

4-2020

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DAWN

**but call
me middle
of some night**

**I wait with her
like an aria
in an opera I don't know,
the elevator
rose and rose
who knew
a house could be so tall
and have so many tenant souls?**

**Baltic light, Austrian music
up and up
then we were there.
But who were we to begin with?**

The iterations
of fulfilment
lead to doubt.

Identity is betrayed, not revealed,
by desire.

The church bell
the pigeons' upsweep,
the whole city
lost inside me

I thought.
And then the marshes ran
down to the sea again,
wave form, trigonometry
folded on itself,
paradise in your arms,
believe.

1 April 2020

=====

Dare I say what wants to answer?

**The sturgeon in the creek mouth
mounding brief out of sea?
Or a seal in Saugerties?**

**We are given
so much to remember,
we're like a sky full of itself
so that we too cover the whole earth.**

**I said that to Olson
that skeptical enthusiast
in a dream, he nodded
with my head,
what can I do but know what I know?
Know what you don't know
he said.**

2.

So much for dreams
especially on April Fool's
or St Stupid they call it
in San Francisco
where they stand naked in the window
to be seen as they see,, who?

and they went down
to the deepest Sunset
to challenge the sea.

But then the rents go up,
the music changes.

3.

I wanted to be there now,
not necessarily Pacific,
any person of the sea will do,

**but mostly wish it could be
where Canapitsit channel
meets the open Sound.**

S

**There is a little sailboat there
that has nothing to do with me
but I call home.**

1 April 2020

=====

Non son Lindoro

I thought I had
already written

a poem

with that title,

I am not

the name on my disguise

my name is someone else

you think you know

vague, glorious or dull,

but other, other

and you've heard it

somewhere

maybe

I whispered it myself

into your tipsy ear

confident you'd soon forget

as I have

so many times

wondered who I am again.

2 April 2020

=====

**I wonder what the pilgrim
holds in her hand—
she's bringing it
back from the shirne,
a flower, a letter?
Something light enough
to flutter in her fingers.
She doesn't watch it,
it trembles as she goes.**

2 April 2020

=====

**Sensing cloud
she looks up.
The half-moon
powerful,
 unchanged.
But cloud
was on the way,
she felt the vague of it,
music-like,
Debussy at midnight,
say,
 what the night
tells itself
to help it sleep.**

2 April 2020

=====

**Still like March,
40's and a cold wind
shivering bare branches.
But a car rolls
gently up the road,
slow, slow, a sign,
slow things change,
I shiver at my desk.**

2 April 2020

=====

**Remorse is relative—
does it mean
the bit comes again
or the bite is strong?
Latin *re-* works both ways.
Let's hope the latter,
not repeated before but did it all over again.**

2 April 2020

=====

**Sometimes the strong wind.
Then I put on
my wooden jacket
my slippers
made of spearmint leaves
and walk outside
pretending to be a part of what's going on.**

2 April 2020

== = = = = = = =

Solve for three unknowns

room reign roam
sound
parries difference
to same,
I stand in the rain,
old.

Rheum,
in this year
of whose reign
do we go
here,

we go to Rome
by staying home?

2.

**Thought was meaning
to be found.**

Who?

**Always
the parliament of you.
Don't listen to me,
hear me instead.**

3 April 2020

=====

When there is only
one color in the world
who is it?

When you're young
you skip.

Each step was a sweet
denial of our condition,
earthbound, ground people,
humanus from *humus*,
where we are.

Color
is the light skipping
with us, for us,
listen to the light.
And when only one color
stands out of the dim,
this dark house we live in,

**who is it, what are they saying,
they who sing together
to make color?**

**Does the sky
have rods and cones too?
Now I'm being frivolous,
just skipping along.**

3 April 2020

=====

**In my other body
I walk along the sky
looking for work—**

**people to help,
deserts to water,
empty spaces
to fill with language,
that riper music of the heart.**

3 April 2020

=====

**If I had listened to you
I would be a bird now
and see things
where they are
as they really are
stressed out over
continent and river,
I look down at the water
I see myself looking up**

**if I had listen to you
I would be a River too
if I had listened at all
I would be there in an hour
Be there.now
there are only
my words can reach.**

3 April 2020

THE GEOGRAPHY OF IT

In the seclusion of necessity
a slender tree
rises,

 pale fruit barely edible,
not very nutritious
but eat enough of it
and it will satisfy.

2.
Because being here,
right here,
is always coming from afar.

3.
The pale taste
of distance
clings to it,
but the leaves are clear,
slim, musical even
as they shiver in the wind.

4.

Even when the sun
is not shining
this tree
reminds you of the sun.
Its crown reminds you
to throw out your chest and breathe—
the tree reminds you
that you, like it,
are made of air.

5.

And like air
you always come from somewhere else.
Sometimes the clouds
drift apart, the sky
shows color and the sun walks by.
See? *Here* follows you
wherever you go.

4 April 2020

=====

**If you want to know
what someone knows
become them
for a while.**

**Your mind
will fill with theirs,
you will know
what it's like
to walk on their earth
thinking their own thoughts.**

4 April 2020

MALORY

from/for Tamas

 a book
and its cover
painted,
 MALORY
 WORKS
lime green
on a napkin
folded, the folds
sensuous and noble,
a book in a basket,
the Grail in its basin
the word brought home.

4 April 2020

== = = = = = = = =

**Back from bathroom
salutes the dawn.
The day.
Already behind
his schedule,
struggles along
after his obligations
like a thurifer
at High Mass after the priest,
wafting incense
of anxiety,
perfume of must.**

5 April 2020

=====

**Yellow apparency
in the far distance
end of the road,
my glasses downstairs,
could it be spring
after all, forsythia,
my whole life?**

5 April 2020

=====

**What Nature knows
we sometimes share.
It's what we mean
when we say Oh it's
at the nack of my mind.**

5 April 2020

q= = = = =

**The lifeline lingers—
so much to happen
in one week,
let it pass over us,
let it pass
so we *can* again.**

5 April 2020

PALM SUNDAY

**It begins again
death of a God
who does not die,
doesn't die
but the killing is real,
the killing was us.**

5 April 2020

=====

Spending it all
on one idea
is how the mountain
happened, happened to you,
coaxing your thigh muscles
up the geometry,
a bird laughs at you
over and over, you would too
if you were your own wife
clambering all sweat-stink
to nowhere.

Remember you're still
in the body. Skin
remembers, muscles remember,
your hind parts, like God's
in *Exodus*, recount
everywhere you ever sat,
the stones of Venice, etc.
The slope goes up,
you call it thinking,
this breathless lunge
nowhere in particular but up,

up, as if the air up there
were better for you
than our own. It isn't
Thin air doesn't give matter
to the lungs, philosophy
typically has trouble
breathing. Touch me,
I'll drag you down,
swim in language with me,
the ecstatic horizontals of the river,
beautiful smug certainty of the sea.
Are you still listening?
Stop thinking. Understand instead.

5 April 2020

PALM SUNDAY SERMON

**Greet him as he comes through the gate,
greet him with palm fronds, cries
in several languages.**

**The thought
torments me—maybe he didn't
have to die. No bumbling Romans,
no jealous priests, no crowd
turned inside out, no crucifix.
ould it have worked another way,
we greeted him, the Jews caught on
that he was who they waited for,
the Romans were at least polite
the way governments usually are.
And he would have lived, o blood,
no crown of thorns, no sepulcher.
Just a man in a land at peace, telling
all humans what they need to know,
slowly growing out from Jerusalem
the wisdom of incarnate Deity
making us what we are supposed to be.**

5 April 2020

NUVOLETTA

**on her back
soft above the trees
she dreams the sun up,**

**she drifts,
the soft form
is pure thinking**

**far below
the trees hear her well
and thrust leaves out**

to show they understand.

6 April 2020

[TWOVOICES I HEARD

*

(sGrol.ma)

**I am
where nothing is lost.**

*

(rDo,rje.Phag.mo)

**Be me
and learn.**

6.IV.20

=====

**I don't know the first thing
about governing a country.
Yet here I am in charge
of running the whole world.
Fore an honest man, there
is no end to responsibility.**

6 April 2020

how to read under water

1.

Try the secret gospel
of coral

how to be
in one place
and still be.
Be. Fully.
The glad
understanding
(how a fish knows)
with no forgetting.

2.

A word
in the water
turns into fire.
Wash it loose by hearing.
all the elements
turn air in you.
you earth.

3.
Seahorses stir
in their corral,
the moon is waiting.

A kiss
is the other side
of almost everything.

4.
Outstretched
on the primal
the smell of rock
beneath you
worries you
when you try
so hard to dream,

dream of glaciers,
opera houses,
canals full of golden barges,
gondolas slipping in and out
between, clever as elves.
But some slight touch

gently moving
is bothering your skin
as if a lover.
But only as if.

