

5-2020

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BREATHINGS

Shun melody

**it said in the dream
end with a single chord
all the words of the song
sounded together**

**Leave the chalice
on the altar
drink the wine
from here
through the very air**

**Can I tell the difference
between what it dreams
in me and what it thinks
in me, waking or sleeping--
what is the real difference?**

*

**Does the law end
at the edge of sleep?**

*

**May Day now
grey as all April
was is
opening at last
a door they thought
they closed last night--
no one knows who we are.**

*

**It gets harder as you go along
harder but faster
the slipstream of time
sweeps all the fallen leaves
wisely together
pages of a book**

*

**Is that the book
a person is asked to read
all night long
with intervals of quiet
when the inner eyes
close too
and time passes by
healing information as it goes?**

*

**Why are all cars white in the morning?
They haven't driven far enough
to acquire history.
History is color.**

*

**The only question
for anyone:
who am I in dream?**

*

**How strange stairs are
that we climb up
to go to bed, pilgrims
ascending. Is sleep
a religion?**

*

**Sat by the window
a long time as if
waiting for the sky
to open the conversation.**

*

**Specifics
sifting from the mind
the scent of absence
quietly heals.**

*

**we say the rosary more in May
eagerly tugging the Virgin's robe
come near us in flowers.**

**I wonder who the first man was
who walked along and called it
a road. I think it was a woman.**

**Prose was yesterday
today is glimpse and gleam and gasp
then pull the silence up
over your shoulders and sleep.**

**Laws should be like roads
lead you somewhere
but let you stop along the way**

**Is it brief
or is it broken--
only the music can tell.**

1 May 2020

LAUDABIMUS

**We will praise
this very day,
all the grammar
of rejoicing
to tease the sky
to tell us something
we have forgotten.
Not just thunder,
we know that already
though I suppose
we need to be reminded
while we're waiting
for that other word.**

1 May 2020

CHECKING EMAIL

**Sometimes they can read
between the lines
and guess what you're really
saying. That's
why there is no answer.**

1 May 2020

ICONOGRAPHY

**Every detail in the picture
means something,
something specific, vital
to the meaning of the whole image.**

**It isn't just a flower
it's a dahlia, purple-flecked,
from Madagascar. It isn't
just a hand, it's a hand gesturing,**

**how many fingers, spread
or closed, palm up or down,
pointing or curled, holding
or letting fall? Every detail**

**tells its part of the story
you need to understand.
It's up to you to figure it out—
that's what the soul is for.**

1 May 2020

=====

**Nothing comes to say it
it just says it
like pain
you do it to yourself
for some reason
beyond all reason
the long mistake
of being,
we mysterious animals.**

2.V.20

=====

Not so long ago a weaver
pulled it from the loom
without a word. Not so long
ago it fluttered by itself
in the strong wind of nobody watching.
A long time it lay on the floor,
the old wood polished and waiting,
there it lay crumpled and soft
until some hand picked it up
draped it over the back
of a chair and said There
I will figure you out tomorrow
and understand whose shoulders
you were born to keep warm.

2 May 2020

====

**Try a different river
roll up the map and smoke it
we are on the move again
colonists of the next moment,
citizens of an idea, we need
a brand-new geology, a horse
to carry us or drag our cart
but they don't make animals like that,
everything is harder now
except the rock,
it crumbles as we walk.
I was wrong about the river--
this one will get there
if you let it, I was wrong
about everything, all
we really know is going.**

2 May 2020

=====

**If I were someone else
I could be me.
But as it is I am.**

2.V.20

=====

**Something green
is going on. Coming
I mean. There, right
outside the window
so very far away.**

2 May 2020

=====

he next thing you know
I'll be walking the dog
I don't have through the meadows
of say Poland where I have never been
doesn't the name mean Land of Fields
and I guess the real reason
I don't like dogs is jealousy
of the easy affection they get
from young and old, pretty girls
do not pat me in the street
for example, and I don't even
know how to bite, people I mean.
So it's time for a change.
Feed me. stroke my fur,
tweeze the ticks out of my ears.
You get the idea. If I walk it
long enough through far country
I might become heir to its ease,
its niche in society.
I shudder at the thought.
Why is an animal?

2 May 2020

=====

**A pronoun is a sad excuse.
People need people
right there, warmish hands,
more or less understanding eyes.
Or are humans becoming like telephone poles,
survivals of obsolescent technology?
Already the morning sun
lances shadows across the grass.**

2 May 2020

====

All these tales I tell thee
for the good of what used
to be called the soul, yours,
mine, the casual listener
nearby. Remember casual?
It's all so deliberate now,
clear blue sky like gritted teeth.
I'm doing this to answer
all the questions you don't ask--
what a life! But the answers
keep coming and that's all I ask.
For example: a woman in a purple coat
saw a big hawk hiding in a tree,
only the curve of its fierce beak
gave it away. She took a picture
and brought it home. That
was the happening, and this
is the telling. The grey of tree
busy-branched not yet leaf'd,
grey of its plumage, fierce eye.

**Now this version of the hawk,
the tree, the picture
belongs to thee,
out there in the world
where nothing is misspelled.
Hawks fly away.
Women walk home.
It all is a lot simpler
than you'd think
listening to me.**

2 May 2020

=====

**I have work to do
for someone else
thank God in the world.**

2.V.20

=====

**Flash of sunlight
off passing car,
a bright idea
that leaves no trace.**

2 May 2020

**Why is everything
I write so short today?
My lungs are clear
but my mind is short of breath.
Language, let me!**

2 May 2020

=====

**(On this day
sixty years ago
I met Robert Duncan
for the first time.**

**On Bleecker St., corner of MacDougal
in front of the Figaro he said
“You must be the Kellys.”**

I have been trying to live up to his command.)

2 May 2020

=====

**Say iy again
sunrise
over Eagle Rock**

**sunset
a man wounded
by what people say**

**banks of the Thames
face in the water.**

3 May 2020

ON A BOOK NEWLY READ

**All about “I”
and a whole bunch of “you”s—
“I” must be a barnyard
and “you” all the cocks and hens
strutting all over the place.
And are you the farmer?**

3 May 2020

TAKING CARE OF THE OBVIOUS

I thought it said
but why would a tree say that?
Out in the desert so many years
i guess they get to talking,
me or the tree.
sunshine is non-stop information,
infinite classroom.
Shelter in the shadow of a rock.

2.
But obvious? Why does it need
our care? Can't things
take care of themselves?
Maybe not. Maybe the whole shebang
is just an endless conversation--
how would you like that?
the world coming on to you
all day long. and then O
(as the German poet says)
O and the nights!

3.

**All the words ever spoken
but not written down
turn into grains of sand.
That's how we know
we all came from Africa,
we said the Sahara.**

4.

**Talk about obvious!
Why did it take so long
for me to figure that out?
I've been studying the mirror too long,
that pale ghost in there
solemn as a bygone actor
trying to remember his lines.**

5.

**Now leave all the possible
me's out of it
and get back to obvious.
Everything talks.**

**Hylonoetic. Hylophatic.
Listen to the woman
she'll tell you what you mean.**

**6.
So when I say 'obvious'
I think I mean
that in the old days
people learned to look
up into the sky
and call it heaven
because the sky was silent
and they sought relief
from the endless conversation of things,
stones singing, trees explaining,
animals courting and complaining.
Only sky was silent
so we worshipped the sky.
But then the cloud spoke
so we said Ah well,
it is a god, so there
must be speaking up there too.**

7.

Did you ever really see,
stand next to one and see
how big a horse really is?
I'm a biggish man and they dwarf me.
How did we ever dare
to climb on the back of one,
ride it all the way to Jericho?
Sometimes I feel the horse of it
in my shoulders and bones.
Sometimes the turnpike
is too long to drive
let alone walk all the way.
And where does it end?
Maybe all these years,
maybe only the horse knows,
knew, where we should go.
I'll never know--
the air outside is far enough for me.

8.

So maybe you'll get your wish,
turn into someone obvious
with rosy spotlight on you
and applauding multitudes
and thus become a famous thing,
a thing like everything else.
permanent, sacred and true.

9,

Did I say you? Did I dare?
After so much stirring
can't I lick the spoon?
Help! A personal theme
is trying to eel its way in--
nyet, stay out, this
is about the obvious
not my own devious
ambitions to intrude
on the other;s sanctity--
and on Sunday too!
Any I wants everything--
why waste words spelling it out

**when words could make
a jungle where blue fruit grows
and men have wings
but women fly just the way they are.**

10.

**Am I there yet?
Is that Jericho on the plain,
gated community
(that's all a city is)
with parking lots and lots of trees,
quarter-acre homesteads
and charming bungalows
and the fabulous Atlantic
healing mind and body a mile away?
Isn't that the place I was meant to inherit,
a meager city washed by sea,
with libraries enough for me
and Sicilians selling cherries in the streets?
How much more obvious can it get
than all the things we mean to be?**

3 May 2020

=====

**Got tired of that theme
and took a break,
would smoke a pipe
if I knew how
and then get back to
how dare I call it work.**

3.V.20

IN PRAISE OF JOHN MILTON

**When a poet comes to that time
when he can't read well,
or read at all, then he must begin
making things up, big things,
things never heard about before,
Now he can't learn the latest
news of God and government,
commerce and catastrophes.
He has to write whole new world
otherwise he's stuck alone
with the smell of roses, the feel
of a woman's warm cheek, she
sleeping on his shoulder
in the one darkness we all share.**

3 May 2020

= = = = =

**Watching the bees
traffic in what looks
like pure distances
the sun is out
we say to mean
she's here, the first
warm dar of spring
and everybody knows it
everybody is out
of what serves them as roads,
ntrrze or quiet air,
the hum of light in the new leaves.**

3 May 2020

BORROWED

I dreamt I was handling a whole batch of a friend's papers, poems, texts, unwieldy, confusing, then one page came out, with her poem on it:

TOURNIQUET

*Twist me
tight
around you
until
we come
together.*

I had never dreamt a whole poem (short as it is) by another person. Not like her work not like mine, I think. But there it was, is, someone using her, using my dream.

