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1.
Let the beginning begin
also, let it have
its own beginning now the day
waits for the night
to have its say and be done
pr at least be gone,
gone out to get more dreams
now we’re fresh out of dark.

2.
How can I tell you more than I have.
People don’t roller skate as much as they did
or go bowling. Something just went away
like religion from that novelist
who used to write about the quest for God
and wound up writing about real estate.
3.
Maybe there isn’t such a difference.
Maybe difference itself is the most precious thing we can own, or that owns us.
Difference is how the beginning has to begin.

1 June 2019
A little horn
lifted in the woods
or by the sea.

The sound of it
a certainty—

angels pour
out of any sound

all the coded
messages we need.

And the wind in trees
is our academy
of quiet talmudists
whispering true
and false interpretations—
choose, choose
the angels
who choose you.

You raise the horn
to our lips
and sound again—
look out to sea,
the fog is your friend.

1 June 2019
Things run away
that’s what they do.
They have their own agendas.
Things run away
and you would too
if you knew what they know.

1 June 2019
for Charlotte

At three a.m. you heard
a robin singing at our window
and told me so—
you are so much better than a dream.

2 June 2019
Heat and cold
hammer and anvil,
time is a headache
we get used to—
Wagner caught
the brilliant clanging
blacksmiths of Niflheim—
we have to hear them,
bear them, before
we can find our way home..

2 June 2019
Snatches of song instead

2.VI.19
CAUSATIONS

Hair wet from face wash
but who wants to know?
Things have cruel edges,
the penguin in the Florida zoo
remembers snow.
What I say I sing for him.

2 June 2019
New worlds coming—
practical adjustments
ethical disclaimers
Pyrex measuring cup
pale window shades.
But keep your screen
doors firmly locked—
the news knows how
to sneak through mesh.
And fox urine will keep
deer off your lawn—
I wonder how I happen
to think I know that?

2 June 2019
This kind of sun today
makes the trees look faded—
the world had a hard night last night
and I alone of men did have no dream.
Or if I had, They did not let me know it.

2 June 2019
Aged burins
gouge new wood
with even older
alphabets.

A sign
over a door,
time’s quiet victory.

2 June 2019
What the world says is onme way to work. Be a car. the way you always wanted, black and fast, road uncoiling out from your desires, high mountains, valleys, or. It tells you Bird, be a bird. Or tells you Stop here a while. What would you? Only the bird knows.

3 June 2019
Use up the new before the old is ready to begin.

That’s what parties are for, happy hours, Facebook.

The new has to be and be used up, all of it before the real begins. How it starts again, take off your clothes, all of them and go to sleep.

3 June 2019
What have we left to decide?
The moon comes up
the sun goes down
the sea keeps coming towards the land
the river finds its way.
How useless I am in this opera,
not even a chorus part to sing
(the birds and frogs take care of that)
so all that’s left for me to do
is shout my delight at all the rest.

3 June 2019
CLOUDS COMING IN

Renegade reality—
I want to weave my nest
out of accurate thread:
precise memories,
desire in hard focus.
Twigs of time,
to feel at home
among all these
urgencies of the actual
so the waves of the vague
will never seep in.

3 June 2019
ANNIVERSARY: A GRATITUDE

for Charlotte

In a phone call from Kathmandu you would be my wife. And in the second or two of delay between the Himalayas and the Catskills a joy leapt up in me that has never faded. You are the happiness of my life, the one who brought it all together, brought me together. And now today the twenty-sixth anniversary of our wedding (quiet Methodist in a sandinista stole, your dear mother and father, only those in what was already our living room) the joy keeps rivering endless under all the accidents of stress and time. twenty-six years, one for each letter of the alphabet, but they’re all about you. You made me new. And I write more, do more, feel more since you came to center me. But how selfish that sounds, as if marriage’s measure is what’s in it for me.
But what can I say? You make me tell the truth and the truth is the power of your will, your imagination, your intellect, kindness, love— you knew me into myself at last.

3 June 2019
Snowman dreams of odd anxieties, 
small ones, remedies in order, 
packages must be opened at a certain time 
only in a certain wayfull name forgotten 
of a one-time friend, melts by morning.

4 June 2019
Things go right
songs turn left.
Quiet forest
caught in between
where other times
real freedom is.

4 June 2019
Things also break—
from them we learn
to say that about
hearts too, that word
half organ and half self
that sometimes holds us
in its grasp and sometimes breaks—
fragility is power.

4 June 2019
At one AM they put on music from *Parsifal,* the announcer assured us he was the same as Percival of King Arthur. Wagner impatiently agreed. The night walked with him down the hall to sleep.

4 June 2019

*(Whose are these voices in the inmost chamber?)*
He looked down left
an arrow pointing to his heart.
Was it freeze-frame
and an instant later would pierce
its way to that mysterious
target he held in his chest.
Or was it just a pointer,
reminder, an ad for introspection?
What goes on in there
concerns the world
and the world won’t let him forget it.

4 June 2019
Strips of palm leaf
given to the faithful.
Make two slits
in a long strip,
wind a short strip through it:
a palm cross
to last the year.

2.
Religion, as the Romans knew,
is all about remembering.
Remembering the present:
tuneful mindfulness.

4 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM ANNANDALE

This linden leaf
grew here, the only one,
I send it to you,
something of now
lost into then.
All postcards are sad
even if they say Again.

4 June 2019
The brain was still working
but the mind had stopped.
Far across a big field
a woman was talking to her cow.
A crow kept coming and going
as if it were really moving.

5 June 2019
I look out the window
maybe I’m imagining the whole thing.
Glasses on or off the green’s the same.
But why would I make up so many leaves?

5 June 2019
(Is there anybody Rome?
I need some Greece,
but not too much
I’ve got rushing to do)

5 June 2019
When I look at the old paintings
it isn’t music that happens
but the other side of music,
a shaped silence.
Not just Rubens or Van Gogh or Hokusai,
any image of the world that was
but still is. You taste it
even after you look away.

6 June 2019
Be abrupt, like sunlight.
As once you felt
my hand on your back
while I was still far across the room,
everything is close, is now.
Sunlight again, eluding cloud.

6 June 2019
My flag is two greens.
A lawn
band of sunlight band of shade.

6 June 2019
Wasn’t I supposed
to mean something once,
like a violin
or a bus from Fresno
to the coast? Marble
steps of a museum,
Brahms first piano quartet?
Wasn’t there ink and bread,
blankets, sand castles
enough for every child?
Wasn’t I supposed to be a child?

6 June 2019
The day upon.  
Closes in on the mind.  
Spaces. Species.  
Reasons to be together.  
Littoral, he said,  
we are made by, made to  
be by the seashore.  
Inland is danger, madness,  
turning to stone.  
And they call their music rock.

7 June 2019
Nothing is said of the sea—what pain did Jonah follow—what was the refusal of road to touch the land to Nineveh? That needed boat and whale? Those stories larger than geography—what was the ship? Where was the sea?

7 June 2019
Mild disorder of the stairs to climb up wood in another city.

7 June 2019
A POSTCARD AS IF FROM CUTTYHUNK

Moonlight on the beach
is a thin silk shirt
on your shoulders
a little shivery.

You think:
We are still being born.

7 June 2019
What does it mean
to be here
when here is moving
over the sea?

(after 5 hours hard driving
Charlotte brought us here)

7 June 2019
New Bedford
And I am with my mother again,
this lake she taught me,
the endless around and around of the sea
she gave me,

gives me,
the wordless memory
of her glare
at the waves nudging the sand.

7 June 2019
_on the Cuttyhunk ferry_
(from a dream on Cuttyhunk)

*The soul is made of words*
I said, concluding, concerning
a playful discourse of two Hungarians
in English, but using Magyar words
to specify emotions and sensations.

And told them dialect differences are not
about telling that you come from Gorz or
Glopf— they are your soul’s speech,
evidence of who you are. The soul is
made of words.

8 June 2019
SEA WINDOW

Sea’s there, I’m here.
Wrong. Sea’s here,
I’m wherever it is.

8 June 2019
I slept only on the edges of sleep, 
tired as I was, till the first light 
striped the window wall faintly 
and I stepped to the center. 
Unusual, patrolling the borders of sleep. 
The dark said nothing—
I think it was waiting till I woke. 

8 June 2019
Boundaries of weather—
wind moves us around.

The narrow vastness
between one island and another
—Cuttyhunk to Gayhead, say,
who can I ask, who can play
my Goethe in this Paradise,
asking lyrically uncanny questions?
The clock works, there is no phone—
and now and then some voices down the hill.
The distance consoles me,
space around my shoulders long caress.