5.
All these years
I have told you too much
but never enough.

The truth is not far.

6.
We tend to be
part of the same world.
Or is it pretend.
We know something, at least,
know there are gods
who want us,
know there is consciousness
in every living thing.
In every thing.

7.
So back to the ocean.
with us,
Cuttyhunk or Margate strand,
drenched bathing suit
sand twixt toes.
The waves keep talking,
they're as bad as I am,
never stop. But they
always make sense—
for instance, right now
you are the sense they make.

6 April 2020, Kingston

=====

**My temple
is the smallest
piece of land,
some trees on it,
grass, a few
yellow flowers
nobody planted
or you did,
whoever you are.**

**6 April 2020
Kingston**

=====

**It is the middle of now.
The sides of the moment
are much too far to reach.
So I stay here, treading water
on dry land, in the dark,
writing one more testament
that tastes like the sound
of someone stroking skin
gently and you answer.
Hip or hand, hood or cloud,
full moon. I can;t get out.
It is now all over again,
Moses and Pharaoh,
angry families, cost of love.**

2.

**Call it the Bible and be done--
one travels all one's life
to turn the age, and there they are,
words again, river of meaning
running through the silt of sense.**

3.

All this because one time
you let me catch you praying
to a tree, I guess, black maple,
or some god beyond it, above
it, inside it, or the air you both
were breathing, leaf and lung,
you let me know you prayed--
and praying makes a different
kind of now, still the far edges,
but a prairie wind comes walking
tells you of magpies, millions
of years, warm coat for winter.

7 April 2020

=====

**I woke to wonder
why I slept
when the dark
is so talkative
and no one interrupts.**

**I woke to wonder
if the words I heard
in my head were
mine or anyone's,
did they taste of you
when I tried to say them?**

**I woke to wonder
to be precise
to whom was I speaking
silently in the dark.**

I woke to wonder
how to catch hold
of what it means
to be here and now

and I thought
that words could tell
so I wrote them down
sleep is an afterthought
and *they woke you to wake them,*
they woke you to wonder.

7 April 2020

=====

1.

Just things
I wanted to tell you,
what else
would wake me?
Only the need
to tell
and it be to you.

2.

Just things you made me think
or think I was thinking
when I was just remembering you.

3.

You are always
in front of me—
do you know that?

**You do it by nature
alone, not by the weak
dithering we call intention.**

**You do it by being
and by being
gladly I follow.**

7 April 2020

HERE BEGINNETH

1.
The silent cantos
start today,
sung words
that have to harp themselves
inside.

 K. 299
and a mother dying,
 who
is that, meaning
on the flute?
 The sound
alive inside.
Sleep till noon
and call it a great city,
Paris in river mist,
the glorious pedestrians.

2
You always know
the right time to tell me things,
play me the music of a Scotsman

reciting Ezra Pound.
from the later work, finally
reaching towards love,
love, not amor or amore,
just love, as in your voice,
and the sound of that too
tells me what's time to do.
To tell again
what I have never told.

8 April 2020

=====

**We Irish love paradox
but some of me is English
so I look with suspicion
on such enthusiasm. Yes,
a song can be silent.
but don't make such a fuss
about it, let your heart listen
as mine did on the Devon shore. Before...
And then endless emigration,
I carry on,
 exploring
the endless woods and rivers
of right here.**

8 April 2020

=====

**Posture expresses mood.
Mood bends spines,
sags bones.
Music helps,
Liszt Ferenc,
dance around the room,
call it rhapsody
what your body sings.**

8 April 2020

=====

**She's out there now
taking pictures of an animal
smallish, chubby, fur.
The photo will show
how dear they are, how near
to us, so hard to know.
Woodchuck. The first time
she saw one, she thought
it was a mongoose, a beast
she knew from India stole
a hair band from her once.
But this plump motherly lump
in our backyard does not steal.
Hides under the deck, garage,
thinks she's hidden when her head
alone is out of sight. Me,
I'm like that too, all I think I am
is what I think. And my wise wife
knows everywhere we hide.**

9 April 2020

MANDATUM

**Treat everyone
the same,
treat them all
as if they were God,
as if you loved them,
and they loved you
whether they know
how to show it or not,
treat them all with mind
and heart and treat
even yourself the same way.**

**9 April 2020
Maundy Thursday**

=====

**Sound says rain
pounds on the roof,
air thickens with it
suddenly,
 the sea comes down.
Then goes back to heaven.
Clear. Clear silence.
Thunder an hour later.**

9 April 2020

=====

Swarm

says the sense.

the senses.

What do we mean.

Meaning is making.

**Florence snowfall,
the sculptor's snowman
I cite Vasari.**

**Or why
did Verdi make Fenton sing,
does sense always
need a tenor?
The world need an aria?**

**The senses swarm
in every answer**

**(be careful,
what is said
endures)
catch me as I fall.**

2.

Close to the mirror
close to the wall
in between
what is seen,

close to the ivy
close to the brick
we were away
an uncle tore down the vine.

no right to do that,
it never grew back,
I pressed the brick,
trusted the color of it,

the rough on my hand,
they told me what it was,
a rock that people make,
bake, a stone of our own.

3.

But always
the mirror is waiting.
Looking at my face
I want to dance,
don't know why,
never could, but still
there is a quietness
in those eyes that needs
some glorious agitation.
But when I look away
even brick is dancing too.

4.

Handlebar musttache
on the old locust tree—
lichen they call it
but I know better.
That kind of tree
ks a man at arms, knows
the duties of the road,
the bark no lovers dare
no cuddle up against.
Teach me my duty, tree.

5.

**I take lessons from everybody.
The real school is free and never
shuts its doors, the drone of wisdom
goes on and on, *Pesach, Triduum,*
Fourth of July, when you learn enough
you understand the Sun herself,
divine teacher of indoor astronomy.**

9 April 2020

=====

Omen

delivery
out on windowpane
or crow in far sky,
quick of meaning,
feel of cloth.
The napkins
no one uses.

2.
Brief blue
a band of sky—
all the rest
is radical,
for once let
the truth tell
itself not smirched
by our fears.

3.

And of course the child
thinks rain on the windowpane
is the sky crying,
long face and sad Latin
the child long ago dreaded
to know why
they call this Friday Good.
Everyone knows that,
everyone says the same answer.
The window will dry
but never the why.

4.

He hates it that it comes
to that, a simple rhyme
anyone can hear,
in the wood's whisper,
in the sea's snarl.

5.

I am allowed to be ignorant
of the occasion. Flag
on the stern of a freighter
I don't recognize.

I am even permitted to be wrong—
the tulip is the tallest
tree I see, no sunshine on it,
it's beginning to begin,
the leaf, no leaf, I am permitted
to put forth
my answers.

The heart is the holiest heretic.

6.

Cold round the knees
the scribbling monk
pauses. A word
he can't make out
in the original. Gets up,
dances around the room
to get his body moving,
his mind warm,
Why is it always cold?

Why are languages
anyhow, why not just one,
like the sun?
Back at the desk,
he gives himself
over to guesses,
translates the brightness
of an eye
and prays for peace.

7.

How close we are
to being right.
I saw the bird into the sky,
and later it flew back.
Art of the fugue,
we are two voices always
or even more,
trying to catch up with the words
that try to catch up with what you think,
all of you in the sky,
same sky? Maybe,
all of you trying to come home.

10 April 2020

====

Remember the night
it wasn't very late
when you led me
almost dragged me
down to a grotto
damp with time,
red mud the floors of it,
porous stone all round,
faint glisten of the little
light we had or made.
We had been ambling
in the hills, slowly.
not meaning to get
anywhere, just following
the spider web of starlight
treed all round us.
The shock of it woke me—
I knew such places existed
but had never met one here,
on such an ordinary night.
My hand trembled as you led on.
It is easy to go down into the earth—

**didn't my teachers tell me that
in school in Latin, in my ears
when I still knew how to listen?
You know how deaf my heart is
so you took me by the hand
and brought me there yourself,
sword clatter on the stone, some
sparrows were still chittering
out there, out here I mean
where there is no hand, no stone,
no cavern for me to comfort in.**

10 April 2020

=====

**Some words
knew me in the night
now stilled
by sun.**

**lost words
like an old song.**

11 April 2020

=====

**Everybody is still alive—
that is the answer.**

*

**All by itself
alone on the shelf.**

11 April 2020

SONGS AFTER HIBERNATION

It didn't want me to see it
so I said it,
I touched it instead
with the sound of its own language
left a little pale mark
of the skin of its time.

