, open curtain, blaze of light.

4. Take what is offered, offer what is yours—seems such a simple system, religion, politics.

5. And when the bowl is full? You decide. Come to it, take what you can use.

5 December 2021
EAST RIVER RHAPSODY

Riverbank
old sugar factory
where my father worked
shoveling sugar
a century ago, the smell
of it haunted him for years,

and not a real river
an arm of the Sound
backbone of this island
slipped in from the sea.

But what is real?
They sent him and me and you
to school, taught him German
to help him find out
(yes, German was the Spanish of those days), taught me algebra, teach you I pray the rights of refugees and programming so we can lie in our beds beside some water or other and wonder why until we wake.

The old sugar factory. The new-fangled park along the shore. We learned all they taught us, now what? Could we find a West River to take it all away?

O the city is the grandest thing we ever made, not so muc the big
buildings but the million little red row houses shoulder to shoulder street after street, God, it looks like Beethoven when you see it from a plane.

5 December 2021
= = = = =

In between there is a city
the pilot pulls the wheel
in towards himself
the plane Rises over and
over the city till there is no place for a
plane to see except inside
the pilot’s heart, his eyes
are closed now, what does he see as the
plane mounts ever higher in the sky?

5 December 2021
The table is under the Tiffany lamp
the rug is under the table everything is
in order
it feel complete a three-volume novel
with illustrations
or an epic poem newly translation from
a Slavic language.
Sit quietly in your chair,
remark to anyone who's there
how mild the evening is
how dim these colored lights.

5 December 2021
EDEN

Eden was language. We could eat from every tree, say every word that rose to our lips, tell any story that came to mind, write everything down. One tree was forbidden; it was called the tree of knowing good from bad, A creature came along and urged us to nibble from that tree. Now we would see that some stories were stupid, some exalted, words have different market value now, and what we wrote had to be fiercely evaluated. And we are ranked by what we say. That was the end of the pure joy of telling, though some children taste it when they babble to themselves, and some writers every
now and then breathe in a sudden breath of Eden in the lucid frenzy of pure telling, ignoring the critic who slithers across the path.

6 December 2021
This was said me
and the waker woke.
Standing tall
against the garden door,
winter, nobody home.
Lean on door jamb
wait for light? Things
need us to decide.
Did the shoe come
before the foot?
We do know the door
came before the wall.

6 December 2021
Say no more,  
go back to sleep.  
You don’t want  
to hurry the Sun.  
Dark for a reason  
only sleep discovers.

6 December 2021
There should be a simple native word that means ‘reflection.’ Not deep thinking, just your face in the mirror say, or lamplight on the daytime window. Why do we have to go to Latin to talk about it? Are we afraid of what we see?

6 December 2021
The difference is an opera, the truth has to get sung, no other way to get a story told, the lovers wed, the villain foiled. Verdi wanted to write *King Lear* but how could even he endure to sing a broken world, no lovers handy, no villains but all of us, all of us forever?

6 December 2021
The past is pathology. I read it on my skin, it dreams me too on childhood streets strangely changed, nothing ever left at morning. Or now I don’t know what the past is, or means, or even if it was at all or was I just born tis moment from an ancient womb?

6 December 2021
The Fool in the Tarot
is running on the heights
he is escaping the word
he tried so hard to say
he left the word behind him,
he sings now, no, humming.
hum means sing with no words
humming he goes, reaches the cliff on
which he stops finally. looking down.
looking around, what is that jumping at
his side, a dog maybe but not a dog, it
is a thought
clawing its way up his body
hungry to be turned into a word
or maybe there's nothing there
just the air of the mountains
rushing out of the dictionary
to trap him, to force him into speech
until he finally lets
the word come out and sing.
The bones of the face
shape what is said.
Language darts in the teeth,
the growl gets clearer,
the message speech.
O you can talk without them,
parrots and old men
do it all the time,

the pirate
captain uses his bird to talk.
Or did I get the story wrong
yet again, too much guessing
too little listening?.
I caress my jawbone,
begit to tell the truth.

7 December 2021
PEARL HARBOR

This day eighty years ago refuses to forget. Last night I heard the drone of planes again, the bloody harbor churning with shipwreck. And I was never there but when I was it was peace, sunshine and sugar, a quier sea. But the day I never saw I see clearer than the day I saw.
History does that to you, and war.
No cars on the road but the lights keep changing.
Green amber red, quiet music of the intersection.
There is comfort in this thought, I’m not sure why. Persistence of a gesture,. The word won’t die.

8 December 2021
Small things are more persuasive than grand rhetoric. A pile of bricks says more than liberty. It begins, it begins! We lift our hands.

8 December 2021
Recalcitrant
As it may be
the bridge does know
The way across

and the hills mound up
Out of old poems
And your uncle kept
Duck decoys on a shelf

they said Living Room
and you wondered
what happens in the other
rooms in the big house.

8.XII.21, Shafer
Inside and outside the same. 
The meadow quiets 
over to a line of trees 
or is it a wooded ride— 
hard to tell in low light, 
my light, my guessing. 
heaven tickling green things 
to tell of marvels in the sky, 
starlight. calendars, diaries, 
such a crowded life.

9 December 2021 
Rhinebeck
Say it fast
or the bird
will say it for you.
They used to call me
a cormorant,
greedy, wings stretched out
easy on a lazy rock.
That image gives me
breath to sing.

9 December 2021
Rhinebeck
SEA BIRDS

1. The osprey bears its fish right over our roof. swiftly inland to devour. He’s gone and I’m left with the long slow image of his fast light. memory is the greatest miracle of all.

2. Sometime it takes so long To find the right key. Black Or white, up or down, how near how far. And when I get it right, just right, is that because the tone
I hear matches some deep
memory of its own, some
answer embedded in me?

