

4-2018

apr2018

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "apr2018" (2018). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1410.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1410

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

= = = = =

**I weighed a thousand pounds when I woke up
I lay beneath the covers and wondered
how the bed the floor the house the earth
could near such pressure. Later the scale
said 185 but what does a metal balance know
of how a body really feels? Numbers, just
numbers. I got up and was normal again
as normal as I ever am. Like you. And you.**

1 April 2018

= = = = =

**Every pen is always out of ink—
a nursery rhyme
for poets and for prophets.
There, I've said too much already.**

1 April 2018

= = = = =

**Lost some words
but they didn't lose themselves.
They go on speaking
whether I can hear them or not.
Maybe you'll hear them
someday and sing them back to me
and only the words will know
where they came from and where they go.**

1 April 2018

= = = = =

**Rhymed verse is ruled by the moon,
free verse by the sun. Fact.
And blank verse by high noon is ruled,
every precious word cherished equally.**

1 April 2018

= = = = =

**I seem to be somebody else today—
why did I read the mail, the paper?
Some inky lust has fallen away
and I am suddenly simple. O give me
back my messed-up self again!**

1 April 2018

= = = = =

**It is unusual for me
to drain a cup. I sip
all day. My comfort
comes from knowing
there is still some
coffee left. This is not
about drinking, not
about thirst. It's knowing
there is an ally at my side
saying it is not over yet.**

1 April 2018`

= = = = =

The wapiti we saw up Estes
in cool mist above the Denver plain
keep walking in my head, middle
distance, smell of wet air, evening
comes down everywhere. Animals
live inside us too I mean. Mountain
pastures too, and alkaline springs
and I have been there with everyone
I ever knew in childhood and beyond
and we all watched them browsing—
don't you remember it all still?

1 April 2018

= = = = =

**April snow
gentles everything
white, no fear,
every human line
and natural branch
delineated by.
Sorts busy culture,
smooths it out,
coats our hard facts
with frail apparency.
I love this light.**

2 April 2018

A MOAN FOR CHILDREN

**Instead of the yellow brick road to Oz
a yellow big school bus drags them
on a grey asphalt road to be taught
boredom and rivalry and commodity.**

**(seeing a school bus passing, the only color in all this
snow)**

2 April 2018

= = = = =

**Snow does it so
much better than I do,
makes the least
things virginal, beautiful,
magical and strange.
Strange above all, sole
engine of poetry.**

2 April 2018

= = = = =

At times I think of giving
up worrying, just let
things take care of themselves
while I look the other way.¹
But then the gnaw comes back—
will the roof fall, the car roll,
the mail get through,²
the snow ever stop,³ spring
ever come. And *what is*
the difference between pretty
and beautiful, And this funny
feeling in my chest, who
is chattering in there. These
after all are my anxieties,
fretting about them makes me me.

2 April 2018

¹ The Other Way is the queendom of Morgan La Fay, fairyland, where im was born.

² How old that makes me seem, thinking about the mail.

³ Yet today I love the snow – it makes every line and shape *express*.

= = = = =

**Tge coast is guarded
and the air is forced,
we have sinned against above
by houses in it
and sinner against below
by pressing down the earth,
by digging in it,
planting what it did not
choose to grow. The plowshare
is a knife that comes from hell.**

**2 April 2018
Kingston**

= = = = =

**The music changes.
Gulls slide out of the air
and the car stops. Open
the door and get out
one leg at a time, stretch,
watch clouds above
the parking lot. This
is the miracle called being
somewhere. Anywhere at all.**

**2 April 2018
Kingston**

BRANCHED CORAL

1.

**There is a kind of innocence
eating in the dark
shuffling through the midnight surf
we all have done it
saluted that inscrutable flag
flapping above the mind we are**

2.

**Get the words of the song
and forget the tune
go hungry to an empty bed**

3.

**Keep your lights
on all day long
because you never know**

4.

Furious dreams
otters and panthers
there's a passage in Saint-Saens
sounds just like Strauss
the Bavarian not the Austrian
placid river past the castle
after under the temple hill
naked swimmers lunching secretaries
true love under the Chinese trees
in the English garden so
you never woke

5.

Be out there, feel, be public
mystic whoredom
in generous decency
deep ivy on brick wall
sound of a penny
plopping in a shallow well

6.

The sound of things so much of what we mean
beggars outside the opera house
leper's rattle, jet goes over
were we always here?
change the channel
dry between your toes

7.

The rumor of dead cities
cement snaked under trees
it's all Brazil around here
nuns and armadillos
Chinese restaurants are the last to close

8.

We found marble piazzas
granaries full of spelt or some such thing
roofless bungalows still veranda'd
they slept on shelves built in the wall
being honest we took nothing home
just photoscans and diagrams
a video of sunrise in the broken temple

9.

I found a chunk of quartz
reminded me of your eyes
I don't know why
not what they look like
but what they see

10.

Far away far away
every day
the children playing by your knees
are playing far away
far away far away
the truest game of all it almost is

11.

**With tentative deliberation
pressed his finger to her waist
instantly the current flowed
from south to north
along the built-in line of life
enough cosmology for a simple man**

12.

**All about taste and tell
the touch of east south east
nibbling tree tops golden
wake up babbling
Old High Dreamese**

13.

**She studied cleavage patterns
many kinds of minerals
isn case she had to break away from him
but water is the hardest rock to cut**

14.

**Too shy to say it in English
she left it for the shadow
of the obelisk at dawn to speak
the older we get
the further away from antiquity**

15.

Sad facts adore you
curve of hip
work for a living
nimble-footed pencil work of prose
he suddenly wanted
forever with her
we get over these things
that's what a city is for

16.

Lucid undertow
sleep again
durch diese hohle Gasse
preparing the event
fore telling
the arrow
Vienna with its back to the river
how wise this shyness
I want to think I'd know
when my time had come
but there is no away for me to go

17.

When Easter was over
we were all here together
a flashlight glimmered
swiftly melting April snow.

3 April 2018

S

= = = = =

**We do different things with time
the waking and the drowsing
worship the why-not of the rising sun
what else do we have to do but be?**

**There is an answer to that question—
come live with me and I'll explain,
nine parts giving and one part gain.**

3 April 2018

ARTIFACTS

**Broken originals
full of their first sound
hold the alabaster
up to your ear
and hear time passing,
Egyptian time
full of impossible certainties.**

3 April 2018

= = = = =

**I don't like you
but I love you—
it's as difficult as that.**

**Being with people
is a kindof agriculture
and never easy.**

**Dig plant wait reap
all over all over again
and every morning hungry still.**

3 April 2018

= = = = = = =

**Passing the bowl of clementines
I snatch a tangerine.
Is this a blunder? I wonder.
Verbal or venial? Today is tomorrow.**

3 April 2018

= = = = =

**Sin they say
is missing the target,
hamartia,
missing the mark.**

**Sin is like rain that falls
but never reaches the ground
sin is like dry soil
that swallows the seed and puts it to sleep.**

**Missing, missing.
But who put the target there?
And when they talk about Greek tragedy
they call it 'tragic flaw'.
Oedipus's own,
the flaw built-in.**

4 April 2018

= = = = =

Have I said enough
to justify last night's sleep?
Sleep is an investment
of the world's time
in just me.

