

12-2023

December 2023

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= = = = =

**A woman is standing on the shore.
She is tall, very tall,
maybe 700 feet tall
and her left arm holds
high a shell or shallow bowl
open to the rain
a thousand feet above.
Her whole body is red,
not dark, not pale,
more like blood
with some water in it
and a little air.
Those who live in that land
get to drink from that**

**special water she
milks from the sky,
every now and then she
brings the shell gently down
so they come and drink.**

1 December 2023

= = = = =

**One note at a time
but then what?
Where does music end?**

1.xii.23 *lune*

= = = = =

**How to rescue him
seemingly safe
in his study
from the boy
wandering around
the woods in his head.**

**No way. We are
what we were
plus a little more.**

1.XII.23

= = = = =

**The echoes ,
things have them too,
not just sounds,
echoes of what we have seen,
touched, imagined.**

1 December 2023

AWAY

1.

**Think it away,
away is the only
place for it,
away, over the Peloponnesus,
over the Euxine Sea—
No, stop right there,
we've been here before,
Celt and Hun, Magyar and Goth,
so turn around, hurry away,
away once led us here.
Be here again.**

2.

**Where could away
ever be but this land?
Great dark ravine
north of Saugerties—
you can open all the boutiques
you like in Catskill or Hudson
the Cleft will still be there,
pre-human time
slicing down through our own,
road closed in winter.**

3.

**Because we're always
trying to be here.
That's what thinking's for**

dear God we are all religion,
say it in Latin, Tibetan, Hebrew,
we are trees in God's forest,
waving eloquent branches in wind.

4.

Thinking and hearing.

The river helps.

The city is the same.

Away deep underground.

5.

*Of course I want to be
the tree that talks to thee,
the writing spelled out
on the birch bark how*

many years ago?

**That's the trouble with white—
it shows what it knows.**

**Think it instead
and let the silence
deliver your message.**

1 December 2023

= = = = =

**So many days it takes to tell—
one to write
and one to read
and one to print it out
for the eyes of a stranger—
who will he be,
or she, who comes along
and finds the message
fluttering at their feet?**

2 December 2023

= = = = =

**A little arbitrary
but why not.**

**A gull is glamorous
on the deck rail.**

**The Albany express
slips by almost silently
at 70 mph maybe
by the river.**

**Is speed the seed
of something else?**

2. XII.23

= = = = =

**But let the litmus paper rest
you have another way
to tell the truth—
look in the sky,
let the flight of birds
divide the sphere above you
into reasonable segments,
call the segments Islands
or see them as parts
of a new alphabet,
you love alphabets,
alphabets are made of letters and all
the letters
are to you.**

2.

**With all the fragments
ready in your hand
you know enough
to begin and beginning
is the whole problem,
isn't it, once you start
your geometry takes over,
the slope does all the work
by itself, no need for you to
interfere. Glide, Master, glide.**

3 December 2023

= = = = =

**Sometimes it's time
and sometimes something else.
You can feel it,
even squeeze it in your fist.**

**It's been here all our lives,
they call it snow in summer,
palm tree on the moon.**

**But we know better—
it is the fierce awareness
that this, this, is what there is.**

3 December 2023

= = = = =

**This is how the poem works.
If you stop reading,
take your eyes off the page
for a moment
the words are flushed away.
When you look back
the page is blank
and in that blankness
your eyes see
into the heart of silence
where what you really
need to read begins to speak.**

3 December 2023

= = = = =

**They stand there:
she in her slim sandals,
he in scruffy sneakers.
The space between husband's feet
and wife's feet
extends into a vast plain,
a wooden wilderness.
Sometimes one or the other launches
a cry
across the plain:
a command, a petition,
a sacrament**

**and sometimes whatever they sent
reaches to the other curls around
them and they hear.**

**But sometimes midway
it falls to the ground,
into silence.**

wood loves silence best.

4 December 2023

= = = = =

**When we we're going to the country
we're always told to walk on the side
of the road facing traffic
and so we did obedient as ever.**

**But as I walked alone back then and
walk along now, I wonder which is
better:**

**The fear of what is coming towards
us or the fearing what might be
hurtling towards us from behind**

**so when I walk facing traffic I see the
crazy man with a big beard coming at
70 on a motorcycle towards me—
would I rather instead be on the
other side of the road just imagining
some gentle person in an old Chevy
slowly driving past me?**

**what kind of fear is best— that
which comes towards us or that
which we dread or hope coming from
behind?**

4 December 2023

= = = = =

**Let the door swing open
so the world you see
is out there but
already has you in it**

**you are part of what you see
and what you see
is part of someone else
can you picture them already even
with your hand
ready to twist the knob
and set the world free?**

2.

**on the other side of the mirror just
as on the other side of a piece of
paper an alternative exists. Be
grateful for it—the
less you know about it the better
smile into the dark, your hands are
waiting your legs are waiting, just as
you are shocked to realize the
mountains are waiting across the
river, and the river is waiting,
waiting so busily so steadily
so honestly so truthfully.
Your turn comes now.**

4 December 2023

= = = = =

**Wander and wonder
just what you're after,.
settle and snooze
and get a glimpse of it
in dream. Sumptuous
ignorance is best, Turn
on the news to fetch some more.**

5.xii.23

—

= = = = =

**Tossed up on the sands of the say
he lets the sunlight dry ocean off,
drenched as he was in sleep.
There. Dry man in dry bed
still not sure what day it is.
Or what any day is or means.
Dry enough but not clear.
Dream still with him
like snow at the side of the road
from last week's moderate fall.**

