Glad to thee,
game so lissome.
a car goes by
and then another.
What can a man do
but drive
to somewhere in his head,
safe? Yes, safe.
Don’t go broken.

2.
But the map
is broken,
but the radio works,
but if he listens to that
it’ll bring him
back to where he started from,
maybe comes from percussion,
something to do with pulse.

3.
O silver road
that lisps so many lies
you do tell true, too,
I’ve seen it in a bird’s nest,
I’ve seen it even here,
far from the nearest bodega.
I just had to learn how to listen.
Haven’t gotten all
the way yet.
4.
Time for the flowers,
you can get there by car
but there’s the music
problem again–
what does color
have to do with how we hear?
Does a so-called color-blind friend
hear the same Bruckner I do?
I think he has colors all his own.

5.
Sometimes they leave
their peals on the table,
sometimes another car goes by.

6.
See how glad a game is
by going on,
all verb and no subject,
hallelujah!

7.
Watch the warble
in the wren’s nest.
Can’t see it?
Use your ears.

8.
I have written down carefully
what esh car said
as it passed by
even if I didn’t hear it.
The alternative
is hitting the road—
and the road always hits back.

9.
So so as usual
we are left
alone with the truth.
And we call ourselves philosophers!
Gophers might be truer,
grubbing around in the actual.

10.
I remember them once
in Colorado
right on the edge of town
where girls from Nebraska
came to dance around.
A long, too long,
wake back to my motel.

11.
So go
by car,
simple song
but no guitar.
I loved that town
too a while
then the sea
told me yo come home.
But that’s just me,
ornery theology
tells me what to do.

12.
Up in the hills
the wapitis wander around
a mile closer to the sun.
And you are l]closer still.

13.
You! At last you’re here,
fresh from sleep,
coming down the wooden stairs of all these years.
All roads lead to you.
The goal is intimated by every pebble on the path along the way, every pebble knows the way,
Paths, streets, roads—silly Roman tricks.
Imagine a line and follow it—what else can a bird do?

14.
I thought I heard you on the stairs but it’s not now yet,
I’ve been talking to myself, 
that part of me 
that is you in disguise, 
the ruler of my whole population 
who by listening make me speak.

15.
A few more cars on Friday. 
Through the sun-drenched window I can’t tell 
a Jaguar from a Chevrolet—maybe don’t trust me? 
a man who mixes up his vehicles?

16.
At least we try, 
we people spoken
by the rain-dove’s murmur,
the river’s tongue,
at least we try.

1 March 2024

= = = =

Petals again
where they fell,
the smooth of them
or cool on them
where they rest
unwithering in mind.
Paler than crocus,
more scholarly than lily,
always holding
Half a century ago they made themselves music, made strings do the work trumpets used to using electric juicing with no music of its own. They did their worst to give the marketplace some profitable song.
2.III.24
What if not only
I had to do nothing
but there was nothing
left for anyone to do,
the work is finished,
the temple stands,
already a cat’s asleep
in sunlight on the stoa.
I could be a citizen
of that municipality
as soon as I finish my song.

2.III.24
THE CHARTER

You sign it
by rowing the boat
whether you actually
have a lake or not.
Muscles assent.
Your population relaxes,
the crowds disperse,
head home
humming the new song.

2.
Climb out of the sentence,
hang up the oars
and study them
from time to time
crossed on the wall.
You said this word,
these copious words
that now look like
no more than a single X.

3.
But we’re not fooled,
even the dullest of us
learned (and not in school)
how to pry a comma open
and figure out what our own
words mean
when someone else
is using them.

4.
We like your eyes
so we believe you–
your body is part of the contract
too. Viral contagion of words?
We vote for our secret
fantasies deep inside.

5.
Waking up each morning
is called getting rid
of the evidence.
The deep crimes of dream
dissolve slowly,
the aching ankle,
the noises in the street
all your accomplices.
You’re safe now, can’t
even spell the simplest word.
O if only there were one!

6.
New day. People
drift into the street again.
O what do they all mean,
and we need each one.

And they need me
you tell yourself,
cloudy weekend holiday
fashion your smile
and where it when
you dare go through the door
into the unimaginable actual.

7.
Later’s time enough for that.
now jist wash your wishes,
comb your wants,
shave yesterday away.
Now do that shrugging
the shoulders exercise
the doctor taught you—
it’s almost time
to look out the window,
and see what you
and you alone have
written in the night.
2. III. 24
Eyes blue as bruises,
skin white as toilet paper
we stand confused
in this new world,
the colors change!
Ancestry spins south,
spins east, we wait
our chance to cross
the street, the light
is always changing,
we’ll all be woven into,
one great abstract expressionist
masterpiece called humanity.

2.III.24
So one day you wake and stumble on stage struggling into your shirt, the one that feels like wool but isn’t, and you’re trying to remember your lines, the window is no help, the whole script seems missing in mind, the mirror reminds you of your name but nothing more. Open your mouth and see what if anything comes out. Sometimes the body remembers better than the mine, but did your skin ever tead the script?
What is this place anyhow where you’ve lived all your life?

2.III.24

LINEAR

The long line of rock
that runs us,
but how can you call it long
when it is your brother,
aren’t all straight lines the same,
end in the same place,
blank space?

Three thousand years of terror
after Romulus killed his brother
and Cain built the first city,
I sing the only song I know,
rock reminds me when I sleep,
yes, I mean Dakota,
where else is there,
our last local war,
we must be done with it,
sister tree and uncle rock
remind, remind, re-mind.
Put the gun down
before the line runs out.

2.
I was, am, some
still alone in the Black Hills.
Never mind me,
it’s the thee I see
the almost unimaginable
consort swaying hither
through the endless grasslands
south. She comes, he comes,
gender comes later,
never mind me, I tremble
at their coming,
the pronouns of otherness
hithering through swaying green. No knife, no sword, no gun—it’s got to be this way, the stone falls from his hand. My hand.

3 March 2024
alle Menscchen werden Brüder

All humans turn into brothers
Schiller says and Beethoven
sings to his hundred-stringed guitar
but something’s wrong
with the logic here–
if they got their wish
we’d die out in one generation.
No, ma’am, not
the logic but the language–
girls are brothers too.
The murk of meaning clutters the bright day.
Things to do and words to say.
Back to bed and shut your eyes, you’ll think of nothing very soon.

3.III.24
Birds, trees, thee.
What more can language prove? The pain is deep, so deep we barely notice, subways and cenotes, we hide from what we need.

3.III.24
Lilliputian logic—
pretend you’re bigger
than you are, bigger even
than your shadow
moving through the trees.

3.III.24
The Christians down by the pier remember what water is for,
change, change by washing,
change by going
here to there, across,
if you dare, dare to move,
dare to be there.

3.III.24
Wild men across the river, publishers and movie makers, I shudder on this warm day fearing ever since childhood what you say put loud, my parents always told me speak softer, speak softer. But there they are, showing images to thousands, and the images move as if they too were alive, showing and shouting and printing words anybody, everybody could hear and figure out what’s going on, when nothing is, really,
just the river rolling past
and me afraid to speak, afraid
even to write this down.

3.III.24
In the rock face sandstone interrupts the gneiss. The world changes. We are left holding the fact alone, a headache in the music. We go on waiting expecting our ship to come in through the rock and rock is all the air we can the shaped by what we thought.

3-4.III.24
It was rest that cured me, wrapped in her old blanket on the oldest bed of all,

grass, grasslands of North America, Carl Sauer, all that 40th parallel magic, pusztta, steppes, prairie, the green belt round the earth.

All you have to do is lie there. your eyes at ease, closed soft, night in Nebraska.

And I woke back home, healthier than I had
any right to anticipate,
healthy as a stone on Cedar Hill.

4 March 2024
Once I learned calculus
I gave up basketball—
see, college is good for something
after all.

4.III.24
It’s not all progress—
oration once meant prayer.
On weak ankles
we run through time.

4.III.24
A RIVER TALE

1.
Stone blocks from quarry upriver barge shuddering downstream against the incoming tide.

We are bringing stones from Earth to Earth, stones calling to us out of the ground in one place tell us take me to another to build your busy mountains on. We move around. We move around. It is as if all we have to do is drag things, o poor dear things, from one
place to some other, as if all we have to do is make a difference change for its own sake, change.

2. Using is simple as that — is it just the sun going down on the same sun coming up again but the life is different? Is it the aurora borealis all over again. green lights fingerling up from the horizon moving always moving and pulling back? Is it always as simple as one thing giving way to another?
I asked myself since there was no
since there is no one else wise
enough enough to ask
or fool enough to listen.

3.
So I watch the blocks limestone
   I guess float down the river
strange to see stone float
   How did we find ourselves
in this magic garden?
Did the garden bring us here
the way it brings the rabbits and gulls
and springtime and snow? Are we
the answers to a question it grants
us? Are we any
kind of answer at all?
Then I opened the other door and who was standing there but the lighthouse keeper telling me calmly
in his old-fashioned German something about the river, something has happened to our river.

