

# Outrages

Poems from a year

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To Maureen, Ashley and Chelsea, but also to Patti and Dave  
Who encouraged us to hike and venture beyond our old limits.

In 2017 I wrote a poem a day. The date of each poem is inscribed in its structure. From the 365 poems I have selected slightly less than half (Still too many?) as being the better of them. Some of the poems were slightly edited after the fact for consistency of punctuation or to change a particularly awkward line, but they are, for the most part, a true reflection of my state at that moment in time.

Perhaps we may say that every poem has its “20<sup>th</sup> of January” inscribed? Perhaps what’s new for a poem written today is just this: that here the attempt is clearest to remain mindful of such dates?

But don’t we all date from such dates? And what dates do we ascribe ourselves to?

Paul Celan, “Meridian.” Translated by John Flestiner.

The business of constructing absolute islands in outer space is damned to precision, as it permits no resting on implicit assumptions. . . In the vacuum, only what is understood in every last detail. . . can succeed.

Peter Sloterdijk, *Foams*. translated by Weiland Hoban.

Discord  
into chords:  
harmony unlikely  
this  
civil year. You can  
pass through a door  
in either direction.

(snow)

(silence)

Hold back  
(none  
immune)  
if you were to apply  
Actual Intelligence--  
tracing the florals  
in the frost.

Dawn

(when stars fall.)

Iced gravel  
along the edges of the river:  
this is where the crows  
gather all at dusk.

Twilight.

The river swirls,  
even past any hope.

Not that we are likely  
to fare  
well: "Against  
the insidious wiles  
of foreign influence  
(I conjure. . .)"

(partisan)

"A uniform vigilance  
to prevent  
its bursting  
into  
flame"

Among trees,  
standing waters  
gray with ice,  
edges laced white.  
Crows gathering at twilight.  
Moonlight  
on  
snow.

Winter

Face to the wind.  
There are beauties  
that freeze  
the heart.

What appeal  
to re-  
peal? Sun  
on snow.  
(Little songs bound  
and on the way)  
Ice  
crystals  
glitter.

(collusions)

Beyond the white  
tufted fields  
and trees,  
the cold horizons  
of willful  
ignorance



We may not yet be  
beyond  
history:  
nothing moves  
in blue skies.  
The fir trees  
are still.

Expectancies

A certain  
dread  
of the approaching moment.  
Boot treads crush  
the brittle ice.  
Your word.

The day before  
the day  
in which all our beginnings  
end (cryptic  
disclosures (encrypted  
answers))  
(tea leaves.)

Prognostications.

So many words  
spill like blood on the ground.  
You have talked  
until you are empty,  
a wordless  
ghost.

“that  
every poem  
has a 20<sup>th</sup> of January”  
What do the augurs  
see  
in the gathering  
crows?

Inauspicious:

bare trees  
and drooping hemlocks  
weep  
against the sky,  
gray,  
expecting rain.  
This date will be etched  
in grave stones.

Gulls float,  
mirrored  
and remirrored  
between  
bank towers,  
(captains  
of capitalism)  
banking  
away—  
beneath  
high  
thin cirrus.

(habitual)

The commute,  
a mobius loop,  
home to work  
to (the question  
is  
one of action,  
or escape  
from perpetual  
inaction)  
The question  
is

Rain  
has embraced  
this city again.  
You wonder  
what she sees  
in these streets.  
Wet  
sidewalks  
glistening.

(Sanctuary)

Rain  
murmuring  
down drains,  
caressing windshields  
of stopped cars,  
red light  
smeared like blood  
on black  
pavement.  
Undocumented,  
but fresh,  
she gives  
the city  
life.

When we walked  
just beyond  
the breakers fall,  
the blue  
and clouds  
painted  
on slate sands  
(sandpipers)

(gulls)

((so much more  
than I  
ever hoped,  
you) a world  
that is,  
perhaps,  
less) still,  
this day  
with its memories  
of salt spray  
and moving  
skies)

Frost  
that melts  
as soon  
as the sun  
touches  
(a few  
white patches  
lingering  
in shadow)

Outrages.

These days  
in which we live,  
beyond anger.  
The last requirement:  
to deny  
what you see:  
the moon  
is the sun  
and the sun  
will never  
rise.

Sunlight  
filtered through  
fir boughs  
and bare  
limbs. Morning  
shadows  
on the winter lawns.

Take  
a breath.

Pause.

No longer  
the hope  
that we claimed  
to be. Dreams  
shatter  
on the tarmac.

Everything  
feels smaller  
somehow.

