2-2024

February 2024

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Sin me, sin me
break the chokehold
of grammar me
he is as it will be
being me as she would
say to me: see me.
Walking around the neighborhood
I look at all the places
once lived me
and wonder why
can I not find a trace
of me here except my soul
standing here
pizzled yet again
by what passes.

1.11.24

= = = = = =
Communication
from the stone:
Sit on me, listen.

1 February n2024, lune
Rabbits run faster]today
and the woodchuck
wakes tomorrow.
What are we doing
to coax Primavera
out of her fleece
and be our spring?
Do we tag along with weather,
try to dance to music
we can’t even hear?

1.II.24
He should never have opened the album. After ten minutes of peering at fading snapshots and Polaroids he realizes that we become, permanently, whatever any image of us shows, if once we actually see it.

There may be other shapes of me that are not me, because I have not seen them. He smiles then, a little sourly, at the faint legalistic flavor of his conclusion, as if he's only an ad for himself. I am as represented. And who are these
other people in the pictures? Do they even now know who they are?

1.II.24
The palace was all around us. We thought it was ruins, but we heard music. Where is it coming from? Nobody around. No boats on the river. Just a few sheets of ice floating slow. I know ice can crackle, but can it sing? What we heard sounded like voices, cellos, ordinary strings. Nothing unusual about it except except its source. We saw a staircase down into a crypt, but down there empty as up here. Do people bring music with them, somehow bottled up until the place, the Place, opens
the flask and music flows? And why were we the only people here today? Whose palace had this been?

1.II.24
Mirror talk:
you can’t keep
laughing forever
at the same joke.

1.II.24
Is it all right
if we just sit here
and listen
to what the ocean says?
My mother taught me how,
she would sit for an hour two,
smiling when sometimes
a swan floated by.

1 February 2024
Yet waiting for it is earnest too, 
A worshipful calm like the warm arm of a friend.

2.
Don’t go.
Linger because.
If they all say so there must be someplace else, thus proving here is really here.
3.
But don’t fuss with proof.  
Geology is theology,  
*shluss*, like the rabbi said,  
no more to be said.

4.
So then you tasted wine  
and stopped wondering.  
Then you stopped drinking  
and started to pray.  
So many prayers  
to so many sense of deity,  
baseball cards from ancient
temples, river otters,
waking late to hear
crows’ impatient sermons.
Could I feel enough
to call it feeling,
or say enough
to have said something?

2.II.24
The Bach listens to me
from its radio, hears
my doubt, insists
that heaven is right here
now, not by being
beautiful or good
but by being.
The glory comes
when music hears you
and lets you know
you have been heard.

2.II.24
The real purpose of religion is to elicit your identity from the mere facts. Without it, people might turn into their bare selves. There must be more to me than some self.

2.II.24
I keep wanting to talk about the Baltic, small sea with so many languages.

I mean walk by it, hearing them conversing or dozing under the ice as they were when once I tenderfoot on the rim.

But I find peace close to any water, Hudson,
Yamuna, Thames or our dear Matambesen.

Water does it all just by moving. I always want to walk alongside this so reliable friend.

2.II.24
SCRIPTORIUM

where the monks
wrote with quills
broad and slender
on parchment or vellum
words, mostly words
of other people
but sometimes their own
or a picture in the margin,
to fix the meaning,
like a little duck with
quek neatly beside her
to show us how words
are supposed to sing.

3 February 2024
Not flowers, not rivers, not boyfriends and girlfriends, not birds, not kittens or tigers or dragons, though dragons come closer, not music, no flutes or guitars, not wine, not daydreams, not government, not churches, temples, pirate ships, not even the feeling of skin upon skin. So what is there left to say? Only the breath of every day.

3.II.24
In the old circus
a little car would roll in
and clown after clown
after clown would get out,
impossibly many,
fat and thin, tall and short
and the car would keep giving.
And so we learned young
contents always more
than the container. Look
in the mirror and remember
In this new place
the word says different,
North Persian carpets,
soda bottles, drink
your fill of carbonated
Priestly water wasn’t it?

Glamor is an Irish word
I wonder why. When water
spills on Turkish rugs
it nourishes the flowers
within, Fact. Taste me
if you don’t believe me
but I won’t let you, will I? Wait and see as the oak tree said to the wild boar rooting around for acorns, but I’ll make do with mushrooms the pig explained—and pigs don’t know how to lie.

Which brings me to the point at issue here, milady, each place has a word to say, yea, inch by inch over the long world that word changes,
shadows tickle the ground,
the word giggles out,
our only excuse for being
here is hearing it.
This bright pagan
Sunday has begun.

4 February 2024
Larcenous logic
snatched the joy away
murmuring about contingency,
impermanence, proof.
I raised the glass of seltzer
anyhow, frisson
of its sparkle on the tongue,
its cool investigation
of the throat. Sometimes
thinking is the enemy of thought.

4.II.24
I guess I was a sort of Anabaptist then, everything has to be done again at least to make it done at all. but since then I’ve learned there’s no such place as again. Glance out the window, let the cars go by, those endless decimals of someone trying to stand still.

4.II.24
Sit back and think about things: faucets, fractions, butternut squash. There, don’t you feel better already?

4.II.24
In Lambeth once
I saw a figure rise up
from the river
and it was me. I tried
to tell my analyst but
got distracted by the stones
in the pathway to his house
and so forgot to knock.
I guess eventually the river
will tell me who I am.