8 June 2019
Catch the light in my cupped hands
I do not feel entitled to this beauty,
I crouch in the corner, agape at the sea,
hoping it’s all right to be me
or be me here. End of confession—
now come the boasts— language owns the sky!

8 June 2019
Where is the wolf?
In the woods.
Boy wolf or girl?
A wolven, fair,
soft-furred, and most
self-conscious, as all
wolves are, amour-propre
gleaming in her yellow eyes.

8 June 2019
= = = = =

Quiet waves. Cold wind, hot sun.
You decide. The miraculous
ordinary is with us again,
smell of the sea.

8 June 2019
CAMINO

People walking make a street.  
A palimpsest of human passage  
on the way to a view from the hill.  

8 June 2019
Walking there, the way weather
comes to us, worms its way
through the words, with us, here,
on the littoral where life begins,
labia of the sea.

Well worth the pilgrimage
to which the Middle Ages
likened human life,
one footstep at a time to where?
Calvary? Compostela?
This glacial remnant rock beneath me?

8 June 2019
So she said the land
shapes the sea,
thighs compelling,
Isthmus of the obvious,
O praline [?] of her back!

She said it was the art
planets are meant to make,
bringing mind to be mind
and mind all things,
and mind too as you’d mind a child.
It all means to take care.

9 June 2019
I looked at a woman in dream
while we pretended
to talk about current sculpture,
new annex to the museum,
the size of steel.

I can’t remember the artists
we pretended to discuss,
woke with only the meanings
of what they meant,
ocean, landscape, art and even
what the word ‘new’
might actually mean.

9 June 2019
Sturdy mind 
avaulting us,
to walk the sea
a process of combinations [?][—
we’re all curators here,
all fiddle with calculus
we all embrace the moon—
Samothrace knew the west of us—
and the only rule of counting
is Do not tell.

9 June 2019
Numbers are sacred, 
hide in their names—
ever dare to touch 
the actual number, 
five might slay you, 
and you’d drown in six.

9 June 2019
Sunday morning on the island gets so cosmological—why don’t I just go to church and be done with it? There is no church there is only the beach, the sea.

9 June 2019
The grackle gobbles
the sparrow pecks.
I scatter my words
in hopes of customers
wings or not wings
freeloading on the railings of my thought.

9 June 2019

(“je sème à tous oiseaux”)

= = = = =

Let it be life
that eats life.
The air so still
the island so quiet
the only difference
between night and day
is light.

9 June 2019
Quarrel walked across the sea
or said he did.
Lies are no different
from the truth he said
all just things we get to say.

Quarrel was Irish
and lived on the Moon
or said he was and said he did.
Quarrel likes to pick a fight with you
just you, so later you kiss and make up.
Quarrel likes to kiss or says he does
though he admits there are things he likes better.
Quarrel hates green peas and butter
mayonnaise and alcohol
because it makes cheerful people,
Quarrel hates that, loves a gloomy smile,
the mailman’s wordless greeting,
an empty envelope, a shake
of a friend’s cold hand.
Quarrel lives on the other side of things,
has a lot of things to live beyond.
Quarrel saw Venus Evening Star
alone last night— above the sea
and swears she winked at him.
No other light there was but she
he claims, and blinked and winked
and called my name. Alas
she was right above another island,
not this island, this island me
where I take my stand and wave
my arms, those magic wands, above the sea.
Quarrel keeps a pebble in his pocket
to buff his pants with, Be smooth,
be smooth, bass-baritone, be smooth
as opera and loud as you can—
Quarrel gives himself lessons as he goes.
When you’re tired of quarrel you’re tired of life
he says, misquoting Dr. Johnson,
but Quarrel has his own views on history,
mythology, Biblical theology, food.
Quarrel thinks that Noah was a woman,
the Ark her body, the flood the acid flow
of history all round the planet but a human came,
stood up and cried Let the rain come down.
Quarrel thinks fun is the creepiest thing of all,
the word doesn’t even translate, he says,
into any decent human language, let alone Tibetan.
Quarrel is always getting ready for something else,
something he calls this, just this, right now.
So Quarrel says just being is doing enough—
yet he seems to be doing things all the time.
If you say so he’ll tell you it’s just your imagination—
imagination is the answer to most problems.

Endure the obvious he writes on his letterhead
on which he scribbles love notes hard to read—
they could be to anybody or nobody,
how many of you (he wonders) even can read.
Quarrel just sits there most of the time,
happiest man in the world — shun action,
pleasure is the bane of happiness.

9 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR PLW

The sea was Anglican today
quiet and very deep
sunlight made its vestments
decent green, a Sunday
after Trinity. On the radio
a choral piece by William Byrd
as if they had the same sea up in Boston.
3 AM

The intercession
the dark of night
comes from the withdrawal
all over the land
of mind from sensory concerns
and its absorption into prayer.
The night is made of prayer.
Prayer, that exquisite intertwining
of fear and desire and poetry
and the child prays by dreaming.

9 June 2019
A word be blacker than a cloud.
In the middle night
the thought awakens—
the decent folk, the stars,
Who am I lingering by being?
Where is the question anyway?

Light on at night
meant trouble in the house.
Awake and thinking
is bad as that.

\`
9 June 2019
DROLMA-LA

I prayed to Tara
Tara smiled
said Do not ask
me for solutions.
I am the solution.

9 June 2019
We are ants
under the table
praying the householder
does not notice us.

9 June 2019
Faring in the words
the tang of lingo
salts this sea-breeze

news just in from Paris, Genoa, the isles.
The thing about the sea
is everything is here.

2.
The word
woke up
late.
   It slept
to the sea sound,
the ever-arriving,
worry not, it’s
always coming in.

10 June 2019
Sleep and waking—

what else

    anybody
does an old man have?

And the birds.

10 June 2019
A point is grand
to wander from.
Sticking to it
bores the mind
worse than school

10 June 2019
Renewal, or the real—
rapture is regular
among the aspens,

roar of sea under bird flight,
rufous towhee, hidden tern.
The sand only a few yards away.

The way life squawks
whenever it gets a chance,
seagull and semaphore,

not a boat on the bay.

10 June 2019
OLD FOLK SONG

But everything swims by
on God’s own wheels,
we cook our pastry
by the moon’s hot light—

sing that, you Baptists,
and gargle your prayers,
I myself am the river
you bathe in, fluent as sin.

10 June 2019
HANDWRITING

I have to turn
learn, do it
like a child again—

those muddy footprints
I meant as words
no one can read.

Slow thought to pace of hand?
more time inscribe
less time decipher?

10 June 2019
Over the years
I’ve spent a year of time
at this very desk
before this vista
of sea beyond island
and all at once
all this is now.

10 June 2019
EL VIEJO

When will the waiting
turn to wonder?
The miracles accumulate
so even I observe them,
and rejoice?

I am the wall
the writing’s on.
I can tell it by their faces
as they look at mine,
*a silent moan will cross their eyes*—

that’s how I know
and who I know I am.

Figure of fun, figure of fear,
Satan wearing Santa’s beard.

10 June 2019
Beginning now
an oboe or
viola d’amore
something from back
of time’s barn
when we all spoke Venetian
and played mumblety-peg
with finite verbs,
when I could tell you
that I love you
and somehow that
would be enough of a song
if you kept smiling.

10 June 2019
ON THE EARTHQUAKE IN OHIO

Things are not where they were,.
The great serpent of the middle
has flexed her spine, thrown off
the failed sciences carried on above.
It has changed in Ohio. Her eye
they call it, but it is her sacred womb
to which they once brought to be healed
all those the day of reason had sickened.
Her womb like our womb is in the head.

10 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR M.I.

The stones of this hill
I listen to them nightly
they speak a dialect
a little older than mine,

the glacier brought them here
and taught them the rudiments
of meaningful mineral discourse
your Anglo alchemists understood,

these rocks still remember Winthrop
pinkish man with good vocabulary.
And you too — they hope you’ll come back
soon and help brush up their grammar—

verbs of motion tend to baffle them.

10 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR P.J.

I can’t forget the day the Fuji blimp floated over Cuttyhunk the week the Red Sox won the Series. It came from the East, as if old Zeppelin himself puffed it this way from the Bodensee. Slow, immense, words all over it came up the sky over Nashawena bringing to the smallest town in Massachusetts (Gosnold, named for Shakespeare’s pal, first explorer of Prospero’s Isle) the actual World Series trophy itself, and lo! we were part of the world, and no one ever after could accuse baseball of being a sport when it is our only true religion.

10 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR S.G.

When the tide runs out
the rocks are still slippery.

Swimming is easy. Getting
to the surf is hard.

Why does this fact
remind me of so many things?

10 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR T.P.

These waves whisper
a dialect of their own
halfway between
Magyar and the moon.

Come listen to them,
you will understand
the meanings of these things,
these sea.