*

Later, a ladder
to clamber
up to somebody's window
mouth full of song.

*

Why can't I trust sunlight,
dearest, nearest
of all far off things?
I have no hankering
to be a rebel.
things as they are
suit me just fine, if only.

*

Books we know the titles of
but never read, they
read us in our sleep,
we wake embodied by
the *Sentences* say of Peter Lombard
or *The Heart of Midlothian*,
the revenge of the unread.

*

Now what can you do,
bumble through the streets
trying to find your way
back to the hotel turns
out to be your own home—
words taste funny in your mouth.

*

Girl in the tower
forsythia in bloom
just like always
all over again.

11 April 2020

BDAY BK 4 BC

**From the forest
where cars grow on trees
barefoot she came
wearing a dress
made exclusively of leaves,
autumn russet and veral lime
sweeping together,
rustling as she came
forward, towards rising sun,
coming to be known.**

**2.
And many knew her,
listened to her voice
and watched the sly sleek
slim transitions in her thought
her body showed,
shimmered with
and she was glad,
yearned to be known,**

Why not?

**she thought
since all we really are
is an idea in God's mind.
They had told her about God
and she was eager to believe,
know Him, or Her, couldn't tell
from down here,
so she, intricately simple,
sashayed amongst us
eager to be known.
Know me, she stood
once at the window,
of a house she played in,
know me, she cried.**

11 April 2020

=====

The word he thought
as green was give.
The stone was the sky.
Color shifted in his hands—
his hands were someone else.

That is what it means
to be between.
He had taught himself to read
for moments like this.
where moss ends
and grass begins,
who that is standing in the trees
and where the water comes from
that soaks so many leaves.

Did you overhear the answer.
the deer said
or did you guess it
from the shafts of sunlight
stabbinb through mist?
Do you have to read everything?

**But there is no believing,
there is only being..
He said the word out loud
he picked up the sky and said
we live now only in what fell.**

12 April 2020

====

**That was another man
that was another day,
the clouds had gone away
he sang, but their shadow
still sweltered on the lawn,
praise me, he sang, if only
because I am here, because
I can ask for things, a child
who can't drive, can't
walk far, can't count past two,
but can ask and ask all day long
until the birds get tired of him
and go home. Praise me
because I am almost done.
And then he was quiet
and the darkness shouted his name.**

12 April 2020

Humani nihil a me alienum puto

THE WORLD'S FIRST LUNE

By Terence the African:

**Humani nihil
a me a-
lienum puto.**

12.IV.20

====

**Ruth's forsythia
grows ever brighter
deep in the long driveway
yellow sheer
in leafless trees.**

12.IV.20

THE READER

He was good at reading leaves. Not tea leaves-
-those oriental mysteries had no charm for
him. He liked reading ordinary leaves, one leaf
at a time, locust or linden, maple or oak. *Our
own trees!* he cried once when asked what
kinds of trees the leaves came from he liked to
read. He never said what 'our' or 'own' really
meant, but we could guess,

he never went far away from where he lived, so
we knew it meant larch and linden, oak and
elm.

One at a time he would read them, slowly,
sometimes only one leaf would take him a

whole afternoon. He read the veins and the chambers between them, lines and enclosures, slow-twist of length-lines, ancient tomb-work of the gaps between,

so many signs, so many things to read.

Autumn is a feast of reading. Just as children then go back to school and the flimsy scraps of paper they have to spend their sweet time studying, he in the same weeks would be in a heaven of decipherment.

But what do leaves say, we'd ask him, what are you reading when you read?

He held up a brown wrinkled maple leaf, last year's, and waved it gently in front of us.

This leaf is a page from a diary, it tells about a fox cub practicing its pouncing beneath the

tree, and about a strange truck that rattled by on the highway, the leaf guessed it was a war thing, an army vehicle from the color it spilled.

He held up another leaf, a maple again, but very different, more wrinkled, older. And this, he said, ah, this, this is a page of what we would call philosophy I guess, though I don't really know what that means. This leaf is wondering about all the different ways of being in the world. It writes about how wonderful but scary it must be to move around, like the animals and birds around it, and wonders too what it's like to be the tree itself, stiff and unmoving. Then the leaf rejoices in its own nature, always in one place on the branch of

the tree, but always fluttering and moving about in the wind and the light, the tree is rejoicing, it has the best of both worlds. You know, he said, thanks to its leaves, a tree is halfway to being a bird.

I asked him once if he could teach me the grammar of the leaves, how to read them as he does. He looked at me as if I were crazy, or maybe just stupid. Just pick it up and start to read, he said. It's all right there, just hold it, gently, gently, in your hand, let your eyes play in its weaving, listen gently inside your mind, and let the leaf do all the rest.

Easter 2020

BC BDAY BK 2

She married a man
married him twice,
they lived in a house
that she kept very nice

But her real life
was in the woods,
playing hide-and-seek
with butterflies and shadows

dancing with the trees,
sonetimes even being one,
being deep inside a single tree
a maybe maple by the stream,
hiding safe in its matter
licking its sap, deep, deep,

and then leap out, run wild,
chanting ancient spells

to moss and lichen, twig and bark,
rubbing against the tree's skin
to know what outside feels like,
she wanted her whole life
to be the mastery of in and out

and sometimes when the forest
went away for a while
or she felt lazy
and the trees were far,
she'd make do with the flowers
in her garden, her secret boyfriends
flagrant in colors for all to see,
she'd sing love songs to each of them,
all her silly flowers, daffodils
(she'd call them asphodels)
and hollyhocks, roses, tulips,
even a lesbian iris now and then,

sweet songs, the neighbors
heard her singing, some of them
wrote down the words
they thought they heard her singing.

how right they were
because words are always right,
aren't you?

But when the jealous indoor angel
poured snow around outside
to freeze her toes, she'd stay
huddled by the fire and beat
the angel at his own game,
write quiet poems to each flame,
short-lived flowers each of them,
but flowers still and worth
a song or two.

...
12 April 2020

=====

**Something waiting in this pen
a word to say
a sparrow
come back to our seed—**

**I listen with my fingers
for what it means
to say**

**needs no effort
to decipher or decide,
just let it speak,
here, like an apostle,
authentic, bringing
you the truth.**

13 April 2020

=====

**What did she do
when the music stopped?
She married him
yet again.**

**Birds
do it, she thought,
why not me?**

**Side by side,
sing as a tree
with thee
she sang—**

**rhyme was easy,
felt good,
sleek as Vaseline.**

**She tried again:
open, O great
cave mouth!**

**And all the bats flew out.
Settled swinging
from the young trees by the creek.**

**So finally she went in alone
plucking on a little
gold harp she'd found
drifting through the air,
feuilles d'automne she thought
and played louder.**

Till the cave shuddered with her song.

**The man was waiting,
old enough to be her father
young enough to scare her,
so she sang softer.**

**He put out his hands,
both of them,
and ran them gently down her
and lo! he was only water,
what you'd expect to find
running slow
down the ctystals of a cave.**

13 April 2020

LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW

gaspd, saw the moon outside,
full, through curtain's gauze,
filmy, flimsy,
the lucent globe
shone right through.
He fell to his knees
to pray,
but he knew no words,
no prayers.
So let my body pray,
he thought,
and stayed there,
kneeling, still
as he could be,
a long time
before his prayer was done.
By then the moon was gone
but its night still
lived in the cloth.

13 April 2020

DINNER WITH FRIENDS

The beef's
carved on,
we hear the knife
almost as it decides
slice after slice,
the kitchen
spotless.

Excuse me,
am I soup or salad?

My bread is cold,
my window dark,
the napkin on my lap
is full of blood,
no, that can't be right,
it's only shadow,
;ithe little shadows.
Or is shadow the blood of light?

Wipe your chin
and pretend to begin.
It's not real food,
it's family fare,
real food eats alone
when you're in the dark,
this is just dinner.

She smiled at us
seated round the *tish*,
gives us a sign
that all is well,
even a sinner like me
can nibble a plant.
No wine for me,
I live alone.

13 April 2020

=====

Wading, ducks
through the spaces
time leaves
in its tracks,

we
sometimes swim.

Alternatives to the obvious
we seek,

That is the book we read,
the beach where we swim,
Marilyn's ukulele
in the dread of night.
Ducks, I say,
adorable, vulnerable,
soon fly away.

14 April 2020

=====

**If you don't know
what it means
you're better off
with mystery.**

14 April 2020

= = = = = = = =

**Grace of encomium
you never knew the messenger
who brought such glad ,
the light was fading,
the wind came up—
these are the faces
of a single cube:
the die you cast.**

14 April 2020

WINDOW

Look out there—
it wants you.
It has no phone
to call you
but it still keeps calling.
Light changes,
wind walks,
even the eternal birds.
Look out—
what are you going to do?
Is there an answer in you?