4 May 2020

=====

Get started with all we need—
a mile for breakfast,
the running stream a wimpled
nun smiling beside me,
new day, nude day,
all ready to be garbed.
even some sun up there
sandwiched in cloud.

Time to shift our Bearings north,
wander mountain clefts,
see seals on lighthouse rocks—
fat chance, and yet, and yet
it all has to begin again,
the ancient glory, why not now?
Dear Sister, tell me true
who is it that we hear
even in these little woods
playing that mandolin? Or is it a lyre?

4 May 2020

A POEM FOR MOTHERS DAY

Close to the new—
the tenderness,
the smell of leather
lavender
rose

 you are my mother too,
we are born
from all we perceive,
fully born, I mean,
it takes so many years.

4 May 2020

COLORS

**Colors
are so kind
listen to them now
the soft blue heartbeat,
they assure us
we will get there yet
where colors come from,
the shafts of light
how they wake
whatever they touch—
no wonder we have windows
to keep the colors in.**

4 May 2020

ARS SCRIBENDI

The pen says
You've filled me with ink
now play with me,
write all the words
I am waiting repronounce.

But what does the paper say,
tattered notebook, hasty envelope?
It has its own theologies,
quiet truths it yearns to share.

4 May 2020

LE NOZZE DI QUALCUNO

**Chubby conductor
wearing cummerbund,
with big round glasses
a girl with a bassoon.
Who's getting married?
And why? Music
needs no reason,
Listen and cry.**

4 May 2020

=====

**One gets tired of being afraid.
The wind howls all day long
and then dies down at five o'clock
when working men come home for supper
and their wives
dread the footstep at the door
with practiced resignation.**

**Something like that, One does
get tired of being afraid
of plague and crashes, thieves,
armies, all the other criminals
lurking in the alleys of the mind.**

**Tired of fear. So get outside
walk on the ordinary ground
look at the sky—for a moment
it all looks so simple. Things
come and go. Don't fret.
Evening now and easy.
The wind picks up again.**

4 May 2020

WINEGAR

1.

Wake the salad
with winegar
the wilt needs it
arugula used to be rocket
we used to alliterate
to break the fast
of silence,
 used to use
the sounds of our
saying selves to sing.
Enough of us left
to say so, so
go good-morninging the world.

2.

He meant (the voice
I mean) we are
God's trumpets--
gold silver brass as be--
the angels use
to celebrate His majesty,

they breathe in us
and we make sense out loud
like the cricket or the wren.

3.

I learned I think
from Rilke how to say
angel without blushing.
Of course I sleep
more than he does, did,
and sometimes it's even night.
That's why wake and
watch and wonder,
whittle the words
and leave enough spaces
to whistle the wind
of your tune through,
his I mean and hers I mean
and maybe me.

4.

Of course I sleep--
what kind of question is that
as if I were another,

**cantilever, cable car, caryatid
but they're all girls
and I am at best a priest of them
snoozing at the altar of their knees.**

**5.
Wake now and wonder why
the vinegar once was wine,
the sounds of words
link or hint or howl
their mysterious relationships,
now is all about how,
sleep leaps you to another realm
a different pilot at the helm
a you you never knew.
I come to you from the deep
sharing my shallows,
mumbling my maybes as I come.**

5 May 2020

Poems like "Winegar" come from listening to Mozart, where serious matters of grief and jealousy and loss of identity turn playful and bounce along--but every bounce land deep within the heart.)

= = = = =

**The trees are hiding
the ideographs of scripture
their bare branches
incised all winter long
into the patient sky,**

**now they're huddling their bones
under the fur of leaves--
and that's their writing too,
summer's new testament
about to fill a thousand pages
all around this little house**

5 May 2020

= = = = =

**Nobody means
the things they do--
I heard that spoken
now have to work it out.
Is everybody no different
from any natural thing,
pelting rain, yelping coyote
scaring the neighbor's cats?
Or is Nobody a special one
who really does mean
everything they say or do?
Am I a nobody in this story--
tell me quickly
since I belong to you.**

5 May 2020

LLANTO

Every day
has a number
but I have none.
Every hour
has neat sections
but mine are blurred.
In the calmest moment
I stumble through undergrowth
dull machete asleep in its sheath,
my hands pushing branches aside,
trying not to spill
the empty cup they carry endlessly.

5 May 2020

=====

**Waiting onward
getting near enough to tell
a fish from the water
both are silver
both move quick—
how can we even know
what question to ask?**

5 May 2020

=====

**Freud's birthday
I'm listening**

**a symphony by Johann Wilms
what will I dream tonight**

**his first symphony sounds
like late Mozart darker**

**nobody tells all their dreams
there is a kind of morning**

**sin in saying, then you hear
your words and know how wrong**

**you sare, you lose the dream by telling.
sand it's going to be today all day**

**beautiful music isn'y that the rule
you tell me you dream by the way you walk.**

6 May 2020

== == == ==

**I am the least
of the world's worries
I think, I wake
I sleep and in between
I'm busy all the time
with saying and listening
trying to hurt nobody.
What am I forgetting?
What am I not telling myself?**

6 May 2020

Feast of St. Signund of Vienna

CELEBRITY

**Everybody knows who I am.
Just look in the mirror.**

ossia, as lune:

**You all know who
I am—just
look in the mirror.**

6.V.20

=====

**Sleep till noon
the hallway said
as I stumbled towards the light**

**sleep till noon
the trees will wait
no one will know
the Sun knows where to find you
if she wants you
she knows how to walk
into your dream and wake you.**

**Now plead your case
the window said**

**and I tried, I try
a cup of last night's coffee
a blackbird flies by
and am I even trying?**

**Send a postcard that shows
exactly where you are,
pretty picture, colors correct,
send it back home to your sleep.**

**It is noon now.
The tree frowns toward me, says
What have you done to the day?**

6 May 2020

====

**Dom't even look at the mail.
It isn't there.**

**Or if it is
it's all used up before you read it.**

**Time soaks the words away,
restores them to their natural sea,
Mare Somnium the silly scientists
thought was on the moon,
far from it, the endless
ocean of dreams
where language began
is right here in the dark.**

**Choose the dark.
The more you sleep
the more you have to say.
Wake up and shout it out.**

6 May 2020

== = = = =

**Strange mood this morning
I wonder who she is.**

**Wave the camera at the waterfowl,
study the etymology of *this*.**

**Time puts up with a lot from you.
Me, I mean. I keep
getting them confused.**

6 May 2020

=====

**Crocheted tablecloths
and smaller doilies.
My aunts wove those
with clever busy little
Irish spider fingers.
We had them everywhere
all around the house,
I still have one, or some,
somewhere, little rumped
poems in white cotton yarn.
'poem' from *poiema* =
anything any human makes.**

6 May 2020

=====

**Looking out
onto your own lawn
green with new spring
all gentle swell
and hill and rest,
and thinking about snow
is a sin. somewhere
between venial and mortal,
leave it to the birds
to spell out your penance
if you wake up and repent.**

6 May 2020

=====

**But how far could it travel
that stone you are
or claim to be**

**could I push you even halfway
up my meager hill
the one I think by?**

**No, I am a piece of paper in your pocket
with names written on it
none of them mine**

**how can you carry so many so far
and still dance grace in the meadow
like the myth you pretend to be**

**but who was he? Who gave you shoes,
who pressed the little copper key
into your wet palm**

damp from so many baptisms?
If I lived in that country
I could try dancing too

but I am locked in my identity
a red bird prisoned by its wings—
it has to fly to get here

where I always am.
I contradict myself
to catch the attention of your logic,

a thinking person is a kind of music
I love to listen to
but I can't play the tune myself.

6 May 2020

=====

1.

**Leave nothing out of the story
it's only beginning
You too are waiting to be told.**

**You have ten fingers—
each one of them has a different take
on whatever you touch.**

**Now listen with your left ear alone
and talk to me about love.**

2.

**I'm after permanent things—
you, for instance.**

**The people we have known
live forever
inside something that lives in me.**

**We are tabernacles
in the wilderness
or maybe just daffodils
in some unlikely spring,**

**never mind all the winters.
we have our own strange wool for that,
we last in one another.**

7 May 2020

=====

**The moon may be full tonight
who made it white?
I mean who made me write
by hand I mean
the way I do, the shapes, curlicues.
maddening mistakes
when I try reading back
what someone wrote
using my fingers—can that
me be? Did I mean all that
and mean to hide it as I did
in spiderwebs of illegibility?
There is some mystery here—
spiritual? neurological?
everybody is different!
No two handwritings identical!
It's as good as Christmas,
eight billion presents
under one grand tree.**

7 May 2020

=====

**Unbreakable mirror
of polished steel
shows who you are
not what you seem**

**floor-length
to show the way
you stand or move
lope or lumber**

**I saw myself there once
and I was sitting
at a table in a diner
coffee in front of me**

**you were beside me
and the world was a window.**

8 May 2020

IN THE QUARANTINE

When you never leave the house
it's up to the days
to come in for a visit
and they don't always say their names
as they come through the window

they're parts of your body now,
you get confused, is this
wrist or elbow, or even
is this hand mine?

I cross the street
in the living room,
pat the sofa, walk the rug,
and late at night
when no one's watching
I bask in sunlight
by the open fridge.

