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1.
In mind alert
growl, a lion cub
hesitant at cloud.
Yes, this is the place
or is no other
origin for what to do
now. Growl,
grow up and prowl
the rich savannas of.

2.
Birth of a pansy,
old age of a rose.
Remember the feel
of when. Bruise
in the sky, yes,
so many yesses.
3.
Keep wanting to want.
The event enews itself in you.
Animals who burrow in the earth
often find light too bright to see.
They walk right up to you and then.

4.
Some day it will roar.
Sunday. Till then suspect,
uneasy feeling I should
be doing something else.

5.
Full grown
on four thoughts
stands clear.
Nothing has been
and been forgotten.
The image speaks
louder than the man.
The fact of the matter is matter. And here I thought it or I was growling. We’re just perpendiculars hanging from the sky.

1 July 2020
Give me just a tissue of belief
to wipe the doubt from my eyes,

let the day exist on its own terms
far away from my jive

for I was ocean too, like everyone
and came across myself to be.

just be. Linger I said like Faust,
linger be you beautiful or not,

only what lingers matters.
Or do I mean only what is gone?

1 July 2020
Something other has to start.
We are the beginning of something else.

How’s that for music?
Can you pluck that on your eternal guitar that makes silence golden?

We are beginning—maybe that’s enough.
The sound comes after and the sense long after that.

1 July 2020
July was Quintile once or something like that before Julius—or should we be like Whitman and say the seventh-month heat and not be named for anyt Emperor? But numbers are our rulers too and go on controlling us long after poor Caesar falls.

2 July 2020
If all the trees
were Christmas trees
and all the leaves
were lights,

the song would tell us
where the north star shines
the one you follow
to come to this hour

the place where
you too get born,
mothered in the stable
and beasts adore.

2 July 2020
So hard to remember how far we’ve come. Take out the roadmap, measure those red lines that wander from name to name across blank spaces, with rivers, multiply by your breaths, then divide by sleep. The result happens to us, all of us. I find myself like a cornfield in August so much of me to be known down to the last kernel. We are born for this.

2 July 2020
Look at the isn’t
to know what is.
The cloud told me
when I thought sky,
look to the other
to find the self
intoned the dark
priest of a crow.
Sometimes a rhyme
tells all you know.

2 July 2020
Tender critters
in my zoo, roses
finches and clouds,
time plays with them
and so I guess with me
but I don’t notice
when my feathers shed.
Just keep my eyes
on what’s out there,
the rich and everlasting
alphabet of the obvious.
I read myself awake.

2 July 2020
What’s happening in the picture is what’s happening in our world. They chip at the mountain but the mountain stands firm. Little mountains break away tumble through space in search of a magnetic field that will make sense of them and spin them in sensible orbits or, or leave them standing proud confident of their infant majesty. Great nations come apart--I like you am a stone of one. We live in the spin.

2 July 2020
Numerous vastnesses
but then
a question of belonging—
who owns these dreams?
I sit some fin de siècle
philosophe in some
pale primitive Pageant?
Things linger to be told.

2.
I ask because I am asked.
“All my iniquities
array themselves before me,
choose me, choose me,
they cry, each
claiming to be the sin
for which this life is punishment.
Though it so seems life’s reward.”
In eternity the numbers take sides.
“I still remember the man I thought was me.”
3.
Carry on. Anachronism is our friend.
Give Caesar a steel cuirass,
change history by forgetting,
Get things wrong!
Our only safeguard in this Chronocracy!
Rule time or succumb to it.

3 July 2020
1. What the hand knows and what the fingers tell are subtly often different. The keyboard, say, has music of its own while the penpoint--older, is more docile to our frivolous intentions but still sometimes makes corrections by itself of what we think we mean.

2. If tools could talk they do.
3.
A mind is hidden in what it has said
or written or carved out of wood
or painted on a mirror
to hide that all-too-cunning face.
The reader knows what the writer forgot to say--
that is what reading means.

3 July 2020
The pale sky makes the trees’ green pale too. Vividness sleeps. Not much sun to turn the colors on. But not a grey day, not like some book or wartime movie or opera stage exulting in obscurity. Not dark, just pale, light inside-out perhaps, this shirt the morning wears.

3 July 2020
Words
like soldiers
huddled on the battlefield
at dawn.
They need a trumpeting
to wake them.
Only your breath can do that.

3.VII.20
INTERDEPENDENCE DAY

An interode
to interpolate
an interference pf the obvious—
fireworks interplose!

An intersong for our intersupper
we interferes ones intersing
while the mwst holy Sun
is still interviewing the sky

interweaving our long longings
in the verdant interoutdoors
where we interlisten to our breaths
to hear the intermind out loud.

4 July 2020
OBJECT

Just try it out
to see what it wants

ask it, asking
can it talk

or only listen?
What can it answer?

only an image speaks.

4 July 2020
There is nothing in the nearby sky to alleviate this mild sense of dread issued from sleep. Job, pensions, real estate. But what is real about all that? All this, it means, soft glow of grey sky and so many trees. Forgive my anxiety, let the birds come back that shun our brash timidities.

4.VII.20
TO JONATHAN GREENE

Jonathan you’re on my mind today as if the bright grey sky I woke to pronounced Kentucky--the accident of place in the eternity of time--something like that. How much I owe you, how grateful my whole life is in the shadow of your kindness. What a magician! Sixty years ago you brought me here today. The sun is coming out, the grey is turning blue, the civil war of night and day goes on and I hope you’re happy too. I pray for that, all gratitude is a kind of prayer, a little selfish maybe round the edges but still. Remember the Sawkill, we call it the Metambesen now,
remember Ricky’s place,
clambering up the stairs,
the river always lurking
down past the trees? How
is your landscape now,
dear friend, dear donor of my direction,
may your words flow on forever.

4 July 2020
DICTA

 Whatever the discourse permits—
 that is the answer.

 *

 No birds this
 why? morning.

 *

 When holiday is holy day
 again, and the light
 is right, and the air
 is always there
 why are we here?

 *

 he self is a song
 someone else is singing.

 *

 Sometimes I wish
 it woyud stop—
 like whistling in the market
among the stalls
of fresh vegetables
under the fierce
eyes of silent farmers,
I want to go home.

*

At a certain point in a man’s life
he begins to wonder
what his real name is.
This wonder might be its first syllable.

*

There’ll always be time
to do it wrong.
So do it right now.

4 July 2020
for Tamas, his painting

Shin is sun
Is person
a name called out

Olive knife
in curl of blood

above all above,all
so many meanings cluster

image I try to pronounce.
Whar is my name?

4 July 2020
ENOSIS

they used to cry on the island,
unity, be-one-with something, someone,
mother tongue or history,
Enosis! they chanted off posters in the crowd, as if to be one with another needs so many voices.

2.
I hear them see them still the bishop’s beard the staccato crowd e-e-énosis! Union now let us be one.

3.
It worked for that island maybe. Would it work for us? Could this be one country,
one sense of honor, one
sense of justice, one people?
Ut makes me sad to remember
we were rebels from the start—
can we ever stop saying no?
Can we ever be one?

5 July 2020
1. Nothing says itself back. The mirror is bottomless, even the big tree outside is silent. I dreamt nibbling the leaf, dreamt old satchels stuffed for departure. Where are my socks when there is nowhere to go?

2. We kept getting closer and closer to saying something but we couldn’t make it come. Silent as skin, as closets at midnight, ceiling staring at me when I woke.

3.
Listening is dangerous, we were brave though, thoughtless brave, and kept trying to hear. Dangerous since no one knows what word will come, or where on earth it’s coming from. We waited and listened and heard each other’s breath. Maybe that is articulate enough, dangerous enough and we woke.

4.
Came back to weather. The listening game is over (they call it sleep) and now the speaking starts, everybody talking all at once, all hearing and no listening like sunshine on a quiet lawn. Where are the birds today? They used to help me make sense of what I did and didn’t hear.
5.
I could get religion,
worrying like this.
But the sky is blue,
not a cloud in it.
It is so hard sometimes
to escape from dreams--
that’s what the day is for,
for us pilgrims from the dark.