5.xii.23

= = = = =

**We're sitting at a picnic table
on the river banks
of a small city
not our own
The river though is our own
because we live by it
on its other flank
but it's with us now,
over to you right
is a sycamore-maple
a strange tree I know
nothing about except
that we have one
in our backyard**

on Cuttyhunk Island
and beyond this one a small
cottonwood which I associate with
yourself not so common
up here on the edge of a small city
not ours. The river is ours
we are the trees',
we are the river's
we belong to what we see
of course and what we see
we suppose belongs to us
in our strange American child fantasy
economy of mind.
Centuries ago they plodded across
the salt marshes
across the silk road,

**deserts of the north,
they came here
oh no, that was us,
we came here
and all we know of us
is where we are,
all over the place,
strange trees,
strange life around them
but it always the river,
the same inexhaustible truth
of all the beautiful rivers.**

6 December 2023

= = = = =

**I keep thinking
I am a person of some consequence
standing at the seaside somewhere
in Italy
or strolling on the beach
in Florida, red sands of Flagler,
watching the sea,
standing still watching the sea, when
all I am and all I could be
is a 3-year-old child
gazing with yearning and amazement
and reverence
at his mother,
all of it, all of her**

**arms wide open
before him
and if I'm lucky
ther'll be a seagull
or even a pelican of my side.**

6 December 2023

= = = = =

**So I'm wondering
what I'm always wanting
the little brook to rush by like
Sshuubert, the linden tree standing
by the well.**

**I'm wondering what I always want,
the sun to rise
out of the mountain
and the mountain to tell me
what it learned as it
gave birth to the sun
so I have a song to sing you.**

6 December 2023

= = = = =

**Music used to be shellac
when it was vinyl
now it comes to us
invisible, just
as it was long ago,
something that
happens to the air.**

6.xii.23

= = = = =

**Watch what happens
when nothing happens:
everybody starts doing
something else. That's
jow art was born,
and why Malraux was right
to call art the voice of silence.
Roaring sacred in every street.**

6.xii.23

= = = = =

**It was the only place I knew,
nickel stuck to the window sill
old man walking his collie
out there in the alley
past the pussy willow
and the creaking fence.
Do people have dogs anymore?
Do people still grow old?**

7 December 2023

= = = = =

**Lapsang suchong
long name
for a sip of tea.
Maybe that's how
it works, the
bigger the referent
the smaller the name.
Me. Sea. Sky.**

7.xii.23

= = = = =

**If you encounter
ancient stone,
steps or terrace or mound,
settle down on it
and let what it knows
seep up into you.**

It will.

**Stone does, stone
retains and relates
what has been done on
or near or to it.**

Listen with your bones

**then come home
and tell us all you can—
we need that,
even more than we know.**

7.xii.23

= = = = =

**What does it mean,
sending Tarot cards
to a woman. It means
women know reality
anyhow, even the future.
They just have to be
teased into telling. Bright
colors, weird characters.
When you come down to it,
everything is just a reminder.**

7.xii.23

=

= = = =

**All the snow has melted
except on the roof
of the gazebo
proof we chose wisely
the coolest spot
to build our summer house.
But now the white
roof glares at me
through the dark trees
so summer seems very far away.**

7 December 2023

= = = = =

**The gate summons
the entrant,
the path
summons the walker,
a stone wall
summons a listener.
I wonder
who the sea summons
and how they obey?**

7.xii.23

== = = = =

**What I learned
in Leipzig:
listen
to every wall.**

8.xii.23

= = = = =

**If I were here now
I could beat rest.
But I am there,
with you, wherever
you are, why
elsewhere holds you
in its tender clasp
and why I can't let go.**

8.xii.23

DUPLICATION

**In the dream
everything had to be done
in duplicate.**

**Or is dream itself
the duplicate of a day
yet to be,
or fell away long ago,
before I was even there
to say goodbye? Words
I don't like to say.**

**And in the dream
every item had to be labeled,**

right-hand faucet,
hook to hang umbrella from,
it seldom rains.

Or did it mean
the brute force of language
makes us label
every thought and feeling,
everything our hands or eyes
can touch?

That's when the dream
moved to the part called waking,
and it was just the same,
two legs, two hands, two
windows in the north wall

**none too bright, I prayed
for unity and then I heard
your footsteps on the stairs.**

8.xii.23

= = = = =

**Another word for this
waits underground
like April's daisy,**

**nothing fancy,
just accurate and true—
I'll know when my spring comes.**

8.xii.23

= = = = =

**Childhood vivid
(not my own—
been there, done that)
vivid, everything new,
everything to be done!
What a contract it is
to be born, you sign it
with your first breath,
and they never tell you
how much time you have
to get it done.**

**Vivid
because when suddenly
you're alive**

**everything else seems living too
not just your aunt's old cat
or the painter on the scaffold,
not just the water in the brook
and the sun swimming in it,
it all is, you have to live it too,
no minute to waste
even if you wanted to.**

9 December 2023

= = = = =

**When whistling was common—
whole melodies, not just
salutes to passing eyefulls—
one heard Cole Porter of course
and Fats Waller and even
sometimes Flotow's *M'appari*.
We liked wholeness, I guess,
and now make do wit bits
and pieces, drumbeat
from passing pickup,
pop screams as you pump gas.**

9.xii.23

= = = = =

So there is complaining
to be done. But why
do I have to do it?
And just asking that
is doing it already,
planctus they used to say
naturae, everything
has some sorrow to report.
But bravely we could choose
to hear them all in counterpoint,
ten thousand different moans
60 make one forest sing.