8 May 2020

=====

**If she thinks it's the right
way to do things it must be.
She knows. I think she was there
when they explained everything
at the beginning. I was still
a stone then, or asleep
on the staircase
halfway up. So I listen
carefully to what she says--
I can explain only what I've studied,
she can explain everything there is.**

8 May 2020

=====

**Light-hearted in a bad time
I am all Viennese inside
though too clumsy to waltz it out**

**plus, who am I to call
this time bad? Every
age has its nightmares.**

**my first ten years of life
happened in the Hitler time—
have we come up from that?**

**We are all toy sailboats
adrift on a little ponds
in this huge old city park.**

8 May 2020

BIRDING

“learning to see happens best with others”
—Susan Rogers

If I knew where the truth
is buried in the sky
I would be out there with you
stretching my neck to watch
the antics of the Messengers

and they above all love
to hide in sheer speed
or hide in those
halfway to heaven
houses the trees

they hide and sing.

And when we hear them
seeing begins.

8 May 2020

=====

**Those 4 ¼ inch holes
to which the old man
strive to set a white ball
in and not just oh and
not just men but what
weird game it is to seek
to bury something no
bigger than an egg if that
into our shallow earth
and pull it out again
striving to do it right
get it gone then get it back.**

8 May 2020

=====

**A dozen stone lecterns
with sloping hinged tops
to be set up in the sand
by my ocean.
Open the top:
book or books inside,
take one out
spread open and read aloud.
Or bring a new one,
fresh, still wet from the sea.**

9 May 2020

=====

**Hold me
in your charms,**

**falling from the sky
on Mother's Day weekend
rain falling
mixed with flakes of snow,**

**petals of gardenia
they should be.**

9 May 2020

=====

**It's not just heat
and light that make
the flowers grow.**

**Something down there
where she went long ago
says All right daffodils,
time to go.**

9 May 2020

THE PROSELYTE

**Whom do you follow?
I follow the wind.**

**Where does it go?
To a place it knows
and no one else
could ever find.**

**What do you do when you get there?
I do not know.
I'm still on the way.**

9 May 2020

=====

Let's try it again—
the park, the pond,
the zoo nearby.
At 4:45 you can hear the seals
barking to be fed.
The maple tree. The dogwood
by your bench, a few
scattered petals on the slatted seat.
You sit there, legs crossed
at the knee— are those crumbs
for the sparrows you're holding?
No, keys. But where is the door?
Where are the birds
that should be at your feet?

9 May 2020

=====

**All the ways of being wrong
lie before us—
spread open like a flower
or hawk wings
sudden over our heads.
Listen to the music
your heart hears.
Then decide.**

9 May 2020

=====

**Stting on the old stone
wall with me until
we both are stone**

**Stone rises up
in those who ouch it—
then we will have
a true story to tell
our friends when we go
our separate ways
into adventure, being
on the way someday
to being who we are.**

9 May 2020

SUNRISE. MOTHERS' DAY.**1.**

**The light sets a label on the day,
she is our mother first of all,
this is no mere pagany,
this is truth,**

where we come from

**daring to stand in the light and sing
for that's what language started out
by being, breath being a good child,
breath answering the air,
all song says I am here
all song is in service,
listen,**

even the proudest music

**is your Figaro, your Leporello,
your Mozart,
your cello,
he shook my hand
before he turned away.**

2.

So Mom is what the kids all say
these days I notice,
even in the most formal context
it's Mom never Mother.
I feel instructed by what seems
the reverence of their apocoptation,
as if the longer noun
were too sacred even to say.
Or are they claiming boldly
a right to nickname
her from whom their whole
being comes?
I wonder.

3.

Mother's Day second Sunday in May.
It snowed here yesterday
the latest snowfall I recall,
icing on the cake, lasted
a new hours on wood or metal,
gone by dawn. The sun
has nother things to say.

4.

My mother loved gardenias
(named it turns out
for a botanist named Garden,
did you know that?)
loved gardenias so I think of them,
they used to be easy to come by
in florists, a little expensive
but easy to find, even in the subway
news stands they sold them,
[inned to white cardboard
half a dollar each.

I haven't seen or smelled one
in years. But still I can talk,
isn't that the point of flowers,
the earth making specific
remarks to us we need to answer,
my heart (the old word for it)
or mind or something else,
something hidden deep in language,
hidden in the next word you say?

5.
Mother tongue
they call your first language.
Everything after
is a translation.
And translation
is the mother of distances,
the far brought close,
when every foreign word
becomes in umber
your mother speaking
to you in a dream.
I miss my mother
that's why I talk so much,
I miss my mother
died in her sleep
thirty years ago
that's why I tend to treat
everything as if it were
my mother still. Everything
and everyone. It's not wrong
to live up to language
even with some words left out.

10 May 2020

=====

**How fast they drive
when no one's there,
seven on Sunday morning
no church to go to,
police still in their blue sleep**

**and the cars roar up the hill,
going 60 in a 25 MPH zone,
bad cars, danger-bearers,
tigers on the loose, sad men
driving fast as they can
away from sorrow. Blame them
I do but shouldn't.**

**There is a certain comfort
in obeying the law,
even dumb legislations
of self-important governors,
a comfort like a child's blanket,
you feel safe and warm
even when the wolves
howl all around you, I mean**

**the fast cars growl towards me
on the empty highways
of the plague year,
not quite empty enough.**

10 May 20

=====

**If I had
to say it all
again
it would be
for the first time**

10 May 2020

.

=====

Searching key

leo rugiens
looking for one more
door to open
one more soul to consume

and all I am is a key
to someone else.

The *roaring lion*
of the liturgy,
a special devil
devoted to devour,
invented to dismiss.

2.
Once there was a wedding
near Central Park
morning early, the bride
and groom could hear
the lions roar

a few blocks north.
Everybody has an opinion
or as the great Durante said
Everybody wants to get into the act.
And even silence roars.

3.
What did the couple think
and what about the guests?

Lie down in the sky
and wait like light

you have heard the truth,
what more do you need?

4.
Weddings are scary sacraments—
everybody present
gets a little married
to the bride and groom.
I try to shun the ceremony,
makes me nervous

to have so many wives,
so many husbands.
I wait outside,
my hands full of rice—
the Romans used acorns—
the rice is words,
I toss and flee.

5.
How long have you been
together, friend?

Long enough to know.

And what do you know?

To ask no questions and tell no lies.

I should learn that too.

6.

**Then the lion roared again:
pat my flank and pat my mane
I am just the same as you,**

**a noise in the dawn that makes you,
a noise in the night
that does not hurt your sleep**

**but speaks its own new language
loud in the courtyard of your dream.**

11 May 2020

== ==

**The old man kept chickens
in his store, they ran around
all over the empty floor,
nothing else in the store
but chickens, an ordinary
little store on Avenue R.
The poor old man all
bent, scary, bent forward
at the waist, a walking L
upside down, as if his whole
being was about feeding
chickens and picking them up.**

**This was where we bought
chicken to eat, the old man
killed cleaned and sold them,
there was a war going on
somewhere, this was life,
this was what the child I was
thought old age must man,
bent, messy, everything wrong**

**and I never liked the taste
of chicken anyhow. I tell
you this now because the sun
is still in shining in the trees.
In the dark I wouldn't dare.**

11 May 2020

=====

Could the roadway glisten
but the grass be dull?

I choose an angel
to amend my air,
this little tune I try to tell,

windows in Providence,
doorways in Rome.
The little arches where we shelter
in the rain like Socrates
stand horizontally all night
and call it sleep, but we wake
weary from the work of dream.

Pale grey sky,
the light is tired too.
Suddenly it gets brighter
and I feel reproached, a car

**slips up the hill and everything
is same again.
Where have I been?.
Brighter and brighter--
it comes to me again.**

11 May 2020

LISTENING TO MASSENET

Calling through the curtains
and who answers?

Any sound from in there
works as a word
for you. Moonlight
on the Aubusson, even
bourgeois have feelings,

maybe more than all
the rest of us so busy,
too busy to feel,
living in the woods.
Hills. Cold cares.

2.
We're not supposed
to like such music.
It's sentimental
they say, over emotional
not intellectual enough

as if the all the world
had no place for the heart
to rest in fervent melody.

3.
Pretend it is a letter
you just got, or got
this wrong but only
open now, in the safe dark,
your heart dulled
a little by supper, now
slit open the envelope, that's
what hands are for,
open and read.

Pretend it is a letter.
Someone loves you
or says they do,
all the way down
the bottom of all these words.

4.

Pretend you've read the letter,
and now you know.

The knowledge is soft in you,
slow dissolving in your mouth.
I mean your mind. You are young
still, you confuse these things.

5.

So that's what you heard
when you pulled the curtain open,
using both arms,

 all a person's strength
barely enough to part that cloth,
that heavenly, soft, thick,
strange-smelling cloth.

*(listening to Massenet's Werther)
from the Met)*

11 May 2020

DAWN FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE

1.

Let the eagle
take you there
where the thunder
speaks a Turkish tone
where consonants
make vowels come

and the bird nests down.
There you are,
adolescently in Otherland
always. Means all days
but maybe the night
has wings of her own.

2.

Her I dare
to say as if
time was

gender too.
I was still
in mid-air when
the eagle said so.

3.
So here we are
together with ourselves,
our shadows playing around our steps
or dozing in our laps
when finally we sit down to rest.
This is a rock.
This is a tune
I found in my teeth,
I whistle it to make you understand
how little I know
this place of time
for all that I wake here
every day and you do too.

4.

Can I touch you now,
caress at least your shadow,
think about the bones
of your spine, how long
they've held you
upright in this tilting world.
Or must I go back to music,
fingerless and intimate?

5.

For I was soft asleep
when this bird fell
down from his powerful elsewhere
and seized me a journey,
a day all over again,
morning, the sun.
You know the rest:
the here of things,
the now that flees before me
her skirts sailing out as she runs,
o the billowing of hours.

6.

