

12-2021

Dec2021

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "Dec2021" (2021). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1482.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1482

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

=====

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 be 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 who 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,
o 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,
good 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 Cohecton,
rain-soaked red clay, slippery.
Stay home. You never can tell.
One dy 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
to look down than up?
Is that a clue
to the whole megillah,
this scroll we can't
go back to the beginning,
caught 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 in 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**

December 2021 20

**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, take 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
pf 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

December 2021 31

**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 f 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 hm 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.**

6 December 2021

=====

**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.**

7 December 2021

= = = = =

**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**

**nd 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,
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
doorway 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-second 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 its 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.**

11 December 2021

=====

**I wake on a high moral p;ne 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.**

11 December 2021

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 now 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
pf 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 fin something to offer you**

15 December 2021

= = = = = = = =

The day before the doctor
the phone always rings.
They make sure we don't forget,
neglect, 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 rlayer
with a scarf or a hat on top.
Then what you mean
can walk out in any weather, safe
from being too easily understood.**

15 December 2021

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 orse 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

movng 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.

17 December 2021

=====

**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

=====

for C.

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 fo 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.

18 December 2021

=====

**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, but 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
yourway 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.**

19 December 2021

=====

We are bone.
We under
stand 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 c
ounts.**

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 ne 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, ths 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 rhe Roman Martyrology says,
hoping for that moment
He came to give.**

2.

**I have a smart friend
who dismisses with conte,mpt
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 guilt 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 ipon 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.
‘Il 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 i
nto 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,
I'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,
not 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?

December 2021 204

**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 yourse, 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
caught 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

December 2021 214

**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,

December 2021 219

**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