to run away from my friends
is to run away from my own nature
my karma

since it is my predispositions my habits
that brought them to me and me to them
and no meeting can take place without a past

so running away from my friends
is running away from my past

not a bad thing to do,
running away from my friends is recognizing
who and what kind of person I am

and I am running from that
always running from that
and that is not such a bad thing to do

and I see my shadow before me as I trot
almost but not quite mindlessly from friend to friend
seeking none

that null-set friendship when my mind is clean.

28 December 2004
THREE PLACES IN NEW ENGLAND

_Austerlitz_

It really could be
some battle place
the plain rising to the heavy hills
along the highway
two hundred years
ago and all the blood
is still not dry

you can see it stain
the autumn moon
the one they call the Hunter’s

ruddy with beasts.
But now it’s winter,
the bloodless moon
rises in the afternoon
and flees from us
before we begin to sing.

_Chicopee_

a mile a sing
the truck side said

a mile a sing
song one mile long
song mile
it fell
out of the alphabet
and turned left

mobile home park
spooky in mist

Great Barrington

A sly café
papered with old sheet music
pop tunes of the ‘40s and before-ties
as sung by their pictures on the sheet,
always sleazy-dapper mustache man,
singer of that song, our song,
who knows Syd Dean now
or Jerry Wayne

and an ad for three songs on one sheet
(My Dear Girl.  L’amour Toujours l’Amour. Adelai.)
tells us that it or maybe every word
HARMS WORTHWHILE SONGS.

[from NB scratches late-December 2004]
28 December 2004
WHAT TOWER

[Dream text, 8:26 a.m.:

What did Greek illuminates light up that Latins couldn’t? A tower.

And then I woke.]

Now find the tower.

1.
What was the tower?
As I wrote the dream down
I thought: Magdala,

Miriam of. Our Mary
Magdalene, the Lord’s Lady.
She is the tower.

Comes from the tower. Later: tower of ivory, seat of brass
the Latins will say of her,

thinking they mean the other
Mary, the Mother
who walked up to heaven

when they thought her sleeping,
Dormition of the Virgin,
parinirvana,

all the disciples gathered round
the old woman
slept her way to living.
So the Greeks, those gospel writers, knew the Tower was Magdala,

Mary Magdalene
who living came to us
bearing the literal word

incarnate among
scarlet oleanders of Arles,
salt marshes, many wild horses.

2.
But what was the tower? What tower? Watts Towers. Where Simon Rodia built a city ship, vesica piscis its shape, the shape of woman. And sailed it downtown, a cunning vessel of cement and broken bottles and his tools, his simple tools, sailed it to where the poor live who have need of it most, towers full of color full of air for a people of color who fill their bellies with song since the poor (said Simon’s master) you have always with you: be with the poor they are your work in heaven.
for Ann Doherty

What tower? Watertower.
O the girls of Chicago
city of love
beside the elongate lake
mother of lakes
phallus of water
the middle fabric
our whole pleasure,

Watertower Place
where the shops ascend
level after level
around a hollow space
the heart of money

Watertower tower
of buying and no having,
of wanting and slim
getting, this
was the death hand
of Chicago city of love
lifted by its lake
vulva, its tower
defiled by desire
not for the other
but for shadows,

the windows of each gallery
filled with shadows
and she stood there,
Ann, dear blonde
surly desperate
unanswering Ann
(her name was
Mary’s mother,
all the stories
locked in one tower)

Ann stood there
over all the shadows
and wanted nothing
anymore and leaped
or fell, and fell
and fell until
she was a customer
dead on the pavement
below, atrium,
dark house of light
inside the shadow,

she met her own shadow
on the way down
and became it
on the ground—
that terrible tower
had not spoken

as a tower should
to every despairing woman,
had not told her
what she needed to hear,
she did not ask
so it did not answer,
terrible tower
don’t you know
it is the silent ones
we have to answer
no matter what they ask
or don’t ask, all
we are is listeners,
Tower, you have to talk,

woe to those who
built in the city
a tower that does not talk.

4.
What tower?
There is a plain in China
far out west where in every
little village and sometimes
the open spaces between

very high towers stand
thin, precarious,
empty, never used
in human memory,

towers for their own sake,
towers. These are our obsessions.
We build them tall
on our meager landscape,
to store our shadows in,

because a shadow is a fragile thing,
can’t take much light or air,
not much color
just the colors they lay on in our dreams,

though some shadows have a kind of color
and some are strong enough to last a lifetime
maybe outlive the body
that cast them between
themselves and the light,

shadow of a panther
shadow of a woman bending to the fountain
shadow of a tower falling
silent under a blue sky.