3.
Song sparrows know the answer.
Presumably. Somebody must.
Or are we in a landscape
where the guess is god?

4,
Pierre, I loved your reading yesterday,
the force of your insistence on
exactness,
speed of vessels timed to a tenth of a
knot,
And not just numbers. I have stood
on that shore too, studying the flags
rather than the speeds, Uncle John was a tugboat captain in this port so I know slow. And slow has beauty too.

if `you let that happen here and there, slowly, majestically, the cormorant spreads its wings to dry.

9 December 2021
Shafer

WALL

It was dark
when she finally reached it,  
the wall, her last  
few steps were cautious,  
her hands outstretched.  
Touched it. The wall.  
Leaned against it, pressed  
her body to it, yes, a wall,  
the real thing. How long  
this novel is, she thought,  
will I ever get out of my story?  
She ran her fingers  
over the rough surface, tried  
to tell stone from mortar,  
tried to learn the difference  
between what was always  
and what we added,  
how much is it, how much is me?  
So quiet here, she rested
against the wall, almost at peace.
She had found the stone.

10 December 2021
The sun she shines
he plinked
on a thing
like a banjo

then plunked
it’s not so cold
so all around
him people happy.

So what is that instrument
I asked and he smiled,
just a thing that says music.
But what is its nationality,
where does it come from, island or mountain or jungle?

It lives wherever I am and I am wherever you are.

10 December 2021
And then Eurydice spoke:
doubt me and lose me,
I am your wife and always
but when you worry and turn
and check on me I disappear.
Try again, husband with your poor head
so full of words
hardly any room for sense,
ever never turn around, I am here
always, at your side, or usually
half a dozen heartbeats ahead.

10 December 2021
Sunlight on the winter lawn spread like butter, but I love the one and loathe the other so I am embarrassed, caught in a nonce resemblance.

Sometimes it’s wiser not to notice.

10.XII.21
Always waiting
for the footstep in the hall.

It does not do
to rise and look for the one
whose advent
you so desire.

Wait, wait
because if you go to meet
it; s not the same as being met.

And you crave that
absolute arrival.

10.XII.21
My best work is yet to come—
a ziggurat in Pine Plains,
a Parthenon up Cedar Hill.
Just wait! The very sky will change.

10.XII.21
Prayer exalt
worm voice
this reddish night.

You spoke the word
into the smallest space
the human ear
doorsway to Evermore.

10 December 2021
Kingston
On the other side
a diamond
many-faceted
but on this side
a dark blue
stream runs past
It is said the mind
has a backyard of its own,
chickens amble there,
so many seeds fallen,
so many pools and puddles
each one reflecting
a different sky.
But who says these things,
the night has its shammes,
its sacristan to mutter
scary maybes to the sleeping
yes every sleeper is a child.
Yes, every sleep is a temple
you never visited before.
Pray you wake
before the ritual begins.

11 December 2021
Two hours watching TV and what I remember is a three-secnd clip of a little white duck floating past an edge. Home counties. But edge of what? So white and graceful, small and moving slowly. Nothing to do with the story, no part of any plot, duck for ifs own sake, perfect duck.

11.XII.21
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION:

Sculpture is her second nature. Or first. She has knees for instance, and turns gracefully side to side, lifts a thigh so that the sun has a sudden sister, swings her shoulders so the sea rolls back. She wants to go to school to learn how to put words on what she does. Will you listen to her body and in a clear voice recite the statues that you see?

11 December 2021
Nobody’s going to write me now, they’re all asleep out west, all busy in the east. And yet I find myself looking in the mail. Maybe in my haze I have written to myself, a billet-doux or stern reminder—doesn’t matter what I think. Still nothing comes. I need to read something in Otherese.

11.XII.21
Suppose a raindove strutting on the rail where you spread seeds. He pecks, considers, pecks some more. This is a vision. True, it is also something we have seen many a time, But not now. What is what we know when it isn’t now? Other bird other seed. So often you notice the pain is gone just before the pain comes back.
I wake on a high moral plane today ready to tell the world what to do and how to feel while doing it, I am the master of mandates, Moses in a bathrobe. Quick, send me a mirror to show what I really am, knowing zip about government, less about law but what I do know is caring, a kind of sharing with no germs, humming of yearning, love rare like the thunder this December dawn.
THE LINE =

The long line looped at last
fell squat to the deck,
now we can moor anywhere
if we find a post or rock
in this gleefully interminable sea.

But why do that? What good
is it to stop, tie everything down,
blunder ashore, wander
among the confused citizens
who have no sea to climb, no raft
to river to the sun, no even log
to straddle in the current--
movement is always,
coming, always from somewhere,
find the current, live
in the continuity of flow.
And yet there is some comfort
in the messy coil of rope
still on the deck, ready to trip us
if we don’t coil it up and drape it
neatly from that hook by the prow.
But who are we who might trip,
who sail this no name vessel
so proud to be destinationless?
That’s harder to answer
than talking about rope.
Or lines. The long geometry
of poetry, trigonometry of that
ladder Jacob spotted angels on.
The sea is all circular! No lines! See, we
are always home!

11 December 2021
NORTH

Moon inside the building
casting shadows out.
Whose house is this?

2.
We walk this way all the time
but never ask the light
whose light are you?

3.
When I was a little boy
the sign said North
and now I am.
4.  
We found arrows in dead leaves, 
tender evidence of no harm done.  
Sometimes we took one home.  

5.  
Walking is always wondering.  
Do trees take care of themselves?  
Does this path care I’m on it?  

6.  
Is it better to saunter the meadow  
eyes fixed on the sky  
and let the legs find their own way?
7. But that house again light from the window arrowing the shadows of trees.

8. Then the trees explained: you don’t hear us asking questions, just take home what we give you.

9. If I shouldn’t ask I couldn’t walk, I just wanted to sit down. A log to rest on, no time to tell.
10. After a while people who walk in the forest turn into trees. Can walk still, but are very tree.