5 July 2020
Helicopter landed on the roof.
Got a run in her stockings
from the swing-down step
but she was there. That’s
how moonlight got to earth,
free for a night from her bossy
husband the Moon. Welcome,
friendly light. join us
in the long opera of our sleep.

5 July 2020
THE DREAM SAID:

Define for me please
the sweet low-transparency luster
in which inscribe
themselves moment by moment
the intimate goings-on inside us.

Is it the sky? Is it a sheet
pf clear plastic mounted over the mantle
in that cottage by the sea
Is it the eye of every human we meet
and some beasts too—
ot is it they themselves,
every single animal a reminder of?

6 July 2020
No contradiction, 
a star. 
But who is my sky?

* 
Surrender 
the way water 
occupies everything. 
Conquers.

* 
Does this sound Taoist? 
Now is.

* 
Waited till I had something 
to say 
till I got tired of waiting 
and said.

*
Revise it
before you think it--
writing is that revision.

* We follow all the rules of an exclusive club we never joined and can’t resign from.

* You are what happens to me.
And you can guess who I am.

* Hurry, catch up with that animal, it’s the only one who knows your name.

* We are children and the fairy-tale never stops.

6 July 2020
Observe this chandelier: 
the dozens and dozens of faceted crystal 
pendants 
reflect and refract the half-dozen 
simple candle flames 
with immense and ever-changing 
intricate. Or consider a single 
glass of water, it (as Jean Cocteau 
born yesterday observed) 
lights up the world. 
Or did he mean it draws 
a beautiful ornate image of 
the first letter of the world’s secret name?

6 July 2020
EPIC

A man
upright
before
a finely scratched
red enamel metal door
as of a car. Or van.

Our hero
in this song,
no dogs, no ravening.

Song without anger
but joggers a-plenty
and plenty of wheels.

His mother
comes to visit
every now and then—

who’s telling this story?
“My mother is younger
than I am,” he explains,
“there are so many miracles in this neighborhood.”

She smiles to hear him say so and agrees when she comes by, always some new suitor flustered by her side, puzzling out how this man could be this young girl’s child—fret all they like, they’ll soon find out. We were puzzled too, we looked it, so he smiled and said “My mother is my other and from this other all wisdom flows—I catch it as I can.”

The main thing is everybody is alive at the end of the story—it has to be that way, only a story is allowed to end.
2.
The shiny door behind him reflects the landscape he faces--fences and fields and trees on a ridge, what might be a cow far off or a boulder left by a glacier, hard to tell, life takes odd forms in these places, these planets.
We could ask him to decide what that pale lumpy object is but we have more important issues to address--you don’t waste a hero’s time with ontology.

What is the order of the day we ask, what’s new, what’s next? He rolls his eyes, almost girlish, and answers what we didn’t ask, “The clouds bring rain, but what does the rain bring?”
Don’t know, we say,  
we are not skilled  
as you in consequences,  
what does it bring?

“Brings you you yourselves--  
you’re twice alive  
when your skin is wet--get  
born every day!”

What would we do without such advice?  
Dry crackers in dry fingers--  
“Quiet your brain  
and pray for rain!”

3.  
*It has to be long,  
like a road,  
has to be wide  
like a door.  
has to be deep  
as a mirror,  
shallow as the sea,*
must be you,
like me.

That’s what the leaflet read
we found on the front seat
when he went for a walk in the field,
ever out of sight.
We could watch him walking
as if following a pattern
he could read in the grain,
young corn, barely up to this thigh.

We put the leaflet back,
began to wonder whether
we should be here at all,
so many words to listen to,
so many religions
and no horsemen coming over the hill.

Look in the back
one of us said and we did,
empty save for a paper cup
with coffee in it still warm
but no one dared to take a sip
though even we knew
wisdom takes the oddest forms.

4.
He came back soon,
the man,
offered to drive us into town.
But we all came from different places
and didn’t know what town he meant
and didn’t dare ask—
we are not brave,
we people of the word,
we know the awesome power
of what can be said.

So we said we’d make our own way home,
studying the wildlife on the way,
the guerison of local flora,
church bells and factory whistles
will guide us more or less
but thank you for offering
we said. “I hope,” he said,
“you’ll meet my mother on the way”

7 July 2020
A PHOTO OF CHARLOTTE BY THE STREAM

from this pale flesh
the water takes
on purity
and preserves it always
by running
as your leg does
by standing perfectly still.

(6.VII.20)
7 July 2020
OLD BLACK PEN

Many years unused
finally speaks,
I fed it at
last some ink.
But what it says
is all its own,
like that wall In Leipzig
that still hums
softly out the music
Bach played there.
Things remember. And
their memory is precise.

7 July 2020
MIGRATION

The sky suspended from a wall but each leaf on the tree a road.

We came through that town on the way but now we can’t find it again,

the merry streets, the wine-red neon lights, bare knees, gruff Teslas of the newly rich.

And now where are we? A planetary distance from a distant star?

Don’t be romantic, you know full well where the water flows

and where the fox buries his catch and why the marmot whistles,

don’t pretend to be even more ignorant than you are,
than me. The leaf
is laughing now, truly

one of our jobs is to amuse
an audience less mobile than ourselves,

assuming we know how to move.
Move them to tears too

with long poems with startling cadenzas.
But no, we lull.

We play Bach like Chopin
on our soft pianos,

we neglect the ides, forget to lay
healing marigolds at the Virgin’s feet,

we oarless rowers on a becalmed lagoon.
What did you just call me?

What did your phone call mean,
I was afraid to answer,
tell me now in a simple way
so even I can understand.

Some unknown romantic
planted this very tree—

Valéry says it was Chateaubriand
who once rode past this very house

om his exile’s way to Albany—
but our trees are all our own.

Soupault proved words are magnetic,
it takes all our wit to pry them apart

and make them say what we want
not what they actually mean.

So many Frenchmen in one morning,
this comes of hunkering down

to dream at the side of the road
pretending we’re not lost.

8 July 2020
2.
When the wolf howled we woke up.
The moon had that sneery look he has
when people down here go astray—
he never loses his way: the sun sees to that.

So we waited for the sun and feared the wolf
and all the other perils that came to mind

the countryside is full of threatening.
The city too—remember cities?

Crowded places full of cruel authorities
but music too. Remember music?

Marching bands with angular trombones!!
Fat tenors with high C’s! Lewd saxophones!

We shiver now and listen to the cornfield,
the wind is busy whistling in there,

not whistling, really, just breathing soft
but our ears expect a person everywhere,
behind every sound a human presence, 
hallelujah! the thing that thinks in us.

But what about now, so dark, so streeted 
with going now standing still. Make believe 

you’re not afraid the Boy Scout said, 
the one who led us yesterday and here we are.

But where, where? Ubi sumus Domnine 
the priest cried out, we thought it wise 

to have one of them with us, a rabbi too 
for laughs, and a lama to try to wake us 

really, he has his work cut out for him 
as the carpenter remarked, a tool-less youth 

sobbing for his missing saw. Night wears on, 
wears us down until we forget the wolf 

and stumble our pebbly way back to sleep. 
Morning will take care of us, or else.
I dreamt a childhood chemistry set
on Christmas morning, she dreamed a horse,

he dreamed a barbecue in Buffalo,
we have so many hungers, someone else

mainly, and you dreamed a creamy shore
of the bluest north Atlantic, the wind helped.

And sure enough the morning came,
the sun a bronze coin slipped in the slot
to start the whole machine again,
*bonjour maîtresse*, French at it again.

will we never wake up from philosophy?
soft gleam on asphalt, road paved at least,
lace up your sneakers and trot forward,
may our bravery last as long as light!

one cried, we doubted but obeyed, reduced
to a murmuring chorus with no soloist in sight—
remember music? I asked you that before but got no answer. Should I go on waiting?

Be careful—language is the best way to wait. And what’s for breakfast anyhow?

8 July 2020
Drive north to get there,
lie about your journey
in long letters home,
lie warm in the forest
copying the birds.
This is how {sing}.
You have come
to a low stonr wall.
Or a dry streambed.
On the other side
a glass. empty as can be.
Now fill it with the wine you are.