I suspect you are an admiral of it
or maybe their appointed messenger.

10 June 2019
ALBORADA PELIGROSA

Rain and chill fog
another register of rapture
coaxing the quiet to insist

In it the special brightness comes
to see so clear and nothing there
pure seeing in the silver light

birds swoop in and out of visibility
one blackbird stays.

11 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR J.N.

There is moorland on the island
up over this hill and down to the west
where you can see America in the glad distance
but right here in heather the Monuments
of English Poetry abound: rufous
towhee, fish crow, grackle, deer,
always a masterpiece near at hand.
Then walk down to China on the sand.
a swan or two, an egret, and my favorite,
a heron nesting, white-bellied, green cap.

11 June 2019
I picked up a broken stone
and found the Eleventh Commandment:

Be good to birds and everybody else
then go back to bed.

11 June 2019
For Athens was a slave culture
and women of no account...

By Ocean River
to turn the tide

bear us all out from
the Mediterranean

into the Emancipation,
the civilian autonomy

the actual sea.
Hellas farewell!

it is time for us to live
for the love of everybody else.

11 June 2019
Raindove
mourning on the lawn
in fog

all grief
calls out to the other
come mate

with me
or else come be me
so at least I can rest.

11 June 2019
All after comes
a brightness to the fog,
makes me shiver to remember
how out of it came one day
Qalambas I'll call him
the man from Genoa,
woodpile, fountain pen,
admiral on the go, pious key
opened up for us the strangest door.
And who but a Jew ever bore
Christ anywhere anyhow?

11 June 2019
Thd health of habits
hides us in and from
the forest of the peculiar
ordinary. king and landlord,
God help us all. and where
were we headed inland
when we first found out?

11 June 2019
They aren’t rabbits they’re shades,
dismembered memories
of the not too recent dead—
a lustrum or two has to pass
before our Known Ones—loved
or otherwise—break down into
quick glimpses on an overgrown lawn.

11 June 2019
Quiet gloaming
nobody around

from up here on the hill
you can hear the sea

all you can hear is the sea

The sea is a runner
who brings you the news
from everywhere

listen listen
the sea is your secret skin.

11 June 2019
It is cold where we think we are, rheumatic patriots of a hidden planet mouths full of books we have eaten and digested so thoroughly that their meanings became what we thought we wanted to say, native women, coco palm, hills full of silver, sunshine all night long. Because we are wrong always, and Eros’s beautiful arrows turn out to be no fit armor against the earthquake of the actual.

11 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK ISLAND FOR T.B.

You look all over,
nobody around
so you relax
and smile at the sea.

Something big-sisterly about it
and the way it smiles back.

You’re sitting on a rough boulder,
a glacial afterthought, but see,
you don’t have to be comfortable
to be happy. Love too
is always trying to tell you that.

12 June 2019
THE USE

Where Have you been
hiding he said to his pen
he said to his hammer
his knife. How can I do
without you, he whimpered,
I am a wielder of tools,
nothing more, You are a tool
yourself, his shovel explained,
just rejoice and be glad someone
uses you as you use me.

12 June 2019
I can dream as well as you can
said the spider to the Sun
and went ahead and did so—
the web she wove worked
all through the night
and not even the Sun can do that.

12 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK ISLAND FOR G.Q.

Philosophy is the last
refuge of the horny mind —
the sea told me that
then washed the thought away
before I could understand.

12 June 2019
Where is the wimple where is the coif
I know the Sun’s a saintly nun
in this crowded schoolroom of the earth—

*the clothes she wears are in our eyes*
rods and cones spin colored silks
to dress the naked truth she shows us.

12 June 2019
A word
is what one waits on
like a courtier
before a sovereign queen.
From these fragm..

some Palatine anthology

subsists.

12 June 2019
Never do we get
anything but fragments of a whole.
Or we are the whole
they come to complete?

12 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK ISLAND FOR A.L.

Heard a soft voice saying

*I forgive you.*

Thought it was you
but when my eyes opened
I saw it was the sea.

12 June 201
DE MUSICA

Mendelssohn *Octet* happening my head
sunlight on a hardwood floor
lawnmower aria on a neighbor lawn.

12 June 2019
Engine forthright notation
how we read our way
through the score — noise,
neighbors, news, nights,
nakednesses—
the Egyptians
called it a fish, N, nun
in Hebrew too, because
it is always swimming away.

12 June 2019
No girls on the island
Only women. And children.
And several species of men.

Mostly the air is moving,
mostly the sea is still.
Don’t trust me on this.

12 June 2019
I have come
far enough into life
to believe my own myths.

12 June 2019
The photons flood together
through the window
a sea of light

the plan is the collective
we do not know them one by one
but only all by all

just as we can’t know
a piece of hydrogen
but only the sea

always the sea is all we know.

12 June 2019
The Horaces and the Curetes
fought a famous battle.
Painters looked on from centuries ahead
fancying that bloodshed had
some relation to their own
disgruntlements, rebellions, hopes.
Warriors, bare swords, cringing maidens,
pretty pictures of our endless grief.

12 June 2019
Evening is Eve’s time
and Adam comes after,
red clay thick with rising gun.

A river of sense
flows through the Bible
but none of us actually

know which way it flows.

12 June 2019
GALE

The orgulous wind
good-hearted though
with decent air
blusters in with the news.

But from where?
Where the leaves come from
and shadows
that chase after Sun ever0changing

as long as Her light lasts.
And rain, the sudden
beauty of it, pagan
morning on the island.

13 June 2019
Ambling through the house
on a wild wet morning,
no further than the door
that partner of our privacy
had blown open in the gale.
Charlotte closed it, just
before the hard rain came up,
Out there howl, in here creak.
the elm tree having fits outside.

13 June 2019
We gave things names. Things sometimes hand them back. Wind is such a little for all the things it knows and does.

13 June 2019
THE MOTIVATION

The mood of San Francisco in 1969
woman naked in her window
welcoming the ordinary purple of broad day,
sophomore sorcerers with borrowed amethysts
magicking at every corner.

It’s over,
the sacred ignorance of those days,
Robert Duncan surest man I ever saw,
intellect luminous in the Mission,
I miss him mightily

and even miss a little bit
Salome’s rude dance on Broadway
with the fictive waxen head of John the Baptist.
Psycho weather of those days,
everything possible, everything
yet to come.

Nothing done.

13 June 2019
Curing weather by will
America invisible
across the storm,
even half-mile island
across the channel
lost in gale.

Keep making up the world
as you kid yourself along,
you are Athena’s owl after all,
who else has such big eyes?

13 June 2019
CUTLERY FIUND IN THE COTTAGE

What shall we do?
Ancient table-knife
silverfish, from before.

Before childhood
all that stuff was going on,
years and years iof it, they say.

But who really knows
what if anything happened
before he opened his eyes?

13 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK ISLAND FOR M.L-P.

You made me see it as a dance,
the water stepping
playful up onto the sand,
getting shy, hurrying away,

taking thought, coming back,
always stepping forward,
stepping backward to come again,
curl of wave, curve of hip,
with undulating rise abd fall,
grace backing forward to where we stand
moveless in admiring.

13 June 2019
The wind will say anything
it knows the way.
Now the morning after the gale
we’re left with all the messages,
scrambled. We need
an Enigma machine, a company
of smart women working hard
to decode them in the home counties—
can my brain be them,
can yours?

This is the supreme
task of poetry.

14 June 2019
What do I know about anything?
I just got here,
my mouth full of language
but is it mine?

14 June 2019
THE RUG

Nothing big
is going to happen
till you roll out the rug.
The old one,
Omar could have knelt on it,
or you spilled tea on it
the day you met the grown-up Carlos Blackburn,
scion of your old friend.
I think some mice nested in it,
there is chewing to be seen
and marks of rodent pregnancy.
But the pattern is clear,
amber sands of Isfahan
with gorgeous red and blue flowers
limned with white—
you know who I mean,
mostly, don’t you?
You have walked on it too,
or crawled on it in your aunt’s parlor
when you were young enough
to enjoy the feel of things,
a rug is just enough like a cat
to keep your fingers happy,
remember? Nothing
of much consequence can happen
till we roll the rug out,
doi together so it rolls out straight,
you push from the left,
you from the right, I’ll
stand at the middle and supervise,
making sure you get the message straight.
I know you didn’t expect
to be put to work
but it took me years
to drag this carpet
all the way here,
to you, for you,
and when our work is done
we’ll count the roses together
and decide what each one means.

14 June 2019
Take the risk
of talking to a bird.
Acknowledge its authority,
be quiet as it meditates out loud,
listen, listen
with a little heap of seeds
ifor it in front of you.
I learned this from my wife
who smiles and folds
her secret wings.