9.xii.23

= = = = =

**Whalebone, lottery,
whalebone on the lawm,
here has not always been here.
Things toss and tumble,
can't ever tell what will roll out.
Clam shell. Rabbit runs away.**

9 December 2023

= = = = =

**Word waits
on the table
for me to
type it up.
There. here
is what it
always means.
Frey sky. Comfort
of morning.**

10 December 2023

= = = = =

**Pirouette. Earth
is said to be doing
that while no one
notices. Except
for scientists, who
specialize in what
isn't there. I like
fables so I don't
complain. But I know
we live on an unmoving
rock in the sea of time
and nothing moves
except we sometimes do.**

10.xii.23

= = = = =

**Lead him up the mountain,
let him find
his own way back.**

**That is all a woman can do,
and lucky is the lad
she does it to.**

**Religion,
philosophy, logic, law—
all by-products of his
stumbling back home.**

**Have I said enough
or too much?
Let's hope the second
movement will be calmer,
if this turns out to be
music after all.**

10.xii.23

= = = = =

**Yesterday a yam,
tomorrow
tomato. Bring salt.**

10.xii.23 *lune*

VISTA

*Closed both eyes
pressed right hand
over eyes to shut out
what little light there was,
and saw.*

1.

In a car, driver's seat,
on a highway headed east
along Lake Constance.

The road was coming
faster and faster
the car standing still.

A voice said:

The road does all the work.

2.

**peppercorns
scattered on a sheet
of typing paper.
Could taste
without touch.**

3.

**Borth cliffs on Oahu
over the sea.
Horizon. Always
another island.**

4.

**Carousel in Central Parrk,
Pages of an almanac
flutter on a park bench.**

5.

**The word window
printed nearly on the wall—
best of both worlds.**

6.

**priest kneeling
by empty bed.**

**Smell of honey in the room
He is praying
in another language
than language.**

7.

**Empty rowboat
tethered to a rock
bobs up and down
in the wake of a big
barge mid-channel.
Oars are on the shore
as if we were here already.**

8.

**Huge parking lot
only one car in it,
car idling,
nobody in it.**

9.

**Snow on Round Top
none down here.
Life is sharing,
the river here very wide.**

10.

**Weathercock spins,
knows how to catch
a breeze I barely feel.**

. . . 10-11.xxii.23

ULSTER LANDING

**Mendicant seagulls
calling for alms,
and like the monks
they are, their cries
a pure blessing. Yet
the town posted a dumb sign
Feeding Wildlife Prohibited.
What kind of religion is this?**

11.xii.23

= = = = =

Rose

**is the past tense of rise
so language does make sense
sometimes
a window opens
gait goes**

**but for so long
I have been waiting
for the wall
the other wall,
the one made of silence
not of stone or brick
but made of the silence**

**of people waiting beside me
my brothers and my sisters waiting
for the word
to come back to me,
some bit of all I have said restored.**

**I have given them plenty ,
I'm sure some I
little will come back
to me for them—
doesn't have to be a rose
it could just be gate
open in the middle of a field
gate in no fence,
a pure opening.**

12 December 2023

= = = = =

**Everything is perfectly natural only
somehow sometimes suddenly gets
added and
everything changes.
A human permission has come.**

12.xii.23

= = = = =

**Or let me
in another language
than language.
Or politics
where words
come to harm.
Waiting
doesn't hurt too much,
music helps.**

12.xii.23

= = = = ==

**Bridge,
is it an unnatural thing??
A human artifice
it joins together
what nature in mighty
ages and efforts
put asunder
with canyons and rivers.**

**Or are we part of nature too?
He stands at the railing
looking down at the river
so full of life,
full of going and being.**

**Then If we're lucky,
he turns and walks back
home, just thinking.**

12.xii.23

= =

MARKET

I was walking
through the market
Blake Avenue in the old days
pushcart fish and pushcart apples,
melons round and ripe as adolescent
dreams
I look young, believe me,
beneath my feet
the ordinary asphalt
street like most days of the week
with cars and stores
and creatures like me
but here it was market day the
pushcarts lined up both sides,

**vendors selling their wares silently
smiling snuggling at the heat oozing
from their stoves.**

**it is the market
and the market has been with us
forever, as long people
feeding other people
and there I was alone
not fearing anybody,
grabbing a knish,
paying for it 15 cents
15 whole cents
enough for three subway rides I start
with the corner of it
and loved it, the peppery**

**saltiness inside, amazing how
Peruvian potato turns
ancient tin their hands,
taste of Talmud and 4000 years, and
the man rubbing his hands against
the cold.**

**On the corner the movie theater
I can't remember what was playing, I
was not watching
I was here at the fish, the cheese the
tomatoes shivering in cold
on marketplace market place why
am I ever elsewhere
what am I going to offer you?**

13 December 2023

= = = = =

**The miniature moment
unfolds into daylight.
Stay sound or get up
into the zone of danger,
the imperious, imperative now.**

2.

**We know by observation
that most get up
a few give up and stay.
I too often bump
door frames with my elbow.**

3.

**It keeps coming back,
the choosing moment
a thousand times a day.
Slowly we are digested
by our choices.
Did I just say that?
Who am I anyhow?**

13.xii.23

LIBRARY

**A bookshelf is like
the box score of a game
not played yet.
It is such a strange thing
that ordinary hands
can move whole books around,
make Trotsky come before
Thucydides. A dangerous place,
full of echoes
you consent to hear.
The order in which you
encounter things—
that is your secret name.**

13.xii.23

WHEN TRUTH IS NOT ENOUGH

**I asked her who won
the Derby.**

She answered Some horse.