The pale sunlight  
fades  
as clouds  
return. As always,  
the rain.



The rites of purification  
are (this cold,  
bitter wind)  
(even the rains  
were not enough  
to wash)  
  
(burning sage)  
  
(juniper)

Is it fake news  
that the snow  
has whitewashed  
everything overnight.  
(erasures)  
White tufts  
clotting  
bare twigs.

All traffic  
  
stopped. Blank slate  
for fresh  
contemplations.

Rain  
on snow:  
pewter puddles  
in white fields,  
where crows  
rise—an unnamable  
quality  
of this light—

While courts  
decide legalities  
of exclusion,  
the sky  
opens  
wide.

Gone as quickly  
as it came,  
so much more  
than the snow.  
Puddles scuffed  
by the wind.

What persists  
What is not silenced,  
in the end,  
is called  
history.

Where have we  
spoken  
of it? (Here,  
or in the hallways,  
on the street  
corner) these  
words

or those--

When words matter,  
when what  
we say  
has some purpose  
or some  
currency--  
what if  
then.

In a dream,  
I flew above a road,  
gliding  
toward a vista  
I knew  
was spectacular.

Optimistic dream.

Waking, less so.  
The dawn  
shrouded in fog,  
veiling rain.  
No grand vistas  
on the horizon  
this morning.

Since the ab-  
normal  
has become  
the normal (so that  
the rain,  
in its very  
mundaneness,  
is comforting)

(So that

(So when  
the next news  
breaks,  
we can look out  
at wet streets  
and damp lawns  
and carry  
on.

)

)

Just enough  
to whiten  
the blackberry  
leaves, to give  
the firs  
a ghostly presence  
in the dawn.

Wet flurries.

White tracings,  
a gray world.  
Some days  
we need a lightening  
to remember,  
some days  
we need  
a cold kiss  
on the brow.

Bright morning  
dims  
into a gray afternoon

/ It's not as if  
we can name  
the day's  
sadness

A whisper  
of rain  
that might turn to snow  
in our dreams,  
adrift,  
in the endless  
white hallways  
we wander  
looking for rooms  
whose purposes  
we forgot.

Snow

lightning:

we have

hidden

the lancing light

in a confusion

of flurries. Thunder

rattles

office windows.

As if

the storm were hidden

within a white

gauze, a veiled

secret, an

impossible wound

of energy

and anger,

torn,

from the brilliance

from which,

perhaps,

a hope.



Trees, standing in water,  
paint the surface--  
these one-time skies--  
a gaggle of wild geese  
caught between.

Wetlands beside warehouses.

March.

For every day, there is a day  
in which it  
is no longer  
remembered,  
its light lost—

(rails pale sheen)

This day.

Spring has  
recused  
itself. The wind  
chimes attest  
winter will never  
end. The trees  
sway in concert.

These cold mornings.

Rain blur  
afternoons.

The surface of the lake  
borrows its colors  
from all  
that surrounds it:  
white aspen,  
sky,  
clouds.

This encircling trail.

We too reflecting,  
reflected.

When  
the promise  
of bright mornings,  
falls  
to the restlessness  
of dull afternoons  
(a vague unease  
  
(what's left undone  
  
(as if  
given enough  
time)))

Some-  
thing  
about the bright  
water that stands  
open  
in every field  
distracts me  
from the usual  
lies.

(Splinters of dreams)

No patience  
for platitudes  
this morning.

The algo-  
rhythmic  
dance  
of ignorance  
and defeat--  
the wind  
whips  
the banners  
above the street:  
swirling  
litter.

Hold your hat.

If you  
iterate  
over your steps  
the sequence  
becomes  
clear.

Skin-  
script: equation  
inked from  
elbow to wrist,  
the gist of which  
explains all,  
or some,  
of it.

A waveform  
collapse.

The realized instant  
(unexpected  
white crocuses  
in rain). The cat  
is merely  
annoyed.

(Whatever  
I dreamt  
of  
has vanished  
in the gray  
light  
leaking through  
a gap  
in the curtains.

Less than fragments  
crumbs,  
perhaps,  
pecked from the grass  
by the robins  
that hop through  
the back yard,  
then startle,  
all at once,  
at a stray dog's  
bark).

I awoke  
to the sound  
of wild geese  
flying overhead,  
my mind  
still lingering  
in the dark.

Dreams,  
still vivid.

Down shadowed  
stairwells  
to a cellar  
with a hard dirt floor.

Looking  
not finding.

She said:

We do not  
pursue  
the gods;  
the gods  
pursue  
us.