2. Went with her to see what we could do. She was a woman by now, they know water better and spoke English, native, no foreign flair.

3. When we got there we found river was way up over its banks
and must have been higher still:
a rowboat capsized on shore,
another nearby, upright,
full of water, a trapped carp
floundering around.
We scooped it out
and gave it back to mother.

4.
Or is that the problem,
I dared to ask the woman
at my side, have we offended
the motherhood of rivers
so pregnant with giving
they drowning our stupid flags?
Is that what a river
is always doing, remind, remind, remind?

5.
You’re right, pale person, she said, right but have no idea of what you’re saying. For she was Egypt now, soft bronze, Yes, I knew the Nile and she knows me still.

Build your toy boxes well back from my banks and let me breathe in peace, in, out, bright sky,
deep sigh.

6.
Left her to her work, walked back home alone. Came in the door I’d used to come out. Wonder what I would have seen or learned or even been if I had used the first door?

5 March 2024
The window woke me, instantly full of light as if someone had switched the sun on. Was this *lusus lumninis*, light playing with us or a trick of time, lose count of darkness, suddenly wake? Here I go again, taking an experience as experience.

5.III.24
The vulgarity of the candidate is an embolism in society, driving hordes to the polls. Americans always mistake vulgarity for honesty.

5.III.24

= = = = = =
I thought of a fire
I touched her thigh
to prove I was alive

she did not react
so maybe I was wrong.

We touch so much
but don't know even
what we mean,

but skin touches skin and understands.

5.III.24

====
In the dark I found myself thinking about submarines.
Time to switch on the lights.
In that ocean there is no hope of knowing what I need to know from what water knows.
Tell me, tell me, mother, what I need. Inside the machine nothing to know except to go.

5.III.24
I used to walk to work a hundred yards away then climb the plushy stairs to sit alone at my desk waiting for someone to come along along and make me be. That is the teacher’s destiny.

To say early what you never thought till someone asked. And get paid for it! I learned more from teaching then than from learning by myself.

5.III.24
A SERMON I WOKE WITH

Once I had the good fortune to be at a talk by the eminent Tibetan teacher who, by tradition, will be reborn someday as the next Buddha, Maitreya, who will come to purify consciousness and open the mind anew. No point in waiting for him, we have had our teachers and our practices. A gleam in his eyes was all it took to remind us that we can have, do have, prequels of Maitreya’s coming, those moments when without urgency or stress we settle
into awareness, deeper, clearer, awareness without object, brighter, awareness without subject.

6 March 2024
If people walk around their gardens in their bathrobes, it helps the flowers grow. Fact, hems flapping in mild March breeze reminds the petals of their long spring game. And we can never have too much color—red robes, peacock blue!
In the doomed patriarchy
brick smokestacks crumble,
debris shattering factory roofs.
You heard me. It all
has to be taken back,
dollar bills be nice
clean paper again—
can write on them now,
poems even to
the one you really love.
Dismiss the president—
government is a cold
hand in the dark.

6.III.24
I suppose I really would like to see a peacock strutting around the yard. But how to take care of a bird, especially one better at being than I am. And he can fly! Maybe after a while he’ll flap away again and leave me knee-deep in reality.

6.III.24

= = = = = =

Edgewise on.
Get it between
in where the dark
gives meaning
and lets it flourish.
Edgewise, the way
you enter a conversation.

6.III.24
Solar. Sun inside stone.
Cordial. Heart inside word.
In water wait. Old man talking to his dog. Sheep on hillside in fog.
What else to know, the girl is gone.

6.III.24
Stand-up arts
like painting and sculpture,
sit-down arts
like poetry and prose.
Where is philosophy
in all this? On a beach
of a Greek island
shivering in cold wind.

6.III.24

POET PLACES
He never saw Bermuda
but used its name
I saw Mount Kinchenjunga once and
knew it as Everest.

We stumble down the gullies of
geography, name of the name
dragging us, pulling me
the way I feel compelled
by the east coast of New Zealand I
have never seen
but somehow need.
Why is it always going somewhere in
mind
if not afoot, was there so compelling
a shadow
laurel wreathed, a shadow shimmering with dark permission. Oh yes if I could only be there about soon as I would rest there for a moment my mind would be adulterous with other places.

7 March 2024
After the building went up
the contractors gathered
quick for a little party,
sipped their beer,
nibbled on the hot tlayuda
a and glS to feel that all their work
went somewhere,
stands there try to shield them from
the evening Sun.
Is that way it always is
when one has spoken?
Things stand there erect
waiting for us to hear them
and obey what they say?
It is the way some of us

struggle with words,
still trying to obey the silence.

7.III.24
On the other hand a gleaming ring. On the other hand a shadow of someone else's face come close to read the ring.

What kind of band of gold has a little modest emerald set within it, a little gold continuum, a ring means a circle, a circle means forever, someone once came along and passed love through that band
as we have passed through love a while but the love stayed, ever green. the way the emerald always says.

7/III.24
Revulsion
and the car stopped
on its way to Toronto,
o lakes and borders
and not feel so good.
Get gas here, who knows
what things are like,
the way they used to.
Always cold wind when
you’re filling the tank,
why, why don’t they do
something, not just this
appalling music
screaming from the pump
working or not.
Stop here? Explore Sodus on the shore?
Revulsion, the feeling is clear, the remedy remote. Back in the car.
At least it knows what it’s doing.

7 March 2024
Unwrapping the present you find the past. Sorry for the pun but there it is, golden Byzantium gleaming through the calendar, ask for Thursday’s schedule and Jupiter thunders from a cloudless sky. Nothing is just now—it stinks of where it’s been. I give this to thee because it’s me. 

7.III.24
Her footsteps on the stairs,
lovely music of wood alone,
no need for strings.
Love is so inventive
when it comes to instruments.

8 March 2024
Nevertheless?
Everthemore?
How children can climb ape-wise through language. Make it up! Make it feel like you, and leave a glow of glory in your wake. Wake!

8.III.24
The calm persuasions
of the moonday sun
deftly coax us out
pf the cozy routines
of being and doing. Coax
us out, where panthers
cough in the woods
and potholes crack axles.
Out of silence into
I can almost
hear what you’re saying.

8.III.24
I used to take the ferry four mornings a week to teach on an island, no names, please— islands are islands, precious little dangers in the immense dangers of the sea. But never mind about me. The ferry is the wonder here, vast beetle chugging across the harbor, its innards verminous with cars. And us around the edges, decks and cabins, each pretending to read
the same old same old
they call the news
when all the while we
were heeding, hearing,
an ancient liturgy
only islands know,
all islands, even the busy
one I was coming from
and somehow still am.

8.III.24
When Roosevelt was living down the road there were more sheep and cows all round these fields. Some were still around when I got here, then the sheep went south, the cows went east and west. Milkless, we shiver in cotton. Or would, except suddenly all the money moved in.
How many moons to light one candle? Elbow of the birthday brush soft soft against the apple tree, but on the birch bark inscribe in soft pencil the hardest name. That is your friend whose voice is that whisper you hear now and then even if you rub the writing out.

8.III.24

= = = = =
I won a prize today, it’s called sunshine in the garden, with new daffodils and it lasts all afternoon. So many prizes, so many winners! Of course I have to share mine with the woodchuck and the raven, but sharing is good for the soul, isn’t it, that best prize of all?

8.III.24

A NEW ANTHEM

When soldiers age chocolate bars
on their way to battle
and priests whispered I
Latin to the dead
we knew what war was.
And where. No we do not
understand how it is everywhere,
how it morphed into
earth’s atmosphere. Merciless.
Just part pf the news.
Not just Ukraine. Palestine, Haiti,
Nigeria, Sudan,
ambush, kidnap, tape and kill, we
don’t lknow where it isn’t,
pur brothers and sisters dying,
thousands of them every hour,
their pure blood drenches
the furrows of our bewildered brains
I thought you a poem
and talked it to you
down the full of my mind
that soft place where the rain softens
the hard soil of experience, the rain,
the rain that is what just happened,
the way
you just happened to me.

8/9.III.24
I talk so much about waiting but I'm a very impatient man so when I say wait I mean come to me right now and when I say I am waiting I mean I'm rushing with all my dubious speed down the dark hallway of an unfamiliar house, my house the rooms of which I barely know, the stairs creak I hope with the tread of your feet.
Let’s spell my name
a different way,
with grains of red rice
from Bhutan and garnet
gravel from Gore Mountain.

Red, red, the way blood
wants everyone to be,
night and day year after year
thrusting that color
through the body
hoping someday we’ll be red.

I don’t need rubies,
so expensive, I’ll spell it with red sand from Florida.

9 March 2024
It was snowing when we drove home after Faust, my first opera witnessed, not heavily, more sparkles on the windshield soon wiped clear again and again.