14 April 2020

== == == == ==

**What the shadow said—
only the other
is luminous.
Learn from the other,
live by its light.**

14 April 2020

=====

**Carrying the treasure back,
conquistador of the moment,
that motion in your brain
you breathe as words, inside,
no one there but you
to say them, you recognize
the voice but it's not yours—
puzzle, forget it, you've got
your treasure, your thought,
now you can come home.**

14 April 2020

====

**Tree
with a faucet in it
high up
to get the sap,
not syrup,
not maple,
pure atmosphere
pours from it—
this
is the world tree
and beneath it
safe in its
immaculate shadow
(a shadow made
entirely of light!)
a woman sits,
her back
against the bark,
reading this book.**

14 April 2020

WOODCHUCK

Child of the lawn
the marmot races,
his shelter is everywhere,
enemies few—
hawk overhead or fox
or farmer,
not many of him these days.
She slows down,
browses. Only the sun overhead.

15 April 2020

=====

**Run back into the parlor.
Peel the linoleum off the floor
read what it says.**

**This is the world's new era,
you can't so easily understand
what's going on across the street,**

**the world is your windowsill,
you still know the feel of it,
bird song, evening star.**

15 April 2020

====

**He has too many anythings
and not enough nothing,
if you don't have nothing
there's not much you can do.
Because nothing is where it happens:
a new thought, a new love,
a new way of walking your path,
a new crazy bird in a brand-new tree.
Nothing is the space we need to live.
So what should he do,
this anythingist, to learn
the beauty of emptiness again?
Read on. Keep reading the paper,
carefully, after the words run out.**

15 April 2020

GOT UP EARLY

to hear a great teacher talk
but got the date wrong--
so my today
turned out to be yesterday
so this is tomorrow
already, like a glass of wine.
But I don't drink wine
so there's a problem here,
no morning glories blooming,
lone vulture circling overhead
then floating off. Problems
everywhere. Why did I think?
And think it was today,
the thing that happened yesterday?
Wrong is always easy, I console,
I change the subject, I call it
yestreen, Coleridge's word,
I use it as often as I can get away with,
lovely sound, sad soft lovely sense,
a lap you lay your head on once,
only a few dark hours ago.

15 April 2020

=====

**As if it turned away
but still looked back.
There is always something
left to care about.
a moment or a mountain.
a friend waiting on the cock.
Come, sleep in my shade.**

15 April 2020

=====

**The snow of seven
is gone at ten.
Blue sky,
change of scene.**

**This long opera
goes on and on,
the sun herself
is humming in the wings.**

16 April 2020

=====

**Residue of chance
is all we are
he thought, then thought
again and knelt down,
praying to the hand
that holds the imaginary dice.**

16 April 2020

=====

**Solemn as a cloud
perched over a tulip tree
starting to leaf.**

Liriodendron tulipifera

**memory serves up,
but doesn't know the cloud's name.**

16 April 2020

=====

Things can be small
and still be tall.
Language says so
and language can't lie,
at least not all the way,
always some truth
at the bottom of a word,
tilt it, let it trickle
to your dry lips, o God
how thirsty we are.

16 April 2020

=====

**That forsythia
still glows golden
through the brown-grey
scribble of bare branches
as if spring had stopped
in its tracks. A little snow
this morning, gone now,
some hope. Weave fine weather!**

16 April 2020

=====

In the back of the barn
we all are born—
science says we come later
but I wonder,
 weren't
all the animals people once
who gave up on language,
our hands,
 to have wings?
Fangs? Symmetries?
I see that sometimes in their eyes,
the wistful sense of us
as what they once were,
back when we all still were angels.

17 April 2020

== == == == ==

**Our culture idling at the crossroads
waiting for the light to change.**

17 April 2020

=====

**O distance, you delicate absence,
human will on the wheel,
sun soon,. each cloud
a message from your friends
but who can read them?
Here in the waiting room of Heaven
anxious we eye every door
and even the bright windows
get a p[ra]yer or two.**

17 April 2020

=====

**Here I am
the tree is outside I
am waiting
eager for the leaves
to manifest,
I want them to be
bold as Lenin in 1917
I want them to flee
the safe Switzerland
of the dark and come
out, here to join me
in the dangerous
liberty of the light**

**17 April 2020
[spoken]**

=====

The light is fading
The street lights have come
and I am waiting
But what I'm waiting for
is not so clear
I think it's you—
what else could it be but you
you who are everything .

17 April 2020

=====

**Serene semblance
what we need
to begin
I seem
to use that tree a lot
to stand there,
stand for something
no one can say.**

**2.
So it's out there, always,
never inside.
Except the real inside,
deep, deep,
the furthest anyone can ever go.**

3.

A tree told me this
after all.

You can't be truer than a tree.

I am where you left me yesterday

it sang, *who else*

of all your friends could tell you that?

4.

At least we mostly know

what's in our hands,

if it's big enough to see or feel.

Stone or bread, the hand

is the First Decider,

the music hangs in the air a while

but the hand holds on.

5.

Once there was a woman
with her arms around a tree
you saw this in mind's eye, you knew
embracing means to hold in your arms,
holding on, you saw her
and at last you understood
something about standing still.

18 April 2020

=====

**Half the people I know
used to play the cello
then gave it up.
It must be something about me.**

18 April 2020

=====

Now that I;m here
tell me what to do.
I have the feeling that
everybody--birds
and leaves and stones--
have their tasks in hand
but what about me?
I kept waking up supposing
I had overslept, but not.
Even now I should be sleeping.

2.

Observe the dangers of sunlight:
you imagine everything has started already.
But all the stages are empty,
the singers still learning their parts--
oh those French vowels, those high D's--
Time for me to get in line.
But where does it begin?

3.

Why do I imagine that my plaint
holds your interest? I guess
you have such wakings too.
wondering what the whole business is
and what you're doing here.
Where else can I be? I reason
but then an answer comes.
from some poet, *Anywhere
out of this world*. If you can
call that an answer, a flight
with no destination, rich smells
from the kitchen but before me
a plate with not a trace of food.

4.

All this mythology makes me tired.
Bird and food and spring leaves--
pure fantasy inherited from Greeks.
Nothing here but us, and what we make up,
plus whoever put us here to do their work.
Good morning, it's time to begin.

19 April 2020

=====

the caution of midnight
is a cat walking through ferns
back there, where the sun
never shines anyhow
and there is no cat. That
is just the feel of it, songs
like *A Missing Animal* or
Who will you be
when the light comes on?
That sort of music.
Imaginary pop, don't ask me,
I don't know that stuff,
my ears are Mahler'd deep
But I do know when
an missing cat walks through
ungrown leaves--I hear
the rtremolos of absence--
can't you hear them too
now I've told you where they are?

19 April 2020

=====

**If everything that happens
is a sign, we will get there
soon. Follow the signs--
that's easy enough if
and only if you read them.
I was going to tell you
here is one now, but then
all of a sudden it went away.**

19 April 2020

=====

**Three-part invention.
The theme
falls away,
the spaces take over—
you call it silence
but I call it
what the music meant.**

19 April 2020

== == == == ==

**I can't explain everything—
or can I?
Is that what you're waiting for
with your beautiful eyes?**

19 April 2020

=====

**Say something
a rose can't say.
Silence. What about
theology— does a rose
have something to tell us?
Yes. A rose is.**

19 April 2020

=====

**She gave me blue roses
easy enough to do in dream
but I was grateful anyhow,
a gift is a gift no matter
*though it is the German word
for poison, why? It's given.)
As I was saying, blue roses.
I gave her an amber sweater,
not just the color but the stuff
itself, smooth, cool, ancient,
electric. Somehow soft enough
for her to put on. The roses
were hard though, carved
out of lapis, scented with lavender,
fields we walked through once
by the old Roman road to Spain.**

19 April 2020

LA VIE DU POETE

Now listen to me
babbling of directions,
textures, destinations
when I never left home,
listen to me chant
of magic fountains,
blue-tiled, temples,
herds of caribou, me,
who spins an old faucet
and drinks from the tap,
listen to me rave about
mermaids and conquistadors,
zeppelin trips and forest nymphs,
moi, who sometimes dares
to step outside and sit on the porch.

20 April 2020

=====

Imagine the opposite.

Go there.

**Lid off, reach in,
lift it to your lips
and taste.**

**Then come back and tell
just from the taste
alone what kind
of love they make
in such a place,**

**and how the birds sound
clamoring in
whatever they use for trees
there, there
the desperate place**

we so much need to know.

