

1-2022

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FOR DANTE

**First mind
best thought
he heard
from his future
so far in our past,
Listen, Listen
everything says,
Listen and repeat
on dancing feet.**

1 January 2022

6L30 A.M.

dreamt

=====

**Oldedom's wisdom
(I'm swimming in the Rhine)
left castles on the rocks
and secrets locked in books
nobody reads. (I'm translating
from the dark.) She taught me
to love the edges of things,
where the danger sings
and at any moment a touch
could kiss. Lorelei, ladybird,
night walks soft, on wet feet.**

1 January 2022

=====

In the first two songs
of this new year
rhyme happened.
The past
kissing us goodbye?
But not the new past,
newly gone, the old
past that lingered
from Cbucer to Yeats,
that kind of past
still wet on our lips.

1 January 2022

=====

**New Year's Day
wants to hear about itself,
the sacred agle of the secular,
the hinge on the door,
Janus laughing, the well,
let's start again.
But if today were just
an ordinary day, no name,
what would it say?
That's what only language knows,
the mice in the alphabet,
wake, it's almost dawn.**

1 January 2022

=====

**Writing is studying time,
investigating the time of the body
and the time iut there
where people happen
and all they do,
and wind and water, weather.**

**Write down the sound of everything
because it's all, all of it,
happening to you.
Nothing dreamier than daylight,
just say the word.**

1 January 2022

=====

**What time is it?
Can't see the clock.
It must be now.**

**I've had that hope before,
men singing by the river
while women washed cloths,
West Bengal, a boat went by
moving by current alone.
Was it you on board?
So long ago I almost know.**

1 January 2022

=====

**When you come from an island
all you really know
is what water says.**

**Everything else you learn
you try to fit into that,
that coming in and rolling out**

**that never stops,
that wets your feet and damps
the eyelashes you see
everything through.**

**Tears of knowing,
tars of joy. Live by sea.**

1 January 2022

=====

**A lover's body
is the furthest away
of all far things
we try to reach.**

**No road goes there,
I watch her across the room,
glowing, aurora shimmer,
splendor in the winter sky.**

1 January 2022

DISCOMFORTS OF ARITHMETIC,

**those chilly gaps
between the numerals,
water from the fountain
slipping through your fingers.**

**How many are there? How many
is water? How many is air?
I smelled your hair
when you bent close, intent
on some other number.**

**How much am I, how many?
I said to the tree Come sleep in me
but they're busy now, trying
to forget each leaf they had
to make next year's even better.**

**And they count each one. The way
we blink our eyes, constantly
renewing the seen. The scene.
The word meant shadow long ago—
who dares count so many years?**

**Someone not long ago has proved
there are no random numbers.
So pick a number and somehow it
is already yours, has chosen you,
as air slips between collar and skin,**

**always trying to come closer.
Do numbers have a home, perhaps
in us, they yearn for and hurry
to reach or to approximate, as we
guess how fast our car is foing**

**by how fast the trees pass by?
Does everything have a number too
or is it just us, refugees from Eden
where there was only one. Until
a furtive computation came along.**

1 January 2022

AQUILA

Spread of eagle wings
over the river now,
we see them there,
famous whitehead American bird,
shadow of empery aloft
sailing low sometimes
just over the bridge.

2.

O the shadow of things
she cried, as one fell
across her lap,
looked up and it was gone.

3.

**Things anticipate their shadows.
I am this so that I can be that.
History is made of horrors cast
by sudden surges of energy,
wingflaps of will and want.**

4.

**But eagles on the estuary
seem purer than that.
Slow patrol, big, big
and we like big. But Ben
Franklin thought the turkey
should be the nation's bird,
big enough and lots of them,
good to eat and they**

January 2022 14

**shit all over the place
nourishing the earth
we live on, seldom
bothering the empty sky.**

2 January 2022

=====

**I got a postcard from the moon,
he said rockets and landers
are all very well
but send up some women
because I have my glands too.**

2 January 2022

====

**In Leviticus
you read the code,
it speaks language
no one made
or all men did
fast asleep in the desert
then woke up speaking.
We're still trying
to make sense of what we said.**

**2.
Colder today,
the mist is less.
Sometimes weather helps,
sometimes a bird hops by**

interested in what it finds on earth.
So much to learn!
All life a crowded schoolroom,
read the maxims hung on the wall.

3.

Casuists. Jesuits. Sanhedrin.
We do these things to ourselves,
complex situations here
bear fake solutions forged there,
back then, deep in the forget.

4.

“We live nearby so we can be friends.”
The simplicity of what got said,
rich polyphony of a single Yes.

5.

**So the code can be
as they say broken
and the juice pour out,
pomegranate to begin with
so many crystals to make one.
And then the scent of lavender
and after long centuries the rose.**

2 January 2022

== == =

**Pigeons stay in the city
I wonder why,
they could fly up here easy
but they prefer
the high-rises of Manhattan,
women who feed them in the park,
statues to perch on
inhaling the bronze nobility
of some general or president.
Now of all the birds who come
regular to flutter by or linger,
no pigeons. Years ago
there were a few
lived on a rooftop up the road
then none. Vultures same,
wild turkeys, orioles,**

January 2022 20

**hawks and hummingbirds
and a concert hall of songbirds.
No busy pointing puff-breast pigeons
though,
they have work to do downtown.**

2 January 2022

DIAGNOSIS

**I am hopelessly misobutyric*
but am an ardent philotyric**
This paradox is to say the least
unusual in cattle country***.**

2 January 2022

***Hating butter.**

****Lover of cheese.**

*****The Western world, where we milk the animals we kkill to eat.**

=====

**What have we
here said the cop
to the carter,
a wagonload of weasels
to frolic in the senate,
like to like, I could spare
one or two for you.**

3.1.22

=====

**It's smart to be silly
when the sky is grey—
the Sun will hear your giggles
and maybe come out to play.**

3.1.22

=====

I slept ten hours—
how can that be?
Someone must
have been helping me
The sly anesthesiologist
rides with the dawn,
sprinkles images
to fascinate the dark—
stay here, stay here
the shadows call,
you will forget us
all soon enough.

3.1.22

=====

**East of the Elbe
crows wear grey
and in the north too—
Scots call them hoodies
and they have them too.
Shocked me first time I saw,
even the birds are growing old.**

3.!.22

=====

**Take a dep breath
and start again.**

**I think the pope is working hard
to bring Christ back,
find room for Him
in all the crowded churches.**

I think nobody understands.

**I think cabala has become
so much part of us
that every word dissolves
in acronyms of otherness.**

Rimbaud maybe said it first

January 2022 27

**but little did he know
he spoke for all of us.
A long time since we had a king—
and what will the weather
be like tomorrow?
We dance a slow mystery.**

3 January 2022

=====

The Spanish Armada comes every night,
we find its wreckage on the beach at
dawn,
our swans peck cautiously
at oranges from Malaga
bobbing on the surf. Flotsam.
Then daylight too washes up on shore,
we wake with our own wings
thick and torpid at our sides.

2.