But father drove slow, cautious, with the tricky lights, oncoming traffic. Music still in me, music is forgiveness, music silences evil, at the end of the opera maybe
even Devil feels forgiven.
Good to think that,
long drive home,
midnight in the winter city.

9.III.24
Cold again,
the new grass wondering,
a few daffodils
shelter under no
sun today. Not too cold
and maybe warm coming.
I look at the crocus
by the fence across the road
and wonder with it, when.

2.
There you see me
at one of the oldest tricks
trying to elbow my way
into the natural world
as if I weren’t already some flower or the mud it grows from.

9.III.24
When I think Vienna
I think Majler, Freud, the usual.
But what I hear is the clatter
of hooves, the horses
Sunday morning, the little
square where the carriages
cluster, I don’t know why,
ever rode in one, but still
hear the percussion
iron hooves on civil stone.

9.III.24
Call it and it comes, 
the dragon word 
roused from its sleep 
in the mind, 
that cave we linger 
round the mouth of, 
we lurk.

2. 
It could be 
almost anything, simple, 
soft even, you know 
it is a dragon 
by the shadow it casts.
That’s why night is so dangerous, shadow everywhere, nothing has one of its own.

3. But granted morning, granted light, you know what you have to deal with. You begin to hear what the dragon says.

4. And they do speak,
these kinds of dragon, loud if not clear, one syllable or few. The rest is up to you.

10 March 2024
Then there are these flowers
suddenly on the table,
dark in rainlight, one
big yellow fellow
with a core black as my coffee.
It must be morning.
Why does every flower seen
seem like a gift,
a special gift for the one
who sees it, a gift from thee.
I’ll use the old word
to be on the safe side
always from you.

10.III.24

A HOUSE ON THE METAMBESEN
Across the highway
the stream pools out,
overflows rarely,
ever runs dry.
Lovely old house
wedged between
corner and the current,
too close to traffic
for my taste but yellow
and wooden and noble
in the old farm way.
No barn, no useful beasts,
but when you look at it
you think of all these old
Munsee woods, you think
of cows mid-shank
in the busy shallows, their shadows reflected on the quick stream on its way to the river, curls unseen around the ridge behind our house and so on through a history I’ve been trying to learn. But the stream runs too fast.

10.III.24
Eleemosynary aptitude. Cast a smile at anyone as you hurry on your way. And you will always have a way.

10.III.24
What time are you now for God’s sake? Let’s go home to Oahu where noon happens only once.

10.III.24
Recalcitrant pathways
it said on the map
all green lines and letters
prompt from the mind
when I asked myself
Where now? *Ubi nunc*
is what I really said,
good Jesuit that I am,
one never quite gets out of Catholic school.
Where now, where
do those paths ead,
by what Proustian trees
gesturing at roadside,
what asphalt deserts,
parking lots, turbulent laundromats? Guess again. Rain forest. Komodo monitors. More likely, or even less picturesque tropics, gangsters playing stolen guitars, What a basketball would say if ever we let it talk and not just throw it away over and over till it learns to keep silence. The path seems murky now, slippery, mushy with my prejudices, those iron bands taut around my temples they call my taste. Recalcitrant is all about me,
the one pretending to be
talking to you now.
Whereas I’m just something
you picked up on the street.

10.III.24
The way you get used to the body you’re born in you get used to language. There’s seldom a perfect fit between your muscles and what you want them to do. But it gets done. Likewise lips say what you really mean.
A cinderblock weighs 40 pounds. One aligns them, piles them, they make handy steps to the porch with no carpentry. One atop another heap high a tower, rough but you can see through it– not many towers let you do that this side of Babel.
Toss them longstream
in some water
like those old Chinese poems
they’ll all come back
someday like the wind,
the snow from Buffalo.
Trust the north wind
bringing back to shore
everything that has been said.

11 March 2024
If I followed my own commands
I’d be on clifftop this
very morning morning
sculpting the wind
and lots to work with.
But I just sit here lazy
listening to what the wind says.

11.III.24
I thought I heard
a camel caravan
coming up the road
but it’s just sunlight
in the bare locust trees
that line the way. Just!
As if there were anything
more than sun, or any
beast come closer
or bring us more.

11.III.24
People were alive here
even then, we sometimes
feel in even our own language
a shadow of how they sounded
when stone taught them to speak

11.III.2024
I have forgotten them
and they have forgotten me
but everyone I ever touched
or talked to or talked to me
has a piece of me
and I have a piece of them
we break apart like seeds
bursting unseen from flowers into
the energy, the *inner work*
of one another so what I make
makes itself again for you in you till
you speak with my voice you
and I hear with your ears and.
You are very name I’ve forgotten,
language Justice to us
and something more something of I guess they used to call it soul lingers, a taste that rubs off on whatever we say, a taste of something like the truth.

11 March 2024

= = = = =

1.
Two hundred kilometers south of me the Wonder Wheel was turning as I left.

2.
I leave it to you to tell me if it still spins and if not what kind pf song is that?

3.
I miss them—Steeplechase, Thunderbolt,
Cyclone, wheel—not me being in or on tem but the bright fantastic insistence of their just being there.

4. Pliis there was a Dragon’s Gorge that taught me much of what the dark is for, hpw light turns into water and how fear can sometimes set you free.

5.
But that was just me, 
the ride I loved, 
traveling while sitting still, 
dreaming with open eyes.

6. 
Sp I close mine 
and see those lights 
again, the fierce 
angles of them 
piercing the night, 
their wave-tossed gleams 
splashing on the sharks 
breeding half a mile 
out from Coney.
7.
So distances matter, they breed with desires and pursue our dreams. I’ve talked about their lights until they all seem dimmer now.

11 March 2024

= = = = = =

If I could be a soldier and there was no war ever, I would be true to something in me, not about fighting or
aggression or even defense. Something cleaner, calmer, if sometimes a little scary too—taking orders, responding to demand, taking a sensual pleasure in obeying the law.

To the eye doctor today to see if I can see him better than last time. But how do I know he hasn’t changed, faded or flourished into new
visibility? He has his little numbers to tell him what he wants to know but how can I be sure if what I see is partly just a figment of me?

12.III.24

=Fhe organ moans the bride gets soldered up the patriarchal aisle to be re-socketed into society—new title, new duties.

Halfway to the rail she
wants to change the spelling of her role and fly away.

Papa drags her back to earth. She sees the nervous groom and has to smile into her veil thinking of the terror he too is going through. Wedding, this initiation into the strangest of all secret societies, The Two.

12.III.24
On its way to being an idea
a glance fled from a hawk
and hid in a tree. Apple,
naturally, the ferns all round
the base sleeping
through their busy thoughts.

It looked around
through all the lancey growths,
so many fronds, help me,
help me, it began to pray
and instantly became
an actual thought at last:

the manyness of the other
is the safeguard of the self. 
Content now, it rested in green.

12.III.24
I let the words
think for me,
let the mind rest
on the edge of thought--
mind an ocean
whose waves lap
easy on the shore,
ever engulfing,
leaves what it touches
wet and gleaming.

12/13.III.24
THINGS
I used to know how to be.

There was the Lion
and he permitted
with one quiet
glance.

And the bronze, black bronze
statue of a panther
guarding the seal pool.
steps of the zoo

who was also, me,
a Confederate general
reviled in a playground
too far from Alabama.
2.
A ship was me too,  
or in me a flotation towards,  
wherever sails could waft  
this freight of mine.

Or Roman oarsmen.  
No submarines.

3.
But licorice from Nederland  
no more, too sweet,  
or crossing into Germany—  
are the meadows different here?  
Can I still be one,  
stretched out past the frontier
like an unspoken word?

4.
So many things I used
and used to be
and was all the way
into am, but who knows?

Who can be sure
of what one is,
Mercedes or Volvo,
Hammersmith or Hammerfest,
Catholic Buddhist flirting
by the synagogue, is that
a baseball in your hand
or a lump of dough
on your way to the kitchen.
5. Mosquitoes all round and you still speak French a little, nothing fancy, a wave on the sea?

6. There is so much sitting on a rock to be done, so many trees to listen to, so many windows to lift to breathe some outside in.

7. And am I still the coatrack in the corner,
cashmere sweater, 
rolled-up Isfahan 
fresh from the cleaner, 
everything new, paradise 
of sneakers, but do I still 
stand in the closet 
trying to remember 
who wore this coat 
so soft against my cheek?

8. 
The Lion lets me 
but what else is permitted? 
It’s only Wednesday after all, 
there’s still plenty of time
to work it out. See,
I’m not trying to remember,
I’m trying to know.
Amy animal can teach you that.

0.
But I was a stone arch too,
good to shelter under
in rain, I learned from
being an arch how to wait
for a bus in the snow
when there still were cities.
Why am I not
a city now?