I woke
in full darkness, my love
beside me couldn't sleep,
we eased each other
calm again and slept.

And here it is, the day.
The sleep so deep
was comforting, how
then does a man deserve
such intense renewal?
I must rouse,, get up,
sit down and write,
teach compassion to the dragons.

4 April 2018

THE TILES OF NINEVEH

1.
Seem to survive
the wind
the time.
The gleaming tiles of Nineveh
are slippery under the eye,
cold against the skin,
yes, desire spells the world.

2.
I thought she was
a marble statue
she was medicine instead
coma and recovery—
all a lover sometimes wants
is to stop thinking about her.

3.
Traffic outside
morning Talmud
busy chattering
innocence abounds

4.

So get the Torah right this time
and leave the anger out.
God is the guy you met in the trees
walking in the cool of the evening.
Be friendly, he may own the woods.
But don't believe everything he says.
You are Adam again,
this time instead.

5.

So some of this story
is for you, but some for you
and I'll never tell.
You have to read for yourself
the sunlight on wet tiles,
the shadows of the swimmers.
I'll just tell.

6.

When I open a door I fear
always a bird will fly in
and what will I do with a bird
the sky has not already done?

*You could listen for once
and learn what they
told me up there*
says the bird.

7.
The bus used to stop
in front of a little store
crowded with men studying the Bible
not a woman in sight.
What kind of indoor
religion is that?
I looked away, across the aisle
a young woman was learning to knit.

8.
So that's what travel means.
The sun does it
and the bird
(I'm speaking of a real bird here,
no poem safe without a crow)
and the eyes do it most of all
watching the gaudy procession pass
waiting for the king to come.

I mean the queen

but am too shy

so I write it down

on this rock

when I am born again

10.

so long like this,

to this sequence of chords

the one I lost in old Kentuck'

of tobacco drying in the barn.

11.

It all is a matter
of bringing it *all* to you.

If you're suspicious,
just look in the mirror—
you know the one I mean.

12..

Out of breath
from running up the stairs
I realize
this must be my destination
where all the old
air is over
and the new song starts.

13.

Never forget
wherever you live
there is a street outside
knows more than you do.

And once you live in a city
you carry it with you wherever you go.

14.

Odes come easy
on windy days
aoidao, 'I sing'
especially if you're a flower,
say the little squills on our hill
blue as a dream.

15.

You can't leave it like that.
--Why not?
The children will find it.
--But they like to be confused.
Gives them power
in a built-up world.
But won't it lead them into sin?
--I pray to the gods they find the way
because sin is comely, necessary,
sin is *sein* of the philosophers,
sin means to be.

Without sin
how could there be goodness in the world,
friendship, touch, forgiveness?

16.

You step out of the water

fast,

**water streams from your hair,
your body,**

**soon you're dry,
don't shiver,**

**study the sea today,
its eternal hankering for the land—
wherever you are, any coast at all,
the sea is always coming in.**

**That's me, you think,
I am always moving toward it
but I'm also the one I'm hurrying to.
Dimly, and only for a moment,
recognize my business is to meet
myself**

**someday on a beach
and overcome myself
and be free.**

**Now go back to sleep,
the sky is almost blue.**

5 April 2018

= = = = = TIME PIECE

**Almost without saying it
the day understood.
There was a hint of a word:
car going by, humming in the ears,
water running in the marble sink.
Black stone.**

**2.
But there it was
a parcel from the sky-lords
disguised as light.
Not as late
 as I'd thought.
And after all there is always time.**

**3.
It doesn't really sink in,
does it,
 this is the only
thing there is
 all the magnificent
architecture
a beehive turned inside out.**

4.

**This is what the rock said
I picked up on the road
someday someone
will find this book
and read it right.**

**5.
Today I have to deal
with Spanish saints
and a schoolgirl's accidental life.
Poor me, I who once
saw all Everest on the horizon
when a Buddha nudged my arm
and pointed and said See?**

**6.
Am I one
or many

you decide

but do
yourself first

so that I know.**

6 April 2018

= = = = =

1.

Wake alone with the sky
a funny noise

a cry?

bean Sidhe you fear,
but they call us out
to work, to life,
not just to die.

Sky
again, over patchy snow,
irises poking through white,
aspohdels.

2.

We always wake near the place
where we began. The skating rink
shuttered now, Ridgewood Grove
underneath the El,
your uncle's bowling shoes
dried up under the cellar stairs.
Cosmology. You always
must have an uncle
to begin. Or a dog outside the window
or a peach tree,
or fresh from the fancy grocery
a ripe green fig.

3.

**The red, flesh red, inside
with yellow tiny seeds—
sky again, only
the size and colors change—
essence mean everything.**

**Have a drink with me
then off with you to work
and let me sleep a few
sentences more.**

4.

**Because it's come again,
the day, with all the being
still to be,
and all things
prompt to begin.**

Start.

**You made this place.
Now watch the snow
melt carefully.**

5.

Do other languages fall in love
or are we the only ones who stumble,
trip, cry out and topple?
The sky is only blue
in Anglo-speaking lands,
but you know what I mean,
the slip, the trip, the tumble.
And you climb into bed
thanking the gods for all those
you've just come home
from falling in love with—
if I live long enough
it will be everyone,
soft sweet carnality
of compassionate mind.

6.
But what was the cry
that woke me,
was it even from some throat
and not the adolescent
squeal of some proximate machine,
last gasp of the humidifier,
ice cracking on the windowpane?
I need to learn
whose voice that was,
and will spend all day
making up the answer.

7.

I would call it an ode, except that name distances the author from the text, proposes that the author is in charge, is the little godkin of the sentences, can summon language and label it and go off, leaving the neatly titled text on the world's long suffering altar. So not an ode. No name for what I do, only a nickname, the sort a sleepy priest sprinkles you with water to impose, baptism by accident. These words are all for you.

8.

When the girls were playing hockey
on the field by Moses Brown
the April snow started to float down.
O endless fascination of the weather,
of all that just happens by itself
(apparently) with none of us responsible
for what the sky says, just our cold knees,
our slippery footsteps, gasps, giggles,
cancelled classes, all we ever can do
to answer history with our bare skin.

9.

The faint blue masterpiece
is clearing overhead. Voilà,
I've made the morning for you
while you slept.

10.

People put too much stock in breakfast,
wait instead, eat late,
let the air, light, moving
things outside, the sky
feed you. Sludge
of oatmeal skip,
scream of the cold egg
splattering in hot oil.
This is America,
you don't have to eat.

11.
Never doubt. That's
what it comes back to,
down to. Never doubt.
This mark you're making
is the only sign there is.
These hands you're using
to shape or hold or compel,
are the only hands there are

12.

The snow will melt
but it will
triumphantly have been.

13.

If I think about the earth
beneath this house,
the old frame house,
its older stone foundation,
what comes to mind?
What should a man
think about where he stands?
Gratitude—immense
debt to the waiting earth—
isn't that where all our living goes,
down there.

Where the snow goes too.
And rain that will come one of these days.
Isn't that what happens to the light,
it sinks down and sleeps into the earth—
all you ever have to do
is listen and you'll see.
Place is history,
rises
in you to be said.