When the nation's economy stops
we go back each by each
into a primeval world
where a tree makes as much
sense as the news
and loneliness gives us back
our original names.
That's why it took an eagle
to tell me Wake now
for god's sake
you can always sleep.

7.

Then what came after
my grandson asked.
Nothing, nothing,
your mother was not born,
I'm still only a little
older than you.

How
can I be, then? he wanted to know.
That's a mystery to me too--

but like all being
has no explanation.
You mean the eagle brought me too?
That is a better way of putting it--
blame the bird
if blame must be.
I never would, he said,
everything that lives
is my good friend
especially the ones that fly.
Everything can fly
I lied, but he
looked at me with
my own mother's eyes.
Old man, he said
all softly like, old man
have you forgotten all the differences,
the distances where you were born?
I'll whistle the eagle down
to bring you back to mind.

12 May 2020

LOOKING FOR NOTHING IN PARTICULAR

Suddenly the trees are green
but sleep until we're ready
they say so I close my eyes.

It does not do to hurry things.
least of all a tree, but me though
I can hurry myself along

I want to learn leafing while I sleep.

12 May 2020

PURITY

The taste of light
is more than milk

I heard you in my sleep
slip into the room

past the shade's straight edges
through the muslin curtains

and there I was again
baffled by what always is.

12 May 2020

THE PUNCH

**So a word can take strength:
 from its position in the *breath*
 in the *line*
 (suppose the line to be one breath)
 how it sounds in the sequencing of sounds**

**(vowels are like colors:
 have complements and opposites
 try five front vowels then a back
Leave me in peace, sleep long)**

**from their brevity among the lengthy
 or being commonplace among the highfalutin
 or by being simple in surprise
 (*Fervent corporeal embassy
 to negotiate intricately with your skin*)**

**But the most important energy is given by the
 breath. Study breath, your own breath, your
 own words said, heard, out loud.**

12 May 2020

DAWN CHANT

for M.L.Z.

The hero the hero's
worth, work,
task is to rush slow
into the world
lusty grab gather
all the winds
wills whims whilings
scattered knowings all
everybody's lost
memories needs knowings

hurry them home
to a heart house he has
only he, only he
must make,
the world urn
turned inside out
until it tells. It tells
the *worth* of every while,
fond wish, found

evidence

and wipe the wound away,

save them, sort them

into a dream of meaning,

old hand at the type-case

sorting the letters

one by one

the deed is done

the worth disclosed,

rock sundered, every geode

opened to its crystal gospel,

o hero, hero

do your worth,

the colors point the way,

is more worth, is more worth

the singer sings,

true. You

have been listening all

your life to that music

those distances

and I in the shade of a missing tree

spent all my silences in praise

of what I saw of what you did

**and that was is enough for me
but you!**

**your hero's worth,
work, is hungry for the world
to set it bright
and get it light
and bring the questions quick
to all the anxious answers,
milk for each new-born day.**

*Thirty-two degrees at six o'clock on a May morning this dreamed
me awake to say it.*

13 May 2020

=====

**All things
need lingering.**

**Dawn sun
on last night's trees**

**one more miracle
soft taste of air**

**guides all our lives
and tide comes up the river**

ocean is our core.

13 May 2020

=====

**I want to give you
a stone worth giving,
crystal structure, color,
heft or just the feel of it—
a thing to hold in your thought,
pure bright useless gift.**

13 May 2020

TARA TOLD ME

**Go play with the nymphs
they'll cheer you up and on
they don't all wear long dresses
some wear sparkles, some are men
even: water takes all forms
and fills every contour with itself,
knows no void—no room for tears,
frets, fears. Play with the nymphs
means be filled with transparent
joy, legitimate as light.**

13 May 2020

=====

**Look right through
the music
and what do you see?**

**She told me: Look—
looking is the real deed,
doesn't matter what is seen.**

13/14 May 2020

=====

Animation
news of the hour
the news is blue—

and all we forget
is a little penknife
lost in the sand

and all we remember
is the sea rolling in
to lick us clean.

14 May 2020

=====

**Everything is morning
unless you say so.**

**Then it darkens a little
to show you mean it.**

**Deer come out of the trees—
by using language at all
you undertake to feed them.**

**And the birds come down.
Grosbeak. Cardinal. And
if you're lucky, a crow.**

14 May 2020

OPPOSITES

Let the opposite
embrace the oak tree
then we shall see

what the clouds have been
trying to tell us
all these years in their blue robes:

the outside is inside.
The little toy ant-farm
of your childhood is you

now nightly climbing the stairs
made creakingly of wood--
don't ask me from what tree,

you have the book in your lap
already. Look down and write it up.

2.

Trees obsess me.
They outnumber us.
They write more leaves
than all the rest of us.
always more than I can read.

I linger restless in their shade,
a schoolboy again
with no recess in sight.
Even autumn will be just grieving.

3.

From my window I can see
someone running up the hill
through the trees. I think
it might be me running away.
what keeps me here is you,
only you. The wings
of your intelligence, the pale

**intensity of your speech.
So now you know. Or had
the tree already told you
when you went out to feed the birds?**

14 May 2020

=====

**Felt dizzy—
fell
into a different language.**

**The consonants
tried to choke him
but he broke free,**

**desperately chanting vowels
he remembered
from a former religion,
candle flame and frankincense,
water drops trickled on the tongue.**

14 May 2020

=====

**Early symptoms of solitude,
sun in the trees.**

**Bird with a blunt beak
on a branch looking away.**

**Mahler on the internet,
middle period symphony
urgently confused.**

**Postcard from an old friend
who died by the sea.**

14 May 2020

=====

**Writing with my father's pen,
an urgency to sing.**

**Cast aside my modesty,
be loud.**

**Stand up
in the empty church
and shout sweet
the hymn you heard,**

hymn you always hear inside.

14 May 2020

=====

**There were cars going by
as we waited on the levee
I think they call it, walkway
where the river's in control.**

**We are the baggage light carries,
three parts nitrogn, one part oxygen
O, and half a dozen little
gasses no one talks about,
but make us breathe. The cars
are all driven by men and women
with things on their mind— Oh
for a yoga of driving,
mind clear at peace, aware
only of the road before us.
Us, I say, but was in no car,
I was in waiting as in old books
for the King and Queen
who strangely, finally strangely
despite the river, never came.**

14 May 2020

=====

**Virtuous merchants
waltzing through the woods.
They carry what they made,
they trade it for leaves,
shadows, branches, bark.
They call themselves people
and have a religion with no
fear in it, only desire,
remember, ransack emptiness
till your heart is full.**

15 May 2020

=====

Morning after we bought a new car
(bronze Forester low mileage)
I wake up different. Why?
Does our neurology's subtle web
extend to our steeds too,
so that part of me was shredded
by leaving the cold car (red
Forester, low mileage), and part
is healing, growing new thread?
Or is it the weather, first open
window day of spring above
this quiet writing desk? Difference,
are you in me? How dare I suppose
anything so subtle could be all mine,
I belong to what happens,
we all do, fresh breeze
in the curtains, now analyze
the difference if I dare.

Going where I should
is a children's game,
squares and boxes

chalk on sidewalks,
going to a job
is hopping on one foot,
the whole being
waits somewhere up ahead
in time, that tropical paradise
across the chilly straits of now.
Goethe would have said it better
of course, he had the devil to help him.
or is that me? The angel of language
is fierce and scarlet sometimes,
always beautiful, o lady lord I listen.

16 May 2020

=====

Nauru? Nenida?

Temple.

**Northlings headed south
—true bides by sun’s night—
culture of cloud.**

**I promised her clarity,
spoke. Language
is running water,
purifies itself as it flows.**

***Goes. The sound
woke me, and I obeyed.***
**Morning is an island kingdom
somewhere else suddenly here.**

**Wake up the bishop
to ban the book
—prohibition augments appetite—**

**old girlfriend along the way
waving in an open car
but way where? I dunno.
They all go there.**

**Not quite done.
We still don't know
what became of him,
poet who made cactus talk
and interviewed silence.
There is no book where we can look it up.**

16 May 2020

CARO NOME

**Dear as a name can be
the waves know all of them,
come in and in
and in, pronouncing them.**

**I am in love with you
(for instance) and
don't even know who you are,**

**only your dear name,
"you"
from whom all my joy and expectations
flood me with your waves.**

16 May 2020

**EPITHALAMIUM
On a Greek Island**

for Claire and Nick

**the Bride wore pale
cotton the Groom
carried pine cones
in his pocket and they
were all alone—
the ocean was their priest,
green the grove
and green the sea—
only the colors are clear to me.
She tugged on his tie
and his coat fell off,
he kicked off his shoes
and they waded out
just a little from land,
she kept asking What
is the name of this island
truly? He just smiled
and smiled and somehow
the smile was enough.**

16 May 2020

THEY TOLD ME TO TELL YOU

They tell me you're an artist who makes abstract figures in bronze to puzzle visitors in dark museums.

They tell me you write music they play backstage to get actors ready for when they swim on stage.

They tell me you're a gardener who grows blue roses for new-born boys, blue lilies for girls.

They tell me you bent the horizon and found an island where no one sleeps. the new step for humankind.

They tell me you're a doctor who can read footprints in the mud or sand and judge the

health or otherwise of those who in passing by left such evidence.

They tell me you're a birder who got lost once in the woods and came home with a new religion.

They tell me you're a scientist who developed an antidote to consciousness but wisely buried it deep beneath some stones no one knows where and you forgot.

They tell me when you were little you climbed a tree and never came down but I can't understand how that could be.

They tell me your children are scattered all over the world but the one you love best is furthest away, coast of New Zealand facing east, thousand of miles of empty sea.