13.xii.23

= = = = =

**Think of it
the only reason I'm talking
is because you're there**

**think of it
you make me talk
think of it
no one else can make me say what
you make me say
only you you you.**

13.xii.23

= = = = =

**A shrug of the shoulders
lifts the world.**

**It is important to remember
each person lives at the exact
center of the universe—**

he she you me

**everyone who can save me
is at the center of the world
whatever *me* does**

is more than all the world.

Remember that

when shrug your shoulders

Be the world.

14 December 2023

= = = =

**A sacrament of sorts,
hay stacks on broad field
gone before winter.
The clock knows all about us.**

**Feed my lambs, he said,
and not just them.
Feed everyone.**

**The sky too
an open mouth
feed it your wise breath.**

14 December 2023

TRAJECTORY

**L\I look at the old cannonballs
neat heaped by the dismal
monument.**

**Look at the kids playing basketball,
softball,
herded by gossiping mothers.**

**Is it all more about
throwing or catching?**

**Arc of movement
through the air sheer mystery.**

14.xii.23

= = = = =

**Does 'sheer mystery'
mean one you
see the light right through?**

14.xii.2023

= = = = =

**Stood in the woods
wondering.**

**Then had to pee
modestly behind
a big walnut tree
careful not to splash
root or bark or tiny
mushrooms.**

**Reverence
is all. Could human fluid
be of service to the woods,
to the world? How quick
the piss sank in, just
a faint glisten where it fell.**

Gift or defilement?

Or are they the same?

**No wonder he stands there
zippered up, still wondering.**

14.xii.23

= = = = =

**The news
is what they choose
to tell me.**

**Let me listen instead
to the voiceless
busy doing
everything there is.**

14.xii.23

= = = = =

**The minute a poet
stops writing love poems
(to girls or guys or God)
he's in trouble. Philosophy
raises its snaky head and says
what no one needs to hear.
Or all the buffoons of politics
local or otherwise will shout
their bluster through his verses.
No, love is better. Or maybe
love and geology, or those
red flowers with thorns,
remember?**

14.xii.23

SAPLINGS

**A fence of course
is a tease
a temptation.**

**Music flows
over and through it
easily while we
can only watch
if even that, some
fences too high
for the ordinary eye.**

**But how interesting
to think**

**what lies behind,
the landscape, the
architecture of otherness.**

15 December 2023

= = = = =

**Abandon evidence,
give the mind a rest.
The world heard you
coming and hid
under the cool
pillow on your bed.**

15.xii.23

= = = = =

**Daily life is masquerade—
we all know that
but few admit it.**

**No one has seen my actual face
no one knows what army
the uniform I wear comes from.**

15.xii.23

FIRST DAYS IN PARIS

**Shocked to find
two drivers on each bus,
one to drive, one
to collect the fare
and keep public order.**

**It was summer,
and the women's dresses
were of cloth I didn't know,
and when I got off
at a busy square
a white-robed monk
sped by me on his scooter
so I wondered where I was,**

**so I climbed the north
tower of Our Lady
and studied the city
laid out below me
and with the cookie-cutter
of my brain tried
to guess out the neighborhoods,
felt brave enough
to go back down
and walk around**

**and walk around
across the own
and found on a curb
a crisp new 1000 franc note**

(worth three dollars
at the time), success!
welcomed, I walked
to a party at the embassy,
delighted to find it sat
on the Avenue Paul Valery,
the thinker, the poet
I was reading on the boat.
Someday America
will get lucky too.

15 December 2023

= = = = =

**Long flight of stairs
to the room where
the sentence ends.
Rest there, cat your breath
before you unwrap
the meaning. Did you know
that every human utterance
is a Christmas present
for a naughty child?
Unwrap. Bgin to understand.**

16.xii.23

= = = = =

**Stone towers of Cappadocia
stand in mind. You know,
you were there once,
playing your what was it,
mandolin? bouzouki?
saved you from hearing
too loud what religion
does to landscape, word
thst shatters bedrock
but the towers sray.**

16.xii.23

= = = = =

**Close enough to Greece
to start swimming
through the alphabet.
That's all they really had,
their words and fancy
philosophic propositions
just random congeries
of letters. In the damp
of their utterance meaning
clung to them like mold.
I mean the world is very old.**

16.xii.23

= = = = =

**Windsock small airport.
No traffic
but the faithful wind.**

16.xii.23 *lune*

= = = = =

= = = = =

**The dusty window
gives a sheen to the trees,
a vowel long drawn out—
the song is different
but the music same.**

2.

**So go outside
to glimpse the actual—
it's always waiting,
always in its own way.
And everything
is always somewhere else.**

16.xii.23

= = = = =

**To know the name and then
the boulevard runs north
under walnut trees or east
under all kinds of I don't know,
I never know, names are rabbits
they run away under the x y z
trees that clutter the brain,
o I didn't mean to moan,
it was an old car groaning by,
a name like Studebaker
but who am I?**

**Register
with the constable and try,
try harder, to go to sleep.**

**Ancillary energies are there
at your disposal, you think
they's girls you used to know
but the wheel turns easy
and they steer uou. We think
we're driving but we're riding.**

17 December 2023

= = = = =

**A month ago I
broke my arm,
got a lune from that**

.

17.xii.23 *lune*

= = = = =

**sometimes it's enough
to see birth trees,
white-barked, uninscribed,
white uprights standing there,
pointing, welcome silence.**

2.

**Then if you must write
scribble on the face of the moon
and let the shadows fall
back on the paper patient ahead.**

3.

**Yes, you must write,
that's how we pay
for all the breath
we breathe in,
think a while,
interrogate, use,
breathe out. The next
thing you say
is what it means.**

4.

**Still, those wordless
white trees
tell me everything.**

5.