All day we try to reclaim images,
merchandise of dream,
slippery with oil the Arabs
taught Spain to grow and press and
pour,

January 2022 29

**cannon balls and grappling hooks,
torches flung, sails on fire,
seagulls diving, swimmers reach the
sand,
lie there looking at the blue sky,
a schoolboy goes by chanting Latin.**

3 January 2022

NOMINA NUMINA

Names woke me,
litany of aunts and uncles,
sunshine, somebody's rabbit.

2.

What to do with a day
that has no name
or only one left over
from last week, next week,
ancient gods of war?

The French kept a calendar a while
where every day of the year
had its own name,
but had to share that name
with some plant or tree or tool,
nothing of its only own.

3.

**We say Today
and hope that counts,
sun in the trees at last
after a week of mist.
And this poor dear new year
has only a number not a name,
but you have a name
and I have one too
yet even so we all
sleep in the bosom of Now.**

4 January 2022

=====

After the angel left
the house was quiet,
the dreams crept back,
the sleepers slept.

But something was different,
it seemed the air had changed,
and the shadows were paler
as if they had taken in
some light the angel left.

2.

I am free
to talk about it
but not to go in
to that changed house.
I would have had

to be there
from the beginning
for the word she spoke
to mean me too.
But I was outside
in the northern forest
busy with a word of my own.

3.

But still I can admire
that house from outside,
tap out the rhythm of a tune
to it on this empty cardboard box,
hollow as a house, resonant,
ready to hold whatever will come.

4 January 2022

=====

**What is the speed
of forgetting
in sadness per hour?
Is there a roadmap
to relief,
a washcloth for remembering?
Things to keep with you
when you travel,
leaving London one last time.**

4 January 2022

=====

Have you ever felt
your soul was divided,
pieces of it scattered
through all the objects,
the things of your house?
The pink stone rabbit,
trptych from Florence,
green lamp, slipper
with a hole in the toe,
ashtray no cigarette
has used in forty years?
Things persist but where am I?
But they comfort me when I am small.

4 January 2022

IN THE JANUATRIUM

the glass roof allows the light.
We speak a static Latin down here,
warming our hands
in the steam curling
up from the heated pool.
On the wet tile floor
a toad or two have crept
in, made themselves at home.
Bufo mihi est, I say,
I have a toad, and you respond
Cur habes bofonem
why do you have a toad.
Unanswerable question,
like why are we here,
what place is this?

4 January 2022

====

waydreamer spoke:

the wall is old brick,
all brick, with vines
and on the vines
white grapes to feed birds.
Bow you must shape
the inside of the house—
too long you've lived
in the bare sight of it.
Now go in. Make yourself
as they say at home
the way you'd learn a new
language, one in the same
family as your own
but distant, a soft tongue,
a language like a cousin.

**Table. Chair. Lamp. Bed.
Simplest things. Lern
how to eat indoors,
deep uses of the spoon.
When you wake
it may already be spring.**

5 January 2022

====

**Look to the ledger,
count the calm money,
the weather is waiting,
and what have you learned?**

**There was a catechism
on the table, open
to a doubt that haunted me,
would I be me if I died?**

**Am I the soul (eternal,
the book says) or am I
just a sounding vessel,
all talk and personality
on display, a shed
in which the soul resides,**

deeply unknown to me?

**Put the money back
in the drawer,
it's not yet even noon.**

5 January 2022

TOGETHER

**As close as we came
there were still miles
inside that got not said.
Awkward pressed together
in this closet that knows
how to walk down the street.
Dour within, we sense
it skip kid-like through trash,
those solid shadows of desire
we too know all too much about.**

2.

**Close? There are religions
further than that.**

**Love you said is a spiel
from a con man but what
we have is truer than that—
true because there is no
word that says it, no word
at all. But I could hear it.**

3.

**So a bridge does go there,
almost every city has its bridges
if only to get out of town.
I saw Golden Gate at sunset
so close they seemed married.
But in that city no one is.**

4.

Heavy traffic of the heart.

**So close we thought together,
no bridge between, the cables
by which we are suspended
welded to the highest ideals.**

**At three we learned to read,
the pages are still turning.**

5.

**Close. Closer than I've ever been,
sometimes I forget which side
of the bed my legs are on. Love
whatever else it does approximates
and its deep trust can be a burden
on the trusted beloved. Otherwise
we'd all be in love all the time**

**and Dante would have nothing
but Hell to write about, but all
the birds would learn to sing.
But who would listen? Love,
be close enough to hear the silence
that thrills us in the empty room,
thresholds everywhere, we dare
to enter, hoping to find us there.**

5 January 2022

=====

**Ant tracks on the desert
no, a scratch healing nicely
on the arm. Count the steps
that lead to Easter, sunshine
on northern cities. Peace
by policy. Not remember
the scrape that made the scratch,
young women studying Torah,
feed the birds. Now all
is at it should be,
healing is common,
how many yards
still left from the loom?**

6 January 2022

EPIPHANY

**first feast,
when we see
for ourselves
what happened.
The showing-forth
without which
no mystery is complete.
A child is born
and now we know it.
And seem to know
something more as ell.**

6 January 2022

=====

**Too many footsteps to the well.
Take the subway instead
or the J that climbs outside
and runs through the hills.
always a mile away from
where I was I am.**

**The trouble
with memory is I'm always
alone in it, thirsty, the well
remote, the sidewalks
strangely empty, restaurants shut.**

**But the train keeps running,
this world is a video game
you're playing all by yourself.**

**Myself I mean, who is this you
I keep repeating? This magical other?
Take a train instead
that dares to stay underground.**

6 January 2022

=====

**How many suns
to make this day?
Snow covered,
bright in a blue way,
why are colors
anyhow? Every day
a mystery, every prayer
begs for information.**

2.

**Homework of the river,
the spotted lens.
Clean the land.
we feed the sea.**

3.

**A girl in gingham
is an oracle,
a man in overalls
adjusts the orb.
Hidden constellations
revealed only when
you dare to lie on your side.**

4.

**Piecemeal, like scripture,
thousands of little words
to make word. Snowflakes
last five thousand years.**

5.

**The lost tribes of Israel
gather in my living room.
They teach me Gaelic,
I feed them fresh coffee.
Everything comes from Africa.**

6.

**And then the dream began—
intelligent men around me,
fraternal, good-humored,
saying wise things. Forget
the message, remember the feel.**

7.

Snow script

dense tangled branches.

We see only

what we are prepared to see.

8.

Even inside gloves

the hands are cold.

In the brightest room

shadows lurk.

It seems I try

to keep myself afraid.

as if fear were the best

protection against what I fear.

9.

Ghosts before breakfast
like Hans Richter's film,
night's fingers leave smudges,
no phone rings.
It's all out there,
waking world,
dogs on leashes,
the broken chain.
Try hard, so hard,
to accept the neutrality of noon.

10.

Sometimes it's all right there.
you don't have to think.
Other times
be a good neighbor

**to your thoughts,
let them play in your yard,
put up with their loud music.
They are your only local friends**

7 January 2022

=====

**I have white hands
they show ink nicely
or other bruises
of saying what one means.
Or thinks one does.
Hand, be my parchment,
tell my testament.
Clean fingers, always
be on time for supper.**

7 January 2022

=====

for Barbara, on her birthday

We were at Yosemite
and you explained
that this earth we stood on
was a body,
nothing more or less,
body of someone
who knows us well and we
must come to know.
We were standing high
you said on a sacred
part of that body,
sacred just like ours,
but very big, and she
stays a very long time.