4.II.24
You had a friend from Madagascar, and one from the Hebrides. Thank God I came from an island too so you would marry me.

5 February 2024
The brother of Solomon’s youngest wife was sent south into Egypt to study and learn. He came back with hundreds of detailed drawings of urban housing, water supplies, sanitation, temple building, traffic patterns. These were given to corps of engineers, who translated them into language, words some of which you can still read or hear in Jerusalem.

5.II.24, dreamt
A word unspoken,  
door left locked.  
To hear is the key.

5.II.24,i lune
= = = =

hope for the engine—we all have one.
I mean we are one, charging all night
in what we delude ourselves by calling sleep.
And truly, truly
when the Sun comes up
we are able, please, to answer what she says.

5.II.24
Consonant revelry
a city in Georgia.
Who needs vowels?
We have birds.

5.II.24
Ridge of trees equivalent.
Nine sisters slender-twigged to foil the wind.
Narrowness wins all.

5 February 2024
Sun so bright
seems dust in the eyes
blink blink
halfway to heaven.

2.
Used to talk ordinary
then the bird.
Spent years trying
to learn to chirp in English.

3.
Petals of orchid
let light through.
When I look at you I see
light coming through you
on its way to all of us.

4.
Eyelids quiver
in the storm of light,
try to blink away the night,
morning anthem
in the church of light,
everything coated in gold
as if everything seen
is made of the same.

6 February 2024
Wipe the window clean,
win the prize
of seeing out
with indoor eyes.

6.II.24
Exhaust the opposition by studious agreements. Say yes to everything then one big No. U know what I’m talking about, don’t you? The hero dies, the music stops, the curtain falls but everyone applauds. What kind of place is this?

6.II.24
Wanting to catch the morning he pulled off his socks and ran on the grass. Was he a bird beginning or something more?

2.
Abbots and abbesses played in his head with do this and do that until he did.
3. 
But grass was cool
so even as
doubting less he ran.

4. 
When he told her after what he’d done
she said he had to hear her words as another
language too.
“We all speak twice whenever we say..”
5.
So back, bed,
and let the sunrise go
do its work
to you to noon.

6.
Humble makes nimble,
so he stretched out again
and let the day do him
precise as a dream.

7 February 2024
Bright as it is
couldn’t say more,
pirate ship, wall
of rushes made,
noise aloft?
Swiss village?
Inside each
child’s head
these cymbals clash,
why we need metal
our only other.

7.II.24
What if there were no, no frontiers at all and the local sheriff the only boss?

It must have been that way once before we cane up with dubious notion of pretending to decide who decides for us

so the bosses get bigger, hot air balloons
ever further frp, us, 
bigger and further away.

I don’t even know 
the mayor’s mother, 
let alone the governor’s 
last weekend date.

7.II.24
Shrugging shoulders turns out to be good exercise—those old guys knew.

7.II.24
CARTOON

Cat on the keyboard
mouse on the strings—
remember?
Why does everything
always answer us?

7.II.24
Let us name our child Oblivia. Forgetting is such a potent force in our neurology, forgetting the pain or discomfort after it goes away. She will help us know more by knowing less.

7.II.24
She rang the doorbell. Full of doubt she rang it again. The door opened. As she came in and said hello she wondered how she could you find out whether they heard the first bell ring or was it the second that worked. Was one enough or two necessary Is once ever enough?

7.II.24
It takes a pound of inches just to reach the road but when you travel on it yet every footstep takes you to a new place, around the corner a city you have never seen, might pass without noticing just as you did that one behind your left shoulder a minute ago — now where do you think you’re going

7.II.24
Blackout on the telescope
you’ll never know
who that was running
on the hill, four legs,
silver hair.

8 February 2024
Getting there and being there—night and day.  
Come some time a different road and see. Or be.  
Clay on your fingers, hum on your breath.  
Yes, you built this wall.

8.II.24
What’s left of me is words. They are all I ever was.

8.II.24, lune
I’m allowed a bit of despair if kept to myself.
Radio. Skater’s Waltz?
Woodchuck tumbling in her first sun.
How can we hear what is so far away and long gone?
Time is full of tricks.
She finds a cookie on the lawn, eats it, the world is new, finds another, this is happiness, causeless effects and a melody too.

8.II.24
Overture to an ending—
all a matter of how
long reality takes.
Or lasts. Play it again.
Scratch marks on old silver,
I never knew a grandparent, 
a wooden baton, silver fork. But many names.
Is a name enough to know or call out in the night?
Dp we too exist by inference?

8.II.24
Work comes first and nothing second. Inscribe it on your opera house your cathedrals. Ambiguity saves lives.

8.II.24
Short breath these days,
let me suck some
from the bones, I need
a long song to offer you,
long enough to keep you
humming the first theme
and wishing it would stop
developing, this is not
Rachmaninoff you say,
stop fiddling on my keys.
And I agree, secretly pleased
to pause for breath,
But that song starts again,
dammit, no one can sing it,
and why should they, seeing
or saying it’s all ip to me?
Cannibal song, it eats me alive—
is this my breath or another’s?
Now it’s out in the open:
O sing with your breath

8 February 2024
= = = = =

Why not a window—with that you get everything else.

*

A door is better as long as you can keep it shut.

9 February 2024 lune
When people come shoving their shopping carts (French calls them chariots) hurrying through weather towards their car they are most themselves, least concerned with how they seem, just anxious to do and move and be.

I watch from my cozy SUV and see and see. Parking lots strip all oretense away,
we don’t even notice
we’re being noticed.  
Trees are planted
here and there to
couch us in serenity.