The stems  
of last Summer's  
petunias  
stand in concrete  
urns, trailing  
webbed leaves  
in coffee  
colored water.

Still,  
it rains.

Now that they can  
sell my history,  
any history,  
will they try  
to sell  
these rainy days,  
my restless  
boredom,  
pulling one book  
after another  
off  
dusty shelves.



A blur of green  
among the branches  
bud leaves.  
(Serious absence)  
the promise of the day,  
lost.

The trees will green.

What's lost found?

It is the stops and rests  
that matter most  
that give the tones  
their phrasing,  
their boundaries.

I need deeper silences.

Edges to define  
the hidden center.

Amid the gravel  
of the railyard,  
the remnant puddles  
mirror  
a bright sky  
no one believes in.

Unobscured,  
the mountain rises.

It is far too early  
in a long day  
for optimism.

Counting words or counting birds  
in the alder trees along  
the river. Seventeen crows haunting  
the branches

New leaves glow green  
against the never-ending gray.  
Each crow its own shadow,  
each word its own stone  
disturbing the silence.

Or that everything  
has changed  
is  
or that everything  
goes away  
and is replaced  
is  
or that

(so many are gone)

But,  
conversations  
over spaghetti  
and wine,  
the old mixed  
with the new:  
the stories  
that are finished,  
the stories  
now beginning.

Topping the hill,  
falling  
into endless sky,  
storms stalking  
the horizon,  
their darkness  
hunting  
the fading  
light.

Mountains crowned  
with cumulus.

Slant light  
on pavement,  
aspen leaves,  
gold,  
blinding off  
the river's water  
beside the highway.

The song  
of the tires  
humming  
home.

Every day  
is the day  
after  
some day:  
every day  
carries  
a weariness  
from the day  
before.

Which is to say

I am tired.  
Which is to say  
the dull gray  
of these featureless  
skies, suffers  
in comparison  
with those brilliant  
skies  
yesterday.

Is this a poem?  
the wind  
trembles  
through new leaves.  
It is cold  
and I am  
tired.

(Tax cuts  
for plutocrats)

Can one  
(me)  
pull words  
from the thinnest  
air? What can I  
say to  
disperse this  
cold spring?  
What do I say?  
Can this day  
sing?

Darkness  
is not absence  
of—it has  
a weight.  
It settles  
over the shoulders  
like a coat.

It presses  
against  
windows.

Light, rather,  
is the absence  
of dark.  
The morning  
is weightless:  
all the leaves  
and pollen  
drift  
in sun shaft  
without  
gravity.  
In the light  
anyone  
can fly.

From elsewhere--  
who is  
not? What  
we have labored  
to build  
or salvage  
or demolish  
or  
not--

Chaos always  
at the beginning.

“Yes.”

Longer  
than the dark  
has wrapped  
the space  
between stars,  
before this,  
a gnat's  
now  
beating wings:

As if it never happened--

Nothing  
after.



Some afternoon,  
or when  
passing a slow  
hour  
in a quiet classroom  
and watching  
her  
at work,  
  
brow creased  
her attention  
focused,  
  
her eyes distant.

walking the edge  
of storm,  
a static energy  
in the gathering  
clouds  
air stirring  
with  
expectation.

Life exists  
at the edge.

Sudden rain,  
suddenly  
bright.

Lingering,  
yesterday's image  
now  
nurtured,  
keeping  
all  
near,  
not  
escaping--  
conversations in the hall--  
something about  
poetry.

The ache  
of the impossible.

Finally, this spring  
a day with  
warmth.

Filtered  
sunlight reflecting  
off a certain  
polished  
sadness, age  
or the end  
of democracy,  
or rains  
returning,

or  
a certain nameless  
angst--

As if  
every calendar  
blank,  
every day  
a white page.

Winter  
has inserted  
a covert  
operation  
into this Spring.  
Geese in  
corn stubble,  
feathers  
ruffled  
by wind.

Two muddy ruts  
running through  
  
the field  
to the horizon,  
road to  
eternity  
or a farm house  
just beyond  
the hill.

These are  
the first  
of those things  
that will be  
recalled  
as endings.  
Words now  
become  
epitaphs.

Tattered prayers  
flag the wind.

Everyone  
busies themselves  
as if  
what was true  
yesterday  
will be true  
tomorrow:  
all beneath  
indifferent  
skies.

If all go  
into the darkness,  
does it matter  
what beliefs  
they take  
into the dark?  
Shadows

cast by daylight,  
silhouettes cut

from the cloth  
of the day.  
The light  
only makes the  
demarcation  
clearer--  
the lines between  
warmth  
and chill,  
between sun  
and  
absence.