... 7 January 202

=====

for Susan, on her birthday

**Sitting down
is playing an instrument.
Looking quietly
across the table
is precisely a song.**

**You know the rest—
the body is the only music.
Every dancer knows that
and we all, somehow,**

**somehow, in some godly
strange impossible, lithe
or fierce or lopsided way
we all are dancers.**

**So many years my words
have watched your dance.**

7 January 2022

MNEMOSYNE MEANS MINDFULNESS

**The smoking car, remember?
Things go away but some go faster.
Roller Derby, corner saloon?
Bible salesmen still come to the door,
but Random House rejects qa new
book by Norman Mailer, 'controversial'
was a word used in refusal.**

**Can I still buy Birch Beer at the
but there is no more A&P.
I am but observing, not deploring.
Things feel out their own paths,
some linger, some not. All the
subway names have changed,
can't tell Flatbush from the Bronx.
It's wonderful, it's being born
all over again, and all the streets**

are new, and I could live
in any one of all these houses
and that figure a block away
might turn out to be my mother.
Now I'll have nothing to remember.

7 January 2022

=====

**A year is an ocean cruise
and winter is a storm at sea.
We huddle in our berths
and yearn for the shore,
April, golden with forsythia.**

8 January 2022

=====

**Exorbitant,
a postage stamp
to deliver
even this tiny message
to the past.
How far back
can these words reach
to say what I would have said?**

8 January 2022

=====

**There is a friction in each fact,
nothing is easy. Prayer
is the oldest lubricant
and is still effective.
But I want more:
a qworld without war.
One thing at a time
and slowly, lowly, change slips in.
Ease all the friction
that you can, o American.**

8 January 2022

=====

**I missed Duncan's birthday
this year, no excuse,
I should have stood
at least a moment in silence
honoring the sweet detached
intelligence of his voice,
who knew that learning
is a vital part of love,
playful master of shaping
silence into music.**

8 January 2022

=====

**There was no waiting.
The globe rested in its flight
endlessly circling because
moving is sleeping too.**

**I thought I knew these things
but I was wrong.
There was a cemetery on the hill
and I knew no one who lay there,
the church across the way
deconsecrated years ago,
artist lives in it at times,
imagine a Jacuzzi in the sacristy.**

**Yet someone has set up
a fine new wooden fence**

**along the road, why?
to keep the dead maybe
from going to a Mass
will never be said there again?**

**Sunday is no different.
Nothing to wait for.
Everything is already here.
Look inside you
if you don't believe me.**

8 January 2022

**Coming to me—
but we all think that.
The line belongs to itself,

the tree is in winter daze,
working hard within,
working hard to make a spring.
Just like yu, Your hand
takes charge of the horizon,
a line is to play with,
a shape is making love—
at least the tree thinks so.
Just wait and count the leaves.**

8 January 2022

=====

**The waltz
of all things
they once deemed
scandalous, indecorous,
all that whirling
men and women together.
Wouldn't you rather
sit quietly side by side
and talk and get to know
and so forth?
I wonder what society
would make of that?
Dance under the radar!**

9 January 2022

COLD STATUES IN THE PARK

**snow in the crook of an elbow,
snow on the hat,
all that standing there.
What a strange thing it is,
a stone statue of a man
(they're mostly men,
politicians, generals and such)
who once was alive,
dancing and lying and
telling the truth but now
standing there in winter.
something so sad and cruel,
it puzzles me, I shake my head
glad that I still can move.**

9 January 2022

=====

**He grew a beard.
I did once too.
But what an odd
expression—a beard
grows by itself.
No agency required.
We men take credit
for the silliest things.**

9.1.22

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**Dip a rose petal
in some mild oil
if you can find a rose
and if your oil itself
came from a clement tree,
then slip the petal
between your lips
and say the word
it makes you speak.**

9 January 2022

=====

**In Callicoon the railroad ran
right down the wide main street,
there was a station there
but every now and then
a freight stopped there too.
I climbed up on a boxcar once.
On one side of the street an old
yellow building held the town bar,
like a saloon in a cowboy movie, far as I
know we never went in.
But way up the hill outside town
a monastery carved from grey rock.**

9 January 2022

=====

**When life is intact
anyone can be satisfied with this,
just this. Just this. This.**

9 January 2022

GEOGRAPHY LESSON

**Across the river
they have better olive oil.**

What to do?

**Build a bridge, plant
a tree of my own.**

**But how can any person
own a tree? And a bridge
is like a bride, every
crossing is a wedding,
a risky business, a love
affair between invisibles.**

Preference rarely does much good.

9 January 2022

CHILDREN WAITING FOR THE BUS

Not quite still children.

**Miriam's satin blouse is untucked
at the small of her back.**

**The not quite children speculate,
what has she been up to,
imagine, giggle a little.**

**Then we all get on the bus
and have to carry that green satin
the rest of our lives, tucked n
along with every thing we ever saw.**

9 January 2022

=====

Nothing is easy.

Empty pockets

wash the table.

Wait. Rest.

Anything is hard.

Nothing is easy.

10 January 2022

=====

I hear the kettle boiling
and understand.

The trees are motionless,
I interpret as I can.

They flee from me he wrote
and we still hear their steps
retreating, naked on stone floors.

Poetry. The beauty of his loss
lingers. The tea is ready now.
Cling to the always.

10 January 2022

THE QUESTION

**Surrounded by this huge self
how can I care about other people?
This noisy crowd all around me,
shouting its fears and desires,
its needs and illnesses, pains
and how to get up in the morning
and work all day and do the dishes,
feeding and reading and seeing
what's on the screen and the news,
the news, how can I break out or
slip out and be of some use to you?**

11 January 2022

=====

**Our geometries
scripted across
a world of trees
rocks running water—
a straight line
is blasphemy
on which we build.
Or a bird flies on.**

10/11 January 2022

=====

**Battlements at Merano
roof of Pound's house
the crenellations
mix Welf and Waibling
to suit whoever wins.
Guelph and Ghibelline we say
and we forget.
But he remembered.
History is all there is.**

11 January 2022

THE LIGHT COMES SOON,

a mazurka from Vienna,

everybody borrows,
the thing about rivers
nearby you always hear them
even in winter or more so,
the ice groaning.
Indoors they're dancing
of course, winter gymnastics,
waltz and polka, any river,
are you dreaming
pr does the earth really move
or just in books and classrooms
while it's really up to us
arms and legs, hips, hops,
to keep movement in the world,
assuage the pain of opera,

Herod said *Salome, dance for me*
but he should have danced
for himself, we would all
still be living now,
a dance can't die,
it's not even dawn yet
a whole day to come,
memory dissolving in morning light.

11 January 2022

=====

If I told you
I dreamed I held you
would it mean more
to or less than if I admitted

**I often think of doing that?
Do we credit dream
more than desire?
Or does telling you
make lies of both,
the real truth neither
of us can touch?**

11 January 2022

=====

**Sailing into dawn.
Up an hour
and the temperature outside
hasn't changed by even**

a tenth of a degree.

Fahrenheit. Refrigerator

hums. Desk light only

on, not to wake another.

I could turn even that off

and bask in the dark.