10.
That’s the real problem,
how many people and cats and dogs do you need in you to a city? Do pigeons count?

11.
For I would be a blackbird red-winged with spring, I would come and go and stay and rouse you even with my gabble. Subway! Symphony! Swamp! For I would be the man I was when you were you.
13 March 2024
= = = = =

Carry the cushion and the feet will follow. Hoist the sun up and spring will happen—things are so much more obedient than we are. Befriend a new thing every day and thus learn honesty.

13.III.24
Across the street
from a church,
but what does a street know?
So much it can tell you
of who and when and where
but never what.
You need the church for that.

13.III.24
Who sings in me now
from the old heap of vinyl
shelved in my head?
Mahler, most likely,
the reliable heart,
das emsige, treue Herz.
I stood with my back
against his rough stone
column in front of the Oper,
prayed to his music
with my shoulder blades.
So now sing now.

2.
And of course it is the distances that sing back, his Chinese hills of exile, the shapely heights across our river the Dutch called the Blue Mountains–and like music they too come close on sunny days.

3.
And don’t have opinions, the music says, and don’t make decisions, music means waiting for now and now is always.
14 March 2024
Carey walks his dog at dawn in Hastings. Strange how people have animals, and cities, and ocean and strange France across the Channel. But all I can see is a friend and his dog. And I can’t even see the dog.

14.III.24
Longboats bounce ip the shore, men in helmets slosh on land. A thousand years later things settle down. No more helmets, no more boats. It’s all in the sky now and men have dry knees until the old blood flows.

14.III.24
What would I do
if I got up from this chair
and walked outside
in this mild March sunshine?
Would I be the same
person, or does place
change us, like case in grammar?
I would be the porch’s me
or the lawn’s own person,
or some dubious identity
leaning on the car
already hot in the brightness.
Lincoln shivered and stood up from his marble throne in the memorial, spoke to the adoring crowd: “I don’t belong there, they shot me because I shot first, I did not keep the war from happening, a war where hundreds of thousand Americas died. slain by no enemy but ourselves. Somebody come, take my throne all we need is no mire war.

14.III.24

A SHUTTERED HOUSE
Shutters on a pale house blue. Imagine pansies, windowbox, soon. Not yet. Yet is in the middle distance past a cloud. Now you know where you were when I saw this.

2.
All we really can do is give and give. Even when we snatch and grab we give experience. Shutters block out light but hum a little in the wind. Music
plus blue plus
the alms that weather brings.

3.
Thus build a theory
of donation, human,
half-conscious, if that.
Inevitably, this is for you.

4.
That word again,
nickname of the Other.
I love it on my lips,
easiest word of all to say.

5.
The house probably was near Narrowsburg, or maybe Shohola, definitely near the Delaware. Not sure who lived there but the garden looked cared for. The shutters are clearest and a hawk overhead.

5.
Memory does that to us or we to it. Bakery. Bank lobby. Biplane over steeple, coffee
dribbling down the chin.

6.
Sometimes it all seems to be a sprawling museum, where every item takes meaning only from who had it or who made it or where it fell. As if a thing by itself is just a footnote to a missing text.

7.
I don’t think I ever lived in a house with shutters, they are the signs of a certain social level
a bit above or below me,
hard to tell which,
like a magnolia
or a dog in the yard.

8.
It says in the bible
keep remembering
till you use up all your words,
then you can begin.
Something like that—
my Hebrew is shaky
though I spoke Aramaic
as a kid. As we all did.

9.
The sun cam out
as I was saying this, 
right in my good left eye. 
A shutter would be helpful now, 
is this all because, 
because I named them? 
And I have a naughty 
bad left eye that no one knows. 

10. 
Except you. 
You again, 
royal patron, 
ruler of language, 
listener at the doorway, 
analyst of the heart.
15 March 2024
The pallor of time
sometimes, clue
of the shadowless,
then a mark, sudden,
mood shift, window.

We always lived
on the ground floor,
rabbits usual on lawn
and once a fisher-cat
dressed all in mink.
Seemed. They,
they take possession
with a sort of patience
we study but lack.
Beast. Best.
Language knows.
They have no words
we have nothing else,
those lovely little crumbs
that fall out when we speak.
Vital to live close to the ground.
Listen with my aching feet.

15.III.24
He knows how to tightrope walk in bed, cautious, passing over deep ideas without actually thinking. Sleepy time is slippery but he moves firm, sees what others down below are thinking but he keeps calm in pigeon-land, safe above the scheming streets.

15.Ⅲ.24
PARADE
The parade. Who are these people who claim to be me? I recognize the music in my mother’s tears, but not much more. Youngdrum majorettes and old men smiling but everything seems to be about another place some other time, and nothing now but the weather.

2.
Make it longer till
it’s all a parade,
tedious consolation
of the never-ending.
Wipe my eyes,
salute more flags,
I am no better
than what I see.

3.
Accents, and artifice.
And a band goes by
with three sousaphones
brighter than the sky.
I hear me in their grunting,
melody of the bottom,
down the scale, sir,
deserve the down.
4.
We climbed Yeats; tower once and kissed in Donegal so the helmets and the pigeons let us watch today safe on television where we children live.

5.
Virtual, the old word made new is, strength of the actual but with less danger. Fifth Avenue, the zoo, the trees still bare.
6.
But in Barrytown
way up the river
the forsythia
gold-yellowing already,
my mother’s favorite,
waking jere
by the train tracks
at the foot of the hill
where so many poets live.

7.
So Patrick’s timing
is right as usual,
he who knew the mountains best,
he who brought
a new-born God 
to this little island, 
I mean the other one 
across the mothering sea.

8.
So religion is hiding 
in all these cheery faces 
bright from breeze 
or trumpet calls, 
and religions is still 
the strangest music. 
I watch their marching 
measured footsteps 
and try to understand 
what I can’t see 
is what really counts.
The evidence all stacked neatly in this empty house.

16 March 2024
The road led here, 
bo choice for it or me, 
we do what the ground tells us to. Obedience is the science of streets. Now learn language from the silly names they bear. Go west along East Palm with not a tree in sight.

16.III.24
Run without stopping upriver all the way until until a sandstone cliff makes the words slow down those legs you trot on easily so meagerly a rock impends and then again you trust the go against the flow why not, you’re tide, you stem from the sea and some of mother’s muscle moves you still, are you a seal or an orca or a babbling child,
makes no difference,
mo matter, be loud and go.

17 March 2024
A pain in the temple,
an ox in the manger—
waking has always been hard.

17.III.24
In that very octave
on an upright piano
the song turns silver,
beautiful old woman
staring in the mirror,
her grizzled husband
watching from the doorway.
Music arms us for what happens.
Can’t help but happen.
Silver gleaming in the sun.

17.III.24

[Brahms’ Paganini Variations]
Mailman came Sunday
brought a package
a mystery to unwrap,
information never ceases,
no wonder we choose music
to drown out all the rest.

17.III.24
No hint of loneliness, 
we invented that ourselves, 
earth always happily 
mARRied to the sky. 
never a day apart, 
But , our we, with our uphill 
and downstream   our silly 
cruise ships and pilgrimages, 
as if to find an island 
of utter exile. Maybe all 
we really want 
is to write long letters home.

17 March 2024
I heard tobacco curing in the barn and knew Kentucky. Things taste like that, profuse information, simple answer to complex not even a question, a smell in the air, a word adrift in the mind.

17 March 2024
They told me they had seen harbor seals sunning on the rocks by Saugerties lighthouse, thirty leagues from the sea.

i told them I’d seen the Northern Lights weird neon green flashing up over Ontario.

We smiled and sipped tea.

Then they told me they climbed a little hill near Istanbul, there Turks think Lord Jesus died.
I told them in India
I had seen Everest fill the sky,
slopes all the gods came down.

More tea. We watched the news.

then they told me they walked
the pilgrim route to Compo stela
and I told them I had walked
on that road too, but earlier on, still
winding west in France.

More smiles now,
we were getting close.

They told me they had dug
for truffles east of Avignon,
I told them I had scraped up garnets in the Adirondacks.


They said when they were young the East River was oily green. I told them it was that way in my Brooklyn childhood too. We sat there wondering if all this might still be true.

17.III.24

Once an archer on the peak of Erigal
shot let an arrow fly
almost straight up,
just enough of an arc
to see it bend, strangely
slowly, away from him
and then it stopped,
just stopped high in the air
so he could stare at it
and look down and watch
the seacoast far away
and look up again and saw
that arrow was still there.
Sometimes travelers in Ireland
look up and see that arrow still.

17.III.24
Fields of cotton
fields of corn
we are born
for better but
they do not tell us what.
We look at all the Septembers
and wonder if winter
has no gift for us as well
and is May just a time
to look at the colors and shapes and
smells and write
their names in precious books.

1718.III.24

AFTER THE SLEEPELESS NIGHT
The thirty-six hour day begins, the waltz persists inside the stone but calendar pages slip nimbly to the floor.