9 July 2020
ROSARY

Imagine a string of beads
rosary or necklace
beads of pearl or sandalwood or jade
and then be one of them a while
and take your ease,
sleep even, safe in continuity.

It’s the kind of advice
the mirror gives
when you wake too early,
sun still tangled in the trees
or is it raining.

Be kind to yourself
is what it’s trying to say
but neither it nor you
know how. Goesswork abounds.
Take a walk, a drink, a week off.
The smile is always ready to come back.
Think about the skin on your back, how little you know it how sensitive it is, a feather will fuss it; this combination in you (in me) of ignorance and sensitivity defines the ongoing music of our race, swelling, dwelling, quelling, telling--you know the song.

A glass bead rolls along the table top--does that feel truer? Are you you when you’re asleep? That’s what poor mothers wonder when the brat is finally snoring gently, gentle smile or no expression at all. How brave to be a mother! The only real heroes that we have.
But I am wandering
from my rosary,
distracted by the truth,
that cry in the night,
that flesh in the forest
I’m forcing myself to go on,
aren’t you, into the all
too well known--to be
conquistador of the obvious!
And then the real magic starts.

I am one of a hundred of us
lined up, linked in time,
each one of us reciting
the same story in different words.
Or the same words
and meaning different things,
how can I be sure, I hear only
myself and the woman next to me.
They’ll finger us out
in a hundred years
but by then we’ll be doing something else,
in Devon maybe by the coast
or leaning on a silver
plow in Gulistan.

9 July 2020
STRANGE THAT ROBERT IS MY NAME

for Antoine Doinel

I just noticed it, what an odd name for me, I ask myself why, what is Robert of me or I of it, I’m not a England-besting King of Scotland or a Frankish chieftain holding up the gate of a town. And not I hope a devil à la eyerbeer. A name not quite current anymore but still used here and there. not in fashion but not obsolete— that’s me. I guess. Prabhakirti I would be in Sanskrit, ‘fame bright,’ no, really, I worked it out once, maybe there’s somebody named that even now, wondering why his mama or his pandit called him that. My friend Elizabeth calls me Trebor—a Mediaeval fellow called himself that—
strange either way you look at it. I suppose a name is as good a mirror as anything else. I gaze at my name and try to find myself in it. No luck. Now you try—what do you see?

9 July 2020
OSSAU-IRATY

Chew your nice broccoli with the left molars, list all your sins to tell the nice priest, save space on the right for the little chunk of Basque cheese I’ve just cut away from the meager slice that was all Talbot & Arding had for sale at closing time on a busy Sunday.

There—it’s not that a sweet marriage, the mezzo-soprano surprised joy of the veg as the sturdy tenor shouts his way in,
rushes to meet her, sidles close? This is what food is for, a sudden opera of new senses. Any priest will understand.

10 July 2020
BACK TO THE START

And do the race right this time--
no acorns along the way,
blue butterflies, Pisgah sights
of distant fields, are those sheep?
no watercress prompted from the brook,
no alphabet idly entered on the bark
of some lank unsuspecting birch,
no tying shoe-laces, no stopping
in the shade to mop your brow,
no texting on your new device,
just go, go, go. Run the way
you’d sleep, in one long rolling
tumbling continuity, never mind
the birds laughing at your gait,
slowness, panting breath--
who ever heard a song bird gsp?

What they do, they purely do.
Now you do too. Ready? Set?
You know the rest. I’ll be there waiting at the goal, no stopwatch, just a glass of some mysterious chemical for you, diamond-clear, cool, you find it everywhere.

10 July 2020
Who am I
and whom
to tell
what to do?

Warm day
but ten degrees
cooler than yesterday--
progress!

And yet
I keep writing instructions
to an unknown personage
capable of motion and mentation,
could it be me?
Am I up to my old tricks again,
talking to myself while thinking
I’m talking to you? Poor you,
you need your own authentic
messages to you, your own prophet, your own letters sent to your own address.

O dear unknown lad or lass forgive me in my mirror trap.

10 July 2020
I wanted to sing a long story
today, tenth of an Iliad maybe
but the truth came out—
the story’s short the song is long,
hum all the rest of it on the way home.

10 July 2020
4:44 A.M.

1. Everybody knew better to begin with. The Sphinx kept telling the truth and often we listened—old houses make noises at night. Or night has many things to say, it’s hard to sort them out, tell the wolf from the wind, the stars from the sand. Life likes sudden digressions and the dark just helps. The door slams. The dog growls. Try to find out what it’s trying to say.

2. Hence the ode, the masterpiece (your choice) in the Louvre, the Blue Mosque. Things outrun what people think, last longer, say more, you know all this already, the night just is here to remind.
3. Ode, I say. From Greek *aoidao*, ‘I sing’
he sang. But we want the ode
that gets away from me,
the song-self-sung
instead of I-sing.
Here the Sphinx comes again
to our aid, says or does
what she has for so many years,
*I am the beast of you, the best,*
smiling I listen.

4. So the ode must stretch
out its paws and step
bravely towards dawn--
they say every night ends
no matter how long,
they say the light is hungry
for us again, won’t wait,
will come gobbling through the trees.
Help the Sphinx remember trees--
huge hard flowers with soft hair.
They have been our friends
since the beginning, they
get along with stones, drink
the same water we do, water
the books say we mostly are,
we are water that breathes air,
water that knows how to sand still.

5.
There are things I would tell you
that do not fit the measures
of this ode. Lists and lusts,
the alphabet is full of memories,
things happen on the staircase,
what I think churches really are.
These things are too bright
to fit in the dark. This dark
muffled music, so rigorous,
all errors rectified, eerie wrong
an arrow pointing at the right.

6.
Pindar did it best
I guess
because he built
from praise,
Rilke’s *rühmen*!
child smiling
up at the only
mother he knows,
can a word
be as simple
as a man running
on a cool afternoon
long miles ago?
Begin thy praise
by loving every word
you can pronounce
or even guess
the meaning of--
that’s what the Christians
mean by their image of
angels caroling
by the throne of God.

7.
By theory we all
knew that music once
and some of us
can hum it still.
Not just Mozart
and Mendelssohn,
that old man too
walking in the woods
(I hear his footsteps
and think it’s the old house ceaking)
the girl singing to herself
as she folds the clean clothes away.

8.
An ode, isn’t it something
like a car idling at a traffic light,
a child (a different one)
anticipating parental consent
unspoken, so the actual words
are somewhere else, schoolyard,
dank cafe, people watching
people play. Isn’t an ode
like a busy animal gathering
food for winter on an autumn lawn,
a pyramid in Mexico with faces
looking out at you rom stone,,
an unknown alphabet you suddenly,
you dreamer, have to read
and read aloud to an audience
that always and always knows
more than you’ll ever know
but yet you speak and you do.

9.
It’s getting light.
 Didn’t I tell you so?
Somewhere in these notes
 is the proof discerned
by Agassiz or Poincaré
but the light increases
even so, even though
I can’t prove a word of what I say.
Forgive my inferences,
bassoons, english horns,
forgive the guesses that stand
in for knowing. the tunes
that take the place of thought,
the cello and the clarinet,
no one on the podium
the music plays itself on.

11 July 2020
APPROACHING THE NIAGARA FRONTIER

Say something about Warsaw
our town down in the cleft
the land folds North and South
as we move west
into the magical forest
I would not dare,
West, west, where dangers are,
quiet ones far
from the angers of the East,
the blue flag sky,
the burning frigate in the harbor,
or the Normndie long years on her side.

11 July 2020
THE FARMERS

Now ask again about the farmer how her blue eyes track daylight through the cornfield the darker the better the taller the corn ask me about the farmer who stands at the barn door in Kentucky SNIFFING last year’s tobacco crop smelling still like his farmer’s cigars

ask about the farmer with her slender arms lifting the lambs or with his strong fingers sifting grass seed on a bare patch like any householder,

you have to know about these things even if it’s left up to me to tell you little as I know, nowhere have I been but elsewhere, elsewhere, all about the music,
listen, ask and don’t answer,
answer comes later, the sheep
does it when it’s grown,
the bull on the hill,
cock on the rock, roof, rain,
a cloud is always a question,
don’t forget, it poses it
over the forest if you’re lucky
to be in with the trees,
or over the steeples, antennas,
summer night parties on rooftops,
anywhere up. And then it answers
itself with rain or wind or light,
just sit there and watch,
pr stand like the farmers
with hands on hips
steady, a little impatient,
putting up with the world,
the earth doesn’t like
all this digging and plowing
and gets angry but what can they do,
people have to eat, up to them,  
the aching farmers, they have to pray,  
just watch the river like you and me,  

we feckless airlines  
who can’t tell a rock from a cow.  
What can we even do? the dreams  
of all those years inhabit us,  
the stage set is modern  
the action neolithic--  
do what we always did, pray for rain.  