But then I'd be caught in thought

whereas now I can write and write,

writing is the opposite of thinking.

A word is made of granite

and little birds fly away.

11 January 2022

=====

**Go slow, white car,
the hill does all the work,
swoop low
now out of sight
safe in your going
being gone.**

**We're in
the Middle Ages still
and every one of us
a pilgrim to Jerusalem.**

12 January 2022

=====

**Poetry is the geometry
of language,
shaping directing, enclosing,
leading it to some shape
it hadn't formed before,
miracle, make circles
using straight lines**

12.1.22

=====

**When you stop going to work
you lose the person you worked
so hard to be
and you're left with who
you simply are.
No wonder on days off
you sit at the window
envying cars on their way to work.**

12 January 2022

== == == ==

**The truth of the matter,
is a flower
growing from a rock.
Only language lets us solve
the botany of geology.**

**We know what hands can do,
but rescue cities from corporate
America is hard, save fishermen
from the sea?**

I saw this stone

with the mind's eye,
it was like the sky
but not so far away,

a flower must come from somewhere
I declare it in a loud voice,

yet relax, we're only in
the slow movement of a sonata,
a flower is when
and then the allegro comes,

remember what you told me once
that words are winds

**that move the way things grow,
I think it was you, or was it
another you, another dream,
another me? But the fact remains.**

12 January 2022

=====

I'm straining
but not at the bit.
To bed! I mean
let my silence speak.

12.1..22

=====

The story worries. The rock
knows how to stand still
but what else does it know?
What comes along with identity,
fuzz on the sleeve of every me,
pebble in their shoe.

The story
stands up, yawns, leaves the room,
what else can it say? Stay? No,
the rock says that. Says and
leaves question lingering behind,
hint of shampoo, or is it cologne,
questions are always on the make,
trying to get someone to ask them.

Let alone answer. Put a small rock on the table, just past breakfast, look at it while you eat, easy, as if you were having a conversation. And you are. Trying to find out what things know will help you discover, remember, imagine what you know. That curious dust at the back of the mind.

12 January 2022

=====

**A lot of eating in those little rolls
all this chewing and busy dipping
in for instance right now the hot
ajvar in cream cheese mush, crust
crackly here or crunchy there
and all that yeasty density inside—
I got most of the way through one
before I got too interested in
how long it takes to eat one firm
little two-inch lump. Or is it me?**

12 January 2022

A PHOTO ON CARMINE STREET

for Joel

You walked up Carmine and showed me what you found, thank you for a place I loved, Father Demo Square, square though it wasn't, and that grey church he built, Our Lady of Pompeii across the way. Pompeii! What a place for Her to be, before Vesuvius, on Her way north, France and maybe Glastonbury, I wish I knew Demo, I knew lots of people right nearby, Mailer's windows looked right out on this, and round the corner was Cornelia were dear friends lived but first that cheese shop the first place I ever tasted *stracchino*, then the government banned it, the way kings do, unpasteurized milk or some such angst, forty years before I taste it again, try it if you can, oft as brie but deeply Italy,

virgin milk and salt of lilies, they still make it in the north, the friends are all dead though. the priest and the pederasts, the opera singer and the journalist, all the wanton darlings, and Auden at the other end of the block I never knew, just saw him in the street, a face lined with love and foiled desires, but how big the church seems now, a sturdy welcome for us sinners, and Ave Maria says the pediment, and that's what we all must do, Hail, Mary, we bow to greet Maria in everyone.

12 January 2022

=====

**Grammatical gender
or the melting snow
not melting but burrowing
lifelike into grassy ground,
a vanishing. Male
or female? Neuter?**

**But what would neuter mean
of a thing or a process
or a day like this, mild
for winter but wolves on th way?
Is that distant figure
walking a dog or pushing a stroller?
Language is a kind of distance too
that things get lost in,
is that your hand on my shoulder?**

13 January 2022

=====

**Curve of the body
equivalent to dew on a rose petal,
skin of the upper arm
soft as a cloud over Fresno.**

**We move inland
yo find the weather,
we from the coast, island,
outwash plain, we
look at hills with wonder

and when we see someone**

lying down we read
low hills on the horizon.

Likeness is how it begins.
But why is a rose?

13 January2022

=====

**I think the sun
is starting to remember us,
we all sleep late sometimes
but I delight in the brightening,
out there, out there!
Maybe a shadow will come along
and tell me where She is.**

13 January 2022

=====

**The toy train
had a steel railroad bridge
to carry it over a mirror
how else can a river
lie quiet on the floor
under the Christmas tree
and let boxcars run smooth
past the windows of shops
printed and pierced shoes boxes
to reach the signals where
a stationmaster size of a finger
stood to slow it past the station.
Once this has happened in your life
there's no way it cannot have been.**

**We are stuck with what has been—
so guess what happens to what is.
And the train keeps going.**

`13 January 2022

=====

**The willow I wanted,
the tree of difference,
veiled and beckoning.
But why call it weeping
when it stood boldly
alluring, a shimmer
of shelter, hide in me,
come hide in me?**

14 January 2022

=====

**I went to stand in the desert
be a statue like Ozymandias
see my longest shadow reach
nowhere in particular, but dark,
making its mark across
whatever a place really is,
a line, a single gesture
my only consequence.**

14 January 2022

=====

**The letters of the alephbeth
curled round the angel's wings,
flaked off and fluttered down so some
among us learned to read.**

**That's how it began; history
had nothing to do with it.**

**Dust and feathers and heaven,
sawdust from the tree of mind.**

It happens all at once to each of us.

14 January 2022

=====

for Kim, on her birthday

**She saw cars pass purple and blue
and all at once she knew everything
walked in the park down to the lake
and she had crossed all Eurasia
from Kamchatka to Finistere,
but America is always still to come,
voluptuous fog , wind on horizon,
she walks but needs no dog to lead
because we are all moving with her,
all our thoughts and wishes, needs,
kisses, leather satchels, backpacks,
chewing gum step after step along**

**our hard-working green latitudes,
because she is always ahead of us
we need her, we need to follow
or how will we get to America again
the land she makes up as she goes
from Big Sur to Plymouth Rock
where else can we live but in what she
says?**

14 January 2022

=====

The evidence walks across the room
vaguely showing off
but with its mind elsewhere,
croft in the Highlands,
shore at low tide.
Anything but here.

2.

We begin to believe.
Everything really is far away,
floors and floors and no escalator,
sedimentary life,
day over day.

We search for fossils in the rock.

We dream.

3.

The evidence leaves the room

and we feel no wiser

but a little bit relieved.

Doubt can be comforting

the way it is when you wake up

but haven't opened your eyes.

4.

You hear the wind,

the sky is blue.

Deduce it's cold,

revert to sleep.

Sometimes that works.

**But sometimes the evidence
is right there waiting for you.**

15 January 2022

=====

He smiled and said
cooking good food
for the woman you love
in intra-Venus feeding.

I smiled back, a pun
is always worth a smile.
But then I pondered
a deep truth in his whimsy,
the offerings we make
to those we revere,
those we love, humans
who are also something

somehow a little more.

I smiled again and said

Thanks for being jovial and wise.