9.II.24
The orchids are pointing at me today, our courtroom of a dining room seethes with accusations. What does this pale flower allege of me, is it praising or blaming my neglect. Should I change my seat or move the flower pot? No, I’ll wit and listen—it’s the only thing I really know how to do.

9.II.24
After three days and a morning
the cloud has come again.

If it were Saturday
they’d send an opera
but today we have to go
fish for one from Cyberland–

what music would suit this calm pale
almost spring-like Friday?
moothing sad but nothing funny,

maybe Jerusalem Set Free–
not top-drawer Verdi
but a dreamy anthem in it
wipe your eyes
and forward march to liberty.

9.II.24
The flower turned
into a farm girl
hopping over a fence
into the green field
where her cow was waiting.
But then it turned into the cow
waiting for the girl
I waiting for what she would tel,lI
who tell whom? flowers
always full of information,
cows, causes, muses,
you know all that,
we all know that,
that's why we like flowers so much. especially this flower actually a young woman climbing the steps to a temple in a land we have never heard of but we live actually in always. happy, wise as this orchid.

9/10.II.24
The wharfinger
rules the moorings,
we pay deep to stand still
pay him so we can step
ashore on a new idea.
Who?

2.
thinking
is a rowboat
with a missing oar,
left swing right swing
till you find the current
but then you belong to it.
3. Between atmosphere and hydrosphere
we are caught
like a half-remembered dream,
you’re sure it happened
but how did it end?

4. Praise the ocean,
stay ashore,
let the current come to you,
watch thoughts pass
where they can do no harm.
Tremble, little kitten,
just a little.

5.
We are built
of repetition
in variation.
Forget the latter
and you lose Mozart,
the avant-garde tried
to rescue us, then
bad art turns vision
into again again,
the world as wallpaper.
6. So growled the sea once day in my head when I was too far away to hear its actual surf.

7. The interior translator reads trees and seas. This is an ad for human life.

10 February 2024
Little turtle
I knew once
taught me dirt,
how to fumble down
a little under.
Down there a separate
dig just a little to discover,
and bring air in with me,
and a little light.
Journey to the center,
come back for supper.

10.II.24
Thank goodness for money so I can give it instead of giving me.

10.II.24
How often have you sat in company thinking of something else, the plausible rattle of their language letting you move deeper into those woods till you see or almost see moving in the trees the aqift pale animal of what you mean?

10.II.24
That brick wall
a dictionary made of dirt.
Only at first
do all the letters look the same.
Cherish the differences
means learning to read,

10.II.24
FEAST OF SAN GENNARO

The band passed by
but the music stayed.
What a joy it is sometimes
to have a brain.

10.II.24
If there were another way of doing this, icicle dangling in a tree, say, or moonbeam on your glass of water, but as it is, this game is mostly asking questions. So when you close your eyes you won’t know who’s near you, so ask away.

11 February 2024
Some specific words have many too many meanings. I am the worst of them and you come next.

11.II.24
The Marquis of Mockery used to drive his old Bentley up and down my streets. Then I got religion, raised his rent, urged him out. I miss the old devil sometimes when I get too serious and start to preach. I hear him snicker even as he tips his hat.

11.II.24
1. Clatter in the pantry, jabber in the parlor, I used to know a song like that but it went away.

2. Sweden the postcard came from when next I heard, busy forests and time to think or so I thought. Then I read the scribble and understood.
Anywhere is far enough away, distance is the deepest music.

3.
So sometimes I feel like a spelling error in a simple text, annoying as it says its piece. Who said anything about meaning? Who made me a mistake?

4.
Revenge of the island—surround us with
what we cannot be.
O I know about ships
and submarines,
but a boat is just
an island with no messing,
no selfhood, no rock.

6.
So genuine your nest
and line with feathers.
I have no more to say
but it won’t keep me from talking.

11.II.24

= = = = =
Reprehensible monolith
this nose on my face,
why are we so many planets
all rock and mush and vegetation
tumbling around an absent sun?
Maybe they feared that up there
and turned themselves all
into Jupiter. Or Mars.

11.II.24
Too many folds
in this curtain,
too many caves
in this hillside,
so many things are lost,
the sunray wrapped in organdy.

11.II.24
Send me and me
and me to the opera
so I can sing,
identity is a chorus
slow learning to chant.

12 February 2024
A woman in France wears dresses made of books as if to say politely read them and don’t read me.

12.II.24
Met Eisenhower once,
his copter landed
in my back yard,
A friendly man,
friendlier than Kennedy
but he was retired now
and JFK had just
begun to turn the wheel.
Hope age teaches kindness, yes?

12.II.24
Sleep wanted a lot of me last night, ten hours and drowsy after. And dreams intricate with irrelevance, lost texts, failed grammar, pointless lectures I had to give but at least when an old man told me this is a Hewish holy day I had the sense to answer in Yiddish Every day is holy.

12.II.24
Tomorrow?
Snow on Mardi Gras?
Sometimes I think
I should hide myself
inside a coconut,
walled safe in sweetness.
But there are worse
things than snow—
consider the music passing by.

12.II.24
Men in space helmets
kick a ball
that doesn’t roll
and isn’t round.
But this is far from the only
thing I don’t understand.

12.II.24
Scrapings from the bottom of the barrel, yes, I admit. But that's where the essence lingers long after the herrig or pickles or old red wine are gone.