12 July 2020
Open the gates of the Temple
my father used to sing,
or was it doors?
He was no Mason and I forget.

And then he sang The Fairy Tree
the Little People danced around
and only children dared to look.
And then from the choir loft,

yes in the empty church he sang
Panis Angelicus almost operatic,
I was the only one there, bread
of the angels  he gave to me.

12 July 2020
PRAYER

O tell in me,
Muse, tell me you.

You and your sisters
my mothers, daughters,
doers, delighters,

o wife me
inb the Helicon of the head,

inhabit me
with your great power
to hear out loud

what the heart says,
and not just my heart,

to hear the world
muse into music

one word at a time.

13 July 2020
Lifting the latch
on the lagoon
the seas rush in.
Bird sanctuary
of morning song
stilled later o
sleep till noon
o love in the quiet
of, then wake
in me maybe,
the longer music
of the urgent sea.
We are together
ever in the sound.
It is a place in us
and we in it
complete.
Pronounce
me with your body
so we are sea too
shaped nobly
by where we come
to and, shape shore
in us, bird, song
from the beginning.

13 July 2020
FOR G.Q.

*honoring 14 July*

When you came to this valley
did you guess what a mountain it is?
did you interpret correctly
the train rushing north
as the flight of the eagle
telling you over and over
your business is calling,
that on this quiet slope
you’d roar with wild
sophisticated gospelling,
thunder in the cloud, feather
on the passing breeze?
O where do things come from
anyhow, why are they here
and talking so loud we often
can’t hear ourselves sing.
People used to say Perish
the thought but we say
write it away, a thought
unspoken is a fester thing,
a broken wing, a wheel bent out of true. Silence wobbles in us--you must have known that, or the river reminded you soon enough, your only business is to flow.

13 July 2020
If you’re serious
you put your name on it,
and then you’re stuck
with whom you seem to be,
just like the rest of us.
When you say your name
to stand apart from yourself
as if calling a stranger
from across the road, river,
valley, sky--who knows
how loud a name is, how far
a word can be heard?

13 July 2020
When my eyes close
the ceiling goes away.
I am a child,
I know these things.

In every house
there is one room
completely dark--
it allows me,

allows me to be
away with myself
alone. Sometimes
outside I can find

it too, in sun or shade
the room finds me,
it feels just like a song
pening its door.
Here in my ordinary bed I have so many things to remember, so much to do in the dark.

13 July 2020
FOR P.J.

salut au 14 juillet

When you got off the boat
(did you come by boat)
when you got out of the plane
(probably Air France?)
did you feel the ground,
our good American island dirt
grab a little at your toes,
squeeze your heels?
Could you sense already
that all the islands of the one us
would not let you go?
O we let you take vacations
the Pyrenees and all the Arabies
but we find ways to bring you back,
poetry and cormorants and the wind
over the Narrows blowing in
from the West where the rest
of this strange country, the part
that is not islands, lives.
Or maybe one big island, 
like the bigger one you came from 
(Cherbourg to Vladivostok, say). 
But we are the power of the west, 
you and I and all of us, spouting 
our bird songs and theosophies 
and all the extra-innings serenades 
that keep us remorselessly 
gorgeously immature. 
You brought us a richer 
sense of ourselves, no wonder 
we will not let you go.

13 July 2020
Not a sound
comes to say.
The nobility are there,
I see them in the trees,
quiet for once,
and one lordly crow
on the rail, nibbling.

Their colors are there,
but no sounds from them yet. How am I to think
if they don’t sing? Am I supposed to make something
out of silence? Rilke
could do it, and Hölderlin,

can I imagine myself
in the same tall ship with them
sailing the silences,
conquistadors of new meanings!
Birds, boats, what am I talking about now? There is a satiny silence in the day that lures me after all to try to run my words all over it, beautiful wife of a day. the morning.

14 July 2020
Incoherence 
is merriment enough, 
a dance turned inside out, 
a song screwed backwards 
out of the comfortable wood, 

we need our untranslatables, 
our effable misprisions,, our 
glooms inverted to be grins. 

I am the fortune cookie 
that tells you Stop Making Sense. 

I am the wind turbine asleep, 
the arrow on vacation, a dream 
fresh out of heads to habit in. 

O lady give me your sleep! 
And when I say I, bless me 
because I mean you too. 

14 July 2020
The sun only seems to stand still while we watch her, look away and she is slightly somewhere else. Drown your doubt in doing! This is not a spelling bee--be wrong! Childhood is wasted on children--be young!

14 July 2020
If I were going
to climb this hill
I would take with me
a Chinese book
to read along the way

of course I do not
read Chinese
so it would allow me
many an empty hour
of speculation, gueswork
and pure glorious ignorance
Poetry is good for that.

14 July 2020 (dict.)
The day is dark
the child is smiling
he walks towards us
walked right past us
smiling still
the road he came from
is empty, he must have come
all this way alone
where can he be coming from
why is he smiling?

14 July 2020 (dict)
SURRENDER

Wave the white flag
dab on the nice cologne--
reality really does
belong to other people.
You’re a guest here
so behave yourself.

That’s what the mirror
just said to me, I had shaved,
was clean, but still
that gypsy glass upbraided me.
What had I done wrong?

I must have spoken out loud
because the glass intoned
in that shrill mezzo voice it has
(remember squeaking a finger
through your breath on the mirror?
it sounded like that) and said:

Doff your hat and cross your knees
wait for the train that never comes,
offer tissues to weeping people,  
count the birds on the roof  
and multiply by sun.  
*Thy day will never end--*  
*here thou art and here shalt inger--*  
darest thou find fault with that?  

Picture my shock--Bible or Shakespeare  
chivvying me,  
who do things think they are. being so smart,  
speaking so clear  
while I can only mumble,  
rub my chin, grouse a little,  
put on my hat so later, later  
I can take it off in homage,  
I surrender, I obey.  

15 July 2020
THE MIRROR WALTZ

It settles from the sky
it swirls. You call it rain
I call it the blue Danube
drop by drop along the window pane.
So many dancers swirling down the glass,
so many friendships, duels,
mriages--and not a funeral at all,
we are all one substance and we dance
one of the elder raindrops says,
portly and slow drifting by himself,
for a moment partnerless
as if to choose
a mild matronly companion
for the rest of the ballroom.
And I was glad to hear him
and credit what he said.
I take your hand and we watch the rain.

15 July 2020
PETRONIUS

showed it is dangerous
to talk about pleasure,
pleasures. We laugh
at people laughing,
scorn or envy other
people’s love affairs.

The world is a car
cruising past my window,
loud stupid music
yielding as the car goes
further and further
into incoherence.
Into other people’s lives.

Skin. We sit
at empty tables,
the waiters have all fled,
I have been away so long
even the obvious market place
is full of weird fruit.
And who is that in the White House after all the rain?

Not just in Latin. In every book we meet ourselves, every story has me in it, no escape. Even the railroad timetable wields my memory.

Yours too, cousin, you can’t divorce a whole family, the boring endless dinners, the DNA. That’s why the sky, it seems so far, but just try to get away! In Latin a smile is a wrenching of the face, an unnatural thing the living share with the dead. *Risus.*

How dare you smile at me when I can’t smile back? I am so embarrassed by my gravity, forgive, forgive I meant to give you all I had
but I kept having more. Turn on the Cartoon Channel I’m trying to teach myself to laugh at least, though I find nothing in the world that isn’t faintly adorable, forgivable, tender soft inside, nothing to laugh at. I hate comedy--it means eating dinner with the wrong people.