7 April 2018

= = = = =

**You can never tell
when a Neanderthal will need a banana.**

**They didn't have them when they grew;
bushy browed and blue-eyed**

**and the 6% of Neanderthal in me (not you
I bet, you elegant human)**

**tells me a banana is sweet and weird.
A yellow sheet to wear**

**or upturned smile on my prognatious jowl.
A banana is so naked!**

**Even its smooth skin is suggestive
and we primitives are shy, shy,**

**that's why we hide our DNA
in you, yes, even you, 1% maybe,**

depending on how much you love bananas.

7 April 2018

THE INSTRUMENT

**Every pen
has its own
Pentateuch
locked inside.
All it needs is
you to hold it
firmly as it writes.
Try it if you dare.**

7 April 2018

THE MYTH OF CHANGE

I had never been
in that Harvard
library before

Eurydice
was waiting at the door

to the gentle grey-haired
librarian I explained
what I was
and what I wanted

Eurydice was naked again
the way she used to be
when we hunted
for deer and lion cubs
together

the old lady
handed me a
book, alarmingly
slim, the collected
prose of him I sought

animals don't fear us
they fear our clothes,
the skins we put on,
the words we wear
to shroud our thoughts

no I said no
these are prose
I need the poems
she said o and
gave me them
the book looked
just the same
just as thin
could this be other?

Eurydice led me down the hall
to where her ape was tethered
"Get in" she said
so we went outside

where's the rest
of them, where are the others,
all the poems
he wrote I mean
we all once knew
I'm sure I couldn't tell you
she explained we never
know, the book just came
collected not complete

a pale water tower
thicker at the top
like a clenched fist
rose across the parking lot
her little animal led the away
still on his little leash
spangled with cowrie shells

I thanked the librarian
gratitude is always best
what else could I do,
walked down the steps
and crossed the river
had a coffee at a Panera's
listened to half-hearted jazz

we have to climb now
she said and said again
again her ape went first
scrambled up the service ladder
white metal rungs
one after the other,
she went next then I reluctantly
left the ancient earth beneath me
and rose awkwardly
clutching each cold rung hard
sentence after sentence
word by word
into the exalted air

I stared into my cup
the shimmer surface
glance of almost images
I began to realize
a little flaw
in those poems of his
I had been seeking

her beautiful body
always above me

the poet had simple
fears and simple lusts
but feared to show them

sometimes I think I am afraid
of her,
of getting what I want

so he made a mystery
of what he meant
twisted words together
so you had to pry
them open with your eyes
grateful to avoid the obvious

I watched her rise
so natural above me

we fear what we mean too

she always did
always will
her body showed the way
her body
influences the sky

people love best
what they need to hide

and then it was a mountain
and we were there
no city to be seen

poems show
the other side
of what he meant
and what we mean
in the fragile
gaslight we call
understanding

we were alone at last
with ourselves
a thousand years pass

cold coffee
Juilliard jazz

she let the little ape run loose
but he never wandered far

the poem changes us
we say it wakes us
from the myth
of certainty

we rested there a while
together
where to be together
means to be free.

8 April 2018

OLD ORPHEUS

**When Orpheus grew blind
Eurydice came back.
“I’m only here
because you can’t see me.
You feel my breath
on your cheek, my touch
on your arms
but can’t be certain
that it is me and not another.
I am your only other,
every one of me!”
And she took him by the hand
and led him—still
singing his head off—all
the way down the road
to her dark queendom.
But blind men can’t see the dark.
But we are healed by all he cannot see.**

8 April 2018

= = = = =

**CAN'T SEE?
MUST SAY.
NO WORDS?
MUST SING.**

**Carve this into porphyry
say it in Greek
if you insist
though it will be harder
and take much longer
until the stone itself runs out.**

8 April 2018

THE STADIUM

**is a far
space wrapped
round itself
that lets you in**

**if you insist
on watching
what other
bodies do
while you sit,**

**bodes that are
never you—
tangle all the speeds
and distances,
shove them deep
into the dark
pocket of your mind,**

**if the crowd would
ever shut up
you might get
to hear the divine
music, the athletes'
feet slapping
the sacred earth.**

8 April 2018

W A K E

a book

**Who was she
wondered him
what did she say
long after midnight
fox on the lawn**

**Things follow us too.
Mirrors. Miracles.
She watches from
the tower she is.**

**Once I was
a balcony
then a little book
like this
full of names
no one I knew**

**Suddenly a departure!
a taste in the mouth**

lemon sweet passerby

**resident trauma
his aunts in the other room
saying the rosary in Gaelic**

**Because it does not go away
a boat makes it happen
car radio blaring
the vee in water
endlessly receding
sinister oldster sneers
it is life that makes death possible**

**Democracy began
when the Greeks
wrote all the vowels in
the breath
of thought**

**If this were a ball
it might not bounce**

but it would roll
he has all
his moves built in

Persuasion is seduction
Greek or Danish
so much flotsam
drags along behind
you never knew you knew

And lo!
they were all naked
inside their clothes
he can't get over that
he clings
joyously
the obvious

assassination in a mirror
again or again
her eyes
and a piece of paper

who? who?

**and always midnight
when the raft butts shore
trowel stuck between logs
the sin of landing
the sin of standing**

**it is a wonder a miracle
most of us have a roof
even at midnight
but not all, not all**

**She leaves the question
behind her
he answers with his life**

**Freedom means looking
every page of the paper
but not reading a single
word it says there**

hours later
we was not certain
it was a fox
any way you say it

snuggle up
against the hour
soft hair
let the minutes
caress you,
be a cat
for a change drink
deep of sleep

got a letter
from her did
not open
it his future
fingered it
wait till tomorrow
wait till tomorrow

random inputs
all excellent energy
he sat in the car
watched through the sunroof
seagull seagull crow
parking lot
center of the eArth

dozed off
in sunshine till
her door opened
she got in
dreamed them together again

downstairs the old men
tipped Jameson's from a jar,
heaven stamped its hooves
Impatient overhead
for all pf us

the bite of long ago
in the teeth of now
sometimes he wakes early
everything forgiven

**shriven
left a cardboard box on the moon**

**an hour later
he was not alone
herself
luminous aftermath**

**morning again
the only gospel
we believe
and it believes us back.**

9 April 2018

A SCENE FROM FAUST

Her picture fades from the wall.
He rubs his eyes,
breathless enlightenment,
dispelled.

 He remembers
there never was a kiss,
reflects on this.

 How could there be?
Thousands of years between them
yet he's older than she could ever be.
The devil beside him quietly asks
What color were her eyes?

 Faust
doesn't know, and his own
eyes fill with tears.

9 April 2018

= = = = =

Woke stifled by the calendar
the deaths of princes
cars scurrying to work
our shabby politics

and there wasn't even snow
to sugarcoat the facts
or spring flowers to distract

just me sprawled worrying
I am a part
of what went wrong

tragedy of every ego
artist anybody self.

10 April 2018

= = = = =

**Awake long enough
to say goodnight**

**sky the same
color as the road.**

10.IV.18

= = = = =

**When you get a poem in a book or the mail
don't just read it—answer it in lines
of language—every poem however gnomic
laconic, obvious or haiku-cute is a question.
Answer it, butt into the everlasting conversation.**

10 April 2018

= = = = =

**Invisible spotlight
in which poets perform
safe from premature
interpretation of
their eternal shadows.
Only in the dark
can their light be seen.**

10 April 2018

= = = = =

**I don't want to go places.
I am places.
You come see me.**

10.IV.18

= = = = =

No one answers
when I call
that's how I know
you're there

I reach out and run
my fingers through the wind
and call it your hair

when I stand perfectly still
I know you're lying beside me.