12.II.24
Live in an angle,
mother floor and
father wall until
you get your breath back
and you’re loud as you
can be but never
abandon your mother–
voices come from underground.

12.II.24
On a street in Boston someone put a sign up that says *To the Beach* and says it in Gaelic. The sign points inland—your Irish know a trick or two.
Tired of talking,
I want to go back to bed and let it talk to me.
1. I see Claire loping down the hill with a whole flower in her lips, white flower, fluffy flower, smile in her eyes.

2. I see that flowers can roam around too, they just need
us to be their steeds,
their colors
the words in our mouths.

3.
I see that hillsides
can be kindly,
gravity on her side
as she hurries
almost effortlessly
down to meet
her friend
holding the camera
steady in mind.

13 February 2024
What does a man do when he gets tired of being now? Why, he picks up a pencil and writes something down. By the time he’s finished now will be done.

13.II.24
WWII

Germany lost the war.
We won.
US lost the Philippines.
UK lost India, Burma, Malaysia et cetera.
Germany lost only the war.

13.II.24
Why wait any longer? The wolf has come to the door and even he got tired of waiting and is gone. Where is he trotting now and will he come back? Danger lies in asking questions.

13.II.24
Use the old music to make a new opera. New tires on old car. But you still need gasoline.

13.II.24
Catch with a net
hurts them less.
Let them go
your soul to bless.
I wanted to hum
this hymn at fishermen
then I remembered
the lox on my toast.

13.II.24
Everyone you meet in the desert or on the street has something to tell you. Don’t ask but listen hard.

13.II.24
Midnight coming close—
sunshine just
sequins on her gown.

13.II.24, lune
Water is like that—
when you stare at it
moving or still
you feel this is true,
water is always the same,
all over the world
this river runs, this creek
this fjord this sea—
and language is like that too, that
ocean of saying
its waves and currents make me think that every word I say might get heard, one fine day heard here and there but mostly this very day and I hope by you.

14 February 2024
A VALENTINE

for Charlotte

I look so often
at that ridge of trees
shimmering in winter sunlight
and try to hear them,
learn what I should know.
And often I try to answer,
say something into the air
that they’ll sometime hear.
But then I realize it’s you
I’m talking to, my true love.
and it’s your love speaks all
the understanding there can be.
Sea glass
   a little Blue ridge
from Church's Beach
from a bottle maybe
spring water
found its way here.
The shard of glass, edges softened by
waves
by sand erosion,
   maybe the light itself
shining through it
as I hold it in my hands.
I think about the places
it has been, where I have been
on the wat to meet it here. 
let sun shine through us both where the beach 
stretches all round us and the sea stretches out 
where we both have been found.

13/14.II.24
Something to do with winter,
with pressure, with
following a woman
up the stairs, trying
to recall a name, hating
the left right left right
tyrranny of the steps,
our steps, getting there
at all, listening bravely to
the sermon of the empty room.

14 February 2024
Listen to the paper, it was printed while you slept, so must know things you don’t. But what you learned in sleep is probably truer. Even newer.

14.II.24
Why his day, beaten to death for his love of God, why do we send his heart to the girl next door? We keep trying to figure out where God lives.

14.II.24
Move the flower
into the light,
its other mother.
I know my place–
only animals need fathers.

14.II.24
Look at the last page first, read it if I dare. Let the end choose its own beginning—that’s what I’m here for.

14.II.24
When did he sing
this wind that
soothes the bare trees?
Who was he then,
holding what in his hands?

14.II.24
If you make a wish make your will in case it comes true.

14.II.24, lune Rhinebeck
This very ascent
be careful how you spell it
climbs to an overlook
like that spot on the Escarpment
from which you can see
six states. In good weather.

2.
Moral Mountain
is a brass band of a place,
even a piccolo of anxiety
carries for miles.
And guilt drones on and on,
wind in the caves.
3.
So linger with us commoners, I guess. Or brave it, guessing everything as you go until the rabbi in the heart says Pause now, let the world catch up with thee.

15 February 2024
Resilient? Brazilian? what did he say? Something about rain forests going away.

15.II.24
Let your dog fetch the paper in.
Let him read it too—
he’ll tell you all you need to know.

15.II.24
Call it a ceremony,
I call it walking
to the car and then,
thus, being somewhere else
the daily service
to the unknown god.

2.
Back roads are best,
more green priests
along the way, rare
acolytes trudging along
lost in their own liturgy.
3.
I do this every day I can,
elsewhere is a verb
I understand,

I verb it when I can,
then sing the sweetest
objecr, home.

4.
I confess too much—
simple-minded,
I jabber complex
up Olympus.
5. 
Noises in the cellar, 
tummy rumble, thunder?

I stand at the mirror 
and give my orders:

Grow up, child, it’s 
not all about you.

6. 
But my image dares 
to contradict! 
So I wet my fingertip 
and run it down the glass
so the mirror squeals.
The image laughs,
and finally agrees.
I think I may have made a friend.

15.II.2024
The subway is getting dangerous these days. Even up here, at the West Two-Thousand and Ninth Street station, I can hear the rumble of approaching fear. Fear flows upriver. I’m worried for the girl across the aisle fingering her rosary or rolling a forbidden cigarette.

15.II.24
Not all words beginning \textit{al-} are from Arabic. Alarm for instance, or alight, alleviate, align. Now why am I bothering you with this? Or me? Sand in my eyes, desert wind.

16 February 2024
AFTER THE GAME

When the field is finally empty the real game begins. Thirty thousand people leave the stadium, and in each of them the real game goes on infinite variations, thirty thousand fields at once. As the wise man remarked: Things only happen so we have something to remember.