16 July 2020
like all thinking
means reflection,
reflected light
but from where?
Where does thinking
come from, what is the brightness
that in our minds shines back
as thought?  I think
there is a sandy beach in sunlight
somewhere, with children
playing on it, many,
up to their tricks,
like the little boy Augustine saw
emptying out the whole ocean
with a little pail,
one pail at a time.
That beach, those children,
some of them not so young,
swiftly moving, running
towards us and away.
And some of them are old.
The light we see by 
comes from their bright bodies, 
quick moves, antics in the surf. 
But where does their light come from? 
A grey day today, grey day’s 
best for thinking, 
don’t ask why. Close 
your eyes and bask in splendor.

16 July 2020
The photo on the mantle changed the face it shows. A different woman looked out at me, no longer a relation, a stranger but oddly familiar. Shape of the head, distance between the eyes, a faint trace of smile, of age, experience, knowledge. I blinked and the first face, the normal inhabitant of the gilt frame came back. The day went on and took me with it.

(13.VII.20)
16 July 2020
Not the sensation
but sensation—
as if anything will do,
water or tumult,
watch tower on the hill,
a fox runs by,
Jerusalem! Apocalypse!

(15 July 2020)
16 July 2020
We choose friends to remind us of the gods. Look at the ones you have chosen (or permitted) to be alive your Company, and you see all the gods and goddesses they mean just by their very being to put you in mind of, in touch with divinity, to walk among them speaking and listening, even sometimes being heard.

(15 July 2020)
16 July 2020
We should have known—
the fuss was about Gradiva,
Billie’s goddess
she finally invoked—
her very name means
*Woman of the steps,*
woman who passes by.

15 July 2020)
16 July 2020
To learn
to know the form
wake it
with every slient, reentrant,
cave, cleft, mound, lake,
tunnel, range, wilderness
t of your own body.
Then the sea rushes in
with all its words
and utterly says.

(15 July 2020)
16 July 2020
Stalking.
Talking is stalking.
The grey sky says we move to a different solar system every night, the sun goes with us.
I have no idea what it means but that’s what the north sky said.

16 July 2020
Time is a door
that lets a stranger in.

*

When I am children
it lifts me,
lays me down
on the apron
of the stage.
Slowly slowly
the lights come up.
The audience is waiting
just for me.

17 July 2020
[dream texts]
They gave you four gospels
but there are more,
moss-covered, cracked,
scratched, torn, faded,
weird language, hard to read.

But they are there.
Now choose one
for your own--
one man or one woman
one gospel--
you can only have one
that is really your own.
Stroke the nice smooth pages
or brush sand off the stone,
use a jeweler’s loupe
of the family TV, choose.
choose and begin.
The word is waiting for you.

17 July 2020
There are more solutions than there are mysteries. This is called joy, the practice of art on earth.

Look up at the birds and ask yourself: have I sung a new theory today? isn’t it time to change history, turn water into wine? Come, it is time to bring Lazarus back to life.

17 July 2020
The indignity of desire—
a lucid animal
sporting on a neighbor’s lawn.

How dare we consider wanting
even the slightest thing
let alone another person,
a person much like you or me?
This is a question to ask
Monsieur Teste when he comes
back to life and we meet.
Avenue Paul Valéry,
American Embassy.

17 July 2020
When one does what one has to do the stone is complete the tree stands there the sky thinks you.

18 July 2020
Voices in from a passing car
chariot of the gods.
The first religion is to think
everything is relevant,
everything speaks.
Eighty years later the child
is still looking up,
still saying Why blue,
why blue? I thought
you’d never ask!
says the wind flowing by
but I did I did! says the child
but you didn’t ask the sky--
don’t try to work it
out by yourself, it’s there
to help, ask and listen,
ask and listen, listen
it said as it faded away.

18 July 2020
In the archipelago of cloud
I spent my morning
swimming vaguely;
soaked with non-thinking
I came back to land
clean. refreshed,
ready for my usual mistakes.
Water washes the body.
The mind needs to go
swimming in the sky.

18 July 2020
THE HOSE

wriggles as it fills
and carries from the faucet
to the newly-seed lawn.
We see te water
only by inference,
the hose’s moves,
the look of soaking on the grass.
So much of what happens
is invisible. We live
by inference, a grown-up word
for guessing from experience.
If we remember to remember
the hose gets the water there
the seeds are softened, fed,
brought to life.
We turn off the faucet
and go inside
where other mysteries are waiting,
turn on the light.
the stair treads creak.

18 July 2020
LIEBESLIED

All I want
is for you to ask
me questions,
all the questions
in the world
especially
the rightt one.

18.VII.20
RICORDANZE

The girls of Cypress Hills wore skirts and blouses. The skirts were tight, the blouses satin. When the tail of one slipped out of the waistband of the other we blushed and looked away and dreamed and schemed. We yearned, ’we’ here meaning boys. I presume I am speaking for my kind of gender but who knows—I did not share my thoughts my yearnings with any like- or other-minded youth. U was alone. No flute to play, no handy keyboard to muse my feelings on, no magic spell. Thoughts,
I call them! Only gaudy images of sudden bliss, a kiss, a touch, a taste and then the girls of Cypress Hills are done.

18 July 2020
The moon is a man eating crackers, the whole world littered with his crumbs.

19 July 2020

* 

The moon is in Capricorn now, one-third of the way in. close to aphelion. when brightness comes. Now tell me what it means.
You don’t know what the sign means you set above your door. Impulse tells you pretend to be a flower and you obey. The flag is a stranger too, waving, always waiting.

Time after time I tried to get you new clothes, new traditions of doubt, put of the boring old consolations of despair.

But you trusted the wood of the door more than my hands, you watched documentaries, I watched you--same sense of horror at what was happening. To look was loss.
And now we have nothing to remember, least of all ourselves.

You went on ordinary planes and trains where even my most ardent arduous thought could not follow--how can there be anywhere else? Aren’t we, isn’t, always here? So you turned out to be a puzzle neither you nor I could solve. Come, let us at least forgive our history, put all the eggs back together again.

19 July 2020
What it means
in Capricorn
the water is calm
but no one believes it.
Doubt is a leafy tree
and lightning even
runs right through it
into the ground--
the tree stands firm,
the charge scatters in the earth.
The human will
is just another toy,
some frail some sturdy
and the game goes on--
we pretend to want
the things that drag us forward
irresistably day after night.
Doubt lasts. It helps,
shake a branch today and see.

19 July 2020
A day when the day went away
but came home again quick
with its mouth full of Greek
and taught me kenosis, emptying
the night so the new can begin,
night meaning the dungeon of
dreams and desires and archetypes,
they’re just words anyhow,
hello. But what could be stronger
than words? Aren’t they
the light the Sun is made from,
*(shem, ;name’, shemesh, ‘Sun’)*
lo, I tell thee a great mystery.

2.
So I said to the preacher
is there really a difference
between the dead and the distant?
We can only think of them both,
not touch, not tell,
and who knows where our letters
really go, and who reads our email?
Don’t the distant come back sometimes
he answered. I stammered with terror:
but what is heaven if the dead never do?

3.
So it’s all about being
here and coming back.
Touch fingertips to brow
in silent saliute--here we are.
Mosses hang in spirals
from the trees, wolves totter
over frozen swamps, wind
howls in the mountain cave
somewhere else, somewhere else,
that luscious music we lure us by
but here we are and here we are.

19 July 2020
In the photos they show me
the comet looks like a scar on the sky.
It scares me a little, make me afraid
to go out just after sunset
to see it in the northwest
near the Dipper, I listen
to the instructions, I linger
in my house, wondering
what comets bring when they come
trailing their long hair.
Are they signs? Everything
is a sign. What do they bring?
All we know is what is here.
Maybe tonight I’ll be brave
enough to look. Or maybe not.

19 July 2020
IN THE MUD CASTLE

Fingers slip
endlessly
along your skin

smooth soft and wet
and yet you feel grit,
the grains of dirt

holding on
for dear life,
your life.

Leave my fingers
alone! I cry
to your skin,

touch is only a toy,
a broken toy.