20 April 2020

AME IT TAME IT

**Animal volition
some single word
to shape it,**

**name it tame it—
call by what it is
the anxious creature
in the heart**

**the heart itself
patiently recording
each fear, each
gasp of anxiety
pulse by pulse,**

**o the atrial animal,
calm it, call it
terror, unease, whatever,
but give a name to it
and sleep
almost in peace.**

20 April 2020

=====

The jointed wooden pelican
flaps its wings when you pull the string.
You do all the work,
it flies a few moments
then relaxes in the permanent
midair it depends on,
yet another string. This ___
somehow reminds me of me —
O love tug my string one more time.

20 April 2020

=====

**He sent some birds
up to pick holes
in the Sky that's
how rain happens
always in the clouds
and the rain comes down
after a while the empty
clouds fall away so
no choice but the sun
comes out. It is plain now
that everything is controlled
by the birds – you hear
their cries of satisfaction
when the sun comes to them again.**

21 April 2020

CHANGELINGS

Remember how the fairies used to sneak into a newborn's room and switch babies, putting one of their own in place of the normal human child--a child that would be taken away and raised as a fairy, leaving the changeling (as they called them) to grow up among us and charm us, shame us, teach us, punish us--whatever fairies do best.

Well, they still do. Switch babies, I mean. Just like the old days. The only difference is that we don't believe in fairies, so have no explanation for the sudden apparition in an ordinary

family of a genius or a wizard or a violinist, a Mendelssohn or Rilke.

We study tables of ancestors. gaze breathlessly at DNA fractions, think privately of demons or secret adulteries, we get nowhere. The answer is what it's always been: fairies.

=====

**Today I am created equal
he said, and a white car
sped up the road, it
was equal too, creation
is a dicey, minute by minute thing,
a woman singing all the while.
Could this all be an opera?**

21 April 2020

=====

Again no color
to the day,
wire causeway,
winter souvenirs
hedge on the moon
and live bird in it
twists of light
branching fence
taste of wood
skin of time
cream on the ankles
appeal to spirit
all connexion lost
the world repelled
but magnets
repel also
that is the secret
on the park bench
play chess with stones
when I had memory
wrote a sonata

**in the glove compartment
father's Pontiac
whose word was this
what German character
all the theaters closed
we tell our own lies now
softly at home
at least the night
not much
grey day no rain.**

21 April 2020

D=====

**oes the word come back
after it's been said and heard?
Cherish the soft truth
in each sound we make,
birdsong or theorem.
Wake up again. And again.**

21 April 2020

=====

**Bless the instrument
in every tool
an ocean focused
evolution happens
instant in your hands**

21 April 2020

LOVE SONG

**I heard white-throated sparrows singing
and that was enough for me,
that and the sky—**

**did you hear it?
But you never stop hearing the sky.**

21 April 2020

S= = = = =

**ound of door opening—
what more does friendship ask?
Something more. A word
left in the air, scent of hair,
quiet cushion on the couch?
Sound of the door closing.
Or was it twilight?
Close your eyes and turn around.**

21 April 2020

=====

**Rarity of the obvious
no sun we see
though we look up
no chair at the table
set out for friend—
I see her lips
pursing and relaxing
on the fipple of the flute,
but hear nothing.
Somehow it is all like a tree
but who knows why?**

22 April 2020

=====

The books I never read
are reading me now,
I become a character
in a dozen plots
leading into strange languages
spoken on another shore,
other mountains than
these Blue ones that see me.
If I had read all the books,
I would be free. How can that be
when all the books I *did* read
lead me to this energetic place,
jungle, castle, crowded street?

22 April 2020

=====

**How to be the one
place wind won't come
a hand laid on an open page
is there writing on it
or only in it?**

**They sit in their back yard
waiting for more leaves [?] to speak,
listening to the subway train below**

**but who would go there
if they could?**

**Isn't thinking about a place
any place, torment enough
when here is the only hap ?**

22 April 2020

=====

**To say an honor
to hear a grace.
Clouds shirred over birdsong,
animal policies serving well.
Alert. Stumble awake.
Be the little man who wasn't there.
Be the color on the grass.
Now stop. The material
is singing loud enough.**

23 April 2020

**SCRIABIN: SONATA *No.*2
PLAYED BY ROBIN FREUND_EPSTEIN**

**It wonders in me
how the wound comes home,
something *says*
and then the word rolls back**

**wave
from no sea**

**do you love me?
it says and says
again**

**until you hear
the wine trickling
into the green glass
your mother told you
came from the sea**

do you love me yet?

the banked clouds over the lighthouse

remember,
the feel of surf on your dry toes,
remember

are you listening?
are you loving me yet?

What can that be
on the horizon
when I am snug indoors
playing with cards,
Renaissance *tarocchi*
full of storms and naked beasts

some of them like you,
do you wonder
why you wound me?

do you ever regret?

and then I'm sorry I made you sorry,
I hold my peace
and watch the window
always the window

always the rain

**the rain pretending
to wash us clean**

out of breath almost with watching

**there is a current carries even us
my heart looks up like something in church
and sees you again**

**and this time
you are looking at me ay last
aren't you?**

**but why do I trouble you with all this strife,
this love that looks like longing
this longing that looks like an army
bedraggled soldiers coming over the hill
trying to march fast
but faltering, my thought falters**

**as I try to hold you
in mind, heart, anywhere,
barren hillside nowhere near the sea,**

**you tell me, you are the reason
for all this striving, this broken war,
this tumble down the hill and suddenly
all the soldiers are children again,
just kids on a grass slope
tumbling, sliding, gravity
is their mother, she loves them
do you love me yet
do you, do you,**

**why can't you tell me?
why can't I tell from just the way
the sky looked this morning,
the way the white-
throated sparrow sang?**

23 April 2020

[Text composed as I listened to the recording for the first time. I began writing when the music began and stopped writing as the music ended. So this a first hearing, first listening-through, what I heard Scriabin saying]

THE GLEAM OF GLISTEN

drive a truck through Kansas
why don't you remember
isn;t dawn animal enough?
Casual, leaning on a maple tree
you watch the myriad
can;t it be me?

Am I
the only one to be only?
Kansas again, a cushion
below your heels, gradual
erosion of the peneplane

somebody's birthday every day
give a kid a drone for Xmas
all a child ever wants to see
is whatever isn't there,
it takes a lot of growing up
to take an interest in being here,
landscape of the moment,

or was it a birch tree I meant,
the white one, you write on its bark,
childhood has its advantages
try to remember them
it;s only time gets in your way
the necrology of feelings
scribbled in a thousand sonnets

why did I get up so early
was I trying to catch rhe snow at work
before it sneaked away
or took the El back to 1950
girl on the platform bla bla bla
a poster of it to show how it should be
a wall is to lean on like a tree
or was it a lamp post in London
an outcrop hear Laramie?

You've got to lean on something
it;s like carrying your bed with you
being under the covers as you go
dreaming on your feet
like a batter waiting for the pitch

**flexing muscles you don't have
dreaming images you can't see
but still,**

**but still,
do it while you can, some
other lad will take up the thread
the tale, or lass, or let me
know how I can help
I used to know how.**

2.

**So that's what the pre-dawn glisten
of streetlights said on the wet road
I think I was the only one awake
to hear it, but you never know—
the woods are full of listeners
what else is a tree for
they bear witness
tell all that they have heard
since they planted us on earth
but we're seldom smart enough to heed them
and for God's sake how do you heed a tree?
that's what they should teach in schools,
they teach us to listen**

but to the wrong characters,
they should instruct us instead
on how to hear trees and listen to stones
then Bach would come back in all of us,
most of what i know
comes from hearing the church walls talk
when the hymns finally stop talking,
just sat in the light and listened.

3.