16.II.24
As if there were more of me
I sent one of me
into battle, boardroom, lawyer’s den.
I stood outside the door
and listened to me arguing, in good English
but no results. I sent another me in, this one soaked in theology.
Silence. I stormed in but the room was empty.

16.II.24
Bluebirds, late winter,
everything
seems under control.

16.II.24, lune
Lune while I still can–
the numbers
may change as we count.

16.II.24, lune
Of course matter thinks—how else could we think without it?

17 February 2024, lune
Patience has another side, a school in tatters, meadow full of cars. Admit it, we came here to learn—nothing else to do in this jostling place, everybody stealing everybody else’s song.

2.
And right they should. Education means appropriation—what did I ever do for Dante who did so much for me?
3.
So whistle my wisdom all you like, little other on your way to being bigger than me. We are spiders on the blackboard feeling along, trying to tell up from down.

17.II.2024
Call them messengers, they come up out of earth and wave colors at us. Capisce? we used to say in Brooklyn, do you get it, do you get what they’re saying? We tried, often got to hear because we had flowers too.

17.II.24
Nothing to say
so here it is,
a placebo of a manifesto
and in sunshine too.
I keep blaming people,
money-men and governments
for not wanting beauty,
for juke boxes that sound
like cash registers, forgive
those obsolete words,
I’m a part of the problem too,
Olson in Gloucester,
Venus in Aquarius.
And yet the crows survey
the snowfield carefully—
something here for everyone.

2.
This is the forgiveness ode,
never stop looking,
never stop worrying.
Worry is the raccoon’s claws
that cling, that climb the tree.

3.
Will you believe me, though?
I am talking to all the detached
citizens of me.
Come along and doubt
in my parlor,
we’ll drink elderberry juice together, pretend we’re in Vienna, and oh the music!

4.
Rich symphony of things as they are or even as they seem. Turn off the engines, conserve water, let lassitude leach anxiety away. Next time worry comes flouncing in, greet her with a smile.

18 February 2924
We all in orbit
each of us
tries to find the sun.

18.II.24, lume
Holiday used to be holy day. Now we waste our time on a mispronunciation.

18.II.24
What the lily said
when the wind
whipped water on her
was calm, philosophical.
Maybe she even liked it—
thirst is universal.
Monet tries to tell us so.

18.II.24
Now what?
The wind went away.
Bow to the now.

Don’t be silly—
which one,
you’re in another
one already.

Bow to the orchid them
and the candle flame,
the msn next door
and the polar bear—
your choice, they’re your
hands joined in prayer.

19 February 2024
The sinner is the sheep who leads a shepherd into the bad place to guide it home.

2. The sinner is the song the peddler sings to keep the coins rolling along the tattered bench of world economy. Just try to prove me wrong. Please.
3. The sinner is the shadow the sunlight casts pn all who turn their back to her.

4. Back to the sheep, back to the flock they walk, his hands ruffling tender in its wool, back to the murmuring herd, the everlasting sermon of the others’ breaths.

19.II.24
Flowers? Fluent.
Hours? Not so fast.
Girders? Choose your steel.

Everything is on the way,
traffic dense along the coast.
Odd sounds from the interior.

19.II.24
All you have to do is stand on the sidewalk long enough and something will happen. As with everything else the best advice is always wear comfortable shoes.

19.II.24
Are you near yet,  
are you here yet,  
is the bonnet on your hair?

We’re all waiting  
we’re all praying  
that your breath will warm us  
on this winter day.

We are aged children  
and we need our other.

19.II.24
Inner apple—
tastes like that opera by Meyerbeer.
Remember how music used to taste when you’re young?
Not the story—the stories are all pretty much the same.
Only the song is different.

19.II.24
Sometimes the painting fades but the canvas lasts. What does that try to tell us about the Pyramids?
Wait for the wizard, he’s bound to be close—check the upstairs closet where I hang my ties, the silks and tartans typically enthrall him, ah, we’re all such slaves to color. The closet door will be a little open to let in some light—tap gently and call his name softly if you remember it.

19.II.24
We had a neighborhood
then there was sun,
peach tree, green tomatoes,
wooden fence, no dog.
Then we had religion,
Sunday sermons in Sicilian,
pale brick walls, empty steps,
vacant lots, the sea.

Then we had a city
vaguely to the north,
walk five blocks and find
the last subway stop of all.
And hen we had time
or something like
we remember, something
that never changes,
still feels just like
a long autumn afternoon.

20 February 2024
Phone, don’t ring, 
door, don’t knock, 
hinge, don’t squeak, 
I want some time alone 
to feel sorry for myself 
since nobody calls me, 
nobody comes, I’ll get by—
paradoxes make us strong.

20.II.24
Bless the willow,
reassure the branch,
shadow means sunshine
and sun means soon.

20.II.24
One day the virgin spoke to her son: come away from your father’s bench, you have better tools to play with.

20.II.24
I keep envisioning the thing I’m supposed to write, it stretches out long and wide, boring as sand if you don’t bend to touch it, squeeze it. And the sea mist is cool as you breathe it in, so for a moment the roar of the freeway behind you might even be the language of going somewhere. Or even being raptly where you are.

20.II.24
We are apples
in each other’s Eden,
just one taste
and the green dream
vanishes so that we wake
in a vaguely familiar world
ready to make new things.