14 June 2019
Extravagant horizon
past far island cliffs to open sea
all the way East
where most of us come from.

Coming
    and coming from,
ways to be here.
Such intimate distances
it would take years to cross
if we were just ourselves,
paddling the hydrosphere,
always wondering
what the night really is
that comes also
to us and with us
and we poor immigrants
almost know
then wake up and forget to remember.
2.
Did you come this way too,
dreamy, svelte moves of dawn
half-asleep on the sheer
fun of otherness?
    I have seen
you on the doorstep of now,
looking back over your shoulder
still, the wind
letting you see, lifting you hair.

3.
You came here to be me
and I let you.
    Why not?
You could do it better than I can.
I with my habits,
    heart
full of klutzdom, uncertainties,
dreads,
like a king in some opera
bass-baritone, uneasy,
do they really love me,
is the Pope really on my side?
4.
So you do it.
Leave me to whisper
back to the sea
what the wind told me,
that godly gossip
who has been everywhere,
everywhere you come from
and I come too.

15 June 2019
= = = = = 

Bruises fade
the mechanism that pales them
is called Time.
Time eats blue, dark blue,
you see it every night,
when time passes far enough
the light comes back.

15 June 2019
OFF NASHAWENA

Vast slow rippled of pure sunshine making for the shore, it’s as if the light itself was pushing the sea around.

15 June 2019
A line she drew across the sky
led me to the wall
I rested, back against it,
praying to the blank (almost) blue page
on which she wrote.
Let me be empty an hour,
let me be quiet as light.

15 June 2019
What did they think it was, that Grail
they fought and died and killed to keep,
keep safe, keep away locked in the Montsalvat of the mind,
the place between what are so aptly called the temples,
of whose head?

What did they think it was, why did they care,
are they still here,
are they the pilgrims who walk along the way.

15 June 2019
A POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR L.D.

I can see you.
I’m looking right at you,
south over the near sea,

you’re up to your knees
in a dreamy lagoon
thinking about politics.

Stop that. Never
think about such things.
Politeness yes, politics no.
Help everybody on earth
one at a time. Same way
you make love. One to one.
Now dry your ankles
and come home.
Weed you here, it’s cold
up here but still. The ocean
tells me everything—
how else would I know you?

15 June 2019
after Shelley

I am Zoroaster.
I am her dead child.
I met myself in the market
at the crowded end
near spices and teas.
I squinted at the face and form
until I finally recognized myself.
He wasn’t looking at me,
he had a bag of cumin seeds
and looked as if he was counting them.
Every one. But then he looked up
and he was me. A better me
or worse I couldn’t tell,
even now in the afterlife
I’m not sure which of us was me
and what the swift encounter meant.
I turned to give my money to the owner
(a loaf of bread, a lump of goat cheese)
and when I turned back I was gone.
I never saw me again.

15 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR B.C.

The sea you left
is still here.
I played with it today,
respectfully.
only looking, only listening,

no hands.
It seems to me the sea
is what they mean by mother,
something you’re always
coming from

and our job is to carry
its messages
into the poor dry land
thirsting for her information.

15 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR S.Q.

The sea took a picture or me.
It shows me walking upside down
on a patch of air,
  my hair’s a mess
and coins are falling out of my pockets.

If this is what I look like to the honest sea
I wonder what i.m really like.
So I ask you, you see better than most of us,
i am I really as out of whack, as opposite as that?
And that music I think I’m hearing,
is that just loose change hitting the pavement?

15 June 2019
I waited all day for the rain to come back. wanted it, wanted it, the wet from above meant the spill of heaven, all our doings, schedules, contrivances, at its mercy. I wanted its mercy, the word of the other spoken so loud in our deaf world, wanted it, always asked for, the word of the other.

16 June 2019
The appropriation of one’s own
is like a vase full of purple irises
standing on a little table
beside the sofa. Of course it’s spring,
that’s when everything is
and is yours. Mine. Ours. Theirs.
we all own this amber piece of wood
somewhat in need of polishing.
There’s a can of neatsfoot oil nearby
but that’s for leather. Good wood
at any rate, the shine can come later
when we have walked a year around
the stone chimney, the brick fireplace.
I mean the whole house, I mean together.

16 June 2019
Can’t sleep
so I’m writing you
you’re the next best thing to sleep,
you’re like an open window
on a pre-dawn sky
Tibetans call it the tho-rang.
a powerful time
special for the likes of you,
or you’re like one of those
so-called poetic forms—
boxes of breaths
columns of images
lovesick geography
like old Chinese poets, can’t
recall their names
any more than I can sleep.
Forms are like sleep,
the way a sonnet is a deep
dream of thinking,
regular
as the soft heave of chest
by which we know
a sleeper is not dead.
That’s morbid,  
no wonder I can’t sleep,  
no wonder I flee from such  
into the embrace of you  
on this my breath,  
help me, wait,  
I’ve lost my train  
of thought  
that led to you,  
only to you,  
sure as morning,  
isn’t it, who are you  
anyway, I thought I knew you,  
I thought I knew your name.

17 June 2019
The sea is loud today
I must attend
the day’s Mass of its meaning.

17 June 2019
= = = = =

The wind is enough to see,
the waiting of light
beyond the horizon,
in this dark room
I feel the thrill of it,
the coming.

17 June 2019
Sunburnt neck,  
broken walking stick,  
toe-pinchn shoes,  
the lights next door.

I wrote that when I lived  
in Hokkaido seven hundred years ago.

17 June 2019
Beach stones on my table
geology of nearest things.
Weedwhacker down the hill
reminds me how thoughtless we can be—
machines could work more silently
if money cared. Doesn’t,
won’t. Up to me to care. Fret.
Growl. We all have our own
work to do in a so-called democracy.
Growl again. Get over it. It pays
to be ignorant they used to say, please,
put on the radio, your cowboy hat and dance.

17 June 2019
How soon we are distracted from the real. Soft as a Victorian Christmas card the sense of real things blows away, the fluff of mind remains, dust-bunnies we used to say lost under the sofa. Instead of actual factual practical ___ the magical spaces deep within, and there the bunnies play.

17 June 2019
What is a tree?
A tree is thee,
a sacred other
that teaches us
to bend before the wind,
react to all that happens,
give from the core of us
fruit and a million leaves.

17 June 2019
Reading and discussing dormancy in fish.
Do some fish hibernate in ice or else lie dormant on ice surfaces?
Over the centuries controversies abound.
Present consensus: no such thing.
Fish can’t live in ice.

18 June 2019
Basic unity of perceiving.
I lost your number
in a forest of leaves.
Now count each one
to find you back.

18 June 2019
Lovely fog
two words
odd together,
loving couple,
good marriage,
fair bride,
timid groom.

18 June 2019
Be a gull on our lawn
or just be bright,
fast, competent and bright.
Gulls are good at that,
but I’ll gladly make do
with the raindove cooing in the bush—
you sent me a photo of her
and my heart spoke too.

18 June 2019
What does the pen say when you first, first time ever, feed it? It tells what is left of everything that has ever been.

18 June 2019
Live to write
another day
shave and shower
sit and shiver
seven slept
you woke alone,
that old song
fell out of the fog
the gull *descending*
tells us You are.

18 June 2019
The thrill of answering
no question,
    shout
of a pure answer—
do it, say it,
sunrise

18 June 2019
The am of maybe
is a queen on a throne,
peacocks play round her,
their screams a shrill reminder
that beauty has its price.
So we fold our hands and pray,
blindly, fearful, knowing only
being also has its price.

18 June 2019
As if to offer
as a cloud does
a certain answer
a periodic grief,
something to reset your soul by
as if you too
were part of the weather,
an important part
of what just happens.

18 June 2019
POSTCARD

Count the pebbles
on the beach
and multiply by sea.
The answer
is always thee.

18 June 2019
Tell me how it should be done,
a mirror, a nightmare
you wake from
with a stalk of fennel in your hand
or is it celery
or are you a tree after all,
firmly rooted, wind-weary,
opening the door
over and over until
even you are sick of arrivals,
is that how it is?

2.
I think it was something
more like school—
a teacher’s voice
heard outside the classroom
voice loud, words difficult
to grasp, closed door,
empty hallway?

3.
It’s China a thousand
years ago again.
She cuts a new pen
to write old words.
From the pond outside
a heron laughs at her.

4.
Is that more like it,
dawn over the empty sea?
What do I know about emptiness?
There was always something there,
I knew at once when she came through the door
but didn’t know what I knew.

5.
But to have a plan,
a well-organized drawer,
office desk, oak highboy.
Storage space under the bed,
barnyard with well-trained chickens,
cats asleep in a sunny patch,
the dog ran away last year,
your uncle burned your father’s car
and omigod.