So why do I talk so much
my kind wife wonders
at breakfast especially
that long-awaited brunch
when the sun if any is high,
I talk and what I keep saying is listen
Listen to the glisten I say
and she looks at me quietly
and wonders why I
of all people can't hear what I'm saying.
But saying wants to be said,
o fearsome judge, saying
is what the stone does

**and can't I be shale a while
like the rock ledge in the back yard,
can't I listen by speaking,
that's what I'm trying to say
now go back to your lox and eggs
and I'll try to be quiet
at least for a while.**

24 April 2020

OUT OF NEW BEDFORD

**Remember the sea-wall
closed against storm
the iron gates sliced shut
locking us in the harbor,**

**now how island?
Run up the shore
round the bay, little boat
ride through the spray.
get there.**

**Got there.
Years later I still feel
a little bit pf guilt
for eluding the sea-wall,
built so long ago for me.**

24 April 2020

=====

**Richard Strauss and I
lived together fourteen years
in a place called Earth,
I hear his horn concerto
now in my head, the one
he must have written
thinking of his father Franz.
Thinking about people
makes things happen.
Then I lived four years with
Prokofiev till Stalin died.
Who should I think about now,
whose music changes the world?**

24 April 2020

=====

**Walking the headache home
and sprawling it on the recliner
closed eyes see what happens next,
best, the geometry of darkness
arcs its mysteries around, loose,
loose, let the tension go, ha,
easier said than gone, but slip
into the dark, a lovely loose-
limbed silence is waiting for you.**

24 April 2020

=====

**Was it here when I looked?
No. But was I here when it
waited? Who can tell.
How far I am from this place
I sang, knowing no better.
And the trees heard me,
cast down their shadows
even in moonlight to spell
what they thought of
the arrogance of my ignorance.
Weighed down by paradoxes
I stumble towards knowing
something at least that will
bathe me with humility.**

24 April 2020

=====

**This reasonable earth
where one person wakes
from one dream into another
before the final waking,
this personable earth
that holds your hands
tenderly while you're sleeping,
then the wonder of waking,
these simple deeds that do us
and we don't have to do,
pronoun after pronoun, this
empty house full of people?**

2.

**It was twice waking
that started this--
what is that country in between,
a dreamy Alsace neither here nor there
and yet I had to talk my way across it**

to get into what still looks like
an ordinary day?

She had dark hair, matters
to discuss, problems of the heart
or maybe mind, not money,
not real estate, just the anxiety
of her eyes--I knew her once.

And how wearily the jogger
jogs this way in his yellow jersey,
no, wait, that's how, he's
on this side of the dream.

25 April 2020

=====

**Full of [the] normal confusions
the adding-machine of the hours
looks old-fashioned as a wooden fence—
and who keeps all hours in?
Indoors is the real outdoors,
the unchained wilderness within.
He paused, he thought
but thought goes nowhere,
never gets out. As if the Sun
were always asking Is it noon yet?**

25 April 2020

=====

**Keep asking for answers
someone may be listening.
Be rational after all,
a fox is just an animal
isn't it? Not a guide
to ghostland? How
can we be sure? Every
animal at every encounter
is a specific instruction,
nothing is random, even
when it has bright red hair.**

25 April 2020

=====

**Imagine a hand.
Where does it go?
What does it know?
Very soon it will be now
but not yet. You still
have time to imagine it.
Speak gently to it when it comes—
it may be only the first of them,
all of them *thinking* in the dark.**

25 April 2020

=====

**Afterimage of a tree—
it must be something in me,
something the mind does
with what it knows,
neurons and remembrances,
the special pulse of morning.
Sunlight. A row
of wine-glass elms,
Massachusetts on the mind.**

25 April 2020

KTL

kai ta loipa

And the left
out, all the rest
of the list,

the leapers and the lepers,
the levers that lift us
or let us fall,

les lèvres

whispering syllables,
to find the sayables,
the lesser limits
of what we say in our hearts
to one another but dare
not lift the latch of lips
and say out loud,

the lame.,
the limp, the listing keel,
to tell all the yous in this world
how much you care,

lip on her popo,
river on the leash,
let me. ley ,me
the way I list

for that us lust.

The lepers nod in their caverns,
waiting with confidence
for the healing kiss,

lend me an ear too,
kai ta loipa,
how the Greeks said et cetera,
and all the rest,

I am leaning in now,
leaning on you,
licit or less, a lease
on your lips.
lower or leaner,

loping onward
as if to be legal,

unlikely!

**Let him live it along,
the lissome rivers
rival his longings,**

**on, on, to the she-sea
he means,
a branch of the lime-tree
held in his hand,
Coleridge in the shade,
er live for letters,**

**send me the truth,
let me lick it like an envelope
and seal it in my longing
do my logic will intuit
which way I should lean**

**I lay that before the lady,
,
a line is the lingering lesson,
a lift-up-your-hearts
like a drone from a lectern**

relive every word of it!
Linden the boulevard
where it began me,
young lime-trees on each lane
away away to the ordinary sea!

You listened closely
loosely to what I lifted,
turn the line into linen,
made a dress of it
a sheath a skirt a kilt
kirtle *kai ta loipa*

the whole world clad in what you meant.

25 April 2020

=====

**Nothing is where
it remembers itself to be,
always on the other side
of the river from itself
and has no bridge but me or you.**

25 April 2020

=====

**How ro cope with it:
s[eak a foreign language to it,
Serbian, Albanian, any one
you don't have a clue to yourself,
that way it will know you're harmless,
just a lady with a parasol, if that,
or some man with a crushed straw hat.**

25 April 2020

=====

**But what do we do with what is left,
shuddering sense of breathless escape
all that's left of the dream
I just woke from, not a single
image left, no narrative,
word, sound, not even a color
left, nothing to hold onto
but the fact of its being gone?
I wake with a new suspicion:
I am all that's left of a dream,
a shared of that shattered vessel,
or all I am is what's left over.
the mere *et cetera* of someone else's list.**

**Dream is still the undiscovered country,
we still don't *know*.
All our theories serve some other science,
some other faith.
But what is really happening
when we dream,**

**and how is it happening
and is there anybody there
who makes it happen
or to whom it happens on its way to us?
I have been asking this for years
his is as loud as I can shout the question.
And who do I expect to answer?**

26 April 2020

====

Once there was a fish
it said its name
and spelled it with its tail
flicking the clear water

I sat on the park bench
reading what it said,
felt its silvery name
swimming in my head,

hurried home to write it down.

26 April 2020

=====

**Spell your name backwards
to see who you really are
or what they wanted you to be
who gave it to you.
Study it a while, try it out
in several languages maybe
till it makes sense. But then
walk slowly to the tree and turn around.**

26 April 2020

====

Getting close
to the grain of wood,
intimate even,
head down
vace close
to the table top
or desk, eyes
almost too close
to focus right
but still. but still
here you are
with it, so close
caught up within
its elongations,
its alphabet of lines
each different
making one same self
and letting you in.
This is your story too.

26 April 2020

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In hollyhocks they also suffer,
he said in me so I would remember,
remembering is more important
than understanding, he said,

and left me with a sense of color,
colors, sadness without sorrow,
how can that be, all
the flowers of being gone

and it is true I didn't understand,
don't understand, barely remember,
but remember, variation
is whee the music comes in
comes from, talk about flowers!

27 April 2020

=====

1.

**Can't look at anything
without remembering
who gave it to me.**

**Things, whatever else they are,
are messengers, love letters,
dictionaries of times past,
caresses, reproaches.**

2.

**That is why a tree
is not a thing.**

**A tree tells its own
story, not mine.
That's why I listen.**

3.

**So story comes to us
from two sides: self's and other's.**

**You or I are where they intersect,
ah, the logic of the psyche
is woven from two strands.
That's why we have two hands.**

27 April 2020

PERFORMANCE

1.
Golden steps
hips on a journey
the circle is in us,
inside us, every
footstep a pilgrimage.

2.
Per/form
must mean
through form
into reality, take
the inside of you
out for a ride,
dance. walk the park,
parade the street.

**Listen to it!
It tells most of the story
we need to know,
philosophers, great
battles of history,
symphonies, science.
All the rest is waiting
for us in her next breath.
Be close when she breathes out.**

27 April 2020

=====

**What I thought it meant
was something else:
*Pay attention, as much
of it as you have,
what you'll see
is worth the price—
it really doesn't matter who
you think you're putting it to.***

27 April 2020

A RAMBLE IN CONNECTICUT

Walk out of the sea at last.

Blow a tarnished silver horn in your mother's garden.

Sometimes it is wise to open the door.

Open the door and just stand there sleepily alert. Not waiting!

The trees have been whispering their secrets all winter long with their alphabet of branches, now fall silent, blushing with leaves in green embarrassment.

The ice is almost all melted now. And all the gouges and scratches and skate scars on its surface have dissolved into the pond. Year after year! No wonder water is so wise.

But sometimes it's all right to wait--just make sure you're not waiting for someone, not even me (whoever I am).

No wonder we get tired after two-thirds of a day-- at every moment we are on a road that forks in front of us, every breath brings new choices. Haven't you ever wondered why we need so much sleep?

Any sentence that begins with "I" can't tell the whole story. But it tries.

Read the signs: blue sky, shapely small cloud over tall spruce. I think that's its name.

Sometimes you feel you're walking through a dreamy empty city like Berlin, not too many towers, lots of skies, wide streets, everything safely in another language.

They say that Connecticut is named for its river, its Indian name, that meant it flows both ways at once--estuarial, obviously, like the

Hudson (whose Indian name had the same meaning). The river flowing south as the tide flows north. Nothing natural can ever finally make up its mind.