11. It happened to me long ago, I came home and was an oak, sturdy, not too fruitful.

12. My trouble is I can’t stop being a scared little boy walking north along the river.
13. Maybe there’s a strength in that like the underground alphabet of how trees talk to other trees.

14. Whichever way we’re heading we’re always on the way home—that is the mystery of movement.

15. Or be home all the time and think about woods, sit at a window and look at a tree.
16. But you have to walk to get to the window—lie in bed and think about spring?

17. But mow you’ll never know who lives there, that house you pass a hundred times, always a light on, nobody home.

18. So the plan is to keep walking, make movement your prayer, confident the place will answer it.

12 December 2021

= = = = =
The headless stranger.
Why don't you show your face”
I have no head to hang it on
he said, and I was fool enough
to believe him. But faces
don’t need heads, faces
are stamped all over us, back and bottom,
elbow and ankle, always me
or always you. Show me your elbow
I’ll know who you are.

12 December 2021
Sneaking into another person’s dreams, the beech tree outside, in its light sleep who told me so many things all summer long, seems ill-mannered of me to pry into that deep complex repose. For trees they say are working all the winter, getting ready for a long green public dream to come.

2.
But while I’m thinking this a bird comes down and settles on a branch--if he can do it why not me? And while I’m at it
let me slip into your dream too
and look around and guess
the language of the city you create,
count the cattle on your hillside.

3.
Why do er keep them secrets,
they may be the best things
we ever think or make or see.
Let me in, let me in, I clamor
at the door, I want what you know,
I want the story only you can't tell.

13 December 2021
I shake the little bottle. The movement of my hand send a tremor down my leg pressed against my desk so that a foot away my coffee shivers in its cup, the same rhythm! I have discovered physics! Or do I mean music? Must be music, it's so quiet now.

13 December 2021
SCHOOL BUS

Children coming from where they’ll go tonight.
A long day busy with elsewhere.
When I was a kid we rode wooden horses on the carousel instead.

13.XII.21
Pale sunlight
like a woman on a horse,
not too cold
like a blue jay settling down.
I cannot name all the things I see
so they have to name me.

13.XII.21
FOR THE DEFENSE

If it is a law
how can you break it?
A law is something permanent,
fixed, eternal.
So the accused must be ruled innocent.
Or are you daring to call
some man-made rule a law?

13.XII.21
Suppose it went the other way, the way of kisses, turn left at the mosque and follow the river past the oil barges to the monument in the little green park. Now read the inscription.

14 December 2021
ANTHROPOLOGY 101

A bivalve
in a biped
no sense
of history.

World must be
a boring movie—
everybody leaves
before the end.

14.XII.21
Capture sunlight and keep it safe, carry it with you through the latitudes until you both reach where it’s safe, safe because solemn and trees all around it, then open your hands and let the sunlight out to join the local brightness, marriage of light with light, one gender enough for all life, now lick your fingers and taste what you have held so long and carefully.

2. That is my travel poster
I hope it works for you wherever you go, Alaska, Oaxaca, some girl in between.

3.
I use the word as it used to mean, a young person of either sex, a friendly encounter, life is still mediaeval, our words should match, no lute needed, we hum the best.

4.
With that clarification you’re safe to travel. Wings or wheels, uguale. But if a boat slips in your dreams, the whole scenario changes.
You don’t bring sunshine
to the sea, you bring salt
of your senses, your dry hands.

5.
I can understand wanting to be
somewhere else, I can’t quite
grasp the point of going there.
Travel seems arrogant, pompous.
Yet in the Himalayas once I learned
that in Tibetan the word
for any living veins means goer.
I reckon they know some way
of reconciling going with being.
Teach me, but let me stay home?

14 December 3032

= = = = = =
1.
In Sweden
for the color
or on the Ohio
for the shadows
of leaves
on moving water—
a person,
a mere incident
of place.

2.
I come out of an island
but an island changes
and I am one thing it does. You never
leave your beginning
but the beginning
is only the first notes of the song.
3.
So technically I don’t know who I am. That’s where you come in—I define myself by how I feel about you, and how you make me feel. All research, all investigation, all invention are love songs. When I learn that then whoever I might really be I can get to work and fix something to offer you

15 December 2021
The day before the doctor
the phone always rings.
They make sure we don’t forget,
eglect, reject, decide
on someone else or just go
for a walkin the woods.
I let the answering machine
handle her courteous voice.
I’ll go see him, but wish he was a tree.

15.XII.21
Everything feels the same. The calendar has made a mistake, pay no heed. The mouse in the bookcase, owl on the ridge, how can anything be different? We still end questions with that curious hook-like sign must once have been the letter Q. And we still have Q!

So why complain? Smooth skin, strong hands, tall trees, blue sky, well, mostly grey today but you get the point.
This moment feels like all time lingering, at peace. Illusion? Delusion? Whatever it maybe I will wrap myself in it warmly go out and see for myself.

15 December 2021
Gave you ever sat on a bench in the park or the museum and wondered who they were who sat there before you and what they thought and why they lingered there, seeing in front of them more or less what you are seeing now? What does the bench remember? I think of a white marble bench, wooden bench on Eastern Parkway with initials pen-knifed in it, under a linden just like ours, far away, far away, everyone gone, everyone still livsitting in the mind.

15 December 2021
Don’t get too colloquial, they’ll figure you out. People wear clothes for a good reason, meanings should too. Layer over layer with a scarf or a hat on top. Then what you mean can walk out in any weather, safe from being too easily understood.
AS IF AT KARAHAN TEPE

Limestone pillars
give earth a face.
Imagine the rough
of rock on skin, gently
touch with hip or hand
what will stay with you,
bedrock inhales your dreams.
Stone always remembers.

15 December 2021
YURKAZI

Name of an ancient people who lived along the southern coast of France and much of Spain. Not clear whether they were indigenous or perhaps the earliest settlers.