**Or walk on the moors
where there are no trees
and read your forest
in the soft rain falling.**

17.xii.23

= = = = =

**In Brooklyn just
north of Blake Avenue,
on California
east of Lake Avenue,
here the road
is called a river,
welcome home.**

17.xii.23

= = = = =

**We went to the opera
and heard *Faust*,
it was snowing lightly
as we drove home.
Childhood enough for anyone.**

17.xii.23

= = = = =

**Sing out
to help
seabirds fly
to the sky,
hard for them
especially when
nobody knows
where the sly ends.**

**sing loud, loud
like a lover,
so on your breath
they rise
into the skies,**

**yes, always
more than one.,
but always up,
always up to you.**

18 December 2023

= = = = =

**Haptic theology,
touching God
on the skin of the other.
Reverence renews toe world.
But it is only the beginning.**

18.xii.23

= = = = =

**Ask thy ball
why it bounces.
Its exclamation
leads you eight
years later to a Ph.D.**

**The ball is a missionary
of that weird Reality religion
and you are its latest convert.**

18.xii.23

= = = = ==

**I've never been in Nevada.
I look at that wedge in the map
and wonder. Sometimes
what I have never known
seems like a flower, close
enough to catch its scent.
Someday I'll try this out
on Tennessee.**

18.xii.23

= = = = =

**The activity
was all inside
the ballroom
of her brain,
safer there
where music
never stops.**

19 December 2023

= = = = =

**Christmas marks
the birth of ne child
into the world.
Childbirth is not easy.
So all the noise and shouts
and songs and slaughtered
beasts and trees are
the birth pangs we bring
to Mary as she labors
to bring God to be with us.**

19.xii.23

= = = = =

**I want to tell you
something about Christmas,
something I don't know.**

**It will come clear
if you listen hard
to what I'm not saying.**

Then you can tell me.

19.xii.23

= = = = =

**This is a Christmas card
though it looks a little
like a poem, don't be fooled, Xmas
Card is what it is.**

**Wedge it in the mirror frame
or stick it on the fridge, or just
leave it with all the others,
heap on the table soon
swept away in the deserts
of January. But here it is,
angels on it (they all look
rather like you) and evergreens
still alive in the ground, maybe
a snowflake but no drifts, one**

man shivering on the corner
trying to say *God Yul* in Swedish,
that's me, show-off to the last.
But here it is. Sorry, I can't
find an envelope that fits.

19 December 2023

= = = = =

**When the sim sets
beyond the parking lot
the cars wake up**

**nothing is easy
everything is far away
and only this to tell you.**

`19.xii.23 Rbk

= = = = =

**Meaning to do it
and then doing it,
a feast of never**

**or a camel carrying
the whole sky
on his back.**

19.xii.23 Rbk

= = = = =

**Mil was neither
but wanted to be both**

**childhood is a cowboy movie
where they all speak Chinese**

**Mil sat on the ground
beneath a pear tree and waited.**

**School is a long day's sleep
preparing or a night of learning.**

19 December 2023

GROTTO

**Off Broadway Brooklyn
a grotto for Our Lady
reverently mimicking Lourdes.**

**The el passed close,
my cousins lived across the street,**

**on the walls of the church
dangled crutches and trusses
of those cured and proving it,
who would doubt a wheelchair?**

The feel of miracles, clutch

**of family. trains and shouts
ad doubts, all too much
for a child. All I could do
was stare at the Lady in the cave.**

20 December 2023

= = = = =

**Forget the tree for a moment, leave
trees to the Buddhists
to meditate beneath
and find their own truth there.**

**Christmas should be
happening inside us,
inside us the child is born,
inside us forgiveness
truth beauty —
all that has to be in us,
from us, coming out of us,
not something hanging on branches,
something**

**exciting in us we yield
like music, no tree, let trees
stand alive in the earth,
oy a;; has to come from us.**

**So when you think of Christmas and
all the noise and all the drama and all
the cries and all the toys, start to
think**

**instead of a child of in you
the strange feeling that one day
strikes inside you,
love celebrates in you.**

**But something else is needed—
the world needs something too, I it
needs you.**

20.xii.23

= = = = =

**No plane, sir,
I want to move
silently through space,
space is a quiet place
it has its own soft anthem,
its morning hymns
its serenades.**

**But I can't hear a note of them
over the engine roars,
so I need another way to move,**

**something I can do
while still alive, magic shoes**

**that know how
to leave the Earth
and yet one day come back.**

20 December 2023

= = = = = = =⁰

**It is a matter of loyalty
once you have seen
something even once
but seen it clearly
you have to be
faithful to what you've seen.**

**/n that way trees can stand
by thousands of a millions
and we can take comfort
from their live, leaves
in summertime then learn
from the inscriptions their branches
write across**

**the winter sky. We can take comfort
from anything
just standing there.**

21 December 2023

= == = = =

**From the undergrowth
of organized religion
arose a child
burbling nonsense
about forgiveness,
healing, love.**

**They soon got rid of him
but echoes linger
of his conversation.
Listen hard and try
to do some of what he says.**

21.xii.23

WINTER SOLSTICE 2023

**Winter solstice comes
at the end of the year
whose name it bears,
as if all those days and months
were needed to patch together
such an improbable number.**

**“As if” is a scaly wag, I admit,
but I do love imagining
the reality of the real.**

21.xii.23

= = = = =

**Opulent spruce
among bare trees—
I marvel at the contrast.**

**The mind is an animal
caged in a zoo,
excited by every living
thing that comes
along to look at it.**

**21 December 2023
Rhinebeck**

EVIDENCE

**Blue sky
tattered cloud,
I'm walking on a path
along the road
wondering where it goes.**

**People have passed
before me, I find
a Pepsi bottle cap,
then a pencil,
nobody uses pencils
anymore, how long
has this ben lying here?
and then a peach pit**

**still icky with wet glop,
who dropped it,
a bird or girl,
boys don't eat peaches?**

**I lumber on,
weary, every
step deeper into mystery.**

22 December 2023

= = = = =

**Arrowing. knowing
where to go
and how to get there
fast.**

**We always use
the sky, catapults,
telegraph, radio waves.
Sky be my path
we cry
and Pharaoh laughs
at us from the stone.**

22.xii.23

LONDON, SAY.