15 January 2022

=====

**The three orders of rock
–igneous, sedimentary, metamorphic–
may mirror three kinds of human
beings and we never knew.**

Try this:

**those who are from the beginning just
what they are,**

solid, unchanging;

**those who grow by experience, wiser
and deeper,**

layer upon layer shaped

by each experience;

**and the rare sort, like the former but
suddenly totally transformed
by one overwhelming experience.**

Who are you?

And who is your friend?

15 January 2022

====

Poetry must be an experiential science somewhat like chemistry. The poet's work is to discover all possible combinations and interactions of the elements,

the elements of language, words and silences. The work will continue until all combinations and sequences have been discovered, and everything sayable has been said. Only then will all truths be known. The immensity of the project is balanced by the intimacy and relative ease of the process, little equipment required, and raw material easy to come

**by, And new words keep surfacing all the
time.**

16 January 2022

=====

I heard enough
to wake me up,
the temperature rose
from 1 to 2
while I got
my first thoughts down.
Winter is full of surmises.

16.1.22

=====

**We need fiction
to give us the lies
we need to find the truth
truth by elimination
as well as by revelation.
Read on to find the door.**

16.I.22

TWEED

In northern islands they weave tweed
taught by movements of the sea.

That cloth is geological. Wear
a tweed skirt, be a hill.

Wear tweed trouser,
stretch out a valley. Why.

Because the weave
is one thing and another,
the differences knotted together
to keep you warm.

The way we walk secure
on rock that once was mud,
mud and grass who knows what,

does even he mountain remembers.

Writing is like tweed, yes?

Close-weaving the differences

together. The distances,

but each of them distinct,

clear. Follow each thread,

words in a sentence, a cloth

of vivid prose, no end in sight,

comfortable enough, a little

itchy too, to make sure you

go on talking forever.

16 January 2022

[see revision, "Tweed"]

=====

Time was waiting for me

at the corner. The light
was green, both ways
were legal. freedom
is so dangerous, hide\
in cities, shiver in the woods.
Yet the trees give counsel,
remind me I have kept
time waiting and by now
the lights have turned red.
What will I do with time now
and efast will time to do me?

16 January 2022

====

*This small field is enough for me to
grow*

*all the sacred flowers that are needed,
orderly lavender, sky-kissed hibiscus*

These lines, with many variations, kept happening all through my sleep. The third line, though, never changed, and sometimes a fourth line loomed vaguely, about the blue hydrangea, but that was never clear. Never really there.

Three lines in sleep, aiming, at pentameter, getting there, preferring something other, line after line, the same lines different. But those rows of French lavender in Provence, those pale roses of Sharon like quiet sunrise, they

lingered, more as words than images.
Every now and then through the night
the snowplow would pass and rouse me
from nothingness to those lines again,
the only flowers that I need. Winter, but
sunshine when I woke.

17 January 2022

=====

Fruition

has fruit in it

and beautiful

is so because it has

four vowels in it,

one of them twice.

**So look before you spell.
The star is staring at you
from the inmost sky.**

17 January 2022

=====

**Tame out front
weird out back
where the woods wait
and the snow lasts.**

Streets

**make all the difference
as the Romans knew,
we have so much to thank
and blame them for
it's a wonder we don't speak Latin.
Or is it possible we actually do?**

17.1.22

=====

for Michael, on his birthday

He found an old language
in the boscage of the library,
looked it over, thought a bit
brushed the dust off,
liked the shape of it, sure,
but found it thick with rust,
this won't be easy, got busy,
copper wool and Salt of Cicero,
got the rust off, then he
polished it with Oil of Venus.
It shone! And in its gleam he saw

dark caves of language,
heard a faint music strangely
familiar. The whole thing
good as new. Better than new,
because this new had old in it,
and all the places it has been,
all the secrets it had hidden,
and some are hiding still.

17 January 2022

NIGHT SONG

Slip

into the sleep world

slip

between the pronouns

into the mist

of nobody's memories.

Now we are together.

18 January 2022

THE MYSTERY

is not what you think of me

but what I think of you.

This Jacobean tragedy

acts on and on

If I don't get the right answer

from my heart

I'll never know who you are.

That's why we live on islands,

to stand on the shore

and stare out to the endless sea.

18 January 2022

=====

I had traced myself
through the night
following the track,
one word led to another,
all the way there.

I found me awake beneath
one more indecipherable tree,
looking up at my approach.
What are you doing here?
Birch bark good to write on,
acorns good to finger two
or three of them in my hands,
since you dare to use my hands.
So let us go home together,

insieme as they say in opera.

But this isn't opera

and we are home already.

18 January 2022

=====

**I think you need thanking
for all you've done
the friendly visits,
thoughtful absences,
teacakes and narratives.
Many an afternoon
would have been blah
without you.
Never go too far away.**

18 January 2022

====

**When morning comes
we'll discuss this matter again,
get to the bottom of the light.**

18.1.22

=====

Put the stress where it belongs.

**In Welsh the accent
stays always in the middle,
the place of the heart.**

**Recessive in English, we
back away from the cliff
edge of silence,
dread the end of the word.**

18.1.22

=====

**Walk like a mine,
copper if not gold,
the ore within you
moves as you do
bringing richness,
ripeness to the world.
For ore is old, and you
are young, and your
easy stride will carry
glowing metal to a needy land.**

18 January 2022

=====

The specifics resist us.

It is the nature of nature,
tough rind on the pumpkin.

water seeks its well.

Everybody wants to go home.

Why are we different, why
do we keep doing Magellan
hankering for unknown seas
when it's all right here,
the *me* in *you* that holds the truth
salty crunchy like a celery stalk.

18 January 2022

=====

Armchair tenderness

the hand

softly on her hair

firm on his shoulder,

the little signs.

How have we lived so long

and learned so little?

Let it suffice

until a green morning,

give me your hand on it.

19 January 2022

=====

The snow could be sand.

Only skin can tell the difference.

Forget our hide for once
and adore the glistening emptiness
stretched out over all the details,
a simplicity rare as Sahara.

I explain this to myself
mornings at the window
but still I crave the waves
lispig on a sunburnt shore,
the seagulls at their liturgy.

19 January 2022

=====

Your birthday
is across the street from mine.
I count the candles on the cake

through spyglass,
I remember how kids used to slap
each other, a slap for each year
and one more, 'to grow on.'
I wonder if kids still do that,
if there are any kids anymore.
I really can't count the candles,
just a general blur of light,
and how do I even know
it's a seven-layer b-day cake
and not just the sun's reflection?
And what street are we living on?
Even during light traffic
it seems hard to cross.

January 2022 143

19 January 2022

ROCKING CHAIR

Didn't we used to have one?

**A rocking chair calms you down,
but lunges forward to help you stand
up.**

**Why aren't more things like that,
giving and taking,
whispering and keeping still?**

19 January 2022

-

=====

Of course by the river.

Or beach if better.

**Nobody knows
more than water.**

**Or live on the mountain
remote from what everybody knows
so all you know is what
you find in the scary
cave of your mind.**

**So we are far away
from what you know,
what water tells us,
what the rock washes away.**

20 January 2022

=====

Suppose there were no Vienna
and all there was is Philadelphia.
What would listen to?
Who would tell me the truth?
Ghetto the point. *Das Lied ist aus.*
The song is over and we're
still here. I watch the busses
come and go. They know
something only distance knows.