2. Is it all about fear? Is it children’s clothing lost in the laundromat, kids abducted from orphanage, who knows the rule? I have a string in my pocket that claims to know how high above ground a word might honestly aim.
3.
Loss of parents
is the greatest fear
but what can we do
now that time
has come to take their place?

4.
Change the way we count,
no more numbers,
just use shape, shapes,
the way we wear our hair, glamorous
baldpates of Sodom,
pigtail pilgrims,
neatniks of Nyack.
5. Won’t help. Couldn’t sleep last night, now punishing the day with this and that, animadversions from Antarctica.

6  Breeze and bright but head is still night. You’re on shaky ground and know it when rhyme appears, mama’s woolen blanket to engulf your fears.

7.
Help yourself to pretzels at the bar she said, the innkeeper’s daughter as she hurried out the door. An old jukebox glowed by the men’s room, I walked over and spotted The Warsaw Concerto floating in all the pop. That’s how I knew it was 1950. That’s where broken sleep leads even the heaviest.

8.
Pardon me, monsieur, I’m still trying to make sense of time, where it comes from
we’ll never know, where it’s going we guess too well, time is a gravel path made of umbers—no wonder I stumble as I go.

9.
Numbers are such slippery things and have no color of their own though 9 sometimes has a faintly yellow calcite gleam, proud of being the biggest single digit we possess. Now let me go back to sleep.

10.
No. Nyet. The crowds
chanted Ross-i-ya Ross-i-ya in Moscow this afternoon. A crowd is an interesting animal, only hurts you if it gets too big or you get too close and it rolls over on you like a nice fat sleepy mule.

11.
I’m scared already—fear is the income tax we pay for being anywhere and not alone. Though solitude has its menace too.

12.
Think of all the dictators. Think of the clock measuring your breaths one by one till you count but it does not. Think of an green oak leaf floating in a well, going nowhere just being there. Now don’t think of anything at all.

13. Why did I sign that manifesto? I should just have swept the corn muffin crumbs away and left the paper blank.
14.
If one thing really does lead to another, next time you’ll be a flower again of course, but this time speaking German or Slovenian. And I’ll have to go to school all over again.

15.
See why I’d rather sleep? Not as bright now and a little warmer. Maybe that’s the answer, wait and see. But how long, o Lord, and with what eyes?
16.
I was thinking about national anthems, and Le Bon’s theories of the crowd. The French are good at that because everybody over there thinks the same. I stood before the Trocadero and remembered.

17.
Walking west along the Cavaillon I saw a human skull poking out of the muddy berm beside the road. Very white, there a long time
but looking at me now. This must be someone I came all this way to meet. I carried the thought of it with me maybe getting ready to listen to it at last. I left the bone and took the mind.

18. Halfway through the day my hands washed clean. I think about putting some music on. no Russian, no folkish, no guitar. Maybe just let silence
rubs its hips against my ears.

19.
Who were you
when you waited for me,
who are you now?
I know you get tired
of all my questions
but I don’t know how to stop.
I learned it as a kid,
it goes along with looking
and eating and wanting.

20.
And waiting by the phone.
Or that came after,
it was one thing I could answer all by myself. If it rang.

21.
But mostly I just bothered you and you and you with questions.
what does it mean when you say Yes?
Does anybody really know what time it is?

22.
Of course we can read a person’s character from their handwriting.
Of course. That is why
people do text messages now, don’t let the secrets out
their spindly S’s
or broken circle O’s
would easily reveal.
They hide from me
who bares his heart to them.

23.
As one might expect
in an oldish poem
before time got its hands on it.
On us, I mean.
Who else can I ask?
24.
I’ve never ridden a horse, never gone skiing.
And this too is a question.

25.
Once in Vienna
elderberry juice
big glass of it in the park.
Once in Honolulu
braised beef tendon
near the little stone bridge in Chinatown.
Can’t tell you anything more.

26.
So much comes out like singing,
can’t help it, hum along,
the words hardly matter
but they matter,
the more they do
the more they sing.
And words go to sleep
to be repaired and polished.
Who knows what
they’ll mean when I wake.

27.
You hate the sound
of cellophane crinkling,
I hate most the sound of
basketball bouncing
over and over on the sidewalk.
I think this means we should have been born two hundred years ago. And maybe we were. And maybe we forget.

28.
For our pleasures and peeves are ancient, they draw us into this world again and again, my fingerprints are stuck somewhere on the Pyramids, your breath still fresh from Ireland when you stood upright by the Stone of Destiny, making sure the world was right.
29.
Little memories
little paving stones,
when you put them down
before you, they know
how to line up, lead you
to the temple.
But which temple?
The one in the middle
of every day, every night,
the answer you’ve been
itching for, the luxurious now.

30.
Calm down, Don Roberto,
my friend would say,
sometimes you keep asking
and miss the answers.
Mist in the trees
just to remind.

31.
And we were closer to the sea
once a whale and often seals
and naught to worry us
after the noisy yachtsmen
sailed away. In island peace,
in paradise.

32.
Sun makes mist lemony,
the infinite set of variations
that is everything we see.
I swear that’s why I woke
this morning, weary
of what I wasn’t seeing,
only words questioning my head,
it was early,
then it was late,
you were standing there already,
already answering had begun.

33.
The phone rang.
It meant the day was working,
earth’s atmosphere intact,
Sometimes I think the norm
ennobles us, Green Peace
sails the seas protecting
thousand creatures they
don’t even know. Make the world safe for how it was before. Before we got here asking all the wrong questions.

34. So as usual the variations are all up to you. I mean me, of course, or maybe the one in the mirror not either of us, writing graceful old-style letters with its left hand.

35. I hope I sleep tonight,
these days too long, 
I hope I sleep tonight, 
my mother called it 
Irish Penicillin, cures 
most things, most things 
calm down like grass in winter.

36.
You saw the hawk, 
I heard the crow— 
enough to get the world 
started again, wise bird, 
hungry predator, hide 
beneath a leaf, oak 
or maple, heart-shaped 
linden, here we are, 
victims of paradise,
touch of your cool hand.

it said when I asked what my next book should be (I’m always asking, always trying to listen) so I thought a month or two ahead, a big newly ripened rose by the seashore, Rosa rugosa
they say, wild rose,
and bent towards it
to smell that Sacred
incense more intense
right now than the sea
and on this hot day
mosquitoes wer reactive,
one came near me,
nipped me on the cheek
and I walked home
with the itch of beauty.
Now the book is done.

19 Match 2024
Last night’s rabbit ate the leftover veggies from the day before. simple as sunrise, jello, hello.

19.III.24
Try again, it’s only now, the Pope is dreaming by his window, content to be alone a moment. Democracies are noisy places, subjects sleep cozier than citizens. I’m just saying that to get your goat. You must have a goat. ,yes? Bring it out so I can talk to it too.

19.III.24
i looked and the lawn said nothing.
Then I saw the rabbit had used all the words.

2.
Hard as migrant workers in late summer coming up from Alabama in their Oldsmobile jalopies to harvest the farm next door this rabbit working even before the equinox.

3.
Or is he silent or am I deaf
or did the wren use
all the words up,
shrilling to its newborn
to wake up?

4.
Strangely silent anyhow
in here I mean
where tumult
is a brand of sympathy.

5.
And why does it feel
so much like Sunday
when Mars is in the saddle?
Sun’s blessed fault!
Rabbit playing with this shadow.

19 March 2024
If I could swim
I’d spend my summer
rafting on the river.
But they never taught me,
sure that I would swim away.
But yjey must jave forgotten
that when you;re in water
there is no more away.

19.III.24
If this really were Sunday
there’d be church.
I wouldn’t go
but I’d know it’s there.
Comfort in the middle distance
like a photo of my grandfather
smiling, tinted the way
they used to do.
And when I face the sun
I can only guess the shape
my shadow makes behind me.
Personal poses today before the old fold-out Rollei. Me at any age pretending to be me. But you know better, you holding the camera miles away across the parlor.

19.III.24
Enough old stuff!
I want tomorrow.
I can taste it already
like the apple sauce
ready for the potato pancakes
but they’re still in the pan,
not quite ready yet.

19.III.24
I could be a bishop
in fancy robes
or an unshaved sheriff
with a horse between his knees.
But I’ve given all that up for Lent
and Lent is long.
I sit and watch
their neighbor’s fence
and wonder what
it feels like to be wood.

19.III.24
Unfortunate Portugal to have such a fat neighbor. But then again it has the whole sea, all the way to Cape Cod.

19.III.24
The brotherhood found a lump of iron in a cave. They brought it to the sisters, who breathed on it and cpaxed it to till it spoke. Later still the lump of iron took on a personality borrowed from one of them. To this day she talks and walks among us, never lies.
Primavera
say it in English
first green
the spring,
*frühling*, the first,
the early one,
*printemps*, the first
time of all, prime
our well, begin now,
be the first, *vesna*
the world turns green.
Forecasts whispered showers
even snow, but no,
the word knew better,
bright sun, comfy cloud.
Forsythia blossoming by the river, my mother’s birthday soon.