**Unwise to read
gaily newspapers
in a foreign city,
especially one
where you know
almost all the words.**

**You might think
you live here, might
lose a sense of where
or even who you are.**

It's happened to me

**more than once so
I'm still not sure
I ever got home.**

22.xii.23

= = = = =

**Sixty-one percent
of New York State
is woodland! Fact.
More trees that me's.
Some of it even might
belong to no one, or
to the state. And what
is the state? A busy
girl in Albany, with
too many enemies.
Forget them. Just
walk in the trees.**

22.xii.23

= = = = =

**A new year is coming,
it better be better,
my arm still hurts
from November.**

22.xii.23

= = = = =

**It doesn't come all at once,
the door opens by itself
(our crude word for gravity)
and the light walks in.**

2.

**Look around the place.
This is your dream,
get to know the wall,
the rocking chair,
the dog. The dog
does nothing, but
you don't like dogs.**

3.

**Paint the walls black,
hang op a painting,
anything not to be natural.
But nature is nothing
but change. Stymied,
make your way back to sleep.**

4.

**At least the dog is gone.
Sunrise on a cloudy day.
Go through the alphabet
again, make sure
you've left no one out.
End of sentence. Sleep again.**

5.

**Am I telling you too much
when too much
is also too little?**

**Wave forms, It is
the North Atlantic of sleep,
deep and REM and
in between? No. No.
Count the drops of water
om the sea sea sea.**

6.

**Remedial math
they teach in schools,
how about
remedial sleep,**

**calm nurse trained
in hypnology sits
by your bedside until.**

7.

**Face the camera,
try to smile.
Or frown and turn
your profile
like a silver coin,
ancient empire
you still rule, easy,
baby, peace.**

8.

**She sighs,
it didn't work,
you're still awake.
She pats you on the forehead
and goes away, leaves
you a story to take her place.**

9.

**You have to tell it
to yourself
all by yourself
until you get it right.
Right means the tale
dissolves into sleep
and carries you there.**

10.

**Why can't sleep be easy?
Or why can't we sleep
all the time, like minerals,
stone or metal? Or is steel
maybe awake all the time,
handlebars of your bike?**

23 December 2023

= = = = =

**We don't have a name
for this kind of thinking.
It's like a crystal bowl
full of hydrangeas
blue and white mixed,
it's like a ruined tower
in the desert, with goats
shelter inside from wind,
it's like a crowded day
in Central Park, dozens
clustered round a cage,
staring at the monkeys.
It's like a rabbi walking**

**slowly round the reservoir, blessing
all the water
who know who will drink.**

23.xii.23

PHOS AUGEI

**Light is growing,
increasing, the sun
giving more each day
early Christians shouted it
like their Pagan neighbors,
the light increases
for all of us, not a theory
but a gift, the world
gives it to itself, to us,
we are children,
we play with the light,
we grow with light.**

24 December2023

= = = = =

**Waiting like a wanderer
for his feet to stop
I lay there in the forest
on the outskirts of sleep.
Then it said in my head
Get up. I wonder whose
voice that is, but I obey.**

24.xii.23

= = = = =

**Shallow bowl
full of rain
she offered
back to the sky.**

**I see her
standing there
on what as to be
an island,**

**how else
could there be
such space
all around her,**

**no one there
but sky to talk to
but everything
answering?**

24.XII.23

= = = = =

**The brain is the pilot
in a random fuselage,
can't tell whether the engines
are on or off pr even
if there is an engine,
can't tell if the crate is
midair or on the ground.
All the pilot sees are wheels
and dials and things to touch,
but what happens
when you touch them?
In front are muddy windows,
the only sound is something
like breathing, but very loud.**

**All the pilot wants
is to make the plane go, go
to a place the brain
can vaguely sense,
some place the brain
still thinks it knows.**

24/25.xii.23

= = = = = = ='

**Christmas! The fence
falls down, the door
flies open. For one
little day the way
seems clear—
what we are
might be enough to be.
Becoming one of us
he made us one of Him.**

25 December 2023

= = = = =

**Enough is seldom.
But once in Dakota
I stood on a cliff and saw
nothing but lush grassland
stirring in the wind
all the way to the horizon.**

25.xii.23

= = = = =

**How many millions
in a miracle?**

**How many pages in
an unwritten book?**

**How many daisies
will spring let happen,
and who will bend
down to count them?**

25.xii.23

= = = = =

Winter wandering
through its new nude trees,
Time like any other child
moves around the world
trying to understand
where it has been,
where it has been even
before it finds out
where it is now
because *now* is afterimage
of before as *then*
is what is left of the beginning.

2

**I wait with it
I'm always waiting
I like to wait
wait means doing nothing
but looking eagerly
in every direction,
every direction but inside—
that dark place full of
who knows what
it's too dark in there to see
but I hear them at it.**

3.

**Engines roar in middle distance, not
many cars on Christmas Eve where
would they be going,
we want to be where they are,
opening that presents
or hiding them, stuffing things in
stockings, hanging
them from trees—
but strange things we do
to celebrate a birth,
a birth that means
like any birth
we are brought all altogether
into the world
and then what?
Wait and see.**

4.