6.
Am I getting warmer?
Is this any help?
I know it hurts everywhere, but where?
There is a comma pause
in every human sentence,
find the gap and hurry in.

7.
Like opera, made
of endings all the way through—
those Verdi duets
for tenor and baritone,
Bellini’s for soprano and mezzo,
we are walking always
on the margins of the sea,
someday the waves
will carry even me away.
If you can read this
you are a little wet already.

8.
What are these tiny differences after all?
Oxygen everywhere the same,
isn’t that what element means?
From all my questions
you’d think I was on the trail
of something, maybe I am
or maybe not. All I really know is that morning is a gull flying almost overhead. Or the thought of one.

9.
The blue color of citizens matches the sea she said when I was barely listening. A house on a hill is like a bikini, it’s all you can see— is that what I meant when I took exception to her expression and said There are too many meanings to ‘blue’.

10.
You shouldn’t ask how to do things if you don’t even listen she naturally observed. The night was overcast, no stars, and the just-past-full moon invisible though it paled the dark, a lyrical interlude
brought to you by doubt, 
makers of philosophy.

11. 
Wet wood is a beautiful song, 
like the syllables in Dante 
or Mary’s rose hips by the garden shed. 
All we are is what comes to mind. 
Feel the wet wood, go with the grain, 
your fingers ice-skate over the smooth. 
And at the end come back to me.

19 June 2019
VESTMENTS

After all, there is a chasuble
the sky wears, woven blue and white
greys light and dark, and sometimes
(given the liturgy of the hour)
golden sunset crimsons rose.

Forgive these churchy analogues—
can’t help the town I’m coming from,
where public scenes of worship
shape the anatomy of time. I keep
trying to get over it, but when I see
a deep blue sky or silver mist it makes
me feel like kneeling down. But what then?

19 June 2019
FATA MORGANA

or something like that,
a light at night
that isn’t there,

a word on the tip of the tongue
swallowed too soon,
the ash tree shakes and no wind blows

then a rabbit walked up on our doorstep,
an ordinary cottontail—
is this what it means to have a meaning?

lost somewhere at sea
a ship they never launched and never sailed—
old-timers say that what you hear on the beach

are the songs drowned sailors sing
to keep their mermaids happy.
And once I saw a lighthouse where there is no land.

19 June 2019
I haven’t finished saying all the sea told me—
I keep getting distracted by the sound of it, song of it, roar and quiet, rush and soft slip away of what it keeps saying to itself, the sound of the sea we say, as if it were only one thing when in fact it is saying almost everything.

19 June 2019
I sometimes think
the land and all that’s on it,
you too, and me, and all of us,
are just a collage the sea
keeps toying with, ah.
the amusements of the sea.
Here I sit all day watching
sea and hearing sea and going
to sleep with the sound of it,
happy to be part of its design.
Tonight the Gayhead lighthouse
a dozen miles across the Sound
flashed its answer, soft red, bright
white, woman standing at a window.

19 June 2019
Woke before the mail
came tumbling in
out of the invisible
meshes of the internet,
woke when nobody knew my name

except the rain,
woke me, painted
densely with itself
our eastern windows,
puzzled me to know
what I’m supposed to understand
but I got to look through water at the sea
and the sea knows everybody’s name.

20 June 2019
They say we were all fish once, the cartoon called science has us marching on our tails up into rat form, bird form, ape form, me. The stories we tell in universities! We rival Russian grandmas crazing kids with the tales we tell, we stride around in houses on wheels made from trees, we summon music out of the air sung by people we will never see—know well: the truth is made of lies.

20 June 2019
To make a mark in color
on an empty page—
how presumptuous of us to say
to near and far
*come look at this and see what I have made.*
Slow slow the Sistine
Chapel fills up with saints.

20 June 2019
Things do stop.
Her hands, lifted,
soon she lets falls.
The orchestra
(why do they call it dance?
They’re all sitting
down or just standing there)
falls quiet.
I wait for something.
Something always happens
if you wait long enough—
that is what music means,
something comes to you and says,
and stays. In my window
the rain-soaked screen
shivers in the wind.

20 June 2019
The strange mind of any Other.
Rapture enough the sudden glance.
I imagine each pebble on the beach,
some of them weigh three pounds or more
has a history, tells a story,
tells something I should listen to
carefully and write down,
this ancient flarf poetry of the sea.
But I’ll leave it to sleep to solve,
sleep, my best interpreter.
Then I’ll wake up and write something down.
That will be accurate enough, isn’t it?

20 June 2019
But some get lost along the way. The fisherman lost his wife of fifty years, the gull screamed overhead, the heron nested. Things happen even in the light, daylight, that strange coincidence.

20 June 2019
CHRONIC

Who is the old man in the mirror?
I asked today. It’s about time
I noticed. It’s all about time.

20 June 2019
A piece of toast
left out on the counter all night
kept in itself
the thought of heat I taste.

20 June 2019
The fog thicker now
than morning was.
Islanded by sea we are
islanded by cloud.

20 June 2019
The Lancaster solution
an island not an island
and at its tip another weather—
the sands, the sands
and Napoleon is dead again
what color was my rose?

I’m thinking hard at you today
in hopes you’ll hear me far away
he wrote, silly as only a poet man
could be, sent her photos of old labels,
car ads from the 1930s, a jar
of pink silver polish hardened solid
and scratched in its surface I L Y.

No one invented being wrong,
that song taught us to sing itself
(rabbits hide under hedges)
(cotton grows in Confederate states)
(in summer insects hum to human skin)
so don’t look so inscrutable, babe,
all the old movies told the truth about you.

20 June 2019
Before I said anything
she kissed me and cried Yes!
And that was the whole opera.

21 June 2019
Mist outside 
from the deck of time
I picked the Queen of Rain.

That is the game.
Fish live in the sea
but what are we?

21 June 2019
If I could swim
I would swim with you
or with a seal
or with the gold
shimmering reflections
you see from below
water you showed me
when you swam
with your camera
on a sunny day.
As it is I can only
imagine, which in its
way is not far
from that remembering.

21 June 2019
Not just seas—
dreams have lighthouses too—
they show the path
she takes to come to you
in opera or in weather,
and the birds fly across it
angling the geometry of sky.

21 June 2019
Time to boil water
feed the air
that hot humidity
rises in an act of praise—
didn’t you know
that’s really why we drink tea?

21 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR A.G.

Beneath the sun
a swoop of iris rose gamboge
above the bay.
solar halo but the boat
girl Bailee said We
call it a sun dauber—
I thought of a child in school
somewhere very far
who with her golden
crayon shaped the sun.

21 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR B.W.

I wonder if this roomy earth of ours might be one organ—large or small it would be presumptuous to guess—in some great body striding through the energies and silences of space. One part of the metabolism of mind, secreting colors and cloud shapes and human speech.

21 June 2019
the flight path of names

for Joel

they have to be coming from somewhere
these sounds that come and press against us so firmly
that people think they are us, they think you’re Joel,
think I’m Robert. think that hawk-faced hombre
on the slopes of Hell was Dante, or Durante,
the one built to last. And Yah I suppose is El,
and my reputation glitters like pyrites. Systole,
you say, the heart contracts, squeezes so much out.
The blood. The hopes, the pale desires, platelets
of mental plagues, all things except the dim sense
that somewhere there’s a name that really means us.

Summer Solstice 2019
LOVE’S SECRET REVEALED AT LAST

All Jews are Christ. Fact. That’s why they’re persecuted, intelligent, talented, wealthy, murdered. They share son-nature with the Son of God. When Christ came by he changed something in the nature of Jewish worship and Jewish life. No more Temple. No more comfort. Priests he left to Irish and Italians, pomp to popes. To his own people the house of study as the house of prayer.

21 June 2019
Someone else
is sleeping in my dark.
I hear soft breaths
when I hold my own,
like a tease of light
around the window shade,
the day herself
has crept into my bed.

22 June 2019
Clear sky
sun about to rise.
The weather here
has been reading poetry
a dove on the doorstep

22 June 2019
Haptic hour
feel my way along.

Responsible tradesmen
sample their bread.

It’s not enough to say
Here! Here!

You must be there.

All too often we are
hands outstretched
waiting for the coin.

But even when you’re not
in some great city or the Alps

sunrise ought to be enough.

22 June 2019
Taste me and tell
where I was mined
or vintaged, minted.
scattered here
io the imposture of form.
Tell me what you make of me,
my echo, shadow, aftertaste.
I think I know well enough
who I am, but what to need
to know is what I am to you.
Sampling the other
again and again
until you too
are an island,
cormorants busy at your shore.
And when you hear
the seagull cry
inside you know
you are complete—
no self ever
without the other.