19 July 2020
Make one more guess
and then the answer speaks

the oldest things
are always new,

telling and telling,
the shadow of that ancient tree
even points at me.

19 July 2020
Wishes and whims float like patches of oil slick on the more or less calm surface, ocean of mind.

And we think desire is so powerful, a shark or manatee, killer whale or leopard seal while it really is a little fish indeed, a little fish with red and golden scales, but they do glint a bit as it swims so slowly away.

19 July 2020
Scurry the hot
wind lifts the leaves,
warmest day in years,
101 right here, soft
cloudy sky, only a little fear.
What is the language
they taught me to think?
Who was the woman
who spoke another language
by my little bed as I slept?
Who did I clutch in dream?
Heat brings such questions
as if we were all in the womb
still on the verge of being born.
Banks of the stream. Apron
of the ocean sea. The continuous.
A word we are being used to say.

19 July 2020
OUT OF THE CLOUD

The kind of chaos
that takes care of you.
A cloud does that
in one way, the woman
in white at the Qatar
Bakery does in another.
She gives you sweet buns
with sesame seeds on them,
lets you pay later. Red
letters on the window.
Haven’t you ever wondered
why clouds are mostly white?

2.
There is summer in my hair,
a strange feeling as if
my hair was someone else’s

pure as your face, warm, austere,
symmetrical, in repose.

3.

AFTER

a metaphor borrowed from time
Thus the title and the subtitle of the book I wrote in sleep--to analyze who people really are and what they mean, unknown to themselves, that is what all the rest of us are for, to see you as you cannot see yourself, So it’s one more commentary after all on Exodus, each of us takes a turn being God, passes by all the rest of us who get to see who and what that Passerby is.

4.
If a whirlwind stopped moving but still was what is it, what would it say?

5.
Rverence immense, due from all of us to all of you who are us too.
6.
And the Bible says so too, treat everyone like God, you can’t go wrong.

7.
Now back to the cloud--this is an opera, after all. Perfect cumulus over perfect green the song sings. The lawnmower is at lunch,

there is a throbbing in the pit, the orchestra at bay, a few violas and one cello passing the time of day.

8.
What a friend a window is!--only self-revealing when you choose to look. And you’ve never seen a window drunk, and only rarely does a window look frightened, rarely, like the eyes of the girl in the bakery as she looked at me and came to help.

20 July 2020
MEDITATION

The light brings
the love with it—

inhale the light!

20.VII.20
Lightning struck the elm next door, the current ran through all the ground and shattered our basement window. Another something to worry about, a gift from Tartarus but a gift indeed.

20 July 2020
I said
I love you
but the sign
said No Smoking,

so where is
holy ignorance
that we call
silence now

when nothing says
and everything means?
Or do I mean
the other way round?

21 July 2020
SOMETIMES IT'S ONLY WHAT IT IS

but you won’t often find me admitting it,  
I have my work to do,  
like the famous cartoon Cat  
staring at the wall,  
I have to make everything  
into something else before  
that thing can be what it really is,  

not just a glamorous seeming.  
an easy selfie, a cute disguise.

No, uncover the truth  
by telling interesting lies  
until the accurate  
gets annoyed enough to speak  
and say its own name clearly  
and my work is done.

The amateur epistemologist  
closes his poem, his laptop and his eyes.  

21 July 2020
The weight of after
waits on the table
to be read, discussed,
and signed. No genesis
without apocalypse.
fair is fair.

After means
we see it best
when it’s going away.

See it, yes, but feel it less,
thank God, like remembering
a dream, breathe easy,
it was only a.

You know
how that song goes,
your mother taught you

and yet the after is the truth of it
if it has a truth,
ask the doctor, Does it?
Truth is what we make up from what little we know, he explains,

    dreams
are gymnasiums where we practice being and feeling and doing and sometimes even knowing---
but why would you even want to know?

21 July 2020
OF CLOUDS

Maybe a cloud comes in. Don’t you mean along?
Not sure what I mean-- what does the cloud want
or want to be seen doing-- and you, for instance,
what do you want, interrupting my stream of thought
(if I many dignified this parched dry arroyo by that term)
pr did you? Who am I talking to now? O voice
in my head O cloud in the sky, ugualeI as the master says.
A cloud is made of moisture and you never know
where its water’s coming from.

21 July 2020
= = = =

Maybe I’ll close my lies
lie down instead,
say my prayers
and fall on sleep--
it’s almost dark
eough to speak.

21,VII.20
Commercial otherwise
a string on the neck
with pearls along it
and occasional amber beads
to let the land back in
and the ancient trees.

I hold one bead od
of that long history
between fingers two and three
and ask:

Where have you been
before you came to this?
In what hollow of rock
or mulch or flesh of what
did you linger before
the master of the gems
took you in hand?

Do you remember
the Baltic coast
where even I once walked
on the frozen sea?
Are we meant for each other
from the start?

Then I let
the string fall back--I do not
speak good pearl.

22 July 2020
Apostrophes
are all very well
but answers
are sweeter.

Breeze in the window
is asking me something--
even people like us
have a few answers—

bless you for asking.

22 July 2020
I’ve waited long enough for you
said the palmer to the dozing farrier,
I’ll take my horse and be on my way,
Jerusalem was far, far, I weary
of walking but he,
sound beast,
will bear at least
the weight of what I carry,
stones from the Temple,
olive wood from Calvary.
I will walk on.
He led the horse,
both of them limping
along the grey highway
that leads to one more sea.

22 July 2020
Anyone who carries anything has already traveled far. The weight of where it has been staggers the carrier’s gait, a borrowed handkerchief weighs the bearer down. We are born naked for a reason. A lesson.

22 July 2020
Help the opal
find its wheel,
help the chimney
find the sky,
a jewel has meaning
but not always one
the books explain,
find its meaning
by wearing it-- with care
because who knows
where the smoke goes.
A thing knows its own mind--
do you know yours?
That is the question
every door asks
as you go through.
Or even just wait outside,
patient, waiting
for me to open it and say
you are the diamond,
please come in.
2. But of course that is not the end of it. The diamond has no door or only one the soul alone can enter, whatever the soul is or means. The mystery deepens. The diamond gleams in the sun but deep down in it I saw as a child a pure and radiant blue. Study your mother’s engagement ring-- it gives the first faint glimmer of what you will become.

3. I use this word ‘you’ a lot, it is small as an opal, precious as diamond. But don’t get me wrong-- the beauty of you and the beauty of me is that we can be anyone at all,
depending. Depending on whether you are listening or speaking, the words around you like emeralds, pearls, carnelians all strung together coherently, a necklace. Put in on, wear it to know what they mean.

4.
I [verb] you. This is the greatest vector language knows. Wind in the trees--see what I mean?

5.
So we are beasts of burden who carry words to their intended, and somehow they sustain us on the way, some of us even grow fat from carrying
so many words so far,
so far. I really do wish you were near.

6.
In India they let cows
walk on the highway
right amidst the cars
and trucks and bikes and horses.
Sometimes they loop flowers
on the cow’s neck. Sometimes
I feel like a cow in traffic
dazed with other people’s
strengths and speeds but there
I am, four feet to the asphalt,
lurching slow forward.
Towards what? Not the slaughterhouse--
this is India remember, *ahimsa*,
no, towards somewhere
what I am or what I give
is needed, honored even
in a half-unconscious way.
I mean towards you, ready or not.
7.
O the glint of one
sun on so many windshields!
Head for the lake or the river
to see the single sun again
smile up at you from calm water
and your own face in it,
, your mother found at last.

23 July 2020
THE STAIRS

We breathe more going up.
The steps creak louder going down as if all the air that lifted us were gone now and we sink weightily, body alone, unthinkingly from step to step—Virgil says it’s easy to go down.

But sometimes as I climb at night I linger on each step to think the thought that lives right there, only there, at that particular ascension, that shelf of history,
every step its own
chronicle, theorem.
I stand there, stunned
by what is suddenly clear,
what is utterly there,
then hoist myself
out of that thinking
then rise to what waits
eight oaken inches
closer to the stars.