20 March 2024
Accidents in time too, don’t let myself get too confident about what day of the week this is. Mercury is swift, lord of the changes, a petal falls, can’t tell from which flower so large the bouquet in which we live. I’ll smirk and guess it is today.
What’s the French for grapefruit, quick, I need one for the war, my weapon, you use it thus: sit down with a small one, no bigger than a softball left in the schoolyard, squeeze it gently, peel the skin off slowly, using only your fingernails, never a blade. Then gently, gently, pry each segment loose, careful not to break even one of them. When all are free, arrange them in a circle round the rind
itself still in one piece
pale inside up on a table.
Now count the segments.
Relax. Battle over.
You have won. No blood,
faint sour sweetness
ldft on your fingertips.

20.III.24
I built a tower
in my sleep
fell off at waking.

No wonder sun looks
so dreamlike,
do I know this place,

have I ever been
here at all?

20 March 2024 lune-ish
Fastidious, yes,
she is that.
Yet she lets me stay.

20.III.24, lune
What alphabet do you use to shine your shoes, what language do you dance in?

I’m not talking flags, I’m talking coffee beans—I like Arabic, you like Brazil and neither of us can speak a word of it.

20.III.24
Woodchuck up and out

to patrol the springtime

and you can feel her glad

At Last! as she trots the lawn.

Mild winter, and she’s

been out before, but now’s

the real thing, eat and breed,

she’s here to keep

the world running

one furry paw at a time.

20.III.24
I can’t always be thirty feet underground trying to talk through a pine tree up there. Sometimes it’s sillier (silly used to mean soul-like), more Vienna than Vatican, sometimes you have to let yourself love the rabbit on the lawn, let the dragon go on sleeping.
If I were a troubadour
I would tell
it isn’t how you look
but who you are.
If I were a troubadour
and I sometimes am,
I could tell you
who you really are.

20.III.24
The Middle Ages never ended, they just bright new machines, better ways of killing one another, or just staying up late at night.

2.
Entertainment mandatory, staying away from the movies is like missing Mass. Get with pastime as it passes
or it will leave you weeping all alone.

3. Maybe Renaissance is on its way. Don’t hold your breath. And all it will mean is you have to learn Greek.

20.III.24
A petal fell.
It crashed
on the table top,
one more Vesuvius
of the mind.
Why can’t we see?
We look and look
through the fog
of memory, vocabulary
and can’t see
what is just there.

2.
The opera ended
with a cry,
“Let me see...!
He asked the music-_ who else could be listening.

3.
That’s why some art tries to show the way,
Brakhage’s hand-painted films rescued from cameras,
those little rooms they lock us in.
Or those photos, rare and wonderful,
where we don’t ask what is it? or have to deal with our feelings for the things it seems to show.
There is no what in these images, there's nothing there but to see.

21 March 2024
Write your will
and move upstate,
sun in the morning
headlights at night,
wake by the river,
pray under the tree,
you’re safe in the temple
of someone else’s religion,
now make it yours,
amigo, now make it yours.

21.III.24
I woke this morning a year ago and only one hour has passed.
Bathroom. Doorway.
Study the sky.
Write down the silence till your love wakes too,
comes downstairs to find you.
That is the method.
Stop writing when someone speaks.

21.III.24
I never held a dog ob a leash 
or even a cat. 
But I have held the pale string 
that tethered a fine 
fat red balloon 
to my intentions, 
sort of, to scribble 
on the sky, and make 
me keep looking up. 
As it leads me on. 
Leash a child to a balloon 
to set him free.

21.III.24

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We are close enough
to live far apart.  
That’s what friendship means.

21.III.24
If I had time
to say it again
what kind of coin
would I sing you with,
an idle or a tidal
or a hand with silver
fingernails, just like Hanoi?
O I forget, I forgot,
numbers make fools of us
always, laptop after blackboard
racing, I stumble, I fall soft,
Honolulu! Is that clearer now?

21.III.24
Raging at the porch door sympathetic relatives. Why do they think alone is some sort of disease? Listen to the gospel: go into the closet and shut the door and be alone with what you mean and who means it in you.

21.III.24

ORBISANT
Orbisant, he thought, 
the holy world a word 
he thought he knew, 
late Middle Ages, early 
pharmacy, glass globe 
with pale green liquid in it, 
drink. Did he imagine it? 
He supposed it to be herbal, 
a tonic mild from half 
a hundred growing things 
all mingled, mild as seltzer, 
healing. Studied 
the color in his mind, 
a little like green tea 
but cooler, deeper down 
and suddenly he knew 
that every liquid, even water,
especially waer, has a precise center, whatever container you shelve it in, the center. That’s what makes the tonic work. What makes the world holy.
Rocket ship to noon
the morning went so fast.
I slept like a comic book
I couldn’t read, Asterix
in Japanese? And sprawled
blanketless in Bozo-land
until I woke again.
If you call this nonsense waking.
Still, here’s pebble
I found on the path here—
maybe it was meant for you.

22.III.24

== == == ==
Dawn was bright but noon was dim—it isn’t even Sunday but that sounds like a hymn. Now I have to learn who’s singing it. Maybe Bach up there with all the girls of th echoir, learning what music’s for. Maybe not.

22.III.24
There once was a word
I thought I knew
then the river swept it away.
What river?
Do you think I’d tell?

22.III.24
I studied linguistics at Columbia. Halfway through the paragraph the music changed. Coney Island in the wintertime, sharks, seals, no girls. But the whole green sea for me.

22.III.24
If I listen to you while you’re on the phone I’ll learn a new way of being me. Or at least sounding like a self I could bear to be.

22.III.24
One snowflake
drifted past me
and one more.
I looked and saw
no other sign.
Snow come just for me!
Amazing, my lack
of humility.
But if you ask me
what it said,
I have to confess
I'm still listening.

22.III.24, Rhinebeck
= = = = = ==
Playing tag with the sun
they come through rain,
the believers I call them,
who hoped in their fond hearts
that there is somewhere else
than where they are.

23 March 2024
You learn that in school—at times you have to be mean. We spend our lives unlearning.

23.III.24
Welcome to New Colosseum.
The Christians today are played by ——.,
the lions by —---.
You buy your ticket and fill in the blanks.
I guess I’d pick poets and scientists—but which is which?

23.III.24
Siren sound through heavy rain. Noon on earth and no wiser.

23. III. 24
No muscle in that miracle, a lot of waiting. Cabeza de Vaca stood just south of the Rio and saw a fellow Spaniard for the first time in his long years of exile. It is what we see when we look up, sometimes the miracle of someone who speaks your language, someone who can take you home.

23.Ⅲ.24
Someday I’ll buy me a tuba,
not a sousaphone—won’t
fit through the doorway
and I live by doors—
just a brassy armful hombardom
to bleat my way along
or boom in terror at what
on earth comes next,
flute like a dagger,
drum like The End.

23.III.24
for C

Let this
soft blue
fleece blanket
be the sea.
It goes over,
not under.
Lie on your side
and be half man
half-mermaid
gender aside.
Sleep will handle
deftly all your
physiology.
And buy you
dreams and
keep you warm. Between blanket and bed, between ocean and sky, the simplest things are full of tricks. Thank you for the blanket, love, you hold me together.

23.III.24
Any desire for public office automatically renders a candidate ineligible for such office.

The woodpecker at the window just told me that—
Some days I can read their ancient morse code.

23.III.24
Birds landing through rain, runway of the deck rail, busy flights and none of us sunning our silly selves out there to bother them. Spell rain another way and let the birds do it.

23.III.24
A girl wrote five hundred stanzas and lived in every room. This is cosmology, no need for lipstick or guitar. She said as she saw and it sang. How did those mossy stones get on the ceiling? How did she make the Euphrates river-rush the narrow hall? She did what we all yearn to do—listen sideways with clear eyes.

23.III.24
Miracle, must be, 
eight billion humans 
and no two alike, 
no two with the same 
thought, feeling, 
breath. All capable 
of breeding more like 
and unlike themselves. 
Tubes and wires and bones 
soft organs oozing chemistry—
I feel faint suddenly 
thinking of what even I am.

23.III.24

= = = = = = =
Palm Sunday
but how much
can I remember?
Tickling our necks
with palm strips,
parents severe but
secretly amused
though they know
what’s coming
this very week
but we forget.

24 March 2024
ANNUNCIATION

Somewhere
on the vast empty plaza of a war-torn city
a woman stands
and quietly says Yes,
so quietly that we all can hear her still.

24 March 2024
FEAST DAYS

How strange it is to know the meaning of a day before the day begins. And sometimes get it right.

24.III.24
Evolutionary attitude:
it’s all one sentence
we’ve been saying all along
or we all are footnotes
to an absent text–
as surely has been said before.