There's a hill I know up in New Lebanon where you can stand with one foot in New York and one in Connecticut. Face north and your left foot will be in a sort of Sufi monastery downhill. God knows what your right foot believes.

Everything happens at once. How could it be otherwise.

I never met my grandfathers, both were dead before I was born. My mother's father in the one photo I have of him looked a lot like Wallace Stevens. I never met him either, but he taught me most of what I know, though you'd never know it. But it's what I mean when I say Connecticut, speaking of what words mean.

I think there is a temple on the other side of anything, a sacred spacious building where true god is served. To find god go, to the other side.

I love it that we have borders and frontiers, especially the kind between states, real frontiers you can cross freely, nobody noticing except something deep inside you that knows, that always knows.

It has connect in it, of course, and cut. Does it mean cut all connection, dwell in sublime isolation? Or should we be wise and ordinary (the ordinary is always wise) and read it in English: connect the cut, span the gap, heal the wound, make the skin of our lives whole again.

Stevens at the end wrote about rocks, the rocks of his place. We belong to the stones of our town, out glacial boulders turned up in our fields. How could we live so long if we weren't part stone?

**Slim hips of Connecticut wading in the Sound,
across from my own island. Grandfather
owned a little chunk of it but I left home.**

**So when I say or I sing come out of the shallows
to me do I have to have someone in mind?**

Why can't we all just sing?

**Heal me with your song--
every woman a wizard, every man a sage. Just
open your lips, let yur breath do all the rest.**

28 April 2020

HAGIOGRAPHY

**Who is the patron saint of clouds?
Who lifts them up, shapes them,
sails them above us to charm or instruct?
Who is the patron saint of air,
atmosphere? Wind, empty
blue sky over bare maple trees?
Isn't there someone we can thank for all this,
someone smiling deep inside the world?**

28 April 2020

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**Should I write along your skin
the formula for light
in case some kght you need to touch it
and fall back safe through the dark
into the startled illumination of dream?**

28 April 2020

=====

**Be a bird of it,
accept what is given,
forget all the rest.
That's how you learn to fly.**

28 April 2020

ON THE PAINTINGS OF TAMAS PANITZ

If you turn an ordinary human house (say eyebrow Colonial or post-war ranch) and turn it neatly and swiftly inside out it becomes a three-dimensional model of its owner's brain. Fact. This includes the household animals, children, spouses, hidden places of the heart (but we know since French science told us that the heart is really a parking lot deep in the brain)

and this model becomes available to the painter's thickly laden brush, his wit sharp as a palette knife (and the other way round) (in fact all paintings are really in parentheses, glimpses of the world snatched from the visible to the deeply seen and kept for future reference, Louvres and such). What is in the mind this brain embodies or encloses or discloses?

Here's where the painter's *patte*
comes in, his 'paw' or touch, his special
difference, his voice. His cats,
cows, trees, stars, moons, goblin shadows,
alphabet of fears, thick as night,
colorful as a dumpster full of metaphors,
and all framed round with gold of Orient.

But no women. There are no women
in some men's mind, which is why they need
so urgently to find them outside,
in that world where the brain turns itself
inside out again and stands on a street
as a nice white house with children
passing and now and then a girl comes by
who turns out to be a woman at last.

28 April 2020

THE FLOWER EATER

In that part of the world
where it's summer most of the time
my friend likes to eat flowers.
One day she sent me a detailed
spreadsheet of her appetite being satisfied
from which I deduce the following scenario—
blame me not her if I get it wrong. So:

at the foot of a hill she plucks a rose
from a public bush—who could own it anyway,
a tree. a living thing?) . The rose
is yellow, or perhaps red. They do
have roses in those parts, don't they?
:et's call it a rose because I like them
and can identify them at once, unlike
most of the world's flowers where I have
not much of a clue. A yellow rose it is.
She starts uphill, slowly. Slowly, Decides
to eat a petal of the flower at each step.
She's like that, she decided things/ How
many petals does a rose have? Enough
to get hee to the top of the hill where

someone (maybe me? is waiting. let's hope
for lots of petals and really big steps,
we want her up here, we're waiting
(no, probably not me, I'd be heading
downhill to meet her halfway)
Step, eat. But what does eating mean?
She slips a petal between her lips
and holds it in her mouth, flat on tongue,
coolish on the roof of her mouth
when she raises the tongue to think
about what comes next. Not chew—
not much chew in one petal. Wait,
accumulate. She'll hold the petal,
the petals, in her mouth until the end,
the top, I mean, and then when her mouth
is full of flower she'll begin to chew,
chew, swallow. She'll have to swallow
in order to speak to whomever it is
synds waiting for her on the crest of the bill,
maybe watching her anxiously
as she climbs, maybe just looking oiy
over the panorama of the distant city—
roses always have a city in the distance.
The big surprise is waiting for her:

at every step a petal. But at every petal
stripped from its native flower
some part of my friend's anxiety
falls away, doubts disappear, gloom
gleams with rainbow light instead.
By halfway up she's as happy as a kid
doing hopscotch with a mind on food.
Petal, petal, take my cares away
she begins to sing when she notices this,
makes the tune up, or it makes her,
we'll never really know whp music is.
And now she's so close, her smile
am little twisted with her cheeks stuffed
with what had once been a rose.
And now she's here, looks down
at the stem and green sepals in her hand,
no petals left, and drops the evidence.
And suddenly she's naked, fully-clothed
but nakeder than she's ever felt,
the air know every pore of her, her mind
has turned into the sky. Far, far
away she can still taste the rose.

28 April 2020

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**Kiss your neighbor
wear a kilt
it's all coming back to me
like an old friend's middle name**

**wave the window clear
borrow the rabbi's car
the priest's umbrella
speak Turkish to your cat**

**but shout Italian at the moon,
you know it;s time by now
this puddle you wallow in**

**time for this and that
and I mean her and him
the opposite ensconced
in armchairs by the fireplace**

**now you remember
the sound you make on cellar steps
the smell of cabbage sudden
when you open the old atlas**

**where have you been
that you've forgotten so much,
I have to work so hard
to remind you of the obvious,**

**satin on your skin, mosquito
buzzing by your ear, the song
of breaking glass, where are you now
that you can hear me so well**

**but I can't see you at all?
Is it all my fault after all?
let it all come back, the little diamond
you thought a pebble in your shoe.**

29 April 2020

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**Can it still be now
after all this while?
I woke up and it was now
again, don't dare to wake
my wife by lamplight
so I can't grab a book
and look it up. And what
book would that be
that answers such doubts
anyhow? I;d better
get to work and write it now.**

29 April 2020

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**A touch
translated from the French
a touch where the hand
feels you completely,
reverently fully deeply
but you don't feel it
at all--a touch you don't
have to be bothered with feeling!
A touch that the hand
does all by itself,
and when the book says 'hand'
it means a thousand different things
on earth or heaven,
bone or brain, wave or weather,
the braille of the spring wind
reading your skin.
A touch you don't even know is a touch
a touch fromfrom someone
who doesn't know they're touching.**

29 April 2020

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**The book sobs
when you close it
on your way to sleep.**

29 April 2020

PERCEPTION

There was a light walking through the trees. I watched it for a while, confident it would soon go out or be gone. But it went on. Whenever I looked out the window, or even the door, the light was still wandering around the woods across the road. What could it be after? What does a light want? As far as I could ever tell, a light needs nothing, is entire and complete in itself. Still, this light certainly seemed to be after something, it kept looking around--that's just how it seemed, poking here and there, doubling back, hurrying on. I locked the windows and bolted the door, just in case, and went to bed, sure at least that by daylight the

light would have blended (or melded, ad the uninformed say) into the general light. But when I got up, hours later, shamefully close to noon, bright day, sparrows singing on the deck, the light was still there, still moving. So I got dressed and crossed the road and went into the woods, and you're the first person I met here, please help me, hear my story, interpret me, help me find my way out of the woods, this light is burning my hands.