It is they who found and dug out and consecrated the sacred wells and caverns along the coast, places still thought holy today.

Two successive nights of dream
told me about this people, and I hope to learn more. It is possible that they were driven ever inland by the successive waves of west-moving peoples—Celts, Latina, Goths, Moors over two millennia—and became the ancestors of the Basque people, the Euskata. That’s only guesswork, waking at hat.

What we know is their deeds of location and sanctification. They found the holy places. We must drink from their springs.
16 December 2021
Sunto the edge of the lawn. Abscissa. Look it up, geometry is built in. But it is a long time since I have seen a horse walk by my house, as once Chateaubriand must have passed it on his way north. The king was still alive then, and the poor queen. Murder makes no people free. But the sun is with us this mild morning—that must mean something, something so deep inside that history
sweeps unseeing over it. The last horse had a rider, she headed south downhill where the fancy farms are and one overgrown meadow where a horse has been standing all the years that I’ve been here, old horse, different horse, always greyish white, still there the last time i passed, and the queen dead two hundred years.

16 December 2021
LOGIC 101

Never reject the obvious—would you wipe the sun off the sky?

What is always there explains what is hidden.

Take your own pulse if you don’t believe me.

16.XII.21
READING JOHN’S GOSPEL

*I am the door*

he said. Door implies wall, suggests house.

Open the door.

and move in.

The sun stands still a second then the light increases.

The self is a door, go all the way in and the light keeps getting stronger the deeper you go.

Once you’re deep inside your self
there’s no one left
to love but other people,
all the people, all
and ever, every,
o love us truly, say
the word, be the door.

16 December 2021
1. Everything nearby. Aeneas on the river moving inland past the white swine, a sign. We have brought so little with us yet everything is here. The story holds your hand.

2. Breccia, yes? And a frozen pond. Mild winter bur in the shallows some. We lost our countries
and found this. Who invented slavery? The Greeks had it, takes so long to lose it. Even now.

3.
Imagine a monk in dark red robe. He lets the color rise up inside him till he feels a quiet fervent love for everyone. Color is a prayer.

4.
Not the site of Rome but upstream a little He came and saw
and left the place alone.  
A woman lived there,  
ancestor of the man next door.  
You hear his car start up  
most mornings. You wonder  
how much of who he is he knows.

5.  
Millennia, that’s what it means,  
three thousand years in Italy.  
You see him in his backyard,  
wears moccasins just like you.  
I know so much I can’t say a word.
Nourishment, the nutria
then the beaver came back,
his house south of the pond.
Then the fox by drystone,
then the buzzard in the orchard,
wolf den on the hill, bear
at the bird-feeder, they all
come back. Swifts at dusk
over the little bridge
feasting on insects that come with the
stream,
evening manners, bobcat on the ridge
makes himself at home
on the doorstep of the gazebo,
the rich-furred gold-brown fisher
comes up from the water
and lies one morning on our deck. They all come back, to feed, to feel, to learn and educate at once. The crows look on, impresarios of this nourishment.

17 December 2021
How close I am to saying yes all the time and what peril that would be—
I need to keep a little no or two in my pocket. But never for you.

17 December 2021
It’s a long time since I’ve been near a cow. I eat yogurt every day and cheese when I can but where is primal moo? When I was a child we were so often in the country, hanging around barns, watching the milking, patting nervously a cow’s nose, a big brown cow. I live in the country all the time, I don’t even see them in the fields, down at Ankony or at Elmendorph, beef cattle mostly but there must be cows to bring them forth. Have they moved south with wool,
north with the sheep?
Ya *nichevo ne znayu*. I live here
and know nothing. *Nada.*
I must be missing more than cows.

17 December 2021
1.
The colors of things wash away in sleep. But the things themselves persist in the unity of their thinking, thinking the thought we share with the made world.

2.
That was as much as the dream told me. Now it was up to me to make sense of what seems so sensible, things think,
of course they do, we hear them all the time and think we’re thinking.

3.
“Only one who has personal experience of longing for someone or some place knows what I’m suffering, alone, isolated on every side.”
You remember the old song—it sounds better with Tchaikovsky’s tune. A tune or something like it is how things think.

4.
Hylozoic, matter is alive.
Hylonoetic, matter has mind.
Pantanoetic, everything thinks.

5.
There, I’ve made
my usual mistake again,
said it, didn’t sing it.
I sat with Frank O’Hara
in that East Side dive
trying to listen. But a certain
kind of music dries the tune up.
At least we learned
to tell the truth—
it happens minute by minute
and only hen.
6. You may sleep now, but carry a word or two with you not necessarily one of mine. Carry it light as an eyelash. It will help you find your way or save you from it. A word always carries a little of its thing inside.

18 December 2021
Lamp in the window again, my lamp, my window. I look out through its light into the truelight, the not mine, the everyone’s. See a tall tree through the lamp’s reflection. Grey day. Very end of autumn.
Innocence begins again
with each forgetting.
Peace on earth. A moment
by the stream. Full moon.

18 December 2021
Meadow screaming peace,
earth’s tinnitus
katydids, cicadas, who knows what,
all silenced now.

Winter whispers, cold drizzle,
or soft as a snowflake
It is so quiet how can we tell
what’s coming, or even

what is there already, here,
in this long night?

18 December 2021
Even the refrigerator was different, lots of space and a little shelf in the door that held something I used every day, byt what? Came in little packets like sweeteners. If they switch the fridge on you you know they’re telling you something in the dream— but that’s all I know. If I were a drinking man I’d understand perhaps but I’m as sober as a stone. A morning stone. Sunrise.

19 December 2021
Sometimes you have to punch your way out of a dream, get off the canvas and swing again, no referee, no count of ten, no crowd roaring, just the hurt of waking hard.