24.III.24
No sooner were the words out of his mouth than they all scampered around and hid under the sofa. So he had to spend the rest of the conversation trying to coax them out. One by one they emerged, shy, fearful of being doubted or even believed.

24.III.24

DISAPPEARANCES
1. When things disappear, look around in the mind to find them or find why.

2. Wild turkeys on the ridge, a bobcat maybe after them. You think of comic books, people chatting, keeping warm on a subway grate in cold Times Square.

3. Or rabbits, for that matter.
Or that book by Mandelshtam we were supposed to make, as his thoughts turned to Jesus he suspected we Jews had accidentally misplaced.

4.
Ladders are dangerous, shudder to think of step by step away from home. Or is that just me? I’m scared of everything, my radical philosophy.

5.
Engine room to bridge; i don’t want to run any more–
turn the ocean off.
So we went back to sail,
blue canvas disguised as the sky.

6.
That’s what it is—
the curtains look
like orchid petals today
with spring sun riding them.
I found the image
but not yet what it means.
Messages everywhere?

7.
Especially today’s
remembrance.
Annunciation. Maybe
the angel was speaking
all the while but on
this day the word was heard.

8.
So I remember
the hold of the ship,
slave relations,
the taste of outside.
At times it makes me
ashamed pf being here now.

9.
Cardboard pelican
swings in the window,
breeze lifts its outspread wings.
Things remind. How else
could I remember the red sands of Flagler and the High Priest?

10.
Things and their names both get lost.
Leave the mind open and walk away and sometimes they come back in. Doors everywhere.

11.
I heard the deep song on old vinyl, music is archery, Bach cello suite, but the bow is the arrow.
12.
How many of me are here?
I lose count or just forget,
make up a different number
every day, always
hoping to add up to One.
I’ll keep asking till you tell.

13.
And the noon is full.
Cat shadows in the alleyways
last night near Gerritsen,
calm lawn up here
with one skunk browsing.
The moon always comes back,
that’s the point here. There.

14.
Highway as metaphor, highway as road. Metaphor is even safer than a quarter-mile in low gear.

15.
Now that’s just obvious. That’s how we like it up here in the woods. Hard enough as it is to see who’s sanding there in the trees.
A thing should shout its name.

16.
In the brain
but out of focus
like baseball in the rain.

17.
Cast moonlight on it
and hope it remembers
the sun it came from,
didn’t it? I forget the name
of that forest in France
I saw every day across the river.

18.
Ageless animal!
Only we have years
to wind around our souls
to help forgetting.
But deep down we know
nothing really goes away.

25 March 2024

= = = = =

Reminiscences of
the *Riesenrad,*
giant
ferris wheel in Vienna.
Sit peaceful in mid-air
in one of the floating cars
among the tourist Japanese,
let them crowd the window
with sweet excitement
of the never-seen-before
and never-see-again but o
my Lord how here it is!
Or however you say that
in Japanese. The place itself
and their excitement in it—
two for the prince of one
and I could just sit there
and smoke and rise to the sky.

25.III.24
It sounds like a flute coming from just beyond the wind.

Or a clarinet remorseless leading me along.

25.III.24, lune
Money on Monday
talk to the broker,
they all seem to have
odd accents, money does that.
nobody gets born in Moneyland,
at least nobody who has to
work for a living. Even
the brokers call it working,
schlepping your savings away.

25.III.24
One of those days
when everything looks
like something else,
epidemic of simile.
Close your eyes and start again,
The first thing you see
will be only itself.

25.III.24

VEENA
The internal discourse of blood and bone, muscle and nerve, mostly memory and mind – fingers touch all those and tell them to a song we can actually hear us music.

25 March 2024

BY THE ABANDONED MONASTERY
1.
Island overhead
roadmap
lost in slipstream,
read your Bible,
there’s always a river.

2.
But the animal insists.
Where is the peach tree now, baby? Are you,
even you, a park already,
bronze statue of a queen hawk on her head?

3.
Or merciful still.
Romany weather,
get moving,
your language alone
has carried you this far,
all the backroads to now.

4.
Fingers on the tent flap,
sun over Walkill,
the only one runs north,
so what seems the wrong way,
what keeps them from easy
sleep all through the camp
is the... wait, I don’t know
what it is, I’m guessing
there is no wrong way.
5. Only numbers can be really wrong. Or pressing elevator button up when you mean down.

6. O love that is a weird theosophy! Weirder the better she said, smiling into the morning sun as if that proved something. And it does.

7. Specifically carbon.
Ring around us.
He had a Coke,
she abanana split.
Try to remember
your chemistry
as you swallow,
before the old car
groans away and leaves
that pretty pale poison
floating behind.

8.
Too political, yes,
I agree. Agreement itself
is too political,
we need Sister Strife
to quiz our policies.
Otherwise the other will always get left out.

9.
Something in what you say. Not government, not chemistry, not even love. Hmm. Swordless you stand, Polonius safe behind the arras.

10.
I have a fair voice but no memory so can’t be an actor up on the stage. Just stand here
among you telling lies.

11.
Golden forsythia
by the river
is the answer.
Now find the question,
bring your camera,
;ittle app on your handy,
helpful, like a word
from long ago.

12.
We used to climb to the top
to see where we came from,
like an exercise you do in school.

13.
Sunday in Saxony,
they must call it an organ
because it works
deep inside you
when you hear it,
a brook tumbling
down the ancient spine.

14.
Yellow flowers
on this very table,
whence came they,
love? From the market,
from the florist, 
from the far-away farm, 
further and further, 
like language, from 
the beginning, the ground, 
earth, I brought them here 
yesterday and you see them 
only now—there is a trilogy 
in that delay, Aeschylus 
maybe, or maybe one 
of those letters from Paul 
of tarsus we read and stand 
corrected, weeping 
a little by the Ionian Sea.

15.
Yes, language
is the strongest psychedelic but it’s hard to get because it’s all around..

16.
O let me say what I’m saying so I can someday learn what I mean. You know already, but be patient with me, I hobble, grammar has such tught shoes.

17.
Forsythia one side
and tracks the other, semaphores between when trains could still read. We keep coming here to visit the river, close as I can come to my mother.

18.
Vivaldi wouldn’t stop here so why should I, isn’t one’s life only the first movement of a sonata? Or a day up to noon? Or noon to dark? I can’t get more obvious than that.
19.
But i can try,
you’re still here
after all,
and if not
the ceiling will keep
my murmurs
harmless safe.
On is the only way to go.

20.
Those flowers...
yellow-day, say-so-day,
from the corner of my left eye
I see shapes of birds
on the lawn out there,
whose wings are those
that lift and whirl
things out of the mind
altogether, leaving
maybe a color behind.

21.
Crows bluejays doves and wren,
some of my relatives
I know by name,
others off in Guessland
in the back of my mind.
Even ignorance is a boast.

22.
The last image of all
is a sleeping child. 
We all were that once 
but can’t understand it now. How could that be me? 
Where are the books, 
the dancers, the golden flowers? 
Can it all be there already 
waking in that soft round face? 
No, I think it must be you. 

26 March 2024
The water rolled away in the night then more rain cane, Out of weakened ground some tall trees tumbled, your favorite alas among them, forked pine by the museum.

I felt helpless to deal with your loss, it wasn’t my fault but it felt like it was. Feels like it is. Not
that I should have power over weather and woods, but that I have no power to take your grief away.

27 March 2024
Quiet sky.
A little sweaty cloud maybe.
Sing a little under breath.
See what you hear just shut your eyes.

27.III.24
My shoulder hurt when I woke up, not fair to make me carry burdens all night. Sometimes dreamless sleep is weaponry.

27.III.24
The chaplain wants us in church, the physicist in the lecture room. Isn’t there a religion that comes to us wherever we are?

27.III.24
LOCUS

1.
An avenue of locust trees leads into town, deep corrugations of bark, bare branches still balancing the cold sky.

2.
We live on that road a furlong further so our trees are yew and linden, quiet teachers.
3.
There used to be a tavern between us and the water—a nasty noisy place full of out-of-towners. It’s something else now, same building dark at night and not a sound all day. We can hear the stream go by.

4.
Look, I’m just trying to say where I am. Honesty begins in geography. Low glacial ridge, sand and slate, wild turkeys
at times, wild ferns.

5.
Telling the place
is easier than saying who.
Let me blither tunefully along
till maybe my draft card
falls out of my wallet
and tells you who I used to be.

6.
But no war for me.
Trees kept me safe
and all he other
protectors too.
Names you know and
banes I don’t and you
had a lot to do with it too.

6.
Shiver. This is getting personal. That’s my character but not my job. News comes on the hour, the truth comes all the time. That’s the real excuse for music: the continuous Me in the song of the Other so I am never alone.

8.
Not even now when you’re out
on the lawn feeding
song birds and the house
is full of silence—
maybe silence
is an endless echo
of all that has been said.