20 January 2022

=====

The log streak of loud
is gone and now the sky
looks a little less blue.
We grow by contrast,
I need my enemy.

20.1.22

**NIGHT-BLOOMING JASMINES OF
MONTREUX**

How many years it's bloomed
since H.D. stood near the shore
and breathed their meaning in.
It smelled like time to her,
time, the animal from which
all poetry and narrative are born,
song is time that we can hear
it tells us what we're thinking.

Notso many years ago we stood
in front of that hotel, breathing in
that amazing sensuous odor
for ourselves. and tried to name

**the darker shapes in France
across the lake, we could see
the peak above St Jean far inland,
the lights of Evian, Thonon, no
late ferry bothering the lake.**

**Scent of the flowers, shapes
of night-time distances, all poetry
is made of distance, one heart
to another, every word's meaning
locked inside the hearer's thought.
So close we stood together, lake
and flowers, man and woman,
and the distances always win.**

January 2022 151

21 Januaryn2022

=====

I met no traveler from it
but I know there is a land
where under a hazel tree
a pool of quiet water rests.

Its water never freezes no
matter how cold the winter.
And someone lives inside it
at peace with his condition,

so much so that his breath
makes lucid patterns on water
and you can hear him humming

as you stand by the edge,

**and sometimes he sings words—
if you're lucky you hear them too.**

21 January2022

= = = = =

The parchment rolls out
the words roll off
we're left with naked meaning.

*

Stare the blank wall in the face.
Be defiant. Insist
on seeing nothing.
Let emptiness sing.

*

There is a fear
that comes with waking.
Maybe only then

does it make sense
to open my eyes
and see ordinary things.
No grand mysteries
like windows or mirrors,
just plain stuff,
like whose shoe is that
that fits my foot so well?

22 January 2022

=====

Imagine the mirror
were a bell instead.

**When it rings you'll hear
the other side
of all your thinking,
your words come back
whispering till they fade.
Then you have to strike
the glass again. ne word will do.**

22.1.22

=====

Well inland
a gull flew over
then I remembered
the river.

We call it that
but birds know better,
ocean tries to come to us,
comfort us,
wherever we are.

The sea is our mother.

22 January 2022

COASTLINES

Long the coast
stratifications of what
can still be known
and the rifts, gaps, caves
where feeling haunts
the habit of our seeing.

2.

Even I have been there.
red sands of the Hadramaut
endlessly everywhere void
as Ozymandias then suddenly
a highway and a little car,
just like reality.

3.

Or further red, the quiet
mountains of Anatolia,
look down, own eyes,
that's what traveling is for,
not getting somewhere,
there is nowhere we have to be.

4.

But I bless the anticline
of this country here
that is sort of mine,
to gaze, even passing fast,
at that rock is to sense

**an obligation, to pay attention,
be responsible to each stratum,
to be able to respond
to each compressed layer of
all that happened.**

5.

Is it enough to let it dream in us?

Something has to be said.

Something always has to be said.

The coast is continuous,

No way for it to stop.

The length of the coastline

**in relation to the area of the land
enclosed determines**

**the political impact of the island.
Work it out. Call it the Greece.
And politics is everything we do.
The rock keeps us writing.**

23 January 2022

= = = = =

**Ten dancers.
that's all you need,
ten dancers**

dancing all around
a shaft of pure light,
but at least one
of the dancers always
must be dancing behind the light.

24 January 2022

=====

**Wide stripes
ovivid green and white,
never saw a dress
with such wide stripes,
wide, like an awning
my wife said, glowing,
sun wrapped inside it.**

24 January 2022

SKY'S

When you live in a city
the sky is more important.
It's the only thing
that really belongs to you,
something you trust,
listen to, o how little of it
you can see, that slice of blue,
that groan of grey thunder.
And all for you. Sometimes
go to the beach or ride the ferry
and then you see more of it,
all of it, you think, but no one

can see the whole sky at once.
But once om Lexington Avenue
I Hard what the sky said
Or just let me hear.
It was a bright October day
and it lasted all my life.
Co now I have to praise
the street and the city,
and most thar bright sky
for letting me hear that voice
and begin to understand.

24 January 2022

== == == == ==

**Nothing to say
best way to start
bst time of day
to say it, nothing
takes so many words,
tunes, timbres,
hushed pauses, gaudy
forward0martches,
nothing takes so long
to say, sometimes
singing is faster,
but that needs two of us,
and everything is possible
when there are two,
but time is on our side,**

**outside, where nothing lives
and we hurry there, telling,
singing, noting stops us
and we lie down together.**

24 January 2022

= = = = =

**But if there were someone there
what would you say?**

**That is the basic question in theology.
And psychology. And every day.**

2.

**The uncertainty is galling
but gets words said.**

**Books written. Crusades
begun and ended.**

**All the survivors go home
wondering where they've been.**

3.

**Pretend it matters,
shipping, fishermen, miners,
industry at play.**

Nothing straighter than a street.

A city is the most we are.

**Then what? What do we do
about Indianapolis? Frankfurt
is insoluble, euro in tucked
neat in the band of your hat,
take it off in church.**

4.

**Or bring the church with you,
safe between your palms,
peer into the dark and holy
emptiness only hands can make.
Speak your answer into that space.**

24 January 2022

THE ROOM

She lit the candle and opened the door. When she saw the dark room, she quickly pulled the door closed, and waved the flame out. It's not right to blow out a candle, she thought or had been taught, breath is to give life, not

puff it out. And it seemed wrong to her, though no one had told her so, to carry a light into a dark room—it seems brash, like blurting out some sharp word in a quiet room.

She waited a moment, gathered her thoughts, opened the door and stepped into the dark, let the door close behind her, nudged by her shoulder. She stood in the dark, inhaled the feeling of this closed space, place, room.

Now she flicked her lighter and lit the candle again, raised it above her head so her eyes would not be dazzled by the light and so not get to see what the light showed.

A table at the right. Two windows ahead, heavily curtained, A couch or narrow daybed in the middle of the room. Odd. No chair. Dark rug, pleasant underfoot. busy pattern, hard to read. She thought about the rug, how curious it is that so many things can be read, once we learn to read. So why are there no chairs? Nobody comes?

But here I am, she thought, and sat down on the bed. Now again she waved the candle out and sat in the dark.

What is this room for, she wondered. All the rest of the house seemed ordinary enough, easy to read, she thought with a smile. But this room... Her uncle and aunt were out of town, she was staying in their house alone,

looking after it while they were on their travels, they were playing with rivers and mountains, and she was in a dark room. What is this place?

It felt pleasant, though in its own way, almost serene. Once she had sat in a park reading a book, and looked up and saw an old man on a bench across the path dozing, smiling in his sleep—sometimes she could even hear his slow breaths, not quite snores. How comfortable that was, to sleep in the sun. Maybe that's the other side of being awake in the dark.

It didn't feel right to sleep on this bed, so after a few minutes she got up and found her way out, no candle needed. She hoped that she'd

remember to ask her aunt about this room when the folks came home. Otherwise she'd have to make up the story for herself. Or maybe just read the one the room had written in her

25 January 2022

====

**Bot much new snow
plenty of old.**

**Planctus. To discuss
weather is to complain,
what comes, what goes.**

**What does it mean
when a language (English
is one) gives up gender?**

**Now we can't tell
if a road is feminine
or an hour is a woman
with whom we spend some time.**

But law was a lady oo,

and servants were all boys.