19.XII.21
Mallow along the east bank
I’d see them from the train,
mallows many, the flower,
the color F wrench calls mauve,
right here, on the Hudson
in the little ponds between
the trestles and the shore.
Ut is a wonderful thing
to be given a word
and its color by the grace
of looking out the window,
it seemed the grace of going.
We are bone.
We understand everything.
We are stone.

The words said that, I was trying to read online in sleep, changing until they by saying that let my eyes open to the faint light.

Morning is an -ing word morning is a process, it takes a long time.

20 December 2021
Far off in Philadelphia
it’s even darker now,
I can’t complain, they’re
two degrees west of here,
west of the rising sun.
How is it down there, ladies?
I know only women in Philly,
city of sisterly love—I swear
in a few minutes your treetops
will start to flush with light,
a winter bird will chatter
and all will be well. Trust me,
I’m on your side in the war.

20 December 2021
We carry their bodies in our minds. That comes of knowing people too well or not enough, the photo in the paper, the memory in your arms.

20.XII.21
a [haiku and a lune, friends at last]

Whose is the face who looks up at me from the well?
I will never know.

- - - - -

I look down the well—who looks back?
I may never know.

20 December 2021
Or did you dream it,  
the faience pitcher  
with cracked handle  
by the well? It had  
a sunflower on its curve,  
sad about the crack  
but who put it there  
where you found it in your sleep?

The life of things...  
each sthing seems to be  
a letter from a friend,  
one who can barely remember.  
But you remember.

20 December 2021
Poor mind of mine, that Baltic Sea; a living ocean trapped among a dozen languages. when even one holds firm forever.

20 December 2021
SOLSTICE

The sun stands still.  
The sun insists.  
It is Her privilege  
to decide. To persist.  
She hears our praises.  
lets the light come back—  
phos augei! we used to cry,  
the light keeps growing!  
I think it’s time for us  
to learn a word or song  
to thank Her or  
the very light you read me by.

20 December 2021
Find
a line
a mercy
there must be
slowly longer
stronger growing,
heard
words linger,
dust settles
after the horse has passed.
Who said anything about a horse?

20 December 2021
Midnight freight
going slowly by,
fills the valley
with its long word.
We all need love.
The shallows
are frozen at the shore,
the river free.
Will I be there
when you finally come?

20 December 2021
If it were a wolf he wonders, the Mass is over, the sexton stands on the steps, smiling, hoping not to have to talk to the faithful filing out. What was it they all hear. If it were a wolf it would have to be near, too near. Just keep it in mind. The people are gone now, Now you can lock the door and go have lunch. Maybe the priest till know.

20 December 2021
There was nobody there.  
The room was all by itself.  
At last. Sun in the window.  
It lives for this moment.  
We all do, sun-soaked terrace  
lying there with closed eyes.  
The room knows the way,  
shows the way. Be empty  
with me, love, it’s always morning.

21 December 2021
The cup
had a rough lip
the drinker
frowned.
What tea is this
milk cannot tame?
Sweet or sharp
no matter: the cup
puts its taste on top
so the first taste
you get is pain—
a tiny pain, true,
but just enough
to make you remember.

21 December 2021
Almost the hour of the solstice, Sun rides on Capricorn while we all feel like kings and queens. Waves of light the sea around us, we need our little triumphs here, horns and ivy, thronged parades, nobody really needs to know why, the time is right, that’s all that counts.

21 December 2021
She hurt my feelings but didn’t hurt my knowings. She is my benefactress for showing me the difference.

21.XII.21
Sun on green grass, 
December! The birds 
are all behind the house 
where the feeders are. 
Out front I’m alone 
with the sun and cars 
that seem to move, 
fast. they seem to pass.

21.XII.21
The garden of long ago.  
Sliding glass doors,  
Bauhaus-y furniture  
low in the big shady room,  
one Miro on the wall,  
sense of open greenery outside  
but also sequestered,  
all walled in. Every mind  
is a museum, memories  
bright arrayed or squirreled  
off in dusty archives,  
but everything still there.

2.  
I walk across the terrazzo  
to the window, slide open
the glass and look outside. Statue, fountain, pond, bench. Statues used to be of gods and goddesses, now who knows. Lady in chlamys pointing to sky. I wonder if the water is still wet.

21 December 2021
Strange connections
birds make with the sky.
We learn from these
the earthly histories
concealed in ancient poetry.
Just as we learn
from shadows how to write.

2.
See, a poem with no rose in it,
no girl, no boy, no even deity,
just the long deep dark canal,
water flowing from the beginning.
3.
Little by little it comes to light, what really happened, who we really are. Yes, mix the seeds together till we’re one.

22 December 2021
Remember the dial-tone?
It told you nothing’s happening,
you can hold the phone to your ear
as long as you care to, dare to,
and there’s still nobody there.
Do something put the thing down.
Waiting is like that.
Moral: never wait.
If it happens, it happens.
Never wait. Do something else.
Sat this moment in time
nobody loves you but so what?

22 December 2021
Sometimes in the country there’s not a lot to see but a lot is going on, down underground, roots are charging, trees animals asleep, trees talking with their fingertips. This could be you and me.

22 December 2021
“Don’t you ever get tired of being you?”

—I guess not, I guess it’s because I still haven’t figured out who I am.”

22.XII.21
The me who makes a phone call, the me who answers the phone—how different they are, reaching out or warily welcoming. I love those neat apartments in middle-class Manhattan with a peephole in the door.

22.XII.21
That tiny blue
glass flask on the windowsill,
the single spot of color
this grey winter morning,
dab of cobalt perfume on the day.

22.XII.21
The word is always, my word is, always for other, word is for you. And I was the you you spoke the word to when you spoke, how can language tell us apiary, it wouldn’t dare.