22 June 2019
1. Strange dawn
    not a bird in sight
    not even a grey dove
    to deplore the growing light.

2. Then I look up from saying so
    and there they are, fly past,
    fly over, diagonals, birds
    big and small. And biggest
    of all, same color in the cloud,
    color, light’s greatest invention
    color, and a gull on the roof.

22 June 2019
It’s getting bright enough to be!
I'm waiting for the glare,
the dazzle on the sea
any moment now—
when I praise the gods
for such brilliance
and shut my eyes.

22 June 2019
Is it the ink
or the thought
that grows confused?

Are you still lingering
behind some other island
or are you coming closer
breath by breath,
my beautiful friend
shaped like an idea.

22 June 2019
Want what the island wants—
it’s safer than the sea—
but so much sleep!

22 June 2019
THE YEARNING OF THE NUMBERS

TWO
   At the end of our afternoon date
Sonia and I played
ping-pong in her basement.

THREE
   Leaping right-fielder makes the catch,
bounces off the ivied wall
tosses the ball up to the cheering fans.

SEVEN
Playing ringaleavio
the one who is It
hides his eyes
against a phone pole
listens hard to the sound of feet
scurrying in all directions—
these he will have to trace, discover—
O Angels, please help the one who is It.
EIGHT
Some grounds for reluctance
the two room flat
(in the old days of course)
ho kitchen just a hotplate,
the toilet down the hall.
Narrow door between
sitting room and bedroom,
how naughty the peering,
the passing between them!
Oh and the walls!
Only two windows,
nothing moving on the street.

FIVE
His whole job
was to write everything down.
It took all day
and made him cross.
The otherman came at nightfall
and carried the words away.

ONE
I share my name with the world
I alone am every one

22 June 2019
GEMATRIA

My name in Hebrew has too many numbers. I add up to the distance from Mt. Sinai to Mt. Kailash with stops at Rome and Bedlam along the way.

22 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK ISLAND FOR M.L.Z.

If you walk long enough
you get here
footsteps lightly on the water,
wear your finest clouds.
Then here you are
alone as we always are,
rock, shore, wave, sun
thank God endless pilgrimage.

22 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK

Hard to be quiet in a garden
hard to be heard near the sea.
Wild roses line the shore,
the waves roar in. I never said
poetry is easy.

22 June 2019
I lie back in my chair
and look at the sky.
It gets closer every day.
Like the thought of you
standing by the bookcase
fingering the spines but never
choosing, never taking
one down to read. The sky
is like that, I mean,
sometimes the gilt edge of a bible,
or dusty flap of a torn spine
where once it said Chaucer.
I don’t mean everything is written
in the sky already (or the sea,
although it is), I just mean
the sky is close today
and I’m thinking of you.

22 June 2019
It is good that things can be far away
or just across the channel shimmering in sun mist
soft as a mild concussion
like when we meet someone new and know right away
and cry Here you are at last!

22 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR C.H.

O ihr Gewaltigen,
take good care of C
and C and C and C
and all the seas
this summer and beyond,

right here a sudden squall.
rain and hail and
thunder at sea sounds
different from itself on land,
,more double bass, less drum.
so I hear ,my answer come.

22 June 2019
I am looking at the sea.
Into it long ago was thrown
Lord Orpheus our master
or at least the part of him
that speaks, if we believe
the old tales we are told.
And if, as I suppose, *eurydiike*
means the widespread justice
of all things, then Orpheus
is with his love again, and we
and all who speak and sing
grow slowly close together,
safe and wise, justified by word
itself, by the ever-arriving sea.

22 June 2019
Nothing to say
the sun
has to say ut for me

leave it to her
our oldest oracle
honey in the sky.

23 June 2019
Now! said Sun,  
I let you see.  
What will you do  
with all my children,  
the sight of things?

Tell every story  
till only one is left  
the one I keep  
trying to tell you.
I am an image
on your mother’s wall
I taught you how to look
first at me then all
the rest thereafter.
I taught you too
the meaning of the Crucifix,
spread your arms wide
to welcome the world.

23 June 2019
The sun has answered.
All the canals of Venice
glitter their way
to the Vineyard Sound
and the open sea beyond
is the river Jordan
where the sun
bathes her sacred feet.

23 June 2019
I confess—all my words
are just an advertisement
for today, a collage of desires
pasted on a passing cloud

23 June 2019
Yes, I’m thinking of you,
your body, the surf
rolling up your thighs,
your eyes just a hair’s width
open to guess the sun.
yes, thinking of you,
the long conversations—years
and years—mostly unspoken
but real as the stars above my head
when I hurry out to catch my breath at night
and there is nothing in the world
but what you tell me.

23 June 2019
I built a house of consonants
and left it to the wind
to pronounce it so I could
finally know what I had made,
at least its name. If I knew that
I could tell you, invite you
to speak it too, your breath
all the vowels that it needs.

23 June 2019
I keep trying to be simpler than I am. Sometimes I want to grab you by the thick of you and shout, flesh, flesh, every time you love you break a vow, even when you don’t go what the kids call all the way. Thought is the father of the deed they say, but every deed has its children too, those bleak saboteurs we call memories. In these dark days every man is Abelard, circumstances are the kinsmen that castrate him, his love is futile. Heart scrawled on brick walls with chalk soon washed away by rain. I come to you as if you were water in the desert, alkaline perhaps, lukewarm, but you let me drink.

23 June 2019
The sea is the truth.
Pick up a stone
and set it on another.
Pour water on it,
water from the inward out. Now you
are the sea.

Listen to me,
have I ever lied to you?
I have never said a word.
Here’s a little stone,
find where it should go.
Then this message will be complete.

23 June 2019
= AN DIE MUSIK

I’ve been thinking hard about you
body soul mind rhythm breath touch
all that happens to us when you start
wrapping up the silence in bright silks
dark wools shimmering transparencies.
What you do. And I suspect you don’t
even know what’s happening to us, so
captured up in your silvery changefulness,
so obsessed with the mysterious calculus
of what comes next. Note follows note.
but why? Only you know. But you don’t
mind if we spend our lives figuring out why.

23 June 2019
STEPS

My pretty niece
(I have no niece)
(I didn’t see her
but I could hear
she’s pretty)
mocked me, saying
“Uncle, you grave oranges!
making fun
of my use of the verb ‘gravel’
(as in ‘to gravel a cheque’)
leaving me
to wake up
and look up
the word in some
unknown dictionary
so here I am.

24 June 2019
So an article I read in dream used Dialectic as if to mean Dialect—so I know I can’t trust that source. But can I trust the dream?

24 June 2019
MIDSUMMER DAY

All the Portugals
rise up in the East—
I go to see
who is there
always waiting for me
at dawn of any day
especially,
the body’s shape,
a gull ascending
(oriole osprey dove)
waiting for my mistake
(I want to hold your hand)
A sentence is the alchemist
refines the dross of thinking,
say it, pray it and be done.
My friend’s in Oxford now,
shadow of a tower.
in Regent’s Park I heard a lion growl
this is a love poem to
the other side of the river,
the way they talk!
local honey on a dried laurel leaf,
look but don’t chew, don’t swallow,
fame is bad for prodigies
once I kissed the blackboard
the teacher smirked
that means you’ll go to heaven
like music on a rainy day,
adoré the crystals in my crown
only a wizard kens which diamonds are,
by lust alone I crossed the sea
using the license you wrote for me
deep aspen grove on a few-treed island
and here we linger busy with light

24 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR K.L.

The sea is a street. We live on it, all our houses shadows of what its waves heave on the shore. Something like that. We are immigrants from over it, you especially, and me, never quite getting here, too wise to call anywhere home, your skin so bright, your mind wiser than any animal, your words answering the waves patiently, as each one comes up the street. We sit on the stoop and I listen to your magic, the ease with which you summon sense into sound. Or is it the other way round? These summer days I get so sleepy it’s hard to tell.

24 June 2019
I have so much to say to you
I can’t speak a word.
It has to be something I give you,
an image at least, wind in an elm tree,
a weird cloud snaking past the moon.
Dragon. Minaret. Bottle of ink
without a cap. A cork. Something blue.
A glass of wine with someone weeping.
Most of all the smell of paper burning.
Most of all a picture of a hand.

24 June 2019
Retry. Other language.
Latin. Umbrella ribs
bent in heavy rain. Talk
to the clock, it always listen.
I wanted to climb the tower.
Your leg. It gets clearer now,
politics distracts you from the soul.
Thus leaves the soul to do its work
unencumbered by your consciousness.
Conscious mess. If you need to know
what I mean, turn on the radio.

24 June 2019
Because you spoke them
the river didn’t wash my words away.
Instead they became your own.
The way the sea outside,
lift and sound of it at midnight
turns into me, safe in time’s surf,
I am nothing but what it says.