Not much  
happens,  
has happened,  
will happen  
here: no  
tense action  
diffused  
across time.  
(We are  
timeless)

The infinitive  
of our desires.

At light speed  
there is no speed:  
nothing arrives,  
nothing passes.  
Are we moving  
at the speed  
of light,  
or standing  
at absolute  
zero?

one seeks  
to break through  
the tedium  
of the day  
into the uncanny:  
swallows skimming  
rushing water,

sun bronzed  
on pool's surface,

the leaves' shadows  
on the currents,  
below the bridge,  
beside the rocks--

The white  
whisper of  
flowing river  
speak, seeking  
its silence  
in the distant  
sea.



Aquariums in every  
waiting room,  
as if anxiety's cure  
were always  
some diorama  
of the sea's bottom.

Sun fish drift  
above plastic coral.

Waiting.

The sere at the edge  
of the sun—  
I could not live  
in only air-conditioned  
spaces  
(spaceships).

Unceasing hum  
of fans  
and vents.

Temperature  
climbing.

The tedium of caring  
and yet,  
the infinities  
of not—How is it  
the sun  
sterilizes thought?

Walking,  
seeking shadows  
like a thief.

Sweat  
beaded  
brow.

That  
a day could be  
so wasted,  
exhausted, even  
in my dreams:  
only the minimum  
done.

So,

so many words  
on the edge  
of paper, waiting  
to mar  
white.

Sitting quietly,  
one moment's  
perfection,  
here,  
in a cool room's  
afternoon,  
blue skies graying  
as clouds  
return.

So, our passing hours,  
isolate affairs.

Gulls bank  
above towers  
rife with  
rumor.

Cool morning  
fathers  
the humid  
afternoon,  
in which  
the skies have blued.  
Humming birds  
hover  
by fuchsia.

All day  
I've hovered  
over ideas

which have yet  
to flower  
from buds.  
I wait  
and watch,  
but they can  
only blossom  
in secret.

And now the afternoon  
settles  
like dust  
on the leaves  
of the rose bushes;  
now the noise

of the day  
stills: quiet  
outside:

now the light  
casts long  
shadows  
through the leaves;  
now the windows  
melt gold  
and show  
their streaks:  
wood smoke  
and  
burgundy.

Each day  
another cut  
until we no longer  
have the strength  
to be outraged:  
so it dies.

Marine layer  
soothing yesterday's  
burns. Clouds.

I have no  
wisdom  
that would help.  
Things fail,  
democracies  
fail, history  
is the story  
that things  
pass.  
The moment's  
troubles  
will flow  
into other  
troubles.

60 years is not  
so long,  
is an eternity  
is an instant,  
is an inevitable  
impossibility,  
is--

How shall I address  
your birthday?

Good whiskey  
must age  
a long while  
to be smooth  
and expensive.  
Knowledge  
takes time  
to accumulate  
enough mass  
to become  
wisdom.  
Each day  
adds to a store  
of light.

Language  
abstracts  
words are species  
collections, genres  
cat,  
all cats,  
not this cat,  
chirping  
after humming birds

We build abstractions  
out of other abstractions.

The unutterable  
uniqueness  
of the particular.



The dirt roads  
that lead  
through the mountains  
in my dreams.  
Vivid vistas  
falling away:  
raging  
rivers.

Which means what,  
if it means  
anything?

The long journey  
toward day light:  
waking.

The delicious  
sweetness  
of the city street  
in twilight  
shadows.  
Cool air,  
the conversations  
from sidewalk  
tables.

Walking to the bus.  
Long day's  
work.

Waiting  
by the Pizza shop,  
watching  
busses arrive  
and depart.

Shallow lake  
in a bowl  
lined by granite  
cliffs,  
snow fields,  
water cascading  
through  
rock clefts  
above.

There is  
peace  
here  
sunlight on stone:

the stone  
mirrored  
on water,  
water bugs  
skimming  
the shallows,  
small fish  
rising--  
rings.

That things can  
change,  
utterly,  
over time  
and yet, at core  
remain  
the same.  
Twenty-seven  
years--

I remember  
that hot afternoon--  
the hospital--

There are beginnings  
and beginnings:  
first things  
and new things  
each day  
overwrites,  
contains,  
the last.

Leaving  
you a  
note and books,  
not  
knowing if you  
are interested,  
not knowing,  
never,  
expecting much

Gray strip of clouds  
behind buildings  
towering.