2. I mean I do the best when I do for you, whoever (as my landsman said) you are.
3.
O Brooklyn such a Buddhist place though not so many of them here, everybody is something else, the mix, the ningle, maybe more back then than now but still, rabbis on bicycles, priests mowing lawns, joyous Haitians irishing around, and a dark young man with Plato eyes looks up at me from an Eastern Parkway bench. This busy town, this full fat head of this great fish island show it’s supposed to be, the alphabet of all of us spelling millions of words.
4.
Now I feel foolish, like a patriot when the parade has passed, little flag drooping from my hand. You can tell my favorite book is the dictionary, it tells me any story I please, or pleases me, or chooses to whisper from the sly definitions—who put them there, dared to say what beauty means, or wood, or water, or a shadow? But words keep coming, stories do not end by themselves but sometimes the weary child yawns and closes the book.

23 December 2021
Yes, I am thinking about Christ today, how He was and will be born day after tomorrow as once when the whole world was at peace as the Roman Martyrology says, hoping for that moment He came to give.

2. I have a smart friend who dismisses with contempt my speculative Christology” he calls it. Not just the Christ in India,
Ladakh, Tibet arguments, but the steady wonder why Pslestine, why among the Jews, and why those who believed in Him enlisted so quickly in the empire that murdered Him. Like any good friend He came with a presence, a present we’re still unwrapping so slowly all these years, come on, help me tear the gilt wrapping paper off, break the box open and let us see at last. and be the radiance He means for us.

23 December 2021
I thought a small bottle on the window ledge was a man standing on the lawn. Thinking is such dangerous fun.

23.XII.21
CHASSE-NEIGE

1.
Nothing to remember.
The snowplow
shives it all away,
five a.m. scouring sleep
then the long
awake in dark.
How to show time passing?
Swift flutter of calendar pages
or slow-mo drag
of focus through a darkened
empty living room?
Call it a salon, and think about Proust.

2.
Nothing to remember.
Pocket empty, burden eased.
The policy is sympathy,
palm outstretched,
gloved if you must.
Be there for that.
Be sure to catch their name.

3.
Tall bare trees
etched upon the sky.
This could be Netherlandish
five hundred years ago.
The sky is full of permissions
like that, but why describe
what speaks for itself?
Trade secret of ancient poetry.
Woman in tower, man in canoe. We’ll be there any day now a thousand years.

24 December 2021
Cravat in place
hat optional
you are summoned
by the day.
Now what, you say,
and the snow replies
*Tais-toi, citoyen du néant.*
‘I’ll figure that out later
but at least it sid something.
You don’t always get
an answer when you ask.

24.XII.21
The weather walks away. Another century meant something else, the sway of beast back sloping through the field but we, ah we are abstract materialists, we chant silently, carry images of images softly from now to then. And then is very far.

2.
Subs have periscopes but what have we? The weather only
hints at what’s around us, 
what’s to come. 
And when the weather walks away 
we sit indoors, transcribing 
ignorance into interesting books.

3. 
Century after century. 
I was a Roman augur once, 
haruspex, bird flight, 
not very good at it but still 
it was a job, and every day, 
weather has no weeks, 
the birds keep coming back.
4.
In the tile rooves of Provence
the dormice live, little
animals called ‘sleepers’
harmless as a beast dare be.
And in thatched rooves
even more at home.
And where do we sleep
at peace, beneath which roofs?
I like the old word best,
makes me feel young again–
in Brooklyn we had rooves when I
grew up.

5.
Enough geography.
It’s Christ Mass day
(speaking of old words)
and the spell-checker gives me a hard time.
I want the word the way it was when He was still in it and we could hear it, if not His name at least the adjective they knew Him by.

6.
Because language is our weather. The storms of it release sometimes a simple day, call it whatever you like, a quiet now tucked inside the rush of onward. A word. Maybe somebody’s true name. But I would never tell.
7.
Noon on Christmas day.
The snow has melted.
The rams and ewes
and lambs and wethers
are safe snug over the hill.
The Magi have come and gone,
a hint of frankincense
left in ther wake. Or is it myrrh
from a new-endangered tree?
Or is it the air itself?
Slowly the light is coming back.

25 December 2021

= = = = =
Jocund, sluggish
as a cloud,
only a faint drizzle
in the smile of night.

Use up all your ink,
there still will be
a star or two—
light finds a way to sneak in.

But because it’s so quiet,
I think of tweed,
the weave is where the waft begins,
yje will. the want,
the just keep me warm,
blue and grey, tan thread
persuaded to hold
itself and all of us together,
sway from the shoulder,
shape to hip.

I’m trying to explain
night is woven around us
even now, Christmas night,
all the fuss finished
and Christ firmly in the world.

Night brings far friends together,
a line of light like a cat’s eye
reaches out through the world
and only the heart can see it,
the heart you mean.

Night a permeable membrane
sometimes I think it is a quiet horse
we shamble along on
thinking this and that. And that
is night’s goal, release
the dream in us, the dream
will make us free.

25 December 2021
Another day relents. The north river water flows gently south (no names, please) to know the sea. Calm as a Roman road. Old stone bridge still spans a dry chanel, small, small, all we need is one step at a time. Is that a cloud? A key slipped gently into the sky.

26 December 2021
I wish the months had shorter names like Fox or lower instead of all these Latin numbers they make us remember.

26 December 2021
Sometimes I spoil myself,
I let myself say No.
Then how the weather
frowns at me, the music
gasps then resumes, a bird
flies by severely. Still,
I had a quiet moment in the shade
now let the engine roar again.

26.XII.21
To be inside something and not even know it. Can’t even ask Who put me here, where’s the light switch? When does breakfast come? None of these. Just here to be, wherever it is. Can’t even go any further in.

26.XII.21
Citizen country
citizen county
citizen household
citizen bed.
The small reclaims the sky.

27 December 2021
dreamt
Sometimes the keyboard is a drunken secretary. Or my fingers have drunk deep of the years and who knows why that key hit by mistake brings the whole screen into a pretty playful helpful nonsense I can’t escape. Might as well strum through all the keys and hope for Schumann.