24 June 2019
to make
the same
discoveries
year after year
anew,
what a word
smells like
when it’s burning
or that the subway
is my sister—
each one, each one,
the truth is in our hands.
the touch of Hosanna!

25 June 2019
Over Nashawena
strata of cloud
like one of Mary Frances’ stones

a landscape in the sky
we poor refugees gaze at
yearning to come home.

25 June 2019
Use words like rubber bands stretch, twist, let each gather and hold together slippery-firm as many meanings, as many thoughts as you can loop together.

25 June 2019
Time to do something else.
The anything hour
come round at last,
suck in your cheeks,
breathe the weather in
then sing it back
so they can hear it
in the other room,
a;; the other rooms.

25 June 2019
Sacred stretch if old wood
washed clean every day
by the rising sun,

how do I dare to bring
my old words to this ever
renewing generosity

trying to make them
new again. Touch
this wood as once

my ancestors the cross,
not for good luck
but to heal these fingers too.

25 June 2019
The sea mist
comes up the hill,
eases us.

Make a friend of weather—
it is the real Book of Changes
come alive at your door.

25 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK ISLAND FOR M.L.Z.

Here on Church’s Beach
along Buzzards Bay
I found the very rock
you rested on at Göbekli Tepe
ten thousand miles away.
The sea knows how
to do these things,
I want to learn them too.
The stones and pebbles along
all the ocean beaches of the world
are what is left of all the ancient
cities, the hundred thousand Atlantises,
not just the one that settled
just off the coast of Spain—
that pilgrims make their way to still.
And you stood on those stones too.

25 June 2019
Drops of wax left on old wood, work for the finger-nails long after, to serve the oak, Druid business built right into us.

25 June 2019
A LITTLE-KNOWN FACT

Once a prince in Austria decided he’d go swimming but needed a sea. So he sat on the terrace at Schönbrunn and wrote poems instead he published under various names, Rilke, Trakl, Hofmannsthal. But they were all just him, all written on a single sunny day in autumn, while animals growled from the old zoo across the park cheering him on, the way beasts do.

25 June 2019
INTERNET OUT

So today we have to make up all the news by ourselves. Here goes:

NASA reveals that the planet Venus (as many of us have long surmised) is inhabited by angelic creatures who bear a curious resemblance to faces we see in Botticelli’s decorous ravings.

The island republic of Wenhaver has a new president chosen not by ballot or parliament but by a seven-year old child with Down’s Syndrome who picked the new official’s name from a list of all citizens provided by the Archdruid Ian.

In Appleton, Wisconsin, a pigeon brushing past a driver’s windshield caused the car to swerve off the road and hit a locust tree. No one was injured, but the torn-up tree root revealed a trove of cash buried by John Dillinger over ninety years ago. The bird survived.

My wife tells me the internet is bac, and so adieu.

25 June 2019
ENCUENTRO

Eurydice is naked.
She wears a hat, jaunty, camel-brown, the kind of hat called Tyrolean.
But this one has a tall crow feather stuck in the brim.
He thinks it’s to distract him from her face.
She is dichroic: one eye green, one eye amber. Or to distract him from her body, naked right in front of him. Or is it? He looks close, daring to, and sees that the naked body he sees is actually printed or painted on a flowing perfectly transparent plastic caftan. Her own body is hidden, safe behind its image. Or is it even hers? Is her own body inside the caftan naked too? And is it the same body whose image adorns the outer surface of what she gives him to see? If it is hers, her own, inside, is she naked
there too? And if not, why does she show herself so, as if and as if? And why the hat? What does a hat mean? And the big tall black feather, is that death laughing at him? Too many questions. All this while she has been standing on the sand looking at him, or at least in his direction. With those eyes of hers how can he tell? He tries to look past her, beyond her, at the sea. But his own eyes are full of tears and don’t tell him very much at all.

25 June 2019
We save what we can.
There is irony in our choices—
set the driftwood adrift again,
keep the smiling image of the dead.
Houses are like that, full
of inscrutable choices nobody
actually made. Choice happens
and then things are gone. Or here.
hang on the wall or clutter a drawer.
All that I read and heard and thought
was myth, mythology, was just
moving stuff around from room to room
until the ancient junkman snickers at the door.

25 June 2019
But it’s you I want to be addressing
with all the formality of a hand
gentle on the back of your neck, say,
or a robin chirping in a cartoon,
a caption below it too small to read,
or a love letter burning in an ashtray—
remember cigarettes? So many mistakes.
I wanted it to be a church of us,
endless ceremony, living eucharists,
bell towers bonging over meadows.
empty, stretching down to the sea.
I want too much, the shaman said,
be content with what you don’t have.

25 June 2019
A week to cross and losses
a week to win
the other side
of the water
has come to us again.

26 June 2019
How much of love is need
how much desire you can’t tell
in the other barely of your own.

26 June 2019
AND THIS TOO WAS ATLANTIS

On the day if day of the blade
you look away

the coyote lurks
by the abandoned lookout

small chunks of concrete
half-buried in moorland

everybody goes to work
on some sort of leash

O love me by sunset
or the rains will come again.

26 June 2019
The saddest sight:
a woman with her dog.
There is no Saint for that.
Healing one by one
as if the mistletoe
left its seret wafture
in the kissers’ breaths.
Listen to some lover later,
you hear the miracle
steal over your distances.
Every healing heals you too.

26 June 2019
BIBLE STUDY

The Old Testament is hard on losers, the New Testament hard on winners.

We all are sinners. Bow your head and come away.

26 June 2019
Come back to the almost that’s where it begins.

A gull swoops past reasoning with the low wind.

The light on the bay is so still, o gentle light, ’

shocking to remember how fast it’s traveling to be here.

But all remembering is a quiet terror, isn’t it, after?

26 June 2019
Little white clouds
lettering the blue sky
I don’t know this alphabet
but I love what it says.

26 June 2019
ANNEX TO *OUTIS*

*for Joel*

Any man along the sea
is Odysseus, the sea
takes hold of his identity.
The true story is more like this:
On Wheel Eye Island
where the Fates revolve,
Polyphemus consumes Odysseus.
takes on his name and persona,
sails away to Ithaca the Upright,
the Erect. There he hypnotizes Eurycleia,
seduce Penelope, you know the rest.
No wonder his poor son
goes looking for his real father all those miles.
That sly old Jewish writer they call Homer
(*omer* – he spoke, he told the story).
hints at this when in his sad ironic epic
of barbarians destroying a civilized city
he calls Odysseus the one who talks so much,
his words like snow blizzarding down—
Polyphemus means Much Talking.
No wonder in a moment of truth
the man, whoever he was, cried out
My name is No One,
you will never know me.
And you who woke this morning,
are you the same one you were yesterday?
But that’s another story,
the one that no one knows.

26 June 2019
I'll burn my book! pleads Faustus as if he knew where desire comes from, something we saw, something we read, or heard, or glimpsed in the flame and smoke belly-dancing above the open fire. He cries out I'll burn my fire! as Marlowe sees him sink into hell. no devil needed. But Marlowe gives him one, shrieks his name, as if he too, author, actor, felt safer with a strutting outdoor demon than what his own mind kept whispering.

26 June 2019
Thank the woman for everything in the world she brought me—doors and keys and keyboards, a house to enter and depart, a loving heart. Everything else the sky brought for me—maybe she also had a hand in that.
MEDEN AGAN

Nothing too much
they said, but why?
Isn’t excess
a fitting answer
to the brevity
of youth, of love,
of life?

26 June 2019
Bright weather
sky like cotton.
My outstretched fingers
touch what feels like light.
We see not only with our eyes.

26 June 2019
OTHER WAYS OF BEING WITH YOURSELF

Straw broom. Broom straw.
Flirt. Stapler. Thurible.

27 June 2019
Overlook the obvious.
Let it make
the first move.
You are beautiful
and it knows it.
It’s just taking its time.

27 June 2019
1. Long after freedom song tends to run out. ‘s why we need religion, some sort, the god-man come again into our lives, jewel in the lotus, the world is up to you. That’s what religion means.

2. That’s why I keep waiting for Kim and Thomas and Lila and Peter to sit down with me and talk church. Like Dante’s poet friends aboard the craft of poetry on the all-hearing sea. I think that even we could make a song of it maybe, a raft at least to drift around
on our brief shimmering lagoon,
our mouths full
of sea words and thee-words,
laughing gods tangled in the mangrove shore.