10 April 2018

= = = = =

Inside the body
of the red goddess
one enters a landscape
like what I'd see
flying from Chicago
say to Albany,
rivers and mountains
forests and farms
towns full of people
whose language
I almost understand.
And when I fly at night
the Northern Lights
out the portside windows
green glass melting in the sky.

10 April 2018

= = = = = = =

**Anything can happen
and already did.**

10.IV.18

= = = = =

**It's always too late to begin
the mail truck left already
the ghosts are waiting to be fed**

**That's what morning means
mavourneen, it's all
in place already, it's all done,**

**you decided this destination
long ago, so just follow
the balloon when the child's
fingers half on purpose let it go,**

**follow, follow. The air runs free,
you think you're jogging
but you're running for your life.**

10 April 2018

= = = = =

**Scraping words
out of the bowl of sleep**

**like a young god
startled by the world he's made.**

**So many gods, so many worlds,
we need so many
letters to spell the simplest name.**

10 April 2018

= = = = =

**A crystal broken
on the shore**

**a sailboat neat and purposeful
nobody seems to be on board**

**the Greeks mistook the Ocean
for a river and they were right**

**it flows along beside me
even if I don't close my eyes**

**broad Hudson broad estuary
gleaming in the somber day.**

**10 April 2018
End of Notebook 411**

= = = = =

1.

**Elegant alternatives
life as a dragon who
from the air blesses
the children of us, or
becomes the sea! so
flows into every one of us**

**howevering muck the fields
where all our poor farmers
shed their little winter ease
and have to drive their sinful
shovels into the victim earth
our patient almost mother.**

2.

**Spring is hard
no choice
I quote a master,
deal with the thing
in front of you,
no choice,
the paradox of Babylon:
we know it well
yet it is not.**

3.

Time, our adversary
runs a movie theater
to entrance us,
embrace us,
called History.
Begin with the bible
one absurdity after another
on which we live.
We think we remember.
We pay our dues.

4.

Or as I have told you again and again
—how could we both forget?—
there is no time as such,
time is a shadowy function of spacem
how long it seems to take
getting from one place to another,
twenty parasangs through the giant's thighbone,
a dozen *li* up the mountainside.

5.

Hard-carved, this platitude.

I scrawled it out for you
a couple of decades back

and poetry is always late to work
breaks breathless through the doorway
to intimate at full volume

whatever you were not thinking of,
a sample of midnight
clutched in its pale hand.

11 April 2018

= = = = =

When at last
we got to the circus
the animals were all asleep

every one
or even worse
or were they only replicas

shapes of living forms
that have no life
except what we confer

by the act of seeing them?
But our eyes were
too full of tears for that.

12 April 2018

ENTUTHEN

1.
And then
we marched
seventeen lifetimes
through the quanta

tending towards
any random
planet here we are.

2.
But then the angel of each
set me apart
a priest without a collar
dreaming somebody else's dreams
drawn as leaf shadows,
bird cries, all the live
spaces in the whole park.

I am the zoo.
I am here for you.

12 April 2018
Rhinebeck

= = = = =

Heart, what we do to
what we mean by
the heart, the hard
organ softened into words

all its hard work
fueling our fantasy

how dare we speak of love

how dare we interview the gods
the way we do
as if
we are their mothers

they grew from us
and overran the earth
then peopled heaven.

12 April 2018

= = = = =

**It was raining
when the day called Rain
began last night.**

**The weather at last
at least in harmony
with the way we think**

**or how we talk.
And any minute
now daffodils.**

13 April 2018

IN THE STARR LIBRARY

**I saw my poem
mounted on the wall
for poetry month**

**I saw my book
on display with Ashbery's
and Peter Gizzi,**

**Carl Sandburg next door
and Grace Paley.
Who am I again?**

And what play is this?

13 April 2018

= = = = =

Whose port
this pirate
vessel slips in
by night,

the town wakes
to the smell
of contraband,
harsh tropic
meat scorched,
the sky awash
with stale saliva?

2.
We must cure ourselves
of all desire
otherwise the pirates come
using our own fingers
to pry open our safes,
our treasure chests,
even our cellar doors
leading down to where
our deepest secrets sleep.
The pirates are anywhere
we are, and anyone we meet.

3.

**Far to the west of here
I first discovered the terror
of the human hand—
what we touch even once
never lets go, never lets us go.**

13 April 2018

= = = = =

Playing doctor.
I never did,
never wanted to be a kid—

to be a doctor, yes,
or priest or king
but not a child.

Now look at me,
a theoretical adult
playing hide and seek

with ordinary English
words I still can
barely understand.

13 April 2018

= = = = =

She called out
two blue herons
flying west
high over the
shopping plaza
parking lot.

Every bird has meaning—
what about two?
Every thing has meaning
so read the asphalt
read the cars
read the crappy music
pumped out of the bar,
read the pulse I keep
hidden in my wrist.

[Kingston, early March]
14 April 2018

METEOROLOGY

**Warmer today
they say.
They'll say anything
that comes to mind
in their machines.
Just like me,
just a weatherman
issuing storm
warnings from the mind.**

14 April 2018

HAMARTIA

**Missing the mark,
missing the invisible
target—call it sin,
kissing the other,
cold breakfast, call it
dented wheel, shuttered
chapel, lone brick
lying in the grass,
roadside, India.
Or call it water
poured from a ewer,
call it a cold knee bent
cramped under a school desk,
call it the kind of pain
you can live with.
Call it music.**

14 April 2018

= = = = =

Put all my ideas
into an old leather satchel
and shove it into a locker
at a railroad station
out of town. Keep the key,
maybe even build
a little shrine with scarlet
votive candle to house the key.
Then walk outside. Squills
blue all over the lawn.
Spring? I'll ask
somebody what it all means.

14 April 2018

= = = = =

**Of all the things
we own we ask
will it mast the winter?**

14.IV.18

= = = = =

**We are all householders
invisible real estate
troubled sleep
gas leak in the atmosphere
something wrong
everywhere isn't there?**

14 April 2018

= = = = =

Waving the flag
wagging the tail
animal kindness
walking the dog
crossing the street
mowing the lawn
humanly decent
running the light
telling the truth
what else can we do?

15 April 2018

= = = = =

1.

Grey sky at morning
the sun always behind us
west of Laramie
mosquitoes in the snow
we are driven, compelled
into the west of things,
no choice, the horizon
sucks us in.

2.

I have fought against the horizon all my life
I have said my *hier bin ich!*
and my God help me
and here I am.

My west
has to come to me inside—
sickness, daydreams,
apocalypses, truth.

3.

I want to watch you painting.
I learned years ago in New York,
we all did, that a painting
is the complex colored shadow

of the mind's moving body that made it.
I want to watch that thing you do
to make the colors come
and run into intelligible order
as the shapes emerge, emerge
from you too, you who are
the precise shape of everything you see.

4.
So the grey sky
is liberal
with understandings.
It helps me
stay here
where it has been
chosen in me,
by me? to be
in all beginnings.
As if my mother
always told me
Listen to the sky
and I almost did.