Possible,  
tomorrow,  
rain.  
Clear now.  
Gulls silver  
in blue  
and afternoon  
sunlight.  
Hoping  
this gift  
has you  
amused.  
Hoping.

Boot prints  
in regolith  
that will never  
fade.

Under star light,  
under earth light,  
lined  
with shadow

in the harsh  
glare  
of the sun.

I was one  
of those  
who watched  
that day.  
Sound of sprinklers  
on summer lawns  
as the ghostly  
figure  
descends.

Could I have written  
this? Summer  
night, the warmth  
in the leaves  
and stars  
clear high  
above.

I've only half  
a hope  
for tomorrow.

How long  
since I have dreamed  
a dream that  
made it to waking?  
All my night  
wanderings  
among nameless  
gods,  
forgotten.

Where water  
falls  
over  
rock,  
splash pool  
in stone shadows,  
sun caught high  
in green branches  
overhead.

Some have died  
here  
falling  
like water.

Do their spirits  
(if such  
should exist)  
hover  
over tumbled  
boulders  
and wet gravel  
like dragonflies?  
Do they tremble  
in the sun lit  
leaves?



Dirty  
fingernail clipping  
of a moon  
over grassy  
fields as night's  
shadows  
spread.  
Headlights:  
the road home.

These days  
at work,  
far too long.

Barely a moment  
for stray  
thoughts, let alone  
time to arrange  
words  
unique to the day,  
and evening  
with its dirty  
crescent moon  
into something  
like poetry.

Blood red sun  
setting,  
as if all  
the summer's wounds  
were left to bleed  
on this horizon.

Wood smoke  
and burgundy  
twilight haze  
over meadows.

Night.

Preview  
of our sepia-  
filtered,  
micro-cephalic  
futures. Cityscapes,  
smoke drifting  
through streets,  
the sun  
an open sore.

Eight words  
relating  
the end  
of the world.

I  
taste  
ash.

The trick is  
to complete  
the day's  
tasks  
before the heat  
of the day  
wilts  
all strength,

or  
to hide in a dark  
cool place,

or  
to read  
about  
ice.

In remembrance--  
it is possible  
each day  
could commemorate  
some past  
horror, yet  
this day's horrors  
are--

Remembering  
while walking.  
Filtered sunlight  
between tall  
trees.

Mountain lake.  
Flowers  
for the fallen.

Flat rocks  
in the stream  
above  
waterfalls  
where we sat  
in afternoon  
sunlight  
soaking  
our tired  
feet.

Smell of  
alpine meadows.  
breeze off  
the water.

We had walked  
to Paradise  
and were heading  
back. Paradise  
with us  
still.

Outrages  
grow as common  
as the dandelions  
in my lawn.  
How maintain  
anger and  
not just despair?

Repair  
the day.  
Clouds drift  
above  
the trees.

There is only  
the slightest  
breeze.  
Leaves tremble  
only a bit,  
anticipating  
the next  
bad  
news.

Waiting rooms,  
old magazines  
scattered on tables.  
The TV, unobserved,  
droning overhead.  
Bad coffee  
and cheap cookies.

The question,  
unasked,  
what are we waiting  
for?

For a new  
world order,  
for a swelling  
of liberty,  
for new wellsprings  
of compassion--  
for car parts.

Twenty-seven years  
ago, standing  
in beach grass  
near tide's edge,  
remembered,  
among flowers,  
on an alpine  
meadow.

Gray boulders  
in a tumbling  
stream:  
glacier melt.

A small shelter  
gazing out  
at peaks.  
Snow fields  
white amid  
black rock.  
Cloud shadow  
and sunlight.  
Paintbrush.  
Lupin.



One event  
eclipses  
all others:  
in the moon  
shadow  
crows fly  
wildly,  
disconcerted:  
a lone dog  
howls.

Mid-morning  
twilight  
a sudden breeze,  
air suddenly  
cool.

After,  
as if nothing  
had happened,  
as always,  
nothing  
ever happens,  
as if  
there were  
always,  
and only,  
this,  
as if--

Clouds  
add a certain  
drama  
to the sky,  
a movement  
by which  
to measure  
a day's  
progress.

We chalk the sun  
on the sidewalk  
drawing

rays around  
a circle.

I draw a tree  
he draws  
three blue lines  
which may  
be a horizon  
or ribbons  
of sky  
or sea.

That the mountains  
are always  
waiting,  
that the road  
beside the river  
winds always  
upward  
toward  
sky.

Dust on leaves,  
the ferns  
bowed by  
dust.  
Hot.