...17 May2020

=====

**When it rains in the trees
I think about you,
gleam of water
slipping down each leaf,
bright eyes, shush of soft rainfall
through hundreds of leaves,
a face I saw once and recognized
at once though i had never
seen you before, startling me
in a quiet way, like spring
there one morning, leaves
for the rain to play with,
play on, speak through--
who knew the rain knew
so many words, each leaf
a speaking tongue, water
knows everything, I know
only you, and I know you know
more thn you know you know,**

**there, doesn't that sound like rain,
aren't you green too, new and green
and full of light, shaped like summer soon,
won't you lend me your cup
to catch a little of the rain?**

17 May 2020

=====

**Woe is my brother
camel's hair the moths prefer
must safeguard
my jacket from their wings.**

**Though it's not the wings
that strife, that bite and spoil
the measured softness of such cloth
color of desert! color of wind**

**so light comes through the holes they leave
but I keep cheer, from the fairy
side of the family I, I agitate
for energy, I giggle in my sleep.**

17 May 2020

=====

The dawn days are best,
the grey antecedents
the blue insinuations—
a word in your lap,
Principessa, a crown
of lilacs any moment
to shape our afternoon.

But now. The crocodiles
of sleep have slithered
back into the night Nile.
New things can happen
in all the old ways,
the temples where the sacred
fire is still burning
after x-thousand years.

You know the ones,
you walked through them
in the dentist's office
in old National Geographics
Cambodia, Mongolia,

**sunlight in Jerusalem.
Aswan, back to the Nile again.
Wake up is what it's saying
though I'm tired of listening
to such music, pluck the notes
off the staves until they
flee like birds from phone lines
at any sudden sound.**

**Sudden sun send me to sleep,
call me when the dream is ready,
I am the last inhabitant of night.**

18 May 2020

=====

**Not sure if certainty is best.
Something sexy about doubt,
about whether I should go
out today to apprehend
the river as it passes by
and demand an explanation
of where it came from, and
in fact where we all came from,
and I suspect that it will tell.
Rivers seldom stop to chat
but shout the truth out loud
as they pass by. Why don't I
manifest a comparable
persistence of useful application,
why don't I get to work.
Sister Doubt snickers at my side,
she knows I'm not speaking
for myself, I have no self
to speak of, that much at least
I learned from studying the river.**

18 May 2020

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**I meant to make
a mark atop the page
but found no sign
of it on the keyboard.
Hmm. I'll use instead
some wild parentheses,
hope you'll understand,
you who read every line
and catch my breath
between them. Ready?
I think I'm done.**

18 May 2020

=====

**If I had paid
as much attention to doors
as I have to windows
I would be there now**

**or would it have
come to me? All these
bright things that work
two ways, what**

am I waiting for?

18 May 2020

=====

**The poet's job
is making tracks in the snow
when there is no snow**

**then following them
all the way to where he is
and saying so.**

18 May 2020

=====

If you wake up before the dark
wakes up and rolls away
the last threads of dream
still dangle from the trees—

real dreams, I mean,
not the private kind you inherit
from your pillow, no,

the ones the world is dreaming
out there always.

Go out,
let them touch your face
walkthrough those amiable spider webs,
walk in the trees.

And not just trees--
from the sky too these threads hang low,
brushing against us, then fading
and falling back up to heaven
as the light sneaks over the horizon.

**By now you've had enough;
go home and mingle all you've
found with all you used to know
then let that mingle with your own
tiny little dreams. Sleep now.
The book you have been reading
closes all by itself.**

19 May 2020

JOB DESCRIPTION

**Lift the lever
turn the latch
we are translating
from the French**

**the novelist alone
knows what time means
poets like scientists
are both trapped
in the mousetrap
of the particular**

**whereas the story
goes on by itself.
Any story. The writer
is along for the ride.**

**Turn the knob
ring the bell
lie on the riverbank**

**exhausted
by the tale you had to tell,**

**giddy poets make noise
nearby, flying gaudy kites
but their kites
soon get caught in trees**

**you lie there hearing
the whine and whimper
of the poets tugging
vainly at their strings**

**you can relax now,
even smile
the story's done,
now open the door
and let her in.**

19 May 2020

=====

**Isn't there a way she wondered
all the way in?
Past the willows and the shadows
to reach the shallow
but most pure pool at the center
or near enough to it
that from its water she could taste
or even lie down in it
just for a li/ttle while so she can really,
understand what the inside means?**

19 May 2020

for Tamas, his birthday

**If you were a Welshman
your dragon (y ddraig goch)
would be red as sunset**

**but you're a wandering
bard from Gypsyland
so your dragon is green**

**green as the puszta, green
as the Duna as it floods
before the grandest of all parliaments**

**green as Maryland in springtime
Elk River where the Hessians
waded ashore to lose the war**

**thus set us free. I know Europe
had a hand in making us. I know too
that you have come to us**

**to say a new thing into our poetry.
images tumbled out of complex words,
a voice we've never heard before**

**and sometimes you even (you know
how child-like we really are)
paint pictures to show us how to read.**

**Thank you for coming to us
just in time for language
all the way across the green sea.**

19 May 2020

for Rainer

**this cup you see
is thanks to you**

**it seems a shame
to think
that I will drink
it all by myself**

**and not a drop
for you, and yet
I mean to share
something with you**

**the taste of words
sweet and hot
and black as Baudelaire
(wishful thinking)**

**a toast at least
in thanks
I lift your cup.**

19 May 2020

FOR LILA,

on her ne The Partitas

**My eyes
can't read a word of it
but they know you,**

**my ears though
pick up at once the tune
you have been singing**

**year after year, a song
that tells the truth
of being in a body in a place**

**in a time amid the scary
glamor world of other people.
And the trees. And the river.**

**I mean I listen to you
and I hear a voice that no one has
but you, rich with yearning,**

**sparkling with fear, glisten,
listen, lust and linger—
you know what it is to be,**

**to be on earth alive—
bless you for being
aloud in all the silences.**

19 May 2020

HOYA CARNOSA

for Maggie

**You made me look it up.
Just looking at the words
I thought it the *fleshy today*.
Then I went online and found
a flower I had never touched,
never smelled – and they claim
it has a sweet smell that makes
people plant pots of it inside their house.
And who knows what else
that flower might make people do.
Or any flower does. There is fear
in every natural thing, not just beauty
and awareness—though beauty is there
certainly, and every thing alive
knows how to talk. You know my creed.
So I think I'll go back to my first meaning,
my first mistake. the flesh of the day
you sent me, soft neck of morning,
rich hips of afternoon, the legs of night
that carry us to bed, tottering with tiredness.**

**And then the morning comes,
the sudden light that beats any flower
at the beauty and brightness game
but who has ever smelled the sun?
Maybe your blessed *hoya* has,
and that's where it got its sweetness.
Quality has to come from somewhere
doesn't it? Now you have to look me
in the eye with your lovely pilgrim eyes
and say: Yes, amigo, they do, but from
inside they come, come out to meet us
there on the ground, where we stand
with something inside us that hears them.**

20 May 2020

THE WORD IS HEAVY

The word is heavy
it said as I woke,
it sinks to eh bottom

of the sentence the blood
whirring in the brain
the well of *Chica Loca*
from whom all language comes.

2.

The word was a disturbance
silence lasted for a million years
then something spoke. I think
it was you but that's just thinking.
You are what the word said.

3.

Heavy,
as in have to carry.
The body does it

**while the mind
(that timid bird on a branch)
listens. The body speaks,
the word is so heavy
only the body can carry it.**

4.

**When I was a child we prayed
at the end of every Mass
the word was with God
and the word was God.
They don't say that any more
I gather, John's gospel,
how it began, the one who knew Jesus,
knew Him well, heard
the word He was.
Now we have to listen hard
to hear (the word is heavy)
but the body is good at listening.**

5.

The lawn is green we say,
th green is lawn we say
the body dances this way,
the body makes the grasses green
because the flesh is one
substance with what it sees.

6.

Go Back to church
the one built
before the world,
go back to learn
how you can be with
what you already are.
That gospel never stops.
The word listens and we speak.

20 May 2020

== == == == ==

We sat in the dark a long time.
we could feel the curve of stone
beneath us, the smell of dampness,
something rough beneath our feet--
was that rock too? The damp
seemed to come up from there.
Then someone said Try
to open your eyes, so we did.
And could see, not much,
it was not bright where we were,
but we could see where
what light there was was coming from.
Stiffly, stiffly got to our feet,
shuffled over the rough
towards it and so
after a while came into the light.
I don't know why I bother
to tell you this, you were there,
you were with me, our skin
still damp from where we sat so long.

20 May 2020

=====

**Cotton, cotton
is the loveliest,
cotton is Egypt
cotton is soft
no beast is plundered
no worm employed,
cotton is Egypt and easy,
cotton grows in our land,
cotton shapes to the body
but does not cling,
is cool in summer, slips
friendly under heavy cloth
in winter, but mostly
cotton is Egypt
and very old, cotton
has stories to tell
listen to your shirt, your skirt,
cotton knows the name of things
and whispers in your ears
when you slip it on.**

**When you're wearing cotton
the river is always near,
and when you hear the river
you're near the sea--
the waves are made of cotton:
you knew that as a child
and you forgot to forget.
Spring morning, cool and green,
cool enough for cotton,
white cotton, cotton is best.**

20 May 20

WINDOW

**Suddenly the trees
said "Me!" again**

**I heard their word
on every keaf**

**when I for once
was keeping still.**

20 May 2020

=====

**They say body
but they mean something else.
a seeming they can show
to the world as if it were
their very selves, or else
something they do things to
as if it needed them
to tellit what to do. No, no.
The bpdy is a radio, non-stop
transmitter not just to the one
who walks it atound the block
but to all the town, talks
to the trees and carefully
repeats what they say, what all
things aresaying. This
is what the body is—dare
to listen to it, through it, let
it give your answers for you
and try to learn from what it says.**

20 May 2020

=====

**Imagine the obvious
all over again
but upside down this time,
your mother's rough beard,
the cactuses of Canada.
This is what the good book says,
the one they quote but
never let you read. Coarse images,
they explain, salacious narratives,
vituperative deities. So they give you
Bibles instead, and scriptures of all creeds,
screeds,
but you and I know better,
we know there is a book
where people love you all the time
and no one dies. We do our best
to copy out a page or two of it
every day, before the obvious
obvious sweeps the dream away.**

21 May 2020

THE CRITIC

**Bees without honey
opera without song--
the critic is at his desk
sharpening his prong
to slip seductively
between what is and
what he thinks should be.
Suspicious of sunshine,
jealous of the moon, no picture
is true enough for him--
it must be dead-accurate
but also startlingly original.
And maybe he's right--
maybe we should be made
to see the ordinary for the first time,
and call that art, or music, or whatever.**

21 May 2020

=====

**From Nay to Nomember
it's supposed to be mild
but I have seen it snow
in Knockedover, and had
to turn the furnace on in Swune--
only the Caesar months are free of chhill.**

21 May 2020

=====

1.