29 April 202

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**I can't be bothered with reality.
There's too much real work to do.**

29.IV.20

*Some Things I Think About Dream[ing]***CITIES**

I was eighteen when I first went to Paris. I got there by a slow sea voyage on a ship filled with students and other riff-raff—ask me sometime about the sea, A very slow boat, ten days to cross, something like that. Glorious first sight of England (Scilly Isles, Isle of Wight) my ancestral shores. Then France and finally stepped ashore, bus to Paris. Paris. Now several weeks before all this, I had a very vivid dream of Paris—I was standing on one of the towers of Noire-Dame and calmly taking in the city. I mention this dream because when I actually got to Paris, I found myself to my surprise a couple of times giving other strangers directions to places in the city, based on what I had seen in and remembered from my dream. I mention it now because it's interesting that dreams can delineate actualities, but also because I dream of cities a lot—and they are never like any cities I have ever known in waking, walking reality. hey

are always huge, crowded, with highly detailed streets and avenues, temples, cathedrals, some of the details intricately carved or painted, utterly lifelike and utterly possible—but not known on earth. Grand the way New York or London can be grand, scruffy and old and rich. I walk around in these cities, and in the dream they seem ordinary enough, and I'm there on ordinary missions. Often the city is Manhattan, with subways and busses and traffic and stories—but all of them utterly different from the island as is. (I have a little essay about all this, *Hypnogeography*, as free sample pdf from McPherson & Co., publishers of my fiction – but is this fiction?) But when in the dream I want to or need to go home, it is always to Brooklyn, either my adolescent home in the Old Mill district, or my first grown-up apartment in Crown Heights—a place I left in 1961. And in the dreams I can never get back there. In waking life, that's the least place I'd want to wind up in the night—and my dreams usually feature the night.

PEOPLE

As with cities, the people I dream are, almost exclusively, people I've never met in waking, people I don't know at all. In fact, and this strikes me as very odd,, I hardly ever dream of anyone I know. But I dream of lots of people, all distinct, fully developed characters, faces, bodies, clothing, voices, professions. Most of them are adults, none very old. In the dream narratives, I am who I usually am, just me, in a wholly different civilization just like ours but not ours. Tender encounters with women, interesting discussions with groups, friendly men. No hostilities, lots of conversation. Lots of travel, I drive a lot, but always in normal ways in normal places. The radical astonishment of my dream life is just how undreamy it is. The only unworldly thing tends to be architecture in cities, so detailed, I could be a Vermeer or a Saenredam by night, that, and the ease of conversation with people. Everybody talks, everybody listens.

WORDS

And that's the big thing: I dream language. Seldom but sometimes a whole short poem, but more often (never enough!) a phrase or cluster of words will swoop around in my dream until I wake—often they'll get me out of bed to write them down, sometimes I fight my way back to sleep, repeating the words so I'll recall them at morning. As I usually do—and so the poem *du jour* begins. I doint mean that most of my poems begin with dreams—they don't, only a tiny number begin that way, but they all begin with a phrase or cluster of words that come to mind, usually when I'm just sitting there looking at the blank page or the pale window at dawn. I mean Language happens to me, and I try to go with it.

HIIGHGATE

When Freud left Vienna he settled in London, where he spent his last years in a nice house in the Highgate neighborhood, in the northern part of the city. Once when I was in London I happened to be in the neighborhood, and

walked up the nice front garden path rto his front door, knocked on the glass. The man has been dead for forty years at that point, but you never can tell. I waited a bit, nobody answered, so I wandered back to the big park. I mention this because I have a great fondness for Freud, the kind you might have for an old uncle who's smart and busy and kind, but whose ideas or pilitics are far from yours. Every stick has two ends, they say. And that is true of dreams too. Freud, sympathetic, sensitive, alert to sex and spirit both, chose always to follow the end of the dream that pointed back into the life and needs and fears and lusts of his patients—as he should, because he was above all a doctor, a dictor of souls. It seems to me that what I do with dreams, if I do anything, is to point them in the other direction: to see what they reveal about the people and places and images they create so brilliantly. That Cathedral where Eleventh Avenue meets up with Broadway, . what does that say about the city, religion, stone, the sky it pierces with its handsome

tower? *What do things mean?* I describe myself as a believer in the *hylonoetic*: my word, the conviction that matter possesses consciousness. Things think. So dreams are like lessons, lectures, nightly quizzes in the science of hearkening to things. Trees talk—everybody knows that. Well, so does stone, asphalt, radiators in Upper West Side apartments, where people think they're thinking about money and art, but really are just overhearing what the steel is saying.

29 April 2020

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**Set it down
get it right
first time round**

**writing wants
to say this
this is now**

**not again,
all you mean
all it says.**

30 April 2020
dreamt as such

=====

**She was wearing a new fur coat
strangely striped: 2½ inch bands
pale fur dark fur alternating
running down to the ankles,
I wondered what two animals
the furs came from, wondered
how much it cost, she said
a thousand dollars which was
she said cheap for what it was
but I thought that was dear
using a word we used to use
when I was young to mean expensive
but nobody uses that word anymore,
nobody has a coat like that.**

30 April 2020

THE DOUBT

They say we are bilateral—
two eyes, two cheeks,
two hands, two feet.
It makes me wonder
where or who might be
the other half of me.

But then I think: one heart!
One mouth! Maybe I'm just
exactly who I think I am!
But thinking is brain-work
and brain they claim also
is split in two, halves, they
communicate with each other
on phone lines made of me.

So now I don't know what
to think. Or who is thinking.

30 April 2020

(Thinking About the Sea)

And if you did ask me about the sea, I would say a simple thing, like The sea is my mother. I would mean by that dozens of wise and foolish things, sentimental things, energetic even propulsive things, how the thought of the sea wakes me to thinking and writing, and the sound of the sea helps me sleep at night.

My mother was full Irish, and the stories of Selkies, Seal Women they told me are linked inextricably with my mother, her fondness for the beach or lakes or any water, but I don't recall her ever swimming, how even at the end of her life she would sit by the salt creek that came in from the sea (Oceanside, New

York) and feed the swans or just observe. And there was a black sealskin coat in the downstairs closet, she never wore it in my lifetime but it was always there, I would hide in the closet sometimes and wrap it round me, I loved the feel of the fur, sleek, slippery as a living seal, the seals I visited so often in the Prospect Park Zoo.

And where is the sea in all this, you may ask, s. True, seals have been spotted far up the Hudson lately, even at Saugerties lighthouse, a mile or two north of here, fifty miles or more beyond their usual range. Yes, if they're here the sea is coming back, Charlotte and I sometimes manage to get up to Catskill in good weather and sit on the little peninsula, some

call it Wanatanka, yhat stretches out along the shore where Catskill Creek joins the Hudson, and the water is wide, wider than anywhere else I know on the river, and I can look out and half-pretend it's the sea herself. And sometimes I can even feel that when I look down from the Rhinecliff bridge at the dark shores.

Sentimental, see, foolish, fooling myself that the ocean I grew up by (Gerritsen Beach, Marine Park, Sheepshead Bay, Old Mill, the wooden walkways through the salt marsh by tottering Kinderhoek on Jamaica Bay) was not a hundred and thirty miles away but right here. Here where I need it to be.

Sometimes, though, I think I brought the ocean with me, always so close to my thought, almost the first metaphor- for-anything that comes to mind. Broad as the, deep as the, bright as the, wise as the, ever-coming-close like the sea. All life on earth came out of the sea—what more can we say?

Yet I have to keep talking. Because the sea keeps coming to the shore. No matter how small the island or how wide the continent, when you stand on the shores of it the sea is always coming in, the waves always come to shore, sweeps out edges clean, washes out, tide in tide out, it always comes again. How can I not think of it as mother of us all?

And then there is Cuttyhunk, my other island. Charlotte spent all her summers there, and when we married let me come too, so for almost thirty years I've been a summer pilgrim in a cottage on top of a hill, within sound of the sea by night. By daytime we gear people and birds, many of the latter, few of the former. And no streetlights on the island, so night is for hearing the exact speech of the sea and reading the sky. But sometimes dratted neighbors leave their porch lights on, and the lighthouse on Gayhead, a dozen miles across Vineyard Sound, scratches out a word or two the stars are spelling. And sometimes the sea roars, and the wind is her comrade, and they make it so that even my dull ears can make out

the message of the moment. The fact is (sorry to be so slow getting to it) the sea is always talking.

I have written so much on Cutttyhunk! I write every day all year long., but in that month or two each summer, something happens in me that takes a long yime to spell out—the long poem is often the consequence. Over the past decade or so, the sea, the island, the wind and all the rest gave me the five long poems that I p[re]sumptuously call the Island Cycle, though each of the five is distinct in manners and matters and all the tricky numerology of berse, and all the musics I try to grasp, like scared Mahler writing a symphony each summer in his mountain cabin. I'm not so sure the

mountains would put up with me the way the sea so kindly does. Mostly when I think of thee sea, I'm saying Thank you. I suppose you'd call me a pagan, but since I believe that everything is conscious, and consciousness pervades reality, I'd rather you think of me as a friend, the way I think of the sea. And the mountain too, thought he and I don't talk much these days—we do keep an eye on each other from across the river.

30 April 2020

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**They ask me deep questions,
O dredge down and lift
language up to them but they
are gone before the answer comes.
I'm not complaining. They've done
their job. Their work is asking,
not welcoming or rejecting answers.
That's someone else's business—
someone close as they can be.**

30 April 2020