Wait, want.

The two words are so similar

A man who does them

a woman who doesn't

they know how close

they are to each other.

Someday let their fingers touch.

24/25.xii.23

[dictated]

= = = = =

**Stood still
side of the highway
fifty years ago
gazing calmly
up the road towards Hudson.
I stand here now
and think I'm in a new
place now, now I could be anywhere
but I'm here.
What does one do here?
Isn't it enough
to stand on the road?**

24/25.xii.23

= = = = =

for C.W.

All it takes to make
great art is a smart
woman and a blank wall.
She moves, little by little,
faces us or turns away,
not making signs
with hands or arms,
just the whole body moving,
slow, slow, pivoting,
her shadow dancing behind her,
secret script of what she means.
We watch, compelled
by the smallest gesture,

**images woven in images,
Greek temple, the gods
swimming through stone.**

25.xii.23

= = = = =

for S.W.

I tried to open up
one of your drawings
to understand it better.
The long sweep of black
across the top I tried
to pry up but was too heavy.
A scarlet patch in the corner
I tried to twist up and off
but it wouldn't budge.
The I tugged at the edges
of a blue curve down below,
maybe widen it enough

to swim in. Nothing worked.
I put the picture down
with reverence, a little sad.
But then I heard your voice
saying “No need to change it.
It loves us just as we are.”

25.xii.23

= = = = =

for S.Q.

**You were twenty
when we met,
I was well over a hundred.
We have been having
one conversation ever since
using almost
anything but words.**

25.xii.23

THE NIGHT AFTER CHRISTMAS

1.

**The deer on the lawn
the clouds in the sky
what am I doing here
all alone?**

2.

**It is an ancient poem
to be born on earth,
a haiku heavy as granite,
soft as the sandstone
cliffs of Ulster.**

3.

**That is to say
it is a question.
But then everything is.**

4.

**Do your homework
go to school
jury home
and play the fool—
you remember all that
but why can't I?**

5.

**The deer still there
leading her fawn.**

suddenly to sense
this mothering world.

6.

Angels in our ears,
last night's *Messiah*
from Buffalo. I used
to work in that town.
What I remember most
is Canada. Alien nation.
Music mothers us too
and I slept too late.

7.

Too late to be born?
I wonder. Misty

today, not cold.
Brits call this Boxing
Day when all their gifts
get stowed away.
As if the coming year
needed to be naked to begin.

8.
Just like infant us,
just like the fawn
nibbling at birdseed
fallen. Is that good
for her to eat?

9.

**I dreamt of a Samoyed
from Siberia who said
We are cannibals
and so should you.
We come out of one
another's bodies so
we should return there
when there is no more breath
to keep us moving
in this strange world.
I shivered at the tender
logic of his sharp teeth.**

9.

**See what comes of sleeping
late or early? Dark room
where you see what isn't there,
hear music no one plays,
you know all that, archbishop
in his cloven hat preaching
to an empty church.**

10.

**I don't see the deer now
when I look out,
maybe my anxiety is catching
and they took flight.
There, I admit it,**

morning means anxiety.

**Decade after decade
being late to school.**

11.

**Pictures to prove it,
deer by the garage,
moon in the branches,
white gull right overhead
is black against the
still bright evening sky.
Some things live forever.
No, I mean things live forever.**

12.

**Which takes us back to sandstone,
anticline by Ulster's shore.**

**Pick at it with a fingernail,
bring home a sacred
relic of time itself.**

13.

**And me such a miser—
what have I ever given you
but my breath
and even that I have shaped
and fiddled with on its way.**

14.

**When Charlotte goes out
to feed the birds
the deer saunter back
to see what may have
fallen from the feeder.
I hold on tight
to this explanation.
The sky is clearing.**

**15.
A little song
to start it
then the singers
get confused,
the counterpoint
bewilders the chorus,**

maybe the best prayer
is a gasp anyway,
sudden surprise
of being alive,
o that's just music too.

16.

What else is out there?
Guess, don't look.
Bluejay on the railing,
hawk in heaven. There,
I have been faithful
to all that seems.

17.

**But I keep getting in the way
of the little pebble of a haiku
rolling to you a thousand years.
Chop up my words
and find the truth again.**

18.

**It is not easy
to tell the deer from the trees
in winter. Listen!**

26 December 2023

- - - - -

**Start here, let the legend
inculcate its weird narrative
into what I think I see.
As if what is just being here
is happening instead.
Candlelight, roses? Women
in wide-brimmed hats?
Not like that. Reef
off tropic coast teeming
with wild life, and I
for ne don't know
what all those things are called.
Any good story tells itself.**

27.xii.23

= = = = =

**Pity me. I have
one heart and
way too many friends.**

27.xii.23 *lune*

= = = = =

**There is a rumor round here
that the sky is only up
so you could dig your way
to another kind of heaven.**

**They've been reading Virgil,
the way to heaven is underground.**

Don't believe it.

**The sky is on your freckled forehead,
your tousled hair.**

Heaven takes care of its own.