27.XII.21
A boy and a book
last forever.
A girl lasts forever.
Ave Maria gratia plena.

27.XII.21
People seldom realize their body is a blessing—it walks through the town, up the hill and down the fields, a blessing for those it passes, conferring, the beauty or urgent suchness of its passage, blessing them, not itself, blessing comes from the other.

27 December 2021
No cars went by this morning mild, Herodotus relaxes, strokes the fleece that covers his knees. Iron pipes let rusty water through, let settle ere drink, read last night’s chapter, the king’s physicians cluster round his wrist, *rubor, calor, dolor*—infection sure. Or was I still in France? The Rhineland was closed, some minor plague a week or two but it kept me here. Read Greek. Cite Latin maxims. Drink coffee, wonder what I’m doing here. Still here. You never really leave any place you’ve been.
The day one more flag to wave
in the interminable parade—
but you love every footstep of it
or at least I do. And aren’t I you?

2.
The crisis has come.
His Majesty’s skin
is warm, reddish and hurts a bit—
the three signs. Mild infection
on the back of the wrist,
treat it, tuck it in, take it easy.
The doctors waddle offstage,
the king broods in his armchair
thinking of this and that.
Brown-study she calls it,
his English queen, the way
he sits with his face in his hands
as if in the immensity of grief, but really only gazing deep into the quiet dark of not much, pale patch of band-aid on his wrist.

3.
And that is all of you. You have my word. Glass cage lets blue skink roam but not too far. The crow out on the lawn through knows how to teach morality, the right decisions, if you know how to listen

_Hurt none. Help all. Tame mind._

Buddhism in six words, trust the crow.
4.
Still, there is a kind of agitation,
Saturday-night-but-no-date feel,
the church door locked,
the bar full of shabby music.
Be calm, be calm, my kitten mind,
you have all you’ll ever need,
Stare at the wall and remember.

5.
The part he liked best
was the talky Egypt book,
full of strange stories,
listening to shavepate priests
tell deep stories of the gods
or were they animals or were they,
even they, sure of what was there,
safe in the dark of the temples?
Gods and invaders from the north, what else has history ever been?

6.
Maybe time to pick up the pen—but not quite yet.
Rest my fingers in the fleece.
It all depends on what comes next—laughs at himself for being obvious.
But aren’t oak trees obvious, and that low mountain whose name I never learned?
Across the river. In the sky.

27 December 2021
he day is always dwindling
the growing
the reach of trees
bare trees into the empty sky
the cold light
of where we came from.
The day is always after.

27.XII.21
Belong to someone else
like young Proust the lover,
it happens in what they call
the heart but who knows where
the keys are to such possession
then one day it all goes away
and one stands on a street corner
sith the free breeze in your eyes
and you’re back in the Bible again.

28 December 2021
The less I tell you
the more you’ll remember

said the rock to the climber
moderately arduous
the granite goer.

Read me

with your breath,
it is a simple story
in ten thousand lives,
marry a mountain,
l’ll always be yours.

28 December 2021
A roll of marzipan, remember?
Or the lawn along the elderberries,
all those other languages,
shadow of a wheel rolling by
or Sunday morning horse,
my carriage?

Don’t bother the river,
it has work to do, song
you call it but it is hard
and takes so long, beauty.
its continuity, taught us
to find the tunes that hold
time together and that once
we hear them we seem to
have always known them.
Of course this is a city, 
hot necessarily Vienna but I wish, 
city happens wherever we are, 
city is a dream without waking. 
Night’s snow all melted into grass— 
do I contradict myself? 
There is no self here to contradict.

28 December 2021
The only snow left by morning
is snow on wood.
Grass swallows it, pavement melts it, only wood accepts the white writing—natural affinity?
Or wood’s own thirst?
I can hear the porch rail whisper
Adorn me from the sky.

28.XII.21
The number of syllables in haiku is the same as Homer’s line in Greek epic poetry.

28.XII.21
Mind mingling,  
the mash within  
of whom and when,  
who, who is that word  
standing in the shallows,  
shadows, waiting to be me?

2.  
The risk of grace is everywhere,  
orange typescript, could these words be mine? Quarrel  
in a restaurant with a relative I never had, in city I never entered?  
But so much of life is lies,  
life is just a lie with an f thrown in,  
failure? fucking? three
notes over middle C?
Rachmaninoff knew it well
and he was the reigning celebrity
when I was a kid, when the bus
used to leave me close to home.

3.
So in my public lectures
(the word means readings,
why worry) I stress
the sound of words and most
the space between them.
I bottle silence
and pour it out for all of you.
4.
Life is a dream, the Spaniard said, and if it isn’t, the German added, it must become one. Leaving me as usual cast up shivering on the wintry shore of morning. How to make sense of what I don’t know, make pebbles hold together. Put a piano in your pocket and sing along with the moon. Trust me to gather good advice.

29 December 2021
The man in the yellow armchair went on speaking
I mean reading
from a thick sheaf out loud.
Half-filled theater,
leatherette movie seats,
nobody paying much attention,
a pair of big Tibetan trumpets standing at stage left.
If I can’ make use of a dream
what am I allowed to do?
Is saying it enough to make it so?
And if so, what kind of gift
am I offering to you, you
who are kind enough to walk
this far with me in the mist?
You can’t see the mountains but they are there, voluptuous contours hidden in the sky.

19 December 2021
Catoptric splendors
of my mother’s mirror,
three mirrors really
on the wooden vanity,
one big in the middle,
two slightly smaller
hinged at either side.
So that all the angles
could be explored,
the self from every side,
the room I sat in
changing too with every
flex of the side glass.
And the big glass could show
what the small mirrors saw.
reflections of reflections
till the truth was known.
I think of you now
sitting before her mirrors,
how much you would learn
about yourself, almost
as much as I know, from
watching you from all sides.
And our years are mirrors too.