15 April 2018

= = = = =

Quiet Sunday after Easter
the opera houses empty
the cathedrals scrubbed and shut.
The trees are waiting for their messages,
green mail for their bare fingers.
Cold, cold spring. No birds either,
such a strange morning, anything
could happen on the empty road.
I don't think the little herd of deer
will traffic calmly on our lawn
as they did yesterday. Nothing moves,
too quiet even for deer. The wind
like the world is sleeping late.
even the samurai joggers are still home,
tea and muffins and the dog asleep.
A little spooky too, this soft cold
empty grey and yet I feel at peace
now that being is the only music.

15 April 2018

= = = = =

**Me? I'm most like a rubber band
holding all my life
dozens of scattered meanings
into one tight bundle.
I can only read them
if I give up and let go.**

16 April 2018

= = = = =

**Nine A.M.
Everybody
goes to work.
But where
does work go?**

16.IV.18

= = = = =

**I wish I was a trustifarian
sprawling on a beach in Portugal.
But then I'd understand
even less of what those around me
say or mean or suffer.
So better I guess a mild impoverishment
with only intermittent bouts of ignorance.**

16 April 2018

= = = = =

**When everything's the color of the sky
you know that someone's watching.
It might be that somber dragon
you dreamt last night over Cambaluc
or that Methodist minister up there.**

**No. It was a broken mirror
luring my half-blind eye.**

**Rain is melting the snow,
one more game, the elements
having fun without our help.**

I could watch the empty sky forever!

**Like pricey restaurants in New York
all they really serve is atmosphere.**

16 April 2018

MANIFESTO

Poetry is listening out loud.

That's the simplest way to say it. Listening out loud silently, on paper or tablet. Listening to the animals in you, to the trees, birdsong, traffic noise, listening to the shadows, the people around you, hearing words from all your lives, the lungs of the wind, the howling in the trees, the sea's interminable alphabet.

Listen with your tongue, listen with your hands. You are the only one in the whole world who can hear precisely, speak precisely, the complex listening that happens in you, to you.

Give something back for all you hear. Give words back to the rest of us in the grace of the words you, and only you, happened to hear. Poetry is generosity.

17 April 2018

= = = = =

A stone told me this.
I was half-asleep, it said
“I have been waiting for you
twenty-seven thousand years—
a glacier left me here
with a message for you,
I’ve almost forgotten.
But if you listen to me clearly
it will come back—then
both of us will know what I mean.”

17 April 2018

= = = = =

Bright clouds dark clouds
but no catastrophe.
Bare fields beginning to hint green,
the earth dreaming its way
into our love again, offering flowers
a few already, then apples, wheat.
The new green is grace before meals.
Something is ready to begin—
I tap my baton and nod
to the first violins. Spring!

17 April 2018

= = = = =

**Exaggerate the obvious
till it disappears.
Then you'll find yourself
on the old coast road
from Gloucester down to Magnolia.
The sea keeps insisting
it's some kind of limit, boundary
but you know better
even though you can no longer
walk home under the water
to that three-star wisdom hotel
where you used to think you were born.**

17 April 2018

= = = = =

**Let the ink sink in,
it's good for the soil
I mean the soul.
Let it tell me
what I mean.**

17 April 2018

= = = = =

**If there were no night
nothing in the night
angry music would have to be
silken too, no murderers
and only such thieves
as would be satisfied
by the touch of skin.**

**But things are around me
as I speak, and poets
have to hate the government
on principle, but I hope to sleep
with the Queen's name spoken
reverently in my mind's lips.**

**16 April 2018
reclaimed 18 April 2018**

= = = = =

**And then the silence said
Stop listening to me a while
and let me sleep.**

18.IV.18

NAMES

**A wooden box
with pens and knives in it
what would you call that?
The Amazon jungle
with ancient stone plazas
hidden under a thousand years of mulch.
And this bottle, plastic, of cow's milk
what would be the name of that?
Cassiopeia rising over Mytilene.**

18 April 2018

= = = = =

**There is something noble
about a pale little car
rolling up Cedar Hill.**

**Architecture is all very well
but sometimes things move,
have to move..**

**Little car going to work at 9 AM
on time or almost,
little hill a glacier left.**

**I'm in a tender mood this morning,
feel kindly towards the little car
because I do share some DNA**

**with the black Pontiac my
father bought in 1941,
the last model before the War.**

18 April 2018

= = = = =

A culpable gate
swung open and let me in.
There I was, with it and in it.
the ancient garden
crowded with alphabet trees—
not just the ones for our languages
but others unknown, signs
waiting for me. I plucked
a handful of strange letters,
aten them greedily, felt sick,
got better, then I began to speak.
And lo! No one living now
can understand me when I do.

18 April 2018

= = = = =

**Genesis should be the last
book of the Bible,
getting us ready to begin
and create our world at last—
we (masculine plural of feminine
noun), we are the Elohim.**

18 April 2018

= = = = =

**Patchwork duenna
that girl in the corner
so severe!**

**if I were a piano
I wouldn't dare
play Chopin anywhere near.**

18 April 2018

= = = = =

**Walking to the station
Walking on the platform
Walking on the train
you'll never get there**

**because the town you're
headed to is moving too.
I mean the woman
I mean the man**

**we live in a world
where nobody's home.**

19 April 2018

= = = = =

Deciding is always dangerous.
Deciding to do things differently
especially so. West, for example,
when I always meant north.

Dangers of Egypt, we Jews
never completely escaped,
I bless with my open hand.
Vee spread between fingers 3 & 4

I am a *kohen* on my mother's side,
the hands of a priest
do not bless, they focus blessing
coming from everywhere,
focused
through the prism of the human will
he said.

I listened carefully,
I didn't know that such a man
was in the house. My house
so long ago made from trees.

19 April 2018

= = = = =

**I have been in disguise all my life.
Mirrors are safety valves,
monitor momentary identity.**

**Am I the one who was born
in this body or am I another?
Such knowledge is not part
of my burden. You tell me,**

**you who are sometimes blessed
by being somewhere I'm not.**

19 April 2018

= = = = == =

O divine immaturity,
to wonder about identity
at my age

 The sky holds
so many secrets still.

19 April 2018

SOUL

**When the brain
runs out of think
I'll still be here,
the soul says.
I'll help you cross the street
and say your prayers for you
while everything sleeps.**

19 April 2018

= = = = =

Provoke
an opportunity
a flower
in the maze
maybe not the center
but yellow,
shows the way in.

Skin
at the center,
the sky's a ballroom again,
dance with the sun
naked behind clouds,
the time is ripe,
right, time,
you created it.

19 April 2018

= = = = =

**Be as lucid as
a child's desires,
gender-free and absolute
and salty sweet.**

20 April 2018

= = = = =

I never went fishing
but a fish caught me,

it sailed above me
I swallowed its shadow

and now I am a part
of its trajectory, its haughty

sea, its incalculable
purposes. Its salt is me.

20 April 2018

= = = = =

Frost in July
and all the flowers died

it said on the dream screen
though I was awake
or as awake as I ever am,
ever can.

The frost
came from a chunk of Arctic icefield
currented south and wedged against the coast.
I was the coast (you are too),
that much I knew.

splendor solis,
light of the sun reflected off the ice
poured healingly into our blood—

light does—but it was cold.
It is cold.