27.xii.23

= = = = =

**Full moon
over the garage.
Sleep well,
dear Subaru,
the stars you name
are far away,
handle their own light.**

**Let us drowse too today
or drive slow to the fabulous
kingdom of nowhere.**

27.xii.23

= = = = =

**Suppose, just suppose.
Doesn't matter what.
You might be right
and the sun will rise again.**

28.xii.23

= = = = =

**Among the Cappadocian towers
the American girl
wandered, hoping
for holinessm which
for her meant the sense
of being in the right
place, right time,
ancient shadows moving
with her as she moved.**

28.xii.23

= = = = =

**Judgment, strange
word as if the mind
had something to do with it
when it's all only
the habit of the heart.**

28.xii.23

= = = = =

**The way music
encapsulates emotion,
Brahms' desperate
loneliness thrashing over us
like an ancient Egyptian
jar cracked open,
the honey in it still sweet.**

28.xii.23

= = = = =

**Moon two days past full
but something
never goes away.**

28.xii.23 *lune*

= = = = =

**Start again,
be a star
that shrugs its shoulders
and still gives light.**

**Only when you have given
everything there is
will there ever be more.**

28.xii.23

= = = =

**I am old enough
to have ridden
the trolley cars
up Nostrand Avenue,
to have seen zeppelins
over Jamaica Bay,
old enough to have seen
the moon rising
last night through bare trees.**

28.xii.23

== = = = =

Sleep
into the comfort
of language,
where words pool out
and shimmer
and let other words
float through

and suddenly
from our own silence
we can begin
to hear what they say.

2.

**Mostly I think of written words,
words in alphabets,
those few strong stones
we build our culture on.
But spoken rafters build us too.**

3.

**It all comes true in sleep,
the steps of Whitby,
who will climb from the sea,
who will be the next cry out
Who is the next to be me?**

29 December 2023

= = = = =

**Look past the light—there!
nothing lives
but gives life to all.**

29.xii.23 *lune*

= = = =

**Someone walking
on the lawn
using four slim
legs to do it,
something waiting
in the ground
to spring up
soon as it can.
What am I doing
just sitting here?
I seem to have mislaid
my copy of the script.**

29.xii.23

= = = =

**Orchids pale
tall-stemmed on the table,
I swear they gave
light last night in the dark room.
They are quiet now
at morning,
pretending to be flowers.**

29.xii.23

= = = = =

**Watching TV
in the middle of the night
my eyes were closed
the sound was off
I had to imagine
what they were
advertising now.**

30.xii.23

= = = = =

**When the bird took off
I took off with him,
why not?**

**one grey haired man
is congruent with another,
grey feathered pigeon,
why not?**

**where we going
I said, you'll soon see
the bird replied
and so I did —down there
not grey not green not gold, nothing I
could name
the world itself,**

all colors no colors,
mostly the sea, mostly the sea—
What are we doing here you're not a
sea=going bird

I cried,

neither are you
the pigeon said and let me go.

30 December 2023

= = = = =

**The people who lived here
before there were people
left evidence abounding
of their pleasures—
rock strata, currents
of stream and ocean,
luminous symmetries
children notice now
and soon forget.
We can read their signatures
in the bark of any tree.**

30 December 2023

= = = = =

**Machinery. One
word enough
to keep us going.**

30.xii.23 *lune*

= = = = ==

Boots. Begin.

One, two.

Enough. The rain

has stopped

your feet suppose.

why can't a boot

go all the way up?

30.xii.23

= = = = =

**Could this have been
Katatolia, where the sun
went down, the land
of dreams, Niagara,
Yosemite? And we came
for the sake of dreams,
sleep showed the way,
the sea's long restless sleep
and here we are.
Or here it is, and we
just sparks in its
meaningful dark.**

30.xii.23

= = = = =

**When I say fireplace
he writes far place...
an when I say chagrin
he writes She grinned.
And intimacy becomes
into my sea.
Sometimes a bad
secretary is a precious guide.**

12.31.23

= = = = =

Heard the piano
pleasant contemporary
classical nothing
much going on,
opened the magazine
and the score was there,
music inspired by Anne
Sexton or composed
by the poet herself?
Print too small to tell.
Then I had to stop hearing
to explain at length
why Creeley made all
the difference, gave

**us back the line, taught
us to hear. I went on
at some length,
then woke, moved
by what I'd been preaching.
What did you dream about?**

31 December 2023

= = = = =

**Eating hash along the highway
I got to Wyoming.
See, I really am an American.
It's the human part
I sometimes fret about.**

31.xii.23

= = = = =

**Countenance? Or miracle,
that we are seen at all
and known by what they see
who look at us.
Faces from old Egypt,
a self persists.**

31.xii.23

= = = = =

**Resist the rest?
Detail the place.
Last day of the year—
why does a time
feel like a strange town,
full of people drunk
on numbers alone,
lights and shouts
as if someone had finally
discovered the square
root of now.**

12.31.23

= = = = =

**Sleeper wakes
and wonders why,
gets out of bed
and nothing's clear
except sunlight in the curtain,
make do with that, amigo,
let it linger in your blear.
Is that even a word?
One more thing to
worry about along
the cobbled way to today.**

31.XII.23

= = = = =

Orchestral interlude.

Nothing happening.

**That's when it really counts,
starts, climaxes, ends.**

**Reality ends
where action begins.**

31,xii.23

= = = = =

**Little people
on a medium-size planet
and still it matters,
it matters.**

31.xii.23

= = = = =

**Whistling in the vegetables,
local market, last
man I heard 'whistling
as he worked;
twenty years of silence
ever since, just muzak
and people talking
and all that stuff.**

31.xii.23

= = = = =

**When I was a child
all the signs said
Do Not Touch.
Unfortunately for me
I could already read.
Behold my empty hands.**

31.xii.23

= = = = =

**Had I been born Jewish
by now I would have gone
at least once to Jerusalem.
But i was born Catholic
so went to Paris instead,
Blind man singing
on an empty street,
woman on a bus,
church on a hill.
Bells. And I learned
that heaven is a river.**

31.xii.23