20.II.24
OSSIA:

We are apples in each other’s Eden,
One bite is all it takes to wake us from the green dream into this morning world ready to make everything new.

20/21.II.24
Now at last
the cymbals clash.
We know what that means
in our fish markets and
meat stalls the oldest
museums, yes, this
is what we ate and what we are.
Don’t blame money for this one.

2.
In a tomb in Egypt
they found a jar of honey
still edible, still sweet
after two thousand years,
safe among all the other 
stolen goods, 
the bees long dead. 
We don’t even know their names.

3.
We never will 
because we never did. 
Something tells me 
eating is itself a sin, 
I heard that from a holy man, 
I hear it still from the green 
fields of rye and corn.
4.
And the lox and cream cheese
on my toast, tastes so good,
tries to make me forget
the salmon of wisdom
swimming still
under the hazel tree in Donegal.

5.
So as our lives are now
sin is unavoidable it seems.
But maybe some of us
can learn to, try to, atone
till our sobbing summons,
sounds like, music. 
And over the Hudson 
a bald eagle screams.

21 February 2024
Republican weather
dead rat in the cellar
wait a minute wait wait a minute— this is no kind of song.

21.II.24
Sometimes I think somebody else should be sitting here at these keys saying something you can use, democracy or information at least whereas I sit here trying to breathe a flame from the dying embers in the hearth of my head.

21.II.24
Yearning for it—
stretch the door frame
heat the kettle,
God’s son is born every day
again for the first time,
listen to his eyes
gleaming from the cradle,
his eyes stay with you,
linger as language,
linger as love.

21.II.24
He walked out of the wall
so I walked right in—
after waiting a thousand years
why wait ten minutes more?
I sliced a tomato and gobbled it
deep inside the oaken wall.
Some people heard me
but thought I was singing
so they wrote it down, sang it
all over the place, recorded it
and suddenly I was famous
pink juice still wet on my lips.

21.II,24, Red Hook

=====
Mirror, mirror on the wall,
I am the ugliest of them all.

No you’re not, no you’re not
but you’re in the running,
trot, trot, trot.

21,Il.24 Red Hook

= = = = = =
Looking for the letter to stick in between what you say and what you mean— that’s what the teacher said or quoted and you went through the alphabet on hands and knees hoping the terrain would tell. But no. Finally beneath the arches of m you came to rest. Silence is best.

22 February 2024
Something to share with you, messieurs, mesdames, my grandfather’s baton. I hold it before you to see, I speak with the ancient authority of wood.

22.II.24
The generator in the stable kicks on for its weekly test. The horses whinny, one kicks back against the stall and then relaxes in the groan of sound. He has heard worse--we all have, the crowds screaming at us to go faster and be gone.

22.II.24
Admire me–
I am made of thee,
both of us unfolded
from the northern coast
by a mothering wave.
To love me is to be
true to yourself, true
as language, as water.

22.II.24
So you’re moving to Italy...
I’ll miss you, so far away on the Adriatic coast.
But in a way you’ll sink even deeper into my life since I grew up among people from Abruzzi.
So now when I remember childhood I’ll find you there too, bright in springtime festivals.

24.II.24
Which alphabet has the most letters? Trees. No, I mean human letters. So why ask me?

22.II.24
All humans are descended from a battalion of warriors sent to this planet to do battle with an alien race in possession. But by the time we got here, the alien race had gone extinct, we don’t know why, climate? plague? In any case we had nobody left to fight with. Except each other.

22.II.24
The sound of water as it drips from a cotton shirt between washtub and clothesline—gentle. ample, let time wring it out. let time dry it. Where does water go? The dry mind gets interested and follows it all the way here.

22.II.24
Got to St Louis
saw the big gold arch
kept going
stopped at a motel
in think Ohio
slept and woke into
wild heavy rain,
first rain I had in a year
and so many many trees
so wet, so wet, I sort
of cried with happiness.

22.II.24
And then the beginning. Everything has to stop for the beginning to begin. Silence rubs its gloved hands and waits.

Men for a moment stop thinking about women. The fox in the meadow knows something’s going on, retreats into the dense shrubbery girdling the woods. Woodpecker reluctantly
postpones his beak. Priests and scientists sound asleep. Now it can really begin.

23 February 2024
Cantilevered silences
topple into sound—
the Brahms symphony
jumps forward, full of itself,
scary but beautiful
like a pedigreed dog
lunging at you in the doorway.
You shiver, back away
even while admiring his coat.

23.II.24
They moved into the photo they saw of the house, felt OK so they bought the place. A month later they got to the door, wielded the old brass key and lo! casa nova. But something was different from the photo. The sea was just as close but the vestibule was odd, felt as if other people still lived there, unseen but actual. Dust on the table where they set the key down,
a clink shivered through space. Are there people here before us, or is it our own ghosts trapped in the house from the time when we studied the photo? Pictures can capture the mind—is this how it will feel when we actually live here, partnering with our hopes, guesses? Now for the stairs. Who did sleep up there? Are they still here? Will we become the? The house will decide.

23.II.24
Flowers on the table
suddenly, who brought them,
who bought them, blossoms
of the money tree
in the invisible garden—
thank you, darling,
for bringing them home,
all the colors of sunshine.

24 February 2024
So it’s one of those questions again, more neurology than history, but what would I have thought as I walked into the room if I hadn’t seen the flowers. What would I be writing about right now if I hadn’t noticed, or let some other percept slip into mind’s morning market place instead? Percept—what a funny word for the real world.
2.
So what would you have been reading about now? Maybe great Vajrayogini standing at the seashore her long arm offering up to the clean sky all of us into the purity of mind. Maybe I would have looked around to find something to offer her and found flowers.