20 April 2018

= = = = =

for Charlotte

What you have given me
is an always of the mind,
a castle risen from the sea,
a sea of pure breath
from which words are born,
take shape, clear, closer
to the truth the longer they go on,
the truth they come from
always, and always you.

20 April 2018

[first poem in the little tartan notebook]

A MEETING IN PSYCHOTOPIA

*I'm very good at wanting. But fortunately for the world
(and perhaps even for me) I'm much better at wanting
than I am at getting.*
—Jacob Samuels

I, all of me
as many as I am
or can
 converge
on the pubic bone.

Thence I migrate me
through all the comfy
suburbs of the heart,
sweet gonad chapels,
midnight pools,
noisy kitchen where
meat's self gets made,

 marching, me,
all ways at once, fast,
hod and trowel,
hose and manifesto
until the blood of Whom
We Seek
 swigs free
from the salt of me,

breathes in
 my sense.
And in the hedgy palace
all-enthorned where
Who thinks,
 Who welcomes
into the bed of the book
and takes my meanings in.

21 April 2018

= = = = =

When the dream
stint is said
the day bows in.
I have a Middle
European meaning
safe in how I think.
Talk. Kiss the hand.
Imagine dangerous,
reality catches fire
easily when you think
anything. Images
somersault out of
things. Spin,
curvet in air, flit
away. I tilt
my head in homage.
Kiss the hand.

21 April 2018

= = = = =

**The chair is lower than the table,
the floor lower than the chair.
And so it goes, until
through dirt and rock and aquifer
and magma we come unscathed
to the diamond at the center
of the planet. They call it fire
but we know better, we have ben
there so many times before.**

21 April 2018

= = = = =

Notice how things are
always coming back.
Music as usual
shows the way.
Remember the ferris
wheel the merry-go-round
.

Don't think wheels
are for going places.
Wheels are for staying
roght here till the world
comes to its senses and
comes home to you.
A wheel is a sort of marriage—
hence the use of wedding rings.

21 April 2018

= = = = =

**The nerve knows
follow the nerve
through all the subways
of the city you are**

**she said, the goddess Ratio
her golden bangles
tickling me awake
as if even the sunshine**

had to be written down.

22 April 2018

= = = = =

Spoiling the dance
by dancing,
spoiling the song
by chiming in—

I am no Kierkegaard
yet I have seen
whole forests shudder
at some upstart tree,

I know that my path
leads through underbrush
deep mulch, moorlands,
sight of the sea—

I am no Greek
but I have cried my *Thalassa*,
Thalassa! at the first glimpse
of it, always rolling inward

towards me, the sea in whose
presence I am always alone.

22 April 2018

= = = = =

**Unwrap the necessity
and find the will inside it,
the desire the fire
that makes the engine run.
Need becomes
a nickname for identity,
family and choosing,
just life on earth.
Where we all live,
trying. Trying to be,**

22 April 2018

= = = = =

**Weavers cut the thread
at some point, have to
or their work would go on forever**

**like householders taking out the garbage
every night and every week
and no end to that disposal.**

**There;s always something left to throw away.
And already they have woven
cloth enough to cover all the earth.**

23 April 2018

THE MAN WHO

outran his desires
stood there
on the grassy brink
looking down the deep valley.

It is a great comfort
to expect nothing,
not even from the trees.

I have been led
here for some reason
he thinks. thinks
he knows the reason,

is not sure. Movement
down below, hikers,
gleaners? He listens,
thinks he hears
music, still not sure.

Nothing moves now—
whoever they were
he knows he doesn't
need to know. Enough.
The leaves are green.

23 April 2018

= = = = =

When things are a certain color
they go away. The next card
shows a swirl of black smoke
who talks to you. *Stay here*
she says, *your destiny rides you*
in little footsteps, don't struggle
so much, endure your rider.
The last card toys with red
like a child playing with fire.
Of course the child will get
burned at little, ouch, that's
what fire is for. How color burns,
reminds us of who we are.
But you cheat, you flip over
one more card—blue. The sky
always poking its head in—
if you're not careful the sun will rise.

23 April 2018

= = = = =

**Resemblances deceive
yet here I am.
Almost the same
as yesterday,
another page turned
in some same book.
Admire my persistence
in veing almost me.**

23 April 2018

= = = = =

If I could write
the actual colors
what flag would show you
on what deserted beach
sea-breezy, wide,
speaking what language?
There must in any set
be one crayon truer
than all the others
and from its mark
all the other colors come
as from the instance
the general arises.
Or is my secret Bible wrong?

23 April 2018

= = = = =

**Seven black birds
flying close together
make the form
of a man walking
quick on our lawn.
He flies away.
Leaves me curious,
almost anxious
to learn what he had
to say if he lingered.
If he had been at all.**

23 April 2018

FATHER'S WAY

1.

**Counting the stones
he skipped,
 skimmed
across the Delaware,
yjtee skips, four, five
sometimes till
out of sight they sank,
how many?**

2.

**I was never any good at that.
I could pitch a ball
accurately, but that's
about it. But he!**

3.

**Don't know why
he loved horses,
drew them on napkins
but never rode,
never bet at the track,
once a year bought a chance**

on the Irish Sweepstakes,
more about money
than horses,
more about Ireland
he never knew.

4.
Never went there,
thought about it,
never went anywhere
mostly, just his old
rivers, East most
of the year, then
in summer Delaware.

5.
And at the end
the little inlet at Oceanside
peopled by sea birds.
Why go anywhere
when a window
lights up a whole world
and a swan floats by?

24 April 2018

= = = = =

**Give people
what they already
have,
let them
touch you. What
else is there to do?**

24 April 2018

= = = = =

**Sunrise now
after the first
even faintly
mild day of Spring.
Promising daylight
trapped in bare
treetops. Green
thinking soon, soon.**

24 April 2018

**I let you see me any time you please
you can put my picture
on postage stamps (remember those?)
or Tarot cards, I'm easy,**

**my meanings are as clear as bone
as soft as skin as permanent as light**

even at night I am illumined by the light of your eyes.

24 April 2018

(thinking of the "Meditator of Roquepertuse")

= = = = =

Is there a word
left in rain
I have to tell it?

The lights are still on
though the light is here,
I am alone
with my mistakes

flu, medicine, sky
grey in the northwest.
The legs ache as if
I had walked here all the way.

25 April 2018

= = = = =

Trees talk
through the ground
we talk
through the air

trees have roots
we have words—
each carries mysterious
healings we don't guess.

But here we are.
And they are larger,
more of them than of us,
I hear them singing.