Is that what we were

trying to forget?

25 January 2022

TRIBUNAL

When the poet was summoned before the ecclesiastical court as he came through the door an instantly the space between him and his judges filled up with hundreds of fresh red roses and their fragrance loomed. One bishop shouted “See, these are blossoms from a heathen land, destroy them!” But the presiding bishop shouted in his turn, “Leave them!” Then, in a quieter voice, “They are beautiful. We need no other evidence.”

25 January 2022

sTURRETS

There is a castle, golden when you see it in sunlight, silvery in moonb. It has a tall tower, and the tower has three turrets.

If you are sturdy and determined, you can clim up the winding stair to the empty chamber where the turrets start. With more strength you can choose one of three narrow, narrow staircases to reach its own turret, And that will be yours.

From the fields and the forests and the nearby towns everybody can see that castle, but few are welcomed there, and fewer still dare the climb. Maybe people are savvy enough to fear

what they might find all the way up there, a measurable distance closer to heaven.

Because, as has been said, thjs room they find at the top of the turret atop the tower atop the castle, that room is theirs. What does it really mean to have a room of one's own?

25 January 2022

CAMBRIC

Here, take this please, my white handkerchief. Perfectly clean, freshly laundered, just hasn't been ironed.

Take it with you the next time you go over there. Whenever it's easy, walk out in the countryside, Languedoc, Normandy, doesn't matter, just out on the land. Find a stretch or just a patch of bare soil and spread the handkerchief out, neatly, a white square of cambric on the dark earth of France.

I'm not sure I can explain it, but it's important to me, to see, if only with the mind's eye, this flag-like homage I offer

**to the nation. Important too that it be
my cloth, but my hand not be the one
to place it there, smooth it out all
neatly, and leave it there, let it sink into
the ground or rot there or blow away,
let the land decide.**

25 January 2022

THE LINE

He saw a white line and followed it along the avenue. It wasn't in the middle of the street, where white lines usually live, it just wandered, vaguely straight but wavering now and then along the asphalt. It seemed lively, and there was no traffic, so he wandered along with the line. After a few blocks it turned the corner, and headed across the creek out of town.

He felt more at ease in the village, but felt the line would be insulted if he dropped out now, so he kept going, over the steel bridge, up the grade past the church, what kind of church he never

noticed before and it was too dark to read the sign now, so good-bye church and up the hill not too far and suddenly the road did a complete three-sixty, formed a white circle and there he was, on the line itself. Should he step inside or stay outside? Night is so difficult, especially for deciding things. He just stood there on the line, just where it met itself coming back from its orbit.

He thought hard. He had never noticed this line before. Was it newly made? Was it maybe there just for him? Was it his business to enter the circle and discover its meaning, if any? Does anything have meaning? Or was the circle a trap, meant for him himself to lose himself in.

Somewhere at the back of his mind he vaguely remembered a teacher once telling a poetry class “You can always trust a line.” What does that even mean? why had the teacher said it, what did it have to do with now?

But the teacher never said to trust circles. So it was decided. Now he knew what to do. He kept walking along the line, followed it as it made its circle, came bak to the junction and kept going, downhill now, easy going, the line shimmering in moonlight, past the church, over the bridge, around the corner and the avenue then all the way to where he started, and that was pretty close to his home, though not exactly there.

25/26 January 2022

=====

**Who listens to us
from under the ground?
The snakes are sleeping now
so we're free to tell stories,
even in Colorado and Tibet.
But is someone else awake
down there? tread lightly,
story. But this is your glory:
you can never tell who's listening.**

26 January 2022

=====

Not a cloud in the sky,

“not even one”

says Aslan in *The Roots*

***of Heaven*. nothing**

to protect us from what we want,

from what we do.

I look up from the memory

and see a man trudging uphill.

No one said it would be easy

or if they did he didn't hear.

Or didn't listen. Trudge, trudge,

the dog at his side no help,

he should have a horse instead

**and ride like Chateaubriand
up this very hill, ever eager
for what comes next.**

History and all the other movies.

I wasn't listening either.

Maybe I need a dog.

26 January 2022

=====

**When I say sky blue
who do you see?
Eagle? Moses on the mountain?
Alice interviewing Tweedledee?
A color has so many people in it.**

26.1.22

=====

**Like rain, snow
is a gift to us
but slow unwrapped—
thinking positively,
shivering, slippery
as a pronoun underfoot.**

27.1.22

SIGNS

**The word went out
to see for itself,
don't ask me why,
all I can do is follow it
down the Orinoco or
Kentucky caves or where
would you go? Names
of places being me home,
one degree warmer than
an hour before, yet I dreamt
other people's dreams
and lost my own.**

2.

Morning does that, the old
stupid potent question,
am I who I was?

And if not, where has he gone,
that mindset that was me,
now out in elsewhere,
maybe following the word?

3.

The first year
I iced up here
a fellow drove
his blue sedan
across the frozen
Hudson all the way

to Saugerties and back.

Fact. I didn't see it
but I can see it still.

He was Irish think,
I hope he still is.

4.

The Buddhist teacher
rewrote Descartes: *Cogito
ergo non adsum*. I think,
therefore I am not present.

A lovely thing about a word:
it does your thinking for you
leaves you free
to be, right here,

maybe even now,
while it goes searching,
researching, remembering.

5.

Mauve a moral problem
with take-out food—
money is not effort enough.

Proper eating means
penitential work beforehand,
at the counter, sink, stove,
forgive me, lamb chop, forgive me salt.

We must work to take the other in.

6.

We lived near an airfield
and a zeppelin came by,
lived near the ocean
and some of me still does.
Zeppelins are over now
but the ocean still smiles.
That's about all I've learned.

7.

The little I can do
is never enough,
is always enough.

**Yesterday you saw
a robin, heard
a Carolina wren.**

**Whatever happens
is enough to go on.
For exam[le, the sky.**

27 January 2022

== = = = =

**Sometime sun
all time space
this little song
lasts four billion years.**

28.1.22

=====

**If you told me
the world was created yesterday
and history a sudden
dream imposed
I would believe you.
Why would you lie?**

28.1.22

=====

In the footlocker of the mountain
your grandmother's blankets rest
stacked neatly, hardly any scent
left in or on them, earth cloth,
the weave of rain.

You never knew her,
all that generation passed away
before we went to the trouble
of getting born, betting on more,
shaking our cute little fists.
I wonder what she was like,
mine too, I guess we spot

some of her in our own faces,
wrinkles, plump cheeks,
a little timid round the eyes.
Mostly it's all one big surprise,
just like morning, don't say
there was no warning, here,
we stand our ground—where
else could we possibly be?

28 January 2022

=====

When is your birthday?

I don't know,

I'm still waiting to get born.

That's the kind of thing,

the kind of things,

you hear these days.

You don't have

to go to college

or even to a saloon.