24.II.24
But the sun was bright so we saw everything. Empty steps, bronze doors of the temple, locked as we discovered. But at least we had climbed the steps, made the offering of that small exertion, stood reverent as you can be in front of a locked door. But what lives inside has a way of seeping out so we could breathe a little of that in.
Learn by breath.
The material world is itself a conversation.

24.II.24
THE VISITORS

I called and they came quickly through the foam, big waves for such a quiet sea. They came up the shore, walking easy on the rocks as on the sand. That is how I knew who they are.

2.
Because when you call out it is seldom clear what name to use to beg their presence in your word-soaked world.
3.
This rime it was right,
the pauses in our breaths
those sacred silences
worked into saying,
felt as natural as
the gulls floating overhead.
And they were talking too.

4.
My visitors (how proud
I feel to call them that)
sat down in the sand around me,
saying nothing yet
but their eyes fixed on me
waiting with the enormous
patience of the sea.

5.
I explained that I had come here
as a pilgrim to the ancient city
behind us, pilgrim, yes,
but not in a religious sense.
Or was it? Did the stones
back there have deity
enough in them to justify
my fancy name for my blunt
wandering?
6. Their faces eased, muscles laxed into the seeming that meant they heard me, accepted, at least for now. How long now would last is always such a problem. We heard the deep bells then from the old cathedral. Sounds without words, men without names.

7. They clearly wanted to know why I had called them
so I used the word again
and confessed I felt
a pilgrim is a sort of thief,
roaming around, seizing, seizing,
stealing the feel of a place,
molecules of its memory,
dragging them with him
ever and ever until he
too runs out of going.
Shouldn’t I just stay
home and water the roses?

8.
They smiled at that,
as if to say home
is everywhere
and everything is a rose.  
Or was I reading  
too much into their smiles?  
how long would they wait here  
for me to come clear?  

9.  
Then some wt inside me  
made me understand and say  
I was raised to feel guilt,  
whatever I Im doing I feel  
it should be something else,  
so much for roses.  
Even now I feel I’m just  
bothering you when I should
just be on my way
to that mysterious elsewhere
that cancels out my here.

10.
As if they knew
exactly what to do
they stood up then
and came close, so close
the sand on their legs
rubbed off on my shoulders,
close, they joined hands
and did a little dance
around me, just three
or four times then
quickly scampered aeay from me back into the sea.

11.
Clearly, the best answer is to be left alone with what you are and what you can do. I needed the whole Adriatic to tell me that.

25 February 2024
Possum slips under the porch—
in Latin his name means *I am able*.
He is but I’m not.
B0astful little creature!

25.II.24
WOODSTOCK HYLONOETIC

O Peter, Peter,
you know that real things
really think,
the ground where
you are buried
thinks with your thought
and with its own.

25.II.24
THE STEPS

Ballooned by breath
step easy
the little up,
here it all has
beginning in it,
the priest starts Mass,
mother breakfasting her child.
A little breath
is all it takes
she said. Or did
she stay step?
Anyway, be here. Did you come home last night or did you never leave that whole calendar day, sturdy as a hermit in the home? Too late to change that now—morning such a breathless pace, space—do you know how long it took our ancestors to breathe in sunlight? Two things at once, think this, do that, history of our race.
The child reaches
for a piece of toast,
the mother remembers,

3.
Three steps and we’re done,
climbing them
is the same as prayer,
offered up and answered at once.

4.
Door and steps
or steps and door,
either way the music starts.
Clerics and cynics
call it harps in heaven
but we know better.
Breath by breath
the music carries us along
until—it can take years—
we begin to understand.

5.
Liturgy used to mean
work of the people,
what all of us are
supposed to be doing
while the sun’s busy shining,
earth doing its round dance.
Still lots for us to do,
ask your neurologist,
your molecular biologist, 
but mostly your teenager weeping in 
the dark.

6. 
One two three 

enough for me. 
Thee. We dare it 
ev...
to house your toy animals, fox and lion and even camel shaded under leaves?

7. And here you are in my here, your there. Sometimes midmorning we just want to lie down again and be carried gently by that floating earth just a little while– but the horizontal is off limits–any steps can tell you that.
Maybe it wasn’t an apple in Eden
but a nap beneath the apple tree.

8.
Breathe in breathe out
breathe in again—that much
should be obvious by now
even to me. The hard part
is watching what happens
in the mind while all
this breath is going on.
Because I’m lazy I just
call it music, but be wise—
don’t call it anything
but study it with all your heart.
9.
Little steps
and little breaths.
The universe
asks nothing more.

26 February 2024
You used to be a gamelan
now you’re a girl,
strange how these things work,
the part becomes the whole,
the music changes direction,
more wind, less stone,
but it sneaks into our clothes
so the skin can understand it
word by word as it wanders
around in our hearts, hear it.

26.II.24
I’m Irish
we love to tease
but only tease
the ones we love.

That’s how you can tell
who loves you most
and who you love best.
Tease to tell.

26.II.24
The ribald character
of wind alarms the skin
the sudden knees
hair flailing eyes.
What would we say
or do to a one
who served us so?
Yet the lindens don’t complain
and they get more of it
than I do. Tease
your knees—I’d like
to do that too.

26.II.24
What’s left
of all my heraldry,
two lions roaming
around a lonely tower.
Anyone inside would be
frightened to come out.
Just like language,
just like me.