Sun baking on  
talus. Scree  
slope into the valley.  
Distant cliffs  
shadowing  
the river.  
Water cascading  
down  
bouldered gorges.  
A respite  
above a cool pool  
high above  
cottonwood.

Snags  
from a fire  
standing,  
dark monuments  
above huckleberries,  
scratching against  
a granite  
outcrop  
under blue  
sky.

The trail  
skirting  
a washout  
fire  
and flood.

Pausing  
on a bridge  
high above  
the rush  
of green water  
pouring through  
a chute  
between boulders,  
the breeze  
from the river  
cooling the  
dust streaked  
sweat.  
Almost  
there.

Cliffs  
reflected  
in the lake.  
Guiding kayaks  
through green marsh  
grass, past  
snag logs  
and shallow  
rocks.

A day to rest  
before the effort  
resumes.

Here is  
the crossroad  
for many trails.  
Hikers shrugging  
off packs  
gray with dust.  
others,  
after respite,  
shrugging them  
back on.  
From here  
to the world,  
if you go  
by foot.

At camp  
by the river  
soaking  
tired, dirty  
feet in  
cold water.  
Mountain top  
haloed  
in sunlight.

Through  
the mesh roof  
of the tent,  
the stars.

Sleep.

Waterfall  
spilling into  
a granite pool.  
A quick dip  
revitalizes  
for the last  
push.  
A bear on snow.

Dusty switchbacks  
down to the  
sun baked parking  
lot.

Heading  
home.

Radical doubt  
can undo  
the world. Science  
depends on trust.  
If you believe  
no one--  
abyss.

The world is burning.  
Ash colored sky.  
Baking sun.

I believe  
no one.

The night came  
quickly  
while I was writing,  
the white screen  
glowing slightly  
in the deepening  
gloom.

Progress defined  
more by the words  
cut than added.

There is hope  
of someday  
an accomplishment,  
a task that  
will end.



The end of history,  
but history  
grinds on. It seems  
we can't get  
past making  
things happen.

When building space stations  
there is no post  
humanity.

There are just people  
who must work together  
in close space  
without animosity.

A clot of words  
to stem  
silence  
before it bleeds  
out into  
the night,  
pale, red  
stars.

I would like  
to write a poem  
the color

of the sea  
at twilight,  
the sun  
just disappeared,  
the transparent  
blue of  
the blackening  
sky.

A word  
that drops  
into an empty  
well. The narrow  
path we walk  
between  
the ragged  
weeds.

The ruined gardens  
blackened vines  
and wilted petals  
clinging.

Some things  
have come into  
ripeness:  
A melon under  
a canopy of leaves  
an ear of  
corn:  
stocks rattling.

Sometimes the sun:  
gleam of tile  
rooftops, a few  
stray pigeons  
in flight  
over the power lines.

Sometimes the blue  
of skies  
pale with autumn's  
wash.

Sometimes  
the will to focus  
on the work  
not distracted  
by perpetual  
outrages,  
letting the anger  
simmer  
aside, focusing  
on the autumnal  
blue, the pale  
sun.

Sometimes words  
are only surface  
faced,  
enfaced with  
other words  
in certain proximities,  
defaced,  
or faceless  
silence.

Sometimes words  
are only as deep  
as the sounds

that bind them.

Speak to me.

Don't speak

I can't hear what you

mean, only

don't be mean

to them.

They are waiting

for you to speak.

Silence.

The rain is  
a pathetic  
fallacy.  
Autumn  
has its own  
sadness, but  
this is a deeper  
loss.

One never  
expects  
the disruption  
of continuity,  
the chasms  
  
that can open  
between  
one day  
and the next.  
I wish I could write  
a better  
memorial.  
It is always  
at the crucial  
moments  
that words  
fail me  
most.

Among books,  
always,  
home, even  
in dreams  
I search the shelves  
for that rare  
volume,  
that tome.

What is written there?  
What words will  
set me free?

What  
old  
poem?

A new approach,  
always,  
the attempt  
to map the times  
to words,  
as if somehow  
to speak--

All time  
consumed,  
rearranged,  
and redistributed  
in this present  
time,

as if  
this were  
somehow  
that  
moment.



A certain  
undefined  
sadness--  
not that there aren't  
reasons enough--  
some sort of aggregate--  
the average  
dullness.

Where there is  
nothing  
to be done  
all remains  
undone.

Nine words  
that  
strive  
to say  
nothing  
that matters.

Sawdust paths  
through tall corn.  
Labyrinth  
to puzzle  
under a drift  
of autumn  
clouds. Sunlight  
and rain.