28.1.22

EPIC

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**A long song
with lust in it
slowly giving
way to light.**

28.1.22

=====

It had to begin somewhere.
the line wound tight around his chest,
“my lungs are a sewing machine,
god knows where the cloth comes from
it keeps stitching, speaking,
spilling out of me into,
I don’t know, where does it go?”
But knowing had nothing to do with it,
knowing is a soft organ
in hard bone, “my thoughts
are fossils of what had been me,”
but that was thinking,
thinking has nothing to do

till it's all done.

And it was only beginning,

if even that, what

was his breath up to now?

Some days are bright

even when you can't see the Sun.

2.

The line kept getting tighter,

slowly, so slim, not like the rope

sailors call line, lean, lean,

like a quick definition

in a cheap dictionary,

tree, a wooden thing with leaves.

But still it kept pressing in,

sometimes he was afraid
it would cut right through,
skin and bone and all
and leave him cut in two,
and even then his parts
would not be symmetrical,
brain and breath, but all the rest
flotsam sailors mock from deck,
“why am I thinking about the sea,
is it to avoid thinking about me?
Are we the same? Is anybody there,
drunken sailors, sober priests?”

3.

Of course no answer came.

No answer comes.

An answer is right there all along,

like April's leaf in January's tree.

Speaking of speaking,

he closed his eyes.

4.

There was no pain as such.

Maybe the line has loosened

r he had slept, dozed a dozen breaths

as his grandmother used to say,

looking at her husband by the hearth,

prayer book open on his blanketed lap.

Short sleeps are the dreamiest of all,

“but why am I dreaming,

or even sleeping?

There is so much work to be done,
Something begun,”

5.

He listened for the sound of water,
water always knows,
toilet flush or hurricane,
listen hard, what it says comes fast.

“I have stuffed my ears with music
so I did not have to hear
what everything was saying.

And yet in music I heard
something breath, just

outside the door, sometimes
I opened it fast to let it in
and now the line plays out
around me, waiting to begin.”

6.

He could use a ladder if he rose,
could climb and let the line dangle,
dangle down to touch the ground—
when it reached earth he'd know
he'd climbed as far as he had to go.

Then where would he be?

At some woman's window?

Leaf-choked gutter on his own old
house,

maybe even at the top of the wall?

A comfortable feeling filled him,
family dinner? end of the opera?
at the sense of looking
at last over the wall.

7.

But it wasn't
and he didn't,
it was just more thinking.
But the line laxed a bit,
he laxed his way into the day,
forgetting all the dream stuff
or whatever it was,
night's menu, filled with unknown
offerings.
His lungs even relaxed,

a glimpse of breath
and then it was day.

28 January 2022

TOWARDS THE GREAT HOUSE

Caster under furniture
moves the world round,
this house, Charles,
this memory place,
or is it palace after all
and we after all
a little wiser?

2.

**Be ordinary
for Christ's sake,
he walked among us,
all we need is road,
the firm re-spelling of geography.
Walk, because it's hard.**

3.

**But you didn't care about the money,
you showed me the check
you wouldn't cash,
just gave enough cash
to buy a potato in winter,
like now, blizzard up the coast,
pray it veers out to sea.**

4.

Right here wind
puffs snow off the roof
fast, like a kid's first cigarette.
We smoked in those days,
people did a lot of things
and things did them right back.

5.

O the town you cared so deeply for,
I have no town of my own,
and your town was not just the actual

but all the possible cities
energy and brain could constellate,
let's shake hands on it,
we need a new city,
we've been waiting out here too long,
at half-imaginary addresses,
a new city, grid and beach,
never mind the showy towers,
they always got us into trouble,
cling to contour, stay close to water,
leave the sky to the birds.

6.

We need a house

**for all our houses
to live in,
just as we went
from cave to stone to wood
so our houses must
glass or brick or metal
have a great house of their own,
dome of pure energy
over our city
to leave the weather out there
and turn our labors
only to the weather of heart's mind
build it, savants,
forget the Moon,
forget probing the remote**

**while our lives are at the mercy
of what happens here.
Project that spacious dome
of pure energy over us,
let us be everything that happens.**

29 January 2022

BLUE MERCY

**I want all my friends
to call me up at once,**

so one phone ringing
will implicate a love,

I want the ocean to come
calmly up the river
and bring me news of where
I come from, remind me,

remind me, it's so easy
to forget, let my eyes
blink blue, let me taste
again the truth of salt.

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29 January 2022

=====

As much as I can
the song of now
it said and the train
ran long the river and
and and and the high
voice of a child so like
so like a bird cry and
small truck salting a long road.

2.

Imaginary ancestors,
a man needs those
just to be able to read a book,

**we think we know
what some word means
we have never heard spoken,
we think we know a city
we have never seen. In Rome
they do thus and so and
and under the turf
grannies smile in their long sleep.**

3.

**Some call it breakfast
I call it apocalypse,
the fierce unveiling
pf a whole new world.
Sunshine and very cold.**

I think I was no one
before this moment,
twists of language
littering the floor of me.
That's how I happened
and it never knew.

4.

And and ask yourself
my question, who would I be
if I had been born,
and not found myself
staring out the window
on what I suppose must be today.
Ask, ask, and if you know,

**and if you will, and if you can,
tell me, tell me, so one
of us at least will know the truth.**

5.

**Becoming,
it used to mean appropriate,
as in behavior or attire,
a civil adjective.**

**But what if it starts verbing again
and tells us become become
and become, what then,
where is the road
and where does it
think it is going**

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and and and where does it end.

30 January 2022

====

**You were always
sitting on the sofa's edge
waiting for your mother,.**

**Youi were always
standing on the corner
'waiting for your gather.
God knows where you
would have had to be
if you had a brother.
But you are always
waiting for the other,
and that means everywhere.**

30 January 2022

A{PSTROPHE TO A SHOE

**O once when you were small
they would have bronzed you
in the ceremony called Child's**

**First Shoe. Midsize nobody
cared much about you, though
they polished you carefully
but the shine on your muzzle
was more about them than for you.
When you grew full-sized, why then
they multiplied you mercilessly,
pair after pair, so many marriages,
colors, leathers, cloths, even
the air outdoors on sandal's feet.
But you held your peace.
kept your shape, a Platonic idea
the foot must learn to navigate.
I bow down to knot your laces!**

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30 January 2022

=====

**What the binder told the book:
lie quiet, Laura, till love lights up,
then what the finger told the page turn,
turn, so he can see all that
happens when the lovers wake.
Because poetry is always waiting,
always waiting for right now.**

31 January 2022

FOOTNOTE TO IMPERIAL HISTORY

Logothete, je was like
the Foreign Minister,
he put words where
they'd do most good,
words could swim the Bosphorus,
words could creep slow and low
up to the Crimea and make
pale savages sing Greek music, yes,
even the Celts in Turkey
would listen, with that sniff
of suspicion the Irish bring
to every government, and goddam
right we are to do so, Byzantium

**or Whitehall or Washington, snort,
the logothete spins the words out,
we listen, we admire, we disobey.**

31 January 2022

=====

Hearing used to be enough.
Then the bird went quiet,
we watched it fly away,
blue wings, blue wings,
flashes of white, as if
the sky were suddenly misspelt,
then the silent tree knew
how to talk to us. But hearing
wasn't the way to listen.
Pay fierce attention calmly
and the bird comes ack.

31 January 2022

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