Tell me if I got it wrong again
the apple and the minister,
the prayer book and the sofa
drenched all night with rain,
the choir frightened by an owl,
and startled by the creaking door
the sermon shatters to the mosaic floor.

2.

I ask you--you're the archeologist,
i'm just the sacristan
sweeping up the fragments,
now and then tasting a crumb
left from god knows
what sacrifice—a word they say
means taking out of the ordinary
something to be special now,
offered, banished or vanished,
given to some Principle that sometimes
somehow leaves scraps of it behind.

**3.
So what do I do
with what I collect?
I have been taught
to keep a neat catalogue
of all my finds
(they use a French word
for it I cannot spell)
and do so faithfully.
Poor as my handwriting is
it's the only faith I have.**

...21 May 2020

THE INTERVIEW

There was a man on the pier
who said his name
I didn't hear it with the wind and winch
and I hadn't come to an island
to talk or even listen
to anything but space and sea.
But he said it again,
Portuguese I guess, a lot of people
from the Azores hereabouts,
I wanted to be polite so I said
my hearing is lousy tell me again.
But he couldn't understand what I said
because the horn started howling on the boat
and drowned both of us out.
By then he was on the deck
the ferry was backing away from the dock.
and now we'll never now.
He smiled though, he had a nice smile,
I smiled too, I hope it looked like his.

21 May 2020

=====

If I told you how to do it
I would be lying
there are purple irises
tall by the bathroom window
can I explain that
or the pair of wild turkeys
that step down from the woods
and seldom use their wings--
does that tell you something
that I can't? Amazements
of paths, loud curlicues, all
the annoyances of pastoral,
how can we trace their gestures
with loops of language? We
I say, note how 'we' crept in,
I sidled up to you, elbows
neighboring, as if you meant
what I mean by being here.
Do you? None of my business.
Stick to the things around us--
they speak an older language

**still, and the older the language
the harder it is to learn
but when you do, the world is new.
And there I go talking about you.**

22 May 2020

== == == == ==

**Open the tree
find the first me**

**fled from the stone
on the way to bone**

**before we dare to die
me must become I.**

22.V.2020

=====

Gnomic geology

**open the rock and a bird flies out
feathers of your ancestors
flutter by your feet, I sweep them
purple in my hands to restore
what is yours, the colors, the so many tiny
barbs in the few wings
by which they fly. You fly
out of the stone. I pray to you,
exciting risk, to dare such plea
and who knows who you are?
Prayer knows, the thing
inside the also tree,
loud psalms of wind in leaves
and never a knife.**

**Geology teaches us all about love,
the strata of our understandings,
the upwelling thrust, how each day
builds upon the passions and releases
of the last. And then there are rivers,**

**how new they seem, slivering
through the rock, always a new
voice to say the old songs,
listen, learn riverlanguage,
it kisses best. It is so simple,
the simplicity scares me,
what have I done that it should be so clear?**

22 May 2020

====

**Our minds are full
of false etymologies
thank God, it means
old words get
reborn every day.
Who knew (for example)
that ‘necking’-- meaning
the soft preliminaries of love-making—
comes from ancient times,
amorous saurians, brontosaurus
twining their long necks together
to get cozy, to get started?
We didn’t even know they existed
when we were fourteen all
cuddled on her mother’ sofa.
And now no adolescent even
hows what necking means--
but I bet the lizards do.**

22 May 2020

====

Tree
 is the ancient
 ethical plural*
 of *true--*
 trees are the most
 honest things
 that people knew.
 And even now.

22 May 2020

*

The ethical-plural was a feature of archaic Nostratic languages. It extended the meaning of some quality to the things or species that possessed or exemplified such qualities. *Good* taking the ethical-plural *God* is the most obvious example, or *tale* from *tell*. Usually ablaut is involved in the process, but sometimes consonantal shift replaces it.

=====

**Cloudless beginning
blue nitrogen.
Everything is a road.
Everything is going.
Everything is here.**

22.V.2020

SHARDS

of the broken mirror
spring back together
the glass is whole again,
no image in it.
But there is music
on the other side.

2.
The spaces between
fill up with meaning.
Meaning is painful
sometimes, like the last
acts of two different operas
simultaneously sounded.
The pain woke the audience
and they fled into silence,
blessed quiet of the nothing much.

3.

In Sheephead Bay
the wind was raised
I heard it moments after,
the names of streets
were song enough for me,
I sing them softly
still to myself
among the listening trees.

4.

Why was the mirror
in the first place
and who broke?
And when it leapt
all by itself to be
itself again, clear
and luminous, why
did it show no face.
Could it be that we
who made such things
are invisible to what we've made?

**Are we an opera
with the music left out?
Or is that mirror
still waiting patiently
for us to show our faces?
But what do our faces show?
What do our faces know?**

23 May 2020

=====

**This coffee needs more sugar
plus it's raining
so the street at least is gleaming
with new meanings.
Early pearly
the childlike sky,
fain would I be drenched
with its quiet certainty,
softly, to itself,
knowing what is to come.
I go now to sweeten the cup.**

23 May 2020

=====

**Be an honest pilgrim
go there
don't just think,
sit on the stone
but stone's not for thinking,
sitting is for listening
to hat the stone says,
Your feet do all the work
you think? Good feet,
nice feet, feet full of pain,
but they're just along for the ride.
It is your body that reads the road
or the road is what your body hears
whispering when others sleep.
You can sleep too, pilgrim,
your bones know how to keep watch.**

23 May 2020

=====

**The biggest bird I ever saw
looked hard at Robert Duncan
in the zoo and he looked back
and they looked like each other
amazingly. The wild eye,
the furious-curious attention.
The biggest flying bird, I mean.,
ruling from its perch in the Bronx.
And so I got to witness
what poets look like when they see.**

23 May 2020

=====

**Better too much
than not enough.
On this premise
webuilt our commonwealth.**

23.V.20

gTER.MA

Hide things.

Hide

**so they will find them
later.**

**You know who they are
bur they don't.**

**They will not know
until they find
the things you hide.**

**Some of them
at least. No one
will ever find them all.**

23 May 2020

WAITING NEARBY AND WHY NOT

**at any moment she might come
carrying that father thing they have
with a letter for me stuck in it,
or for someone I pretend to be.
For I am various, devious, curious and pure.**

**And here she is, drops the envelope
and rushes on. How quick time passes,
with such slim legs and silver spurs!**

**I open it slowly, for me time's slow,
fondle the paper out and read:**

***We have one duty above all:
to excite awareness, thinking, desire
and spiritual intensity in one another.***

**Chastened, I struggle to my feet
leave the pretty ourling stream
and shuffle back to work.**

23 May 2020

NIGHT LETTERS

1.
Writing letters
in the middle of the night
to say what no one can see
can't be shown
on any stage

the Romans knew
for all their fancy words.

At least they knew
the mind and hand were feminine
and the sea
still takes on the gender
opposite to each one who enters it
or gazes on it lovingly
or listens to it speaking in the night.

2.

In that dream I was the earth
reaching up inside the pyramid
to rescue the king from
what he thought was being dead.

No! You are just a child,
a little boy or girl
playing on the riverbank,
sandcastles, all that stuff,
anything that keeps your mind
off being dead. Play,

play till you're grown up again.
Then open the letter I left
propped up atop your tomb.

3.

Word, word I lack!
ends the opera.
Moses is looking at the sky
hidden from him and us all
by the stage works and he roof

**and the clouds over Boston
and time goes by.
I wrote a letter in Portuguese
to the girl next door
and she didn't answer either.**

**No pain. Words
are to speak,
answering is optional.**

**But speak-singing in German
Moses blamed the word: Word,
word that fails me,
word that absents itself from me.
As if it could! The one
thing that never fails is words.**

**4.
A dark trombone
haunts the dawn.
It hurts to sleep?**

**So wake and write
letters to doubtful friends,
dead patriarchs,
movie stars from your childhood,
glamorous gurus,
strangers on the bus you never rode,
they all need your news.**

**There is something obscene
about a sheet of blank paper.
Hurry and cover it up with words
before mother sees it and frowns.
O the frown of a mother
is a kind of Egypt think,
lasts a long time and feels like stone.**

**It doesn't matter what your words say,
they aren't yours anyhow
and words know deeply
how to take care of themselves.**

5.

Night letters

they used to call

a cheaper kind of telegram--

remember telegrams,

a few expensive words,

stuck on a flimsy sheet

but brought right to you

by a warm-handed messenger

who didn't know what it said!

A miracle of silence in a little

yellowish envelope.

Now we write messages

with no paper

and no warm hand.