On one step
I stop and think
of who I am--
but ‘am’ is a house
with many floors--
am I what I look like
as I do a certain thing
or am I what I think
in doing it? Am I
even doing it, or does
the task itself draw me
into the vacuum of itself
to be done, so that I
have no more agency
than a feather floating
on the wind?
So many feathers these days
on the deck, the old
steps outside, the hawk
attacking mourning doves
again, soft birds
that come to be fed
so it’s my fault when
the Cooper’s hawk comes
down and kills them.
And is that too what I am?

Why are there steps
and how many are there,
I count all the time
and the number keeps changing,
how many steps to get where I am,
and know the place
and go on from there?
And why are there numbers
anyway. chalk marks
on the cave wall,
up the stone hill, no,
the wooden hill to Bedfordshire
they used to say
night time, beddy-bye
where Great-great-grandfather John
was a priest and knew
a winding path to Sophocles--
I knew Greek once too,
that was a gorgeous step,
a long swoon of scholarship
a warm unending autumn afternoon,
but I digress-- you’d think
that would be hard to do
on a single flight of stairs
but no, distraction beckons everywhere,
and maybe wandering aimless
is the real road to Jerusalem,
pilgrim quest, top of the stairs,
al som de l’escalina, said Dante
who knew who waited for him
up there. And for me?

Take one more step,
who knows what I’ll see from there,
the groaning elevator of my attention
yearns to rise. O an elevator
would be a precious tool
to bypass thinking
into pure Arrival,
up there, where the angels
wait to stage the night’s dream.
Though I suppose dreaming
counts as thinking too,
wouldn’t you?

And sometimes even
while I linger on a step
(speaking of thinking)
I’ll think: why not stay here?
This present place,
this exiguous plateau
is new-found-land enough for me.
Stay here and be at home
halfway to nowhere,
but home, home, no more
climbing, no more going down.
Standing there upright
somehow feels like lying down,
peaceful, a long soft exhalation, all vigilance relaxed.
Then before I know it a foot lifts by itself and heaves me to the next step, bare tundra and a sense of loss. My body has its own ideas so who am I after all?

...23-24 July 2020
So many Suns
in one small sky!
Like thoughts
in one thinker.
or as the pious say
we are all of us
separate thoughts
in the One Mind.
But I see yellow
blazes, like a woman
in that old French
movie revisiting
all her old beaux,
the boys she danced
with one night
all too long ago, No,
not sad like that,
joyous, sunshine,
a mind remembering
all the lovers, all
the travels, tropical
atolls., sturdy cows
in his uncle’s barn.
kingfishers at high noon
arrowing down at their prey,
archeologist rolling
the stones away to open
what? Grotto, tomb,
cave where your ancestor
drew fine lyre-horned
cattle with a grace
my fingers wish they had
to write of these same
glowing mysterious
and so many Suns.

24 July 2020
Lurching wordwise
the anger of work
woke me
voices out there

then the voice
of heavy objects
moving, being
themselves out loud—

how could sunshine
make so much noise?

25 July 2020
you don’t have to answer. Questions know how to take care of themselves, the catechism goes on and on. Tune in when you can and only then, only then answer me. I need you just to be there listening, I am not entitled to answers, not even one. But all I say, every word however certain seeming is a question, every noun in the book asks you something, every blessed bird in the sky.

25 July 2020
Some people give enough just standing there to make sense of our being in the world together.

Others you have to marry just to get some sense of what they mean. Marry, matriculate, memorize, write odes to, portray in oils, set to music, make an opera of.

And there are others who never divest themselves of seeming—they just be. You’ll never know them. They are the walking trees, stone congressmen, shadows who can make you cry.

25 July 2020
Sometimes the angels
meet and chat outside my window,
wake me with their juicy voices,
these workmen of the sky.
I try to go on sleeping, knowing
what they say is none of my business
and yet I listen, reasoning
they must know I can hear them,
they must be here for a reason,
doesn’t everything have a reason,
shouldn’t I be writing down what they say?
But would even you believe me?

25 July 2020
I thought
I had a lot to say
and I did
so I did
but it took
only three words.

25.VII.20
Hold tight hold tight
even this will fade away.

26.vii.20
All night I gorged
on this banquet I am
and woke to wonder
at such sacred hunger
honest vain as Whitman

and my whole human mind
was spent on making
patties toasted over fire.
There is an instrument for that.

And hunger is an honest thing
among all our opera houses,
honest as a flashlight in the woods--
who’s coming towards me now?

26 July 2020
A DOOR IN HUDSON

for Charlotte.
in thanks for the image

A door to begin with
is magic.

Any door.
That door in Hudson
carved wood and a window
clearest glass
perfect mirror

shows
what is behind you

but not you.

A really perfect mirror leaves you out

shows only what you can’t
by your own self see,

the world behind you,
as if you are transparent,
a glad grand honest witness.

We look at the mirror
and see a church across the street,
tall and grey,
dignified as stone is
(but why is stone so often grey—

does the earth hold colors frivolous, leaves it to childish us to chrome and rouge and paint it up?)

You’d see through the door if you stood inside not just the church but the busy street, people enough like you to keep them at arm’s length, see them through the door. Out there is what it means.

A door is where the world begins.

Pale wood varnish glow around the dark where we see

what is not there
but here, far
before here,
the place from

we come.
The photo calls it
a church and why not,
noble structure

mostly empty
most days and only
in the rarest thinking
strangely full.

The door says that,
says A door is between,

between you and you know not,
between maybe and you know what,

A door is all
the answer
,most of us get
but who bothers asking?

Turn the knob
touch the wood,
it’s mind against matter
all over again,

are you open?
Is anybody home?

26 July 2020
THINGS HEARD

Caul for my comfort
or do I mean a different word,
morning means confusing
what i dream with what there is,

Caul to wrap round,
or call out to thee?

because all the old words
are still living in the night.

2.
Now silenced by sun.
Who are we today,
brave pilgrim,
on time’s turnpike
asphalt softened from summer heat?
I mean wake up in me
natural as a ball of twine,
uttering secrets orderly
one tug at a time.
3.
These days I miss the sea though the river brings some of it to me, fjord that it is, firth our word? But only with the whole sea can I or music be continuous. Otherwise it’s just one song after another, wren at the window last night you heard.

4.
Ah you, the diamond of my days, you are where you are when nothing is where it is. You tilt the light so I can see, you coax wildlife to give singing lessons to the lifelong child, bluejay jive and chipmunk chatter, speaking strictly, like a flower.
5.
But do not name it so early in the day. Let it be music if it must, rivers of, sensuous legato rifling the silences, is that an oboe or a little girl crying softly over a torn dress? Should I waste the music trying to find out what it means?

6.
Suppose a spoon. It does what nothing else quite can do: lift a little liquid to your lips. We must have spoon nature in us, since we give a little taste of us to you and you, only a little and hope you like the taste.
7.
Anyhow, that’s what the music said while I listened to the loud piano, sound is such a paradox, it comes so far to touch the skin. child Mozart memorizing Palestrina, some such story, stories too are music, come from far away to touch us as they can.

27 July 2020
Was it my life
I remember living
or is it someone else’s?

That’s the kind
of question you get
if you lie there

on a hot day
trying not to hear
the lawnmover outside.

What do neighbors really mean?

27 July 2020
VOX

.

Even on the telephone
the gift is genuine.
The voice. The sound of who
you really are,
the sunlight gleaming through
the foliage of what you say,
the true.

2.

Left to myself
I would call it a river,
slender and deep, that runs
through dark woods and empty fields
and only sometimes, sometimes,
makes itself heard.
3.
River, *potamos*
in Greek, what a strange
word for river.
the voice does strange things
with what it finds,
finds to say. I think the word
meant to stop that other flowing
with firm consonants,
stop the river for a moment
so it could be looked at,
known, tasted, crossed.
till it was a thing like other things,
then the voice let it go.

\[ PO = \text{stOP} \]
\[ TA = \text{sTAnd still} \]
\[ MO = \text{MOve again and be} \]
\[ S = \text{cntinuousssssss} \]
4.
So that’s what we hear on the phone--
the voice is the health of mind
overwhelming mere circumstance
with its own power--
and in all this world
no two of them the same.