25 April 2018

PAPILLONS

**Small moves
chittering on the piano—
butterflies
turn into bats,
we saw white
houses for them
over the river
up in Catskill,
children come along
in daylight and see
only the houses
nailed to the trees.
Later the butterflies
will come out
fluttering all over.
Size matters. Color
matters, we say
bats are blind
because they see
with their ears
but butterflies (fast
ripple on the keyboard)
listen to colors.
Come to the feast!**

25 April 2018

= = = = =

**Daunted by daylight
vampire eye
fond of feasting
on the unseen—**

**even the ordinary
hidden in clothes, even
the insides of rural
frame houses at midnight,
not a light showing.**

**Nut now everything
is seen but nothing known.
The real gas vanished
into the illusory,
the things around us
that daylight shows.**

25 April 2018

= = = = =

**The stairs keep going up
so many steps
in each step
the grain of the wood
grows clearer**

**soon each tread seems
to eb a window
onto a country
I must enter,
with all this climbing,
a door, evedry step
its own doorway
into the grain of the world.**

**Why have I never seen this before?
Why am I climbing now
towards midnight
this wooden mountain
that lives in what I thought
is my house, but who knows?**

25 April 2018

= = = = =

**One hears
one's own.
Pulse.**

**Can't
be healthy
overhearing
inside you.**

**Those drums
trumpets hail
a never-ending
resurrection.**

**a new religion
between
you and the pillow.**

Roll over. Sleep.

26 April 2018

= = = = =

No more dreams
no more staying
overnight at friends'
houses, no more
searching the street
or the sky for signs.
No more chit-chat,
no more clothes.
The rhapsody of sleep
is over now. Wake
with sweaty neck,
empty ears. With hands
still clenched, anxious
miracle of now.

26 April 2018

= = = = =

**Half of my day's work
is done by the horizon,
the other half by my breath's
intermittent ecstasies.
What an easy job
it is to work so hard.**

26 April 2018

= = = = =

I worry the far
away the near
at hand's reach
chew over distances,
doubt. How far
things are! And
suddenly they're here,
headlights glaring,
lean on the horn.
Tomorrow blurts
into today. Who
can resist the obvious?
But all we really
love is what's not
actually here
or there. Or any
where but you.

26 April 2018

= = = = =

**The wind came up.
Ignore the design
just follow the colors
by feeling your fingers
through your hair.
Then you'll be there.**

26 April 2018

= = = = =

A Cosmology

Stroke by stroke
leaning on the bridge
you build rivers.

Skies you build
by staring up
until something happens
to the dark.

That is they.
That is how they come
to know.

2.
Another time you read some book,
mist falls through the air
settles, dampens the page.
You build a story
from what you guess you see.
You enter it and follow
all the way till the sun comes out.

3.

The sun spoils all your tricks.

It's like a typical opera

a;; the good stuff in the first act

and some more right at the end

but in between it's an empty

playground, you're crying,

there's nobody there.

26 April 2018

= = = = =

**I am the unknown celebrity
walking through your midst.
I drop holly onto Christmas Cribs
to give you a hint. At Easter
I lie unmoving on the lawn,
late-winter deer come lick me.
You see me all summer
dressed to the nines
among the skimpy sunbathers.
Come shake my hand and I
will make you world-famous too.**

26 / 27 April 2018

= = = = =

**A current is a thing that runs against us.
We leap upstream,
we are the salmon people,
bones in our faces
from a race before yours.**

**Everything is difficult for us
always, hard where we work,
hard to sleep. Hard to be.
And so we leap up, joyous
against the flow. All
yjayt comes natural to us
is going against the grain,
smiling, the sun's salt in our blood,
leaping, never far, but leaping.**

27 April 2018

SUNT LACRIMAE RERUM

**Rain enters the rapture
the picture
shows another window
looking in
on this woman at her devoirs
eyelids fluttering at times
as if to hold back tears**

**Rain everywhere inside, prayer
is like that, it prays
for everyone, it's only hood
only works if it is compassion
prays for the near and far, the sick
the dead
tears
are part of the system**

**Now the window
shows the ice
fields of Saturn
then the banks of the Neva
in winter by the cathedral
and yet another woman walking
this one you know
you call out her name**

she turns and smiles
her fur-trimmed hood
wolf fur glistens with rain
you see that she too
has been crying

You look away from the window
you remember what they
(dear Christ, they, the many, the they)
used to say about tear-jerker movies:
not a dry
eye in the house
and they would laugh at such feeling

You look around you now
do you really live here?
why aren't you crying too?
what makes you special?
there is dust on the picture frame
around the face of your father
and how could this cup you hold
be dusty too
while you're drinking coffee from it?
Is dust a kind of weeping too?

27 April 2018

= = = = =

**The wood grain shows
an image of the tree
from which it comes—**

**a picture of not what we see
looking up at it but the tree's
image of itself, the truest,**

**self-image accurate angelic
rendering of what it is,
just like you and me.**

27 April 2018

CLACH NA BRATACH

1.Look at the through
among all her other prepositions—
what does it mean,
a stone she sat *on*?
Who made the world
perplexes children,
who made this stone, though,
that hard theology.
Was it on water?
Some have seen a lion, full-grown,
licking a human's wound
and healing it. His tongue
was blue, his claws
were too, he sang
a little as he healed,
a green song.
Others think the stone
itself heals itself
continuously and all
those who sit or stand
astride it. Truth
is hard to come by
in these times,
 but the skin
usually knows.

2.

Does it invite us
to explore
its prepositions?

It seems so, often,
but be sure—

 it doesn't do
to burst in *upon*
unwelcome spaces,

terrain protects itself—
dear God the geysers of it!
The glaciation!

as once in Wyoming I swear
I brushed my hair against
a low flying star
and my scalp bears the scorch mark still.

3.

Anything you touch
you carry home.
Your senses ultimate palimpsest.

4.

I worry about the words,
the way and where
they wonder us.
Without them would we stay
at home? or always on
the move? I wonder,
stupid as a child
reading a book, in love
with the next page
where someone waits
I think is me he
thinks is he. Her.
Whom. I imagine
stumbling over an un-
familiar word
and being glad,
another clue
to the single mystery.
Look it *up*,
where else could it be?

5.

Accurate longitude demanded chronometers—
the books all say so,
we need a clock to know where we are.
73 W 54. The stone
in our backyard knows this too.
I stand near the stone
admiring its tenacity,
it endures soil and grass and grazing.
I think we people
are more like stones
than animals,
can never stop being who where we are
and even, most of us,
being good at it.
But animals can *go*,
their longitude is measured by desire.

6.

So did I mean it
when I asked them *in*?
How far if so
were they free to go?
Are they still traveling
out of sight,
tunneling the lugubrious nowheres [?]
down there,
 among the sleeping scholars
of the bone [?] Sorbonne?
What I suspect is this:
I have no more right
to go *into* me
than I have to go into you.
I own no patent
on my mystery,
no special heal-all
for my ignorance.
The dark inside me
doesn't belong to anyone.

7.

The line of shadow
points to where I work.
Don't go there,
it's Saturday,
the parking lot is empty,
the crows came *back*,
the heron fishes in the stream.
The Lord rested
but the shadow still is pointing,
then a little cloud passes
and hides sun, shade, direction.
NO time now. Unless
for a moment out there
the world is a stone.

8.

I think of the sacred
stone of my wife's people,
the leader of the clan
found it cracked one day—
she showed me a photo—
but still went into battle.
Fatal. Why didn't he
she asks believe the stone?
What else is a stone
for but to tell?

28 April 2018

ROUGH BREATHING

1.

Phone off

the telegon,

asper (spiritus)

hope for home.

Blood leaves the body

as breath. Fact.

check out the laundry list,

the Kings need clothes.

What Josiah didn't

Hezekiah did,

the rule of law

reached into the sky.

I will give you my Bible yet

to set you free, I say,

but I have first to unscrew

every letter from the law

and every law from the wall.