29 December 2021
ELEMENTS OF CALCULUS

The pebbles on Church’s Beach all point across the bay to the mainland, America, insofar as round things can point anywhere. Mostly round. Worn by tide, time, friction, glacial enterprise, all the usual suspects. Last night I learned how to unwrap cough drops from their twisted paper. Paper is supposed to be just for writing on. Cellophane was made for secular occasions, paper for sacred. Writing manifestos, wiping the body,
dabbing tears from lovers’ eyes, all the holy things. The beauty of pebbles is they do all our counting for us—no numbers needed, the beach accepts the sea. The vacant lot across the street possessed a deep declivity as if an old foundation planned, just deep enough for us on snowy days to sled down not far but fun, micro-alpine pleasures in the city, or more truly towards the city’s edge—we had the last candy store before the marshes on the sea. The way pebbles roll. This is the enactment of the play the characters asleep in the script,
the actors relaxing in the room
they call Eden, innocence and wine
until cast out into the next act
and whoever they are vanishes
into whomever they must be. Become. Please keep listening.
You hear the pebbles rolling
down the sidewalk, one of them
captured in your sneaker, digit
on a digit, don’t count, get it out—you are suzerain of your shoes.
Banish interlopers, those numbers
from the banker’s bench, those
guesstimates of lethal sciences,
silence, look at the sea.
That’s Massachusetts over there
and Rhode Island in your left hand,
life of danger, merry-go-round
in Rockaway, hear the music, calliope knows best, rub two between your palms, pebbles, and feel the rhythm of creation—do we create what we behold? The bus stops across the street, the subway five blocks away, see what life is like? We are children of the distances, no mama but the waking light, day is here, go do it all again. Stone by stone it signifies. But you have to read it—that’s the hard part. Here, let me show you how. Ox. House. Camel. Door. Window. Man asleep on a blanket on the floor. The alphabet holds us together
pebble by pebble. As many as it takes to fill up a figure irregular in shape, a hip or a hummock on a hillslope, how can we measure the inner meanings of what we see? We see curved space with straight line eyes—that is our religion from the start, Karahan, Jerusalem. Hold firm, a generous hand often has gaps between the fingers—through those pebbles tend to fall you end up with fewer stones now than you thought, but did you ever count them? Not then, not now, it’s still New Bedford over there, the best ice cream on Ile-St-Louis, pebbles, always more pebbles
until the mind is done. Exalted over the plain, smiling like lavender on the slopes by Cavaillon, river after river until the word is said. Even then it’s hard to hear—imagine Aeneas trudging upstream on foot for once, boat and sea far behind him, us I mean, imagine the long walk to get where we are. Aren’t we refugees from a lost city, pebbles in our pockets, there must be a place up ahead, place for us, stones too yearn to come home.

30 December 2021
The geology of it. Wrench
the garnet from the rock. Manhattan mica schist. Or up Gore Mountain
the gravel red from garnet.

Humans usually don’t care what they say or do around pure stone. No shame no shy
the Lama said of them, ones without the dignity of self-control.

I have spent so long listening to the stones around me
that I have to keep writing down
what they say. Or what my faint intelligence can understand of that long, long testament.

30 December 2021
Altar, everything is an altar. That’s what a thing is, what it means. Each thing lifts the mind, the hand, the spirit, whatever we bring to it, whatever we offer by using it. Or keep it in reverent silence, cupboard or workbench, a table always spread.

30 December 2021
They hear my eyes open
so they hide.
But when I get to the window
I can see
the highway through the trees,
two lights of one
car upon it heading north.
Who am I then
to be brought to such a place?
Why wouldn’t they let me sleep?

2.
*Planctus*. Old word.
This is a complaint about
the sounds that are not music
but wake me to make mine.
Dark angels? Stealthy healers?

3.
Picture a city with an empty street,
old respectable row houses
on either side, six trees,
twilight, nobody there.
That’s what night is like
in my house. Dawn
is a lottery you pray to win.

4.
So who woke you,
the Other Angel asks.
I don’t know, I heard
the sound of someone
not being there, sound of a sudden absence, wood or water, rat in rafter?
It’s time you knew these things, the Angel countered, or are you so in love with the melody of your confusion? The library is full of you.

5.
But I was just a child who woke, tottered down the hallway, saw lights swift through the trees. I’m not to blame for all that happened then, words and wishes, names of far-off friends,
trains that run nowhere, 
fog horn on the river. 
Sometimes I think I’m just 
a small part of the weather.

31 December 2021
Pick a meaning from the air, lay it easy flat on the table. Let it rest a while after all it’s been. Then lift it gently, press it to a sound. Voila! A word is born. Now the hard part begins.

31.XII.21
for C

I watched her
when she was quiet
and the others spoke,
her face noble, calm,
austere and beautiful.
Athena, true queen
of the city we are.

31 December 2021
The mist is cloud on earth.
We move through the heavens.
That much is true.
Up and down change hands,
swing your partner,
am I still asleep?

31.XII.21
A drop of blood inside a miracle.
The heart beats.
And beats again.

31.XII.21
I think of my friend in her kayak walloping the waves on her way out on the river in this mild mist. It must feel like paddling through light, storming through the invisible. I bow to her with admiration and shiver on the shore.

31.XII.21
Words lying around on the bottom of the mind. Upend! Float them anew, they are what you really mean. Listen to the whistle on a passing train and you’ll hear them start to flutter.

31.XII.21
It doesn’t have to be now but it is. Love is like that, a vein in the sandstone of self.

31.XII.21
They spell it ornery in books, it means to represent the sound of judgment: refractory, hard to get along with or just plain mean. I wish the word fitted in my dialect. I need it so often, so many roads only run uphill.

31.XII.21