28 July 2020
Sometimes the heat
in the hairs of the arm
feels like an ant
prospecting there.
A twitch or flex and
the phantom ant is gone.

But the heat stays.
Steiner said that summer
is the Earth’s long tumbling dream
and we dream too,
breeze uneasy in the trees.

Summer reminds us
it’s all sensation
We live by interpretation.

28 July 2020
The sudden silence imagines me.

I begin by resting nestled in its arms, yes, the mother-arms of silence, you must know them too.

Slowly the answer grows, the answer that I am, any child in mother arms, what I am and am to be.

So quiet now. A furlong north a calm car passes, a breath of wind, then quiet more. When nothing speaks, I am spoken.
Out of silence we all come. I don’t mean to be solemn about it; it’s joyous, made of billion differences, carnival. It’s not some church. Or is it?

28 July 2020
PATRIARCH

I held her in my hand,
the whole of her
in my one hand,

I pressed my face
against her belly
and I whispered firmly

“any child you ever have
will be my child too, somehow,
no matter who the ardent father is.”

Time’s soft erasure
has blurred her features,
there are many women she could be,

she could be you.

28 July 2020
Said to be enough, the saying—what else could a word do but speak? The certainty is part of us. Language is nature.
Sometimes we ask for the wrong things. Then the bus comes and takes us there, not too crowded, window open, old-fashioned bus old-fashioned street with people on it and then you’re there.

Why am I here? is natural, every geographer knows to ask but seldom seldom doth an answer come, as some book says. Get off the smelly bus, stand on the empty corner watch the bus flow on its way.

Stand. Why can’t humans jump the way chpimunks can, ten times their body length in one easy leap? Why do I stand here? is natural, why don’t I keep moving? Where
is there to go?

You need a tribunal
to discuss these questions
and fortunately for you
you have one built-in,
the wise elders of language
murmuring on their benches
deciding. There is nothing
to be done. Just wait
is what the judgment reads.
You got on that bus, now wait
and see what happens. Life
goes on. A dog trots by.
Someone on a bike passes
and seems to smile.
There are worse places to be.
Here you are. Voilà.

29 July 2020
Take me to the laundry
said the sinner to the priest
who answered first wash yourself
before I take you in my hands.

29.VII.20
Do you believe in Confession, do you go to the priest kneel in the dim and try and try to tell the truth?

Does it work? And if so is it what he says now or what you said then that wipes the mirror clean?

Is mirror even what I mean? Are the you who confesses and the you who sinned the same you? How many of you are crammed in that stuffy booth, kneeling in the dark? Try to be simple. Say yes to everything.

29 July 2020
Teach the pilgrim
a new dance.
you make the music,
the dance called standing still,

staying right here,
sitting on the lawn
loving the daffodils
till they fade,

then loving
the irises till they wilt
then loving the rose of Sharon
and it’s almost autumn,

slip inside and watch the leaves
strip from the trees and float
past you till the snowflakes
sift down so beautifully,
each one a crystal message,
now the world is white
as a page and you can finally
write down your journey
and be at peace. Sleep now,
this is Jerusalem.

29 July 2020
The truth of the matter
is matter itself
said Goethe in a dream
so I woke and wrote it down.
You need so many lies
to tell the truth.

29.VII.20
I feel like I’ve just been born again. It must be the blue sky, or this e-mail from a dear friend, or a cloud hiding behind the tulip tree-- *liriodendron*! what a grand word for such a tall tree. So here I am—is it again or for the first time? what does a new-born know anyway? And why should he care? Isn’t it enough to be loved? And maybe fed every once in a while. That must be what breakfast means.

29 July 2020
Now the stage is set
a breeze comes
and the trees applaud.

29.VII.20
I try to get simpler all the time simple tunes for simpletons like me to sing. tone-deaf but touch-true.

29.VII.20
Great is Zeus
who comes from the sea,

offer him leeks and sparrow-grass
for he eats no meat

offer him scrolls and styluses and pens
for he yearns to be written

eyarns to be read.

29 July 2020
on a painting by T.P.
LILA

*for Lila Dunlap on her birthday*

In the mountains near Nepal
your name means *play,*
*play the way the gods* do,
their quiet joyous faces show
the same calm smile of matter
itself, look at any stone,
look at water,

*though not much of that*
in Arabia where your name
means *night* time—
so if you were in the Old World
you would have to play all night long.

Doesn’t sound so bad at first
but think of the dawns you’d miss,
the eerie silences of early afternoon.
Maybe you should be glad you’re here,
where your name means,
what does it mean?

*Means you,*
of course, best of all
and then a kind of *river*,
I think you mean rivers,
you always need a river,

I see you walking on the levee
(I’m not sure what a levee is,
a Levi, a Hebrew other-priest,
a grand party of soldiers,
a raised embankment, a wall
to tame the water, a make-out promenade?),
walking along
above the flow of that great lady
we Brooklyn kids thought of
as Mrs. Sippy, what did we know,
and rivers don’t know how to spell,
just to go, and go you with them,

I said I see you walking by the river,
it could even be our own up here,
poor Henry Hudson’s ample fjord
that brings the seals to Saugerties
and even a little salt to Albany
where God knows they need it,
speaking of God.

River, I say
I see, and you beside it
keeping it company, walking
with it, talking its own language,
that scares me like that werewolf
you cradled in your arms.
You can’t fool me, I know yo’re kind
to everything that tries to live,
that’s what gives such power
to your poetry, roogaroo
and demon bunnies,

never mind about all that,
you’re by the river now,
walking towards us,
a casual passerby would note
your resemblance to the Virgin Mary,
the Queen of Sheba, that girl at the gym,

but no worshippers here, just me
watching you stride north
to meet the flow, God knows
what you are thinking,
that's none of my business,
I just get to see you walking,
strong as dactyls, meeting the river,
you know the best way of flowing
is to fight against the current,
walk, walk gently north
like the troubadours of old
(they called them salmon-men
who swam against the stream
uphill, higher, where the riches are)
poets whose voice was sweetest
when they sang against the song.

30 July 2020
TRYING TO KEEP UP

Paul Blackburn, in memoriam

Trying to keep up with the alphabet
but there are so many letters
running before me,
deer through the cornfield,
blackbirds over the roof
too quick to count,
your breath beside me.
Letters, letters all,
God’s cursive scribbled on the sky,

2.
and when we shake hands
does every finger consent
to this mild argument,
the book of peace
opened to the chapter called now?
3.
The letters,
not just the ancient
ox-house-camel procession
from Egypt into the Holy Land

but all of them, every mark
shouting from the stone,
long before the privilege of print.

The law runs this way:
once you learn to read,
everything is a book.
Once you learn language,
everything speaks.

4.
So learning a finite language
(Gaelic, Zulu, Thai) means learning
to leave things out, how
not to hear certain sounds,
means casting out meaning
from most of what you hear or see,
and narrow-squinting on some few.
5.
So every given language
is a subtraction from the whole
of what is being said?
Sounds like that, Means
run faster, ride the horses
of sounds, surf the waves of sight,
always more to be said.

6.
Are we there yet?
is what every breeze says,
Yes, yes cries every leaf
until it falls.

That’s the song I heard
written on the lawn.

7.
It began again
with the horns of Zeus
the god came riding
to your house, knocked
on your door, you watched
from the window.
And then what did we do?
He called out to us his law:
*Death is not an option*,
then *Everything means*
and then rode on. Leaving
all the rest of the letters,
uncountably many, all of them
needing to be spoken
alone and in concert,
all round us the music,
the ancient masters gesturing,
urging us to strive
into the dance, the whirlwind,
the breathless moment of calm
we yearn for and call meaning.

31 July 2020
DE PARTIBUS

Parts of the body
that never meet
not just the left
heel and he top
of your head,
vertex whence
spirits exit,
angels pour into it

I get them confused
with what I thought
are my pwn thoughts,

they think me!

Not just the obvious
parts of the obvious corpus--
how long has it been
since your left elbow
nudged your right buttock,
in the wonb, maybe?
Who are you after all with all these unrelated parts you spend all your days and nights all your precious breath holding together and don’t even know it!

If I were Mozart I would write a sonata