27.III.24
they used to say
and look what happened
to them. War. Politics.
Entertainment. Once
we lived in a very nice place,
a garden sort of
with cats and pheasants
and who knows what
elsing around in the trees.
I know that’s not a word
but how else can I say it?
Better make up a verb
than waste your sacred time.

27.III.24

= = = = =
Woodchuck under deck toddled out. This is the country, this is earth, this matters, what a marmot does.

Each of her footprints is recorded precisely, graven in a slab of time by the angel in charge of things.

We watch Wilhelmina waddle up the lawn, mother of many, we call her our wombat but that’s wrong–
I can feel the angel frown,
the right word matters so.

27.III.24
EMERGENCY

Now you know all my secrets I’ll have to make new ones.

27.III.24, lune
By the lagoon, waiting.
River trying
to interrupt the tide.
Music is made
of interruptions too,
imagine a single
drum beat that never ended.
In dream I watched
the ride ripple in.
It felt like prayer.

28 March 2024
Salt-lick in the pasture,  
slight modification of chemistry. 
Taste me who dares, 
I mind your milk.

28.III.24
On one of those bridges over the canal, not the fancy one with shops, just a meek walk over water I ate an apple once. No, more likely a banana but that doesn’t fit the music... Venetian banana o that’ a different tune indeed! Later a horde of football fans from Udine came bursting in but I never heard who won what game. The point here is that I bent over the stone wall and peered down at the water,
my own face looked up, infallible magic of how what flows lets an image stand still. I wasn’t eating anything, not even a fig—lies can help to tell the truth.

28.III.24
You see, doctor, in the last few years the Adriatic, besides being an arm of the Mediterranean reaching up to touch Trieste, had become a wide, gleaming living touchstone of reality for me. I mean the thought of standing on the shore looking out at it from marble jetty or just plain ground makes me serious, earnest, determined to tell the truth of some important matter. How can a sea
do this to me?

2. You see, sir, that stretch of ocean slips northwest among more than a dozen languages. It’s natural, if you know that, to feel what you think and more cogently what you speak must be worth hearing in some many discourses.

3. But, doctor, when I stand
by the Baltic, another
dozen-tongued puddle,
I feel nothing but pleasure,
excitement, gulls and seals
and Latvian girlfriends,
skiffs and Sibelius.
And it’s north-er and colder
and I walked on the ice
free to be happy, free
even to be quiet there.

4.
So now it’s getting clear.
It must be history
that solemnizes you
among the stones of Venice
and all that. Diocletian
across the water,
Illyrian frowns and dead
dialects, Genisthus Pletho
dragging Plato across the pond,
mosques of Tirana,
Macedonian manners,
scary shadows in what
you thought was Europe once.

5.
You’ve lost me, doctor.
I mean i knew some of that,
interesting, but it soon
washes off like any knowledge.
Whatever it is I feel
is different. Serious
but not frightful. Look,
it’s like waking early
on a cloudy gentle day
with nothing planned
and lying there knowing
something is asked of me,
but what, lying there trying
to remember some of the future,
something I have to do or say.
that’s what that sea is like.

28.III.24

= = = =

Construction workers
praying for rain,
a boy sitting on his stoop
eating grapes.
Assume whatever happens answers someone’s prayer.
Assume that meaning comes in thingly waves.
The grapes are green seedless and it starts to rain.

28.III.24
Stylus on the sundial seen in childhood,

remember when every single thing is a mystery but then words, names eased the pain of things a little, pain of not knowing what anything really is or is for or means or does.

Remember the winch that hauled water from far down the well
and you drank?

A childhood image
is like a lost love,
you see her still
shoving the boat from the jetty.

28.III.24
GOOD FRIDAY

Sometimes the skin heals, the wound scabs ver but the pain never goes away.
We did this.
We did this to one of us.
Never mind who,
Jew or Roman or any one of us.
what we did to Him we’re still doing.
Not just in Palestine.

29 March 2024

= = = = =
Appease the lion, vegan diet for King Beast. It will take a long time, slow digestion aims at mercy. Maybe. Fruit-flies hover over the salad bowl—life has so many forms, death only one.

29.Ⅲ.24
Heard screams before dawn, woman? outside? inside? raccoon in the garden, breath in the windpipe? Looked all around, nothing left to do but think in the dark and wait and think again.

29.III.24
Sun shimmer through organdy yellow flowers in shadow in a deep blue vase. Where’s Vermeer when we need him, do we have to word it all alone?

29.III.24
In the London zoo a pair of zebras going at it, hooves flying dominant over quivering mate. I wanted a different kind of love, less aggressive, less operatic but still I hear his bellowing, her whimper.

29.III.24
A few blue squills already on the lawn, hard to see so bright the sun. The time has come, soon all over the lawn banners of resurrection.

29.III.24
VESTIBULE

we called it
in my first house.
Up the stoop
and through the door
and there we were,
a room before the rooms,
tall ceramic flower vase
(usually empty) and brass
hardware gleaming
on the inner door.
A room all about being
between!  Little table
for the vase but no chair.
It was not a place to be in,
but to pass through,
felt like temple or a church, those places where with nervous breath we guess our way ahead.

29.III.24
What the air said when I stepped out—day of rest?
Or wrest the day from mere riveting by and build it tall, rock-bottomed, logical and full. But even if you let it fall I still sustain you—watch the new blue flowers wave.

20 March 2024
Holy Saturday

= = = = =

Maybe walk
around the reservoir
bless the water
on its way to the city,
maybe be urban
a little ourselves,
eat out, tip the waiter,
watch sunset from the sjore.
Imagining is good for us all.
We’re all alone by the river
watching the empty trees
starting to pretend their green.

30.III.24

Tobacco hurts self,
cannabis hurts other.
Note the ‘random’ acts of quiet young assassins.

30.III.24
There was a mill right there
we still can hear the stream
rushing down to the river
though in dry weather we
have to listen hard to hear it.
But now it sings, steady,
mourning its mill wheel
for all I know, I do not mourn
what I miss, half a century
it has not stopped singing to me.

30.III.24
Boston weather
in our own backyard!
March and forsythia, 
dandelions, squill.
college up the road
a mini-Harvard with fierce bite, 
and all we need is people.
But their role is played by trees
who speak the purest grammar
even I can sometimes hear.

30.III.24
Rude shamans of big Pharma
brutal politics
of drones and daggers,
lies abound and coups d’État,
every dwelling place
a haunted cave in this
now-o-lithic age.
When will modern times begin?
Sorry, Charlie, that
was just a movie, long ago.

30.Ⅲ.24
How many borders
have I crossed
not counting day’s and night’s,
or the one between speech
and silence, or the one
between guessing and knowing,
take out the map,
count the countries
penetrated, now the states,
county bounds, town limits,
other people’s property,
the neighbor’s lawn.
No way to keep count,
I suddenly see myself
as ashy invader,
a blundering Viking
meaning no harm,
helmet in hand, begging
for the alms of elsewhere.
I’ll get over it, I’ll go out
walk strictly on the sidewalk
legal as lexicons.

30.III.24

XPICTOC ANECTI
He is risen.

Ge stands upright in your heart.

At first you think he’s a man who works nearby.

And he is.

But then he says your name.

31 March 2024

Don’t bother the stone
with my complaints,
the stream doesn’t much mind
but it’s not nice
for the ocean where all
rivers end. Don’t phone
the pastor on Easter. Take
whatever bothers me
as a childhood game,
an Easter egg hunt
in shabby foliage for
the real value of this woe.

31.III.24

== == == ==

She’s feeding the birds,
I’m writing some words.
Morning in Annandale
inescapable rhyme.

31 March 2024
1. Carry on! Carrion?
What do words tell us when we look the other way?
Wind the clock,
tune the ears, leap the vast gulf between the sounds of things.

2. Wait for the water–
I’ve seen that molecule before but didn’t know t, don’t know it now, my eyes
are dreaming, streaming, strong sunlight and no forget.

3.
The glasses, the masses through which we seemed to see the operations of deity. Look out the window, the trees are priests and rabbis—does it so much matter which is which?

4.
Waking up is trying again. The water comes by again and again, the wind stops and starts,
keeps me paying attention,
pull the collar up
around the words.

5.
This is matter’s mind again,
hylonoetic, our mother’s mother. Matter’s mind. it still whispers us the story’s story, age after age we hear.

6.
Decades it took me to understand
the bricks in the wall of the house I was born in. I’m still trying to decipher the ivy a drunk uncle ripped all down from the wall.

7.
Am I home yet? Do I have too many relatives to be trusted? Sober as I am I’m still somebody’s uncle. I was drafted into this war.

8.
So wait for the water as I was saying
before I interrupted myself with myself, so what, wait for the water, the priest sprinkles the gift and the giver, wait by the river, the gull launching up shakes a few drops on me, wait for the water, it seems to be free but you pay the price of never forgetting it.

9.
Use water to bless with, dries soon but always comes back. Each drop
a reminder. Wait for it.
It won’t be long now.

31 March 2024