Not far away the leafy

tract where Morse's house

stands by the river,

the man who made the telegraph

and since his time writing

has gone faster and further,

elephant in rut, shark in pursuit,

a little sliver of water

**curling down the drain.
Here it is, for you
if it finds you,
the night ;etter comes again.**

24 May 2020

=====

**Wake up,
it's time to go to Thule
and watch the first people
wake up, pink and fuzzy
from northern sleep.
Wake, bring them breakfast,
adjectives, and prepositions
to tie their scattered things
together, what they call
their belongings,
but no one
owns them, they are just things,
sacred, ontologically other, all
they have in common with us
or the folk of Thule is language:
listen to them! Daylight already!**

24 May 2020

= = = = =

for Valéry

**Grey breezes
of the after-night**

**headache raw
from sleepless**

**the me in different
but I the same.**

24 May 2020

=====

for S.W.

Towers are like pens
or brushes,
painting the sky.
You live in a tower,
reach out your arms
to bring heaven to earth.

Sudden genesis. Each
image is a new creation,
something never seen before
on this earth or any other,
ink on paper, paint on cloth,
doesn't matter, a slender
thing that never was before.

Before you made it. Snatched
it from the sky, maybe,
but only you knew how to read
the sky that day, the clouds
romancing high over the tower
you teach us to see,

24 May 2020

=====

The infant joys of anywhere
run to the freezer
take out some winter
hold it in your hands
until the sun melts,

you know what I mean,
be a child again,
wet handkerchief, muddy carpet,
all the sacredness outside
dragged home
and everything has a weird smell,

so do it again and again,
being a child means being again
so live up to the job,
taste everything twice,
spit out the peas and beets
mumble the soft bread—
this is your new religion, now.

**Pleasure without measure
is what it's about, don't let them
tell you otherwise, God wants joy,
answer evgerybody with the same
silent smile, they'll let you
get away with ity for a while
and never never go to school.
Or if they make you go
wrap your dreams around you
and make love with the sunshine
dancing in the chalk dust near the window.**

24 May 2020

=====

**Contraband
the sudden bird**

**animal of elsewhere
fortress on the mind**

**sentence with no tense
broken airport**

**into this oily lock insert
this hidden instrument**

**sound of water
silence of the leaf.**

25 May 2020

MEMORIAL

**This day we used to call
by another name
when we were young**

**or no name at all
when we were finally
young enough to call it**

nothing but now.

25 May 2020

Memorial Day used to be called Decoration Day when I was a child. I don't know when or why it changed its name. Marriage?

GETTING THERE

**It had a grammar to it
a grey car on a grey road
and who was driving
but the one he wanted
and didn't know why.
We never do. The whim
sticks to the will
and becomes a want.
The want drives its own machine
and there we are
on the endless freeways of desire.
Or not so free. Call it a turnpike,
with invisible operators
lifting each expensive gate.
And some days even from
far away you smell the sea.**

2.

**Of course the sea is the universal
predicate of wanting.
Homeland of no land,
parent, lover, priest**

and ever friend. End there
or begin. Works both ways,
as any road will tell you,
dirt path through pine woods
crow over your shoulder.

3.

I'm only telling what I'm told.
Please forgive my tone
all chalk and blackboard,
geraniums on the fire escape,
frowning windows.
Eyes. Forgive me for seeing
when I wasn't even looking.
Forgive me for staring
and still not being able to see.
It's a tone time takes in telling,
all preacherly and general,
too many words but never enough.

25 May 2020

FRIEND

for Jack Pagliante

**How old were you
when you first became a friend?
Did you know what you were doing?
Did you consent
to those tendrils that springtime out
ro reach from the heart to
some sudden person who isn't you,
isn't even like you?**

**What a strange thing
to happen to a child
if child you were
when the first friend
happened to you.**

**Stronger than kinship,
more fragile than love.
gone in a second no need for divorce,
can last forever, tears by the grave.**

**It is the most mystery we do
and who even bothers to notice?**

**Cicero or somebody wrote
learnedly in Latin
about *Amicitia*, Friendship--
but didn't even know as much
as English does, that it is
a ship, and has an ocean of its own
and a strange harbor it's headed for
across all the turbulent years.**

25 May 2020

ORIGIN OF THE ALPHABET

in memory of Dr. John W. Boylan

The queen in her wisdom began to wish for something less fragile than human memory, so let itself be known that she sought a way to keep some substantial objective record of what she said or thought. he or others even. So she summoned her counsellors and set hem the task. after much searching and sensing and scheming and even praying, they came up with the idea of writing words down on durable surfaces somehow. But what does a word look like?

One of the savants, a youngish man shyly in love with the queen from afar, was fond indeed of looking at her. In him awoke the notion: let us draw a picture of her mouth speaking--each word will surely look different from every other.

And so they settled down, taking turns at the foot of her throne, close as they dared, and

watched her closely whenever she spoke, modestly looking away in her silences.

Little by little they began to make little sketches of what a later age would rapturously call the organs of articulation. Always look to the body, the body tells all. Lips and nostrils and chin obvious, tongue and teeth harder to see, but look close, look close, imitate the sound she makes and feel in your own mouth the palate, the uvula, the cave mouth of the throat. Thus, by listening and looking, imitating sounds and sketching seen or felt anatomies of speaking, the counsellors accumulated a repertory of signs.

It wasn't long before the pursed lips looked like a B, or like a P when a puff of breath parted them, and the crest of tongue angling off the roof of the mouth got scribbled down as K. And so on, with variations and smoothings and forgettings and all the risks of wrists (a hard phrase, isn't it?) and eye, what we call the letters of the alphabet were formed.

It was then just child's play, a few thousand years, to figure out how to set them in place

safely out here in the silence actual things. Stone, wood, baked clay, papyrus fiber, animal skins, even fragile paper might work. We try everything to get those little pictures down of how we sound when we think out loud.

I have every reason to believe that Her Majesty is still pleased.

26 May 2020

=====

**Language too can step
too close to the edge
and then what?**

**Silence
or worse? Or some other
register of meaning
may begin to sound.**

**Open the door, now
open the wind, walk
through the light
until it opens too.**

**But we are children
still, we have to listen,
we have to be told.**

26 May 2020

====

**Springtime
a new upanishad
something to read
with faith in your hand**

*how wonderful!
somebody thought this first
even before me
it must be true!*

**There are no pirates in religion
every ship is legal trophy
all cargo belongs, so deeply,
to those who haul it ashore
or stumble on it in the surf
even on the nakedest beach.
Listen gently and you'll hear:
*Here I am, and I am yours.***

26 May 2020

=====

Miracle
a little thing to look at
with the inside eye

miraculum
(thank God for Latin school
the sweet silly core of words)

the sick man is healed
the sun stands still.
All we are is what we see.

26 May 2020

=====

The song is broken

**long stretches of sound
and then silence**

**how can we tell what is music
and what isn't?**

(that much heard in dream)_

cloth over the words

**is it the wind outside
or someone sighing**

**and where does silence
come from anyway**

let alone music?

27 May 2020

=====

**So many arks
on one small flood
a million words
to answer one small rain**

tirelessly we build our contradictions

**wait on the levee
for the crow to tell us
which is water which is land**

**we lose so much perceiving
in our believing**

**like the old song said
the one I never heard**

are you?

27 May 2020

=====

**I'm not sure where this is going
but I like the way
its hips sway
and the clear tracks it leaves
for me to follow**

**so I follow,
obedient as a wheel.**

**Downhill is easy
and it helps me climb,
no reason not to go
as far as it goes
then see where I am,**

where we are, where it is.

**Loosen my collar,
let me speak louder,**

**we'll get there soon enough,
the place of decision,
have to decide
is it me or another?
Is there any going,
any life without together?**

**Who have I been fooling
all this while
pretending to be me?**

27 May 2020

A GLIMPSE

**Imagine a minute being an insect
a flying one, innocent enough,
no meaner than a moth,
fly around outside a while
then dart through a window
into someone's house—**

**what an astonishing difference
you suddenly inhabit
between the endless world outside
and this intricately defined space
with made things all over it.**

**Now imagine you are yourself again
and look around--
the ordinary world you find yourself in
is the moth's sudden house.
Now find the window and see
where you came from and be free.**

27 May 2020

OPERA

**The music exceeds,
music exceeds the words,
transcends the moral
urgency (desire, rage,
tenderness) of the one
who sings it. The fierce
floats off into beauty.
Manon's pretty melody
sheen of her insincerity
still goes to the heart.**

**(24 May 2020
listening to Massenet)**

27 May 2020

====

I am somebody's otherbrother—
watch out for me.
I bite like Mozart
I write long letters
and pretend they come from me
but who knows who
is talking when I speak?
Someone up in the mountains
sitting on a rock at sunrise—
that would be me
if I could get up that early
but as it is, it's always
late where I am. That
may be why you love me—
we always feel tender
towards the ones we wake before.

27 May 2020

=====

**“And annotate with closed eyes
the unwritten portion of our story”**

**it said in my mind
loud enough to wake me**

**Write it down
don't wonder what it means.**

**27 / 28 May 2020
3 A.M.**

=====

**Notice how the truth
tends to tell itself**

**even in sleep
can't escape
the weight of words**

**only music
sometimes knows
how to be silent**

**(roses after irises
thunder then rain
a child's eyes)**

27 / 28 May 2020

=====

Then it was again

**I know you'll say
it always is
but this time it was
again again,**

**a bug buzzed close
because the window
too dark to see what i heard,
you know, again,
the daze we wake up in
but daze sounds too cheerful,
this is a bottle of ink
spilled on hour sleep
you wake from, dripping.**

**Of course language is waiting,
you don't have to tell me that.**

2.

so much happens in the obvious
we never notice, and yes,
I'm speaking for you oo,
cynic sister of a thousand dreams
all Ilium and Egypt at your feet.
And still you need the likes of me
to bring report, news of the salamander,
tidings of the karst formations,
the bottomless lake.
How else will you ever know
how little we know?