Then you will see my lions

galloping through space

playing with a speech tower—

my house of prayer.

Silver lions of the voweled breath!

Arcane remembrances,

blue tongues lick the tops of all your heads.

2.

Angry bibles sleeping on a bench—
my church is Wednesday with spread knees,
when everybody has a middle name again
and we knew what Hebrew really means.

3.

As camphor to closets
so breath to a book.
Elsewise moldy words,
more moods than meanings.
Allow me, Madame,
to adjust your stole
make sure its pashmina
covers all your skin,
the neck is delicate
and the subtle wind
is always leaning in.
Thank you, Sir,
I have at home
another animal all my own,
it will take soft
muffins from your hand,
and never bite.
I call it Spiritus Asper,
the letter H,
'rough breathing']

the boys say
but how it warms
my cold throat,
come feel for yourself.

4.

Question naked,
answer garmented in guess.
You've seen the ads,
they take a word
and sell it back to you
but then you can never
use it again.

They own the phone company too,
the internet and parlez-vous,
no discourse safe from discount,
and walls with leprosy too,
and words, and all
the armadillos in Leviticus
can't cure the infected word.

At least a poem tries to rinse your mouth,
or dampen at least a patch of underwear.
So that you'll know
it's come and gone
and for a moment you're not all dry again.

5.

Dream made me do it,
sneered me awake
between 5 and 6,
barely light, afraid
suddenly of telephones.
Some woman in Berlin,
a man in Valenzuela,
no, that's the pitcher,
I don't know what country anybody's from.
The freighted caravan
is coming from everywhere,
it's all my fault
help, help the telephone,
spiritus asper, the *jota* of Aragon,
they drum on cardboard cartons in Brazil.

6.

It was so good to wake.
Stumble up the hallway
stare into the grey
argumentation of the light.
Just follow the words,
they'll lead you home,
you'll sleep again
in your own bed
with a west wind warm beside you.

7.

It doesn't work
if you understand too soon.
You're not *made* of lightning, [?]
boss, it just happens
through you, and when it does
lights all the rest of us up—
and you remember the old Irish deity,
the truth that is
so hard to see,
is the only
truth for me
and so on, lots of rough breathing,
glasses raised, it's gasped,
shocked in-laws shooing flies away
from such sweet misunderstandings.
And not a drop to drink in the house.

8.

Disaster is a bad star
dismal means
an evil, inauspicious day.
Every day we cross the Rubicon
come back with words in our lips
the people we meet think they understand.
and we think they do too
and soon Rome is on fire
and the knives comes out.

**Every time we wake we come to town.
Bless me, though, it's safe right now.
The rain-slick road is empty,
bless us, we heard the thunder in the night,
a great voice clearing its throat.**

**29 April 2018
(6:25 AM)**

= = = = =

When the last streetlights go out
the leafless trees
stand like great austere flowers
barely coloring the sky
that passes through them on the way to earth.
Of course we live in the sky,
that's why we're always studying,
moving around, birding it, raining it,
floating by. The Romans call us
humans, from *humus*, soil-dwellers,
to chain us down. But we knew better—
life on earth's a momentary perch,
a nap, a dream getting ready for the sky.
Or so the trees report this morning
and to my knowledge trees never lie.

29 April 2018

Telegon,

(as if angle or distance,
every proximity its own angle, as
I am 7° away from you)
the sound made the word up
as I woke from dream, or
the sound made *that* sound
necessary in the phrase that
waking breathed or said,
as if the phrase were an
equation and *telegon* the answer
to it. *This* is how religion
happens, a harp in your head
struck by the fingers of morning.

29 April 2018

= = = = =

**Things get heard
in the dawn watch.
Write them down
before they run away.**

**Dream is the bank
you're coming from, flush,
but there are robbers
everywhere.**

**Speak
to the nice paper,
tell it what you think.**

29 April 2018

HORTUS CONCLUSUS

**is that what it meant
growing all the while beside me
out there in the you-niverse
(the long, long poem all about you)?**

2.

**Bad English, good Latin,
a lock on the door
shaped like the letter H.
I mean the lock, we lack
gendered adjectives to be clear.
Everything else is His or Hers.
Door to the bathroom c;psed
garden of the mysteries.**

3.

**Even when you're young
it's all over. Clifftop
dwellings in Big Sur,
sleep with the sea.
And when was the last
time you watered your amaryllis?
Here, hold it on your lap while I pour.**

4.

Scant valor in virtue these days,
it's safe to be good
when they shoot on sight
and the gents on the jury
knew better than the judge.
Or the priest, scientist, scholar,
anybody who ever for a minute
peeked outside his box.

5.

But I'm in love with boxes,
the snug enclosure
scented with rose,
black frankincense, myrrh
from Nubia, faint
hint of sweat. Inside
is more intelligent than out.
Something brewing in the South.

29 April 2018

= = = = =

**Vortex,
 whirlpool
where men drown**

**but the wise man has no enemies
he is the enemy
that no one knows,**

**the rodent at the foot of State,
the fireman who starts the fire.
the detective who buries every clue.**

29 April 2018

= = = = =

**Soon they will forget me
the stone carnation
the tulip made of flesh**

**only my name will linger,
a story, a bullet is cheap,
a knife is free,**

**they'll keep humming my lovesong
hang my picture on th restaurant wall
where once i flirted with the waiters**

**but by then even i will have forgotten
who i was and who i am
and what i did and why they care.**

29 / 30 April 2018

= = = = =

**I am a hologram of your father
and stand before you wearing his words
you and your brothers
are right to feel holy terror--
it is not easy to be a man
lost in the jungle of religion and desire,
the fangs of righteousness
always at your heels.
So I gave come again
to erase the pages of your books
and set you free from flowers and fire--
you are the nobility of earth
naked and ignorant again
and ready at last to begin.**

29 / 30 April 2018

= = = = =

1.

Bone spur off the sky
touching earth this denser cloud
dancer, slim-footed
as spurted cold from a mountain
spring water
for and with us here on earth.

2.

She woke and the trees were gone
called her husband the phone was dead
went back to sleep and the trees came home.

Dreams sometimes forgive us
they know what we mean and forgive us anyhow.
Accept the absolution your night gives.

3.

Passionate the clutch
sweet ordinary light
no need for flowers or parades

all the music is built in
the hum in your head.
Awake anyhow, the gospel
is still to be written.

The sky is hungry for our mistakes—
if we weren't wrong
we would not be at all.

4.

I like it that the mailman
takes one thing away and leaves another—
he's the parish priest of the exchanges.

Every time I see his little truck
I feel less selfish, more
as if I too had something

to give back to the world
even though I too have to steer
from the wrong side of the car,

5.

The meager desires of old men
amuse Mephistopheles—
a girl, a kiss, some immortality—
even country boys want more than that.

He wonders if such a soul's worth snatching,
and (not for the first time) why he bothers—

is he too just some finicky old devil
craving for nothing juicier than
other people's used-up souls?

6.

So that's my problem, doctor.
I began by doubting the weather,
reading Auden, worrying in museums,
Christian anxieties, Jewish fantasies,
Himalayan answers. One by one
the pagan values dwindled
until I sat in the park)remember
parks?) alone with the mistakes I'd made,
capisce? which is Old Broojlynese for
I don't think you'll ever understand.

30 April 2018