3.
But what would we talk about?
God knows, we used to say,
with the casual blasphemy of ignorance—
I suppose: What God or Gods do we know,
do they want anything of us or from us
or are they just there to give us
models of potency and touch and love.
Or is vengeance in the picture too.
And do they even know we’re here,
are they listening
even to this?
I know there is a power in the mind
that thinks of them,
and that power gives
what we call meaning
to the uncontrollable turbulence of each day.
4.
Tell me darlings
is that enough to know?
Or do we even know
the things we say?
Even this foggy morning by the sea
the fog is full of light,
light as a substance folding round us,
light we can breathe.

27 June 2019
SEA FOG

The fog is getting brighter.
the sun is in it,
the fog is getting brighter,
fog is good for the mind,
fog eliminates the distraction of remote particulars.
leaves us with what is right here,
in our spaces, in our faces,
fog is the wisdom of now.

27 June 2019
Ardent symmetries
God and Man
it said in the night
I changed Man to Human
and waited for more.
I’m sure they are
waiting to be seen.
Heaven. In the dark
well before dawn.

28 June 2019
= = = = =

All things I said to Thee
most intimate audience
let me speak.
And speaking, be.

28 June 2019
1.
And so from far away
you held your lover’s hand.
A city lets you do this,
a tangle of wires or better
the invisible wiring of the air
where birds can fly
right through our precious
metrages [?] and who knows
what changes they may scribble in,
a grackle flapping through my love song
as it internets its way to you.

2.
In this world
everything is Verb.
Nothing stands still—
why should it
when even the chilly neon
keeps lumbering [?] through space
yearning for his lover’s face.
3.
And in this world
everything rhymes.
Not always right away.
Give it a day
or two and it’ll loom
like subtle sunlight in a shuttered room.

4.
Because we live in houses,
not just nests.
Acquire objects and store them
for reuse. Reread this book.
There is some truth
in what we do,
the organic machinery
of knowing you.

5.
Stop rhyming now
the poem said.
You’ve made your point
whatever it was.
The word meant ‘rhythm’ once which is why we speak it so peculiarly, not like *rime*, at first, stony stalactite in the kitchen freezer.

6.
Because you felt the space of a distant city moving suddenly inside your chest, because you looked down the hill from the little temple of the addicts toward the chilly stream where office workers lounge at lunch, some daring to swim, the very thing that you can’t do, because you suddenly are there, friends beside you, someone’s hand on your knee you know you’re dreaming, you know you’re me.

28 June 2019
Make me pale
make me sky
don’t ask why.
White flowers small
of the feverfew
cure headaches.
The clouds cure
loneliness, by sympathy
but where
grows the natural
force or flower
that cures identity?

28 June 2019
DICTAMINA

Write bigger letters
so the tiger
won’t see you
through your tall trees.

*

The sea is contagious
everything looks bigger
when dwarfed by the sea

*

The Sun inhaled
last night’s fog
to cool her brow—
everybody longs for weather—
we are loose change.

28 June 2019
POSTCARD FROM CUTTYHUNK FOR S.W.

If you saw the sea
the way the sea sees you
it would loom
up onto the page of the visible,
level by level,

the sea
has so many lines,
the countless interweaving roads
the fish obey and so few people know.
But some painters do,
know how to follow those lines,
shimmers, gleams, streams, rushings
all the way from the sea’s bottom
to the human eye, they document
the light’s arisings.

And later
they walk barefoot in the surf.

28 June 2019
Still.
Quiet as the heartbeat
in a healthy sky,
pardon, I mean chest,
where a body
keeps its life.
Quiet
like the edge of cloth
draped over a chair back
waiting.
I mean quiet as a shirt
with no one in it,
quiet as the clouds
befriending sun right now
like bridesmaids round the bride
our quiet bride.

29 June 2019
How can we resist
an invitation
to a house that does not exist?
I came after all
to eat supper with you
in a dream.

29 June 2019
SOMNIFUGIENS

1. Let the air come through the place you dream in— I often call it Portugal because the girl next door. And it is the next coast over there, so much of what the sea says seems to come from there.

2. Somewhere down the hill a bird or a baby making a weird noise. A gull or osprey floats by black against the sun. We live amid alternation, darling, think about that.
3.
Svelte handwriting
of shadows on my table.
I could do worse than trace them
as that luminous artist Rhonda Harrow
did once with the leaves,
shadows from her Chelsea backyard tree,
every leaf precise as a dream.
I rest my cheek against the light.

4.
Dark thin lines
lead me.
I go to work
every day
though my work
is not far away.
Talking to the Other
is what I do,
and writing down
what they tell me.
5.
The breeze has not awakened yet but I feel it stirring in its sleep. Human voices not so far—our glorious imposture of being here.

6.
Small things meant to lose—diamonds, threads, needle in a pile of clothes—harsh notes in the symphony all these losses, the poignancy of little things. We kiss so much good-bye.

7.
And now the first dove has come to speak his Bible portion for the day—sounds a little like yesterday and promises a bright tomorrow. His cooing sounds like counterpoint to another music only he can hear. Or maybe everybody can but me.
8.
Let them tell you
what I have seen,
her hair red-gold
sunned through the sea
is how she came to me—
I have a photo proves it.

9.
It might be a quiet everything
that wakes without a word.
Then we have to find it one,
rod and reel, pickhammer
on the wall of the cave.
Fish and be quiet. Sing
under the ground, one
way or another
let us hear what everything says.

29 June 2019
LIEBESLIED

So tired of waiting for you
to speak.
It’s like waiting
for the red light to turn blue.
Which It does not do.
But I suppose that green
has some blue in it,
maybe even enough of it
to give me what I want:
a piece of you,
something you can snap
off painlessly inside
and toss my way—
the bone of truth
for me to gnaw,
the tossed stick of meaning
I can trot happily back with
and drop at your indifferent feet.

29 June 2019
RAPTURE

Maybe not waiting
is enough.
The sound of water
gushing up
to fill the tank
after the toilet’s flushed—
the sea has come to visit.
The rapture has begun again,

2.
Or never ends,
Think of Icarus,
that story Greeks made up
to warn young men
not to get too close
to their mothers.
Get too close to mother
and all the artifice
your patriarchal father
equipped you with,
it all will fall away
and you fall,
your mother is the sun,
get too close and fall
into the sea, they said.
But what sea? And
they did not say he perished—
they dared not carry the lie so far.
The Romans knew better
and made the guilty father cry
Icarus, Icarus where art thou.
in what region shall I seek thee?
He knew full well the boy still lived,
he knew and feared the region,
the natural splendor into which the boy fell.
Icare, Icare, ubi es? sounded
the tick-tock clock of male self-deceiving.

3.
How’s that for morning?
Kidnapped by sleep
lost in the airport terminals pf dream,
stranded on ignorant isles—
a sudden waking.
The story lied.
Maybe all stories lie,
a lie is what is told,
But secretly we sense
fiction comes from
the same verbal root
we use when we pretend
that something is a fact.

4.
But Icarus, Icarus, where are you?
I’m safe inside my name
call me when you need me.
We live only when we are called.
And that’s why each young person
seeks out their proper calling.
Call me, call me,
and if you love me call again.

30 June 2019
CANTIQUE DE SAINT-JACQUES

Austere energies
walking up the hill
every slope is Everest,
is Calvary, every pond
or puddle left by rain
is the sacred lake of Avalon.
Every footstep brings you
closer to yourself.
This is the pilgrimage,
the upward path.
The sea is always
surprise, vast level
prairie after all your climb.
It will not let you walk on it,
not yet, You need a different
verb of going, find it in your
heart, and then you’ll be.

30 June 2019
THE COVERSATION

But was there anything to say?

—There always is.

But who will say it?

—It says itself in you and keeps repeating like a child saying a word they like the sound of over and over.

But who will listen to such prattle?

—Pretend it’s music, then everybody will, so hang your wash out on the line today.

30 June 2019
Suppose a lion
walked out of the sea instead,
Instead of what, you ask?
Say, instead of Pasiphae’s
white bull. Or instead
of some glamorous GI
rushing up the sands of Normandy
to die. Suppose a lion
came up, shook itself dry,
looked around for something to eat.
You know how they are,
you are one too, What kind
of love would keep him tame
and keep him fed? Suppose
this lion is something that really
only lives in your head instead.
Instead of what? Instead of being
only my hands reaching towards you.

30 June 2019
I think this is the day
the church honors
Saint Joan from Arc,
the one *the English
burnt at Rouen*
after the French
gave her away. I think
she was nineteen
at the time, and had
had colloquy with angels,
so dangerous. So brave.
We want to think of her
as beautiful (see Ingrid
Bergman, see Falconetti)
but beauty must linger
in the world, what some of us
do for love, for truth, for what
some voice whispers in our sleep.

30 June 2019
And one day all the ones he ever knew gathered around him and tore his hungry will apart so he could not want. He was floored by the frequency of all his wanting and getting, how much of himself he had thrown away always thinking we was getting more.

30 June 2019