26.II.24
There is a kind of flower creeps into the house and flourishes unseen.

We call them germs or by some Greeker name and dread their blossoms.

And their only colors are what they paint on our skin. Rashes. Resistance. Rush to the doctor.

I’m trying to understand color,
I mean nature, how so much beauty and terror live together. In us. And underneath the vineyard a fossil dragon sleeps.
I wonder if I’m ready,
I wonder if I’m it
as we used to say
playing hide and seek.
Why is it always up to me?
And you too, “whoever you are.”

27.II.24
What day was tomorrow? Don’t use numbers, use your body, point to the accurate date. Part. Skin covers flesh, meat hides bone. It all points upward to the zone where a few people sometimes grow aware of what the skin and all the rest of them is telling how to be Me. That’s the day I mean.

27.II.24
Gentlemen, the time has come to reveal to us what your researches have disclosed.

1. Madam, I submit herewith a map, detailed, of a mine field in Pomerania on the old border between the two Germanies. I walked across it once unharmed, unguided. But in the years since then
the location of each mine has grown clearer and clearer until (with the help of an art student) I got the whole field mapped. Here it is, early results from a decade’s research into the terrestrial-cognitive union, how the human mind learns to hear what the earth—every yard of it, is saying.

2.
Madam, mine is a map too, and took long years to learn.
It shows the precise locations on the human back, from neck to nates, always the back, where each person’s truth is stored—you can tell lies with your face but not with your back. On the diagram I have marked numbered points, each the site which under careful pressure from a human fingertip—no tool required or even possible—the sensorium of the person touched will undergo a change in perception, visual, auditory,
emotional, conceptual
of a sort specific to that site.
This is a map
of everybody’s back,
every point elicits
the same sensation,
differing only by virtue
of the experiences
stored in each person’s mind.
Or wherever we keep them.
This is my latest contribution
to Haptic Theology,
study of how human touch
can reveal higher reality.
3.
Mine, madam, is more modest, I apologize. But once in Wismar I heard a servant girl in the hotel singing as she changed sheets. She was from Finland across the water, pretty, dark-eyed, quick, competent. She sang in Finnish, I suppose, I don’t know a word of that tongue but loved what I was hearing so I switched on my cellphone and recorded what I heard. For years I’ve listened
to her song again and again
until the sounds of it
began to sound like
words I knew, finally
even words that fit my lips
so here for you is what
she sang in me:

\[
I \text{ climbed a tower} \\
\text{stood way up there,} \\
\text{looked down and saw you.} \\
\text{I waved and called you} \\
\text{to come up with me,} \\
\text{and so you did,} \\
\text{and so you did.} \\
\text{We stayed a long time}
\]
just being together
but then we got thirsty,
then we got hungry,
no food up there,
up here where we
are so much together,
don’t want to go down,
don’t want to go down
so we walked
hand in hand
into the sky,
and so we did,
and so we did.

Soon I’ll find the right soprano
znd she’;;; sing it our next meeting.
Gentlemen, gentlemen, you all have done well. Curious that all your studies have centered on location, what it means somewhere, on earth or body. We know so much about things. Perhaps all that’s left to learn is where we are.

28 February 2024

= = = = = =
Suppose there were no clocks, no cuckoo to pop out and sass you in Swiss, what would those arrow-tipped pointers (they call them hands but they’re more like feet endlessly slouching around) what will they point to now? always something moving near, usually something you really don’t want to see. Like me, standing there, demanding is it time yet?

28.II.24
Clouds granular  
a chemic rain  
persuading the body  
inside and outside  
are the same.  
I started out getting born  
on the outwash plain yet  
I’m still on my way to the sea.  

27/28.II.24
ON THE FIRST OF MARCH

The little Welsh
in me wakes and cries
St. David’s Day! then
Y ddraig goch or
something like that
and falls back asleep.
But the man in me
smiles and sighs
Only three more
weeks till Spring.
But the poet wakes
to the birthday
of Lynn Behrendt
who knows how
to turn deep feelings
into words,
to turn deep feelings,
always feelings,
into visual images–
a fierce poet
working bravely
almost in secrecy
to say her world.

28/29 February 2024
AFTER THEIR READING

for NP and PJ

The lobsters down in Buzzards Bay read the latest news in the sand grain script the waves inscribe so briefly. They learn of hermit crabs and cormorants and what goes on inside the shell only a couple of hundred miles away. But we do all that here! a baby lobster says.
Yes, says mama, but we don’t have poets to sing us what we deeply know.

29.II.24
The wind still with us and we’re only few blocks north of noon. The things they tell us, these sprites (spirits) of air and light. It’s worth getting up sip last night’s coffee and eavesdrop on their dialogue. I am a willing customer of time.

29.II.24
The man next door to next door is holding a dooda merry mush hour for two hours tonight. Noise lurks, the panther growl of tipsy conversation. Where can we keep our silence? It’s too cold in the fridge... Put an opera on the internet! Good music says silence best.

29.II.24
for DZCz

Sometimes I hear you
at the back of my mind
bent low, searching through
the flower beds, one hand
gently moving petals
to decide. There seeing stops.
Are you after color? Texture?
That sense of transparency
that makes a petal look alive,
not just a product, but a child
alone in the world. You choose
something, I can’t see what,
and keep it gently close in the other hand. This is how cities grow, and Odysseys get written down, one leaf at a time. I will keep on watching, maybe someday I’ll get to see exactly how your deed is done.

29.II.24