Cats said  
to be familiars  
to witches. One  
watches now.

Who was it  
cried this single  
tear of sand?  
corn silk whispers  
mysteries.

A moment's quality  
of light  
between clear dawn  
and the coming  
storm: leaves  
glowing against  
slate skies.

Geese circling  
storm's edge.  
Rain, on the horizon,  
moving in.

Yellow leaf  
scraping across  
the platform,  
stuck for a moment  
on a rail,  
poised  
like a butterfly.

If  
there is an answer,  
or  
if  
somewhere  
wisdom for those  
none the wiser,  
staring into dark.

If  
there are words  
unobscured  
by other words  
abstracting  
abstractions--

If,  
as the sages say,  
there is a way  
that is always there,  
if  
we stop striving,  
if  
there is something  
beyond saying--

While  
this sentence  
loops  
in an attempt  
to eat its  
own tail  
(  
first word  
devouring  
the last.  
)

All sentences  
are autophages,  
consuming  
their own syllables  
until gone.

Self-erasing  
semantics.

All speech spills  
into void.

What have I left  
when I've said  
all I had to say?  
What is still  
to write?

The argument from James  
that things are,  
in fact, just as we  
experience them  
in the world.

Logic a practical  
addition, tools  
providing a semblance  
of order.

The universe  
does not have  
to conform  
to our logic.  
Logic is mainly  
grammar,  
we map the world  
to our thought.  
Thinking and being--  
but in disagreements  
the universe wins.

Later,  
you said--  
nothing was  
needed.  
Keep the books shelved  
and whoever  
needs them,  
now for  
everyone.

(A day in which  
the rain which has not returned,  
returns.)

Libraries.

Knowledge is an  
asset--  
that the ignorance  
you embrace  
despite  
information  
clearly present  
here  
there  
everywhere  
reposited--

(degree to which  
intelligence and energy  
add to grace and beauty)

Just  
read.

A dusting,  
they call it,  
of snow,  
as if it were somehow  
from neglect,  
an unwiped shelf.

Melted by dawn  
save where the shadows  
preserve ghosts of it.

A whisper  
of white.

Blood  
on the pews:  
whose prayers  
were answered?  
That this madness  
has no end.  
Deliriums  
of violence.

Will they ever  
just decide  
enough is enough?  
Let it end.

There are too many  
guns.



Sad fields,  
ruttled with rain water.  
A gaggle of wild  
geese sweeping  
low above  
the gray puddles.

The train, itself,  
seems infected with  
their rain filled sadness  
somehow.

The whistle blows  
at a crossing.  
The geese scatter.

I have never understood  
the wind.

It speaks to me  
autumn days  
but in a foreign language.

Almost I catch a word,  
but somehow confuse  
it with another.

But, like a poem  
I can't explain,  
its meaning is clear.

There's the view  
through the window,  
the surface  
of the glass  
itself, streaked,  
and the interior  
reflected.

A geometry  
of perspectives:  
warehouse lights  
shining through  
her reflected  
face.

How capture this?  
A photo  
from my phone  
only catches  
the reflection  
blurred,  
dim street lights.

There are days  
that are meant  
to be between  
other days,  
stitches holding  
those other days  
together.

Some days  
we pass through  
like ghosts  
not stirring  
a leaf.

There are days  
clouds  
pass over  
not shedding  
a drop of rain,  
making way  
for tomorrow's  
storms.

The wind composes  
melodies  
on the porch chimes,  
rests between  
gusts, not quite  
a concerto  
or gigue.

The Aeolian harp  
of the Romantics,  
strings plucked  
by the wind.

Music of the spheres,  
if there were spheres.  
The chimes are tuned.  
Any accidental  
clang resolves  
into a chord.

Dark, so early,  
still long  
before sunset.  
The torrential  
rains  
soaking  
the muddy fields.  
Flocks  
of geese.

Muddy rivers  
rise against  
their banks:  
their will  
to be free.

I have dreamt  
of rivers  
awash through streets,  
brown swirls  
by open door wells,  
street lights  
still on  
reflecting, red.

Now, at last  
in an afternoon,  
closing the doors,  
here, for  
one  
long weekend  
empty of dreams.

The sky is painted  
in colors that have  
never been named.

The puddles steal  
a dull light,  
not their own,  
and gleam  
in empty,  
rutted fields.  
One could  
fall into their  
expanse  
forever.

What does it mean  
to mean?  
Walking the mean  
streets, poised  
on the mean  
average  
of mediocracy.