28 December 2004
But I’m stuck waiting here
wondering why the stars still shine—
could they be as old as I am?

I remember the stars when I was little
but I think they were different then,
different animals prowling different
circles overhead, the strange
neighborhood where stories happen,
and they were brighter then
but the brick houses of Brooklyn
bore them, bravely, on every roof.

Where did those stars go,
the constellations I remember, the Black
Leopard, The Ice Skater, the Crucified
Carrying His Cross Back Down the Hill?

And where did these new stars come from,
everybody talks about them, Dipper, Little Bear,
and a lady upright on an uncomfortable Chair?

They have changed so much world on me,
how can I find my way from mother to mother?

28 December 2004
CARTOMANCY

A new deck of cards:
an amazing Parrot
staring in the dark of his covered cage
about to announce
a whole new kind of light!
A new kind of daylight
only he can see!

but then I turn another card
and a different sort of bird flies out
screeching the way a birch tree
creaks in wind on a bitter cold day.

But today we saw a mile from water
a swan fly slowly overhead.

28 December 2004
To use the little grace I knew
or suck a fountain pen
to make an idea come
then listen to what it thinks
but all the while keep walking
looking for the big roof of Saint
Eustache above the tourist heads—
do all this and you will be
music, like a skirt worn snug
or a man on roller skates.

At length they will listen –
calm yourself, they’re listening already,
dominations, powers, even cherubim,
everybody but the seraphim
they have no ears but only eyes
and wreath around the shining space
where deity would be if being
were what God did do

instead of absconding eternally.
Deity is what flees before us
and makes us follow, hurrying
past the church and through the market,
past money and past river,
past all the foreign languages,
church bells, cute students
of dead sciences, parks,
fields, prairies, seas,
glorious hum of bees around the empty hive.

29 Dec/04
SHOPPING LIST

He wrote down apples and couldn’t think of anything else. He doesn’t like apples, apples are for her. What else would she like?

He couldn’t think. He looked at the word and saw he had written in in French, for her, pommes. Red, organic, local best. None of that had to be said, written down. The blank paper has its own rights too.

What else. When only one word stands on the list you know you’re near the end of something.

What. And did he know it? Does he know it even now as he stares at the empty platter where apples usually sat and only knows there are no apples? When the light goes out the room is dark. That surely is enough to know.

29 December 2004
Shift the pain to the other hand.
Squeeze hard.
The sponge ball fights back.
This is an opera after all,
_The Hand & the Ball_,
more Verdi than Ravel,
o hand of mine, old baritone,
how sad to see you wince,
your hunchbacked knuckles
good for rubbing my sore eyes—
that kind of music.
Furtive, haunting, bad.
You punched the wall
once too often.
But the wall fell down.

29 December 2004
But trying
is a flower too

the amaryllis
on the window sill

opens crimson
against the evening snow.

Every rhyme
would be a lie.

Even a line itself
by ending tells

too much of the truth
and more than it knows.

29 December 2004
AFTERMATH

A phone number
in a foreign god
rings inside her

she sticks her red tongue out
that drips with blood
for you.

Strange blood
maybe from you too.
Later he says

if they find my wife
they will call me
looking at the camera

as if the lens
and all of us behind it
were idiots, mute

witnesses to an immense
disaster, if they find her
of course they’ll call me

and tell me so, call me
from the sky
on no telephone,

and I will hurry to her
on no road
and it will be a fairytale
again, a prince
crashing through
the glass hedge

and finds her sleeping,
wakes her
for the journey home

and to carry us
the king will send
two white horses,

no flames anywhere.

29 December 2004
fecund pecunia feoh

cattle
coins floating in air

Kennedy half dollars.

A cow comes first,
Aleph’s wife,
walks through the meadow,

finds me. Gives me milk.
Milk of the letters,

salt from the mill lost in the sea,

milk, gives me the letters.
Of course the cow.

A coin
floats between her horns.

My desire is a coin that rises over the world.
I can be gold. Pay me,
my fee is everything.

I turn everything to what is told.
Pay me my fee is everyone.
Feoh. My fee is feelings.
I want everything, the world around me
is my fee I feel
and everyone,

my ox and my cow and my wife,
Leah, a heifer, my fee
is Leah, never mind Rachel,
the cow I want, not the sheep,

I want the north not the east.
From the North comes Light.

F light. F train. Brooklyn to Queens by way of the city.
A token once for the slot
some coin with a slit in it,
a cap. F
promises me everything.
The way a woman would.

29 December 2004