3.

Every mistake is an animal.
Follow it to its den.
Observe what it eats,
what it neglects.
Does it climb? Fly?
Live content with surfaces?
When you face it
do you feel fear?
Stand your ground.
Claim it as a friend.

4.

Did you like my little sermon?

Kiss me with your inky lips

to show me I am understood.

**Or at least endured. Putting up
with one another is a godly deed,
a sort of science to it, study
diligently, kiss me again.**

27 / 28 May 2020

=====

**Honest men always arrive
ten or so minutes late—
it is important to be there
just when your expected
arrival is delayed long enough
for expectation to turn
into something that might
feel a little like desire.**

**(27 May 2020)
28 May 2020**

THE TRANSLATOR

Make the word
jump
over the word
into the else

where something
lives.

This
is the secret
of the secret
the simple
leap

and then
another
all the way
to the other.

28 May 2020

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**And listen back
to what one said
to another and be
that other listening
to me. A taut
circle we inhabit—
learn another language
leave the earth a while.**

28 May 2020

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**Cookies for crows
wait on the lawn.
Fly down and find them
easy on the new-cropped grass.
Feeding crows
makes more sense than wine,
wandering, work.
They come and talk to you and they go.
And as the old book says
No blame.**

28 May 2020

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**What if it were cooler?
Color or a bird?**

**The cat of cloud
curled up on our knees?**

**Athwart our desires
a stronger will?**

**Morning as usual,
everlasting question.**

29 May 2020

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**To be in the world
is to be meat,
eaten, nourished,
powering bones
along to do. Getting
the mind's cup
to where it drinks.
The going. The meat
of meaning. The sound
of an opening door.**

29 May 2020

=====

**There was a star
living in that tree.**

**In those days
people could speak
but also listen.**

**The star said its
prayers and we said
ours.**

**The tree
for once was quiet.**

**Night came, the star
was louder. Now the tree
began to sing too,**

**duet above us, we sat
on rickety chairs
on grass and marveled.**

**People held hands
in those days,**

**some busybodies
tried to name the star
but we didn't listen,**

**only to the star,
only to the hand we held.**

**When dawn came
we could go back to sleep.**

29 May 2020

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**A car can be so loud,
a mourning dove too
on the lawn, it's all
about getting ready
to be now. Sounds,
identities, colors.
Walk by the river
quietly repeating
your name until
you get it right.**

29 May 2020

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**Add me to your catalogue--
I admire
your leaf and your letter,
the book you inhabit,
the sheen on your shell.
Your leash and leather,
the will in your shall.**

**It doesn't work till three
times it has happened,
lips parted, word uttered
(means outererd, outed)
and everybody knows.
Write my name on your page,
the tower is looming,
the girl in the sky still young,
the handle! the handle on the door!**

29 May 2020

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**I dreamed you in white,
a smile in the dark
then nothing more.**

**What a strange gospel
any night is.**

29.V.20

=====

**Pick up the pieces
then pick up the whole.
The boy they call Cupid
is too young to experience
the desires he rouses.
That's what myth is for--
to hide the obvious
until we grow worthy
of perceiving the truth.
There is a another god
who deals with that.**

29 May 2020

=====

**Wandering around these days
is a little like walking through
the ruins of Pompeii.
How would you know,
you've never been south of Venice.
All right, like the ruins
of that Roman city
on the outskirts of Arles,
I've walked around there,
empty doorways, empty doorways!
all the sad stone
so busy remembering.
Here was a store once,
I walked through its door.**

29 May 2020

=====

**If the surface is wet
it comes from me.
Tilted cup or errant spout,
blame no one else.
I am responsible,
the irresponsible agent
of all humidity.**

29 May 2020

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**Word hammer
cloth pirate
Decoration Day.
The old comes back.
The ocean lets us
come together
into this thunderous now.
Under the covers
burrow into dream,
hide in what happens.**

30 May 2020

PLEA

to Charlotte

**Decipher me
before I lose the woods in me
where only I can find you.**

**Lovely lordly ambiguity!
Patient as the sky
I trundle this instrument along
for you. For you to me me
finally,
 if final means
a road stop along the way.**

**Of course the garments come away,
that's why they were put on,
the naked word left
humming in your head.**

2.

From me to you
a silver privacy,
to want so deeply
what we already have.
Wanting nothing more
than being with you.
And am nothing without.

3.

The sun is flushing through the trees
the leaves all but at their full
and a crow calls.
Just once. Brighter and brighter.
You touched my wound
and it was healed—

what else do you remember?
A crow is always a reminder,
message from the future we need right now.
And in these woods which way to turn--
the sun knows but doesn't say.
The crow tells.

30 May 2020

THE DEVOTEES

The Sabbath citizens stand up to pray,
seven in a circle

their hands fingertipping touch
and they have turquoise eyes.

Can you tell me what they're saying,
at least what language,
at least what deity?

Probably not. We were not
taught that in school

*Join us if you want to know
who we are and what we pray.*

I found that printed on their calling card.

2.

Seven in a circle
genders alternating,
when two of the same
gender come together
the circle closes.

This union is called the *Priest*

**and their hands actually join.
All the others say the prayers
but these two don't talk.
The clasped hands are theology enough.**

**3.
That's what the crow was saying,
or at least what I understood--
so wildly different
the saying and the hearing
across the gaunt Dakotas of the heart.**

30 May 2020

== ==

**A trifle in my fingers
a dime I thought it was
felt under water
what shall I buy now
with such sensations?**

**Aren't feelings given to us
(I suppose Greek myths were asking)
by what they called the gods
so we could come to know
the world deep and intimate,
not just leave things lying there,
all art and handicraft
basilica and orchestra
just a penny on the subway steps?**

30 May 2020

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**I think the finger
is the thinnest religion
but it knows so much
goes so far, comes back
and writes it all down,
the places and the natures
it inhabited as it traveled
the infinite spaces between
itself and any other.**

30 May 2020

=====

for Charlotte

Thunderweather
used to say as kids
pretending to be German
and then the rain

and then the lovely after—
swans on the sea-creek
in Oceanside,
one swan on your pond,

right here,, everything
has come right here,
where you have brought
all my memory to life

in this place, my dearest,
you know all the members
of the air, you alone can
translate the cloudless sky.

30 May 2020

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF HER

She is seated.

**Spread open on her lap
a book in the French language
more intricate than obvious
more poetry than prose.**

**She wears a robe of cotton
azure and sea-surf white**

**Her right hand strokes the neck
of a chipmunk perched n her knee.**

**Her left hand is outstretched,
and on the tip of the middle finger
a blk-capped chickadee rests
eating sunflower seeds from her palm—
that hand has a ring of gold on it
and one of silver a-gleam with citrine.**

**Her hair is rufous and radiant,
her head crowned
with a great oval of straw,
symbol of beauty in fragility.**

**Around her feet several
creatures play: a marmot
with her young, two wild turkeys,
cardinals male and female,
two blue jays and a red squirrel
symbolizing endurance in danger,
one grey squirrel and a mourning dove.
Above her head two crows
float briefly wings wide-spread
to shield her from the morning sun.
To her right lilacs are in bloom,
to her left a young linden tree
with heart-shaped leaves
the wind plays gently in
but we can't see the wind.
She is seated atop a grassy hill-
in the distance but not far
the whole ocean sweeps the sky.**

30 May 2020

NOBODY KNOWS YOU PLAY THE FLUTE

**Nobody knows you play the flute
and the penny-whistle
and sound on it “The Lament for Limerick”
such that even my eyes fill with tears.**

**Nobody knows you’ve never
been in Scotland, but Scotland lives in you,
you descendant of the Donnachies,
King Duncan killed by that unspeakable
character it’s bad luck to name.**

**Nobody knows that as a schoolgirl
you translated Virgil’s Aeneid.
verybody knows you can translate French
and are famous for being so great at it**

**but nobody knows you ranslate Tibetan too
and are a fully trained ordained Lama
named for the Dharmadhatu,
the empty world of everything.**

nobody knows you know the language
of cardinals and orioles, finches and wrens,
the thin speech of small furry creatures
who come to you to be understood
when I can barely understand
the language of crows,
clearest utterers of the mind.

Nobody knows you have swum with seals,
walked the Himalayas, fed ducks in Paris,
frightened old men in Germany,
nobody knows how quiet you are,
wise and simple and certain and deep,

nobody knows how true you are,
how much you give,
silently fulfilling all those around you.
Nobody knows, and I'm afraid to tell.

30 May 2020

=====

The king laments
she never loved me.
Or the girl dressed as a boy
cradles the dying villain's head.
Or the boy dressed as a swan
becomes a boy again.
These things happen to us
year after year. Death
seems to bring the oveliest
music. Why do we do it
to ourselves, suffer so keenly
what others pretend to be suffering?
The whole thing is an opera.
Sometimes when I'm alone in bed
I pull the covers over my head
and huddle in this manufactured dark.
I try to empty my mind and just breathe.
I think this is called thinking.

31 May2020

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**The sky is summer
but the wind is cold.
Sure enough, we have two hands.
One for the mother one for the wife
and a man walks between them
all his life. Sorry for the rhyme--
this is no kind of music.
Just one more anatomy lesson--
someday we'll figure the body out.**

31 May 2020

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The mourning dove
landed on the lawn
sang happily its sad song,
dropped from its beak
at my feet a letter
from the Pope. I guessed
from the incense on the envelope,
opened, read some words in Latin
which from my schoolboy memory
seemed to mean
There is no such thing as Time
There is only Space
What we call time is our experience
of distance as we move
between one place and some other.
I really think this came to me by mistake
I said but the bird had flown away.

31 May 2020

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**The trees write haiku
wouldn't you
with all those breezes?**

*

31.V.20