I know you mean well,  
but it is void  
of meaning.

Speak to me  
he said  
as if you mean it.  
Such an angry,  
mean thing  
to say, as if  
it were not  
demeaning enough  
to mean  
this.



Knowing  
and not knowing  
yesterday's  
last light  
and the moon's  
thin crescent  
over the dark  
low hills.

Always,  
at day's end  
the road  
home, between  
trees and fields.

Limb's shadow  
on pavement,  
a trembling net  
to catch whatever  
light—is there light?  
Sometimes no car  
ahead, no car  
behind,  
sometimes  
only the dim  
light of curtained  
windows.

I have  
little good  
to say  
about this day.  
After a long  
grind, it is finally  
over.

Taillights  
spread down  
the road  
below me  
like a ribbon  
of coals.

Stalled.

Can one say  
the lack  
of light  
is enlightening?  
These days  
we wander, so  
in the dark.

This last month  
of what proved  
to be too long  
a year.

Winter  
arriving.

What I have not  
done weighs  
more than what  
I have: (my heart  
heavier than  
a feather).

The judgement  
not of sins  
committed, but  
of those acts  
never enacted.

Nothing  
is  
weightier.

Just the thinnest  
tissue of ice  
on the surface  
of the puddles,  
dissolving  
in first sun.

One more cold morning  
to mark this world  
of ever more endings.

The railroad ties  
white on black.

Startled by the sky,  
my eyes  
too long  
on my feet,  
my gaze too often  
focused inward.

Cold blue.  
Winter sunlight  
even if winter  
has not yet,  
but still--

These trees  
that define  
the horizon,  
these hills.

The night's  
uncomfortable  
silence. What  
we have, of course,  
is wordless,  
unspoken under  
the red  
quarter moon.

The tongue  
cannot articulate  
how the frost  
condensing in the air  
tastes.

The mind cannot find  
the syntax  
for such a sentence.

Words  
precipitate  
out of the cold  
air, like frost  
sparkling  
under streetlights,  
whitening  
the pavement  
and sidewalks.

Twelve cold words  
pulled out of nothing  
in the dark, frigid air.

Listen,  
whatever  
I have to say  
is frozen here  
in time.

Less than  
your whisper,  
nodding  
now, acknowledging,  
keeping just  
a hint,  
nothing given,  
nothing taken,  
everything possible.

Not wanting  
to step  
out into the cold  
waiting  
for some train.

A muse  
for a moment's  
amusement,  
a wistful thought,  
a passing  
fantasy.

Conspicuous capitalism  
or  
the dance of snow fairies  
in the streets  
outside a mall  
for the rich.

Soap bubbles as snow  
blown by fans  
over the heads  
of crowds.

Wind whipping flags  
a sprinkle,  
a mist of rain.  
This winter night,  
approaching  
the cold hibernal  
solstice.



Sitting by this window  
everyday,  
trying to come up  
with just enough  
words,  
counting the day's  
speech.

There are never enough  
or  
there are more words  
than I need,

It is not as if  
I can say  
exactly  
what I need to say  
on any given day:  
words  
stray.

After  
its first glory,  
snow seems  
mostly sad:  
gray tire tracks  
and stained  
footprints,  
sagging tree  
limbs.

It's as if  
the day itself  
melts and  
freezes, thaws  
and hardens.

It's as if  
the cloth  
covering the world  
is threadbare:  
holes worn  
in the white  
wool, threads  
unraveling,  
tufts of yellow  
grass,  
gray, snow clotted  
twigs.

I almost  
forget this day  
words  
unspoken,  
unwritten,  
lost in the  
light rain  
dissolving  
the Christmas  
snow.

There are days which are  
erased from memory  
even as they occur.

What did I do?  
What did I say?  
What news  
troubled the evening  
report? What  
stray dreams  
vanished when I  
awoke?  
What smoke  
drifted  
from what  
embers?

Night rain,  
and the snow,  
is as if  
it never were--  
as all of us,  
facing  
darkness,

or  
the sound of it  
off the eaves  
tricking along  
the curbs,

or  
the light  
from windows  
across the street,  
through a mist,  
pale and cold,  
swimming  
on the street,  
smeared  
on pavement  
against black  
like  
so many  
dying stars.

The year winds down,  
rain, wind  
sweeping away the litter  
and dirty snow  
of this failed year.

All that words  
that I have gathered  
to describe these  
wasted days.

And now, at the end  
I must say more  
than I have said  
before now,  
As if, at the end,  
I was more prolific  
or had  
some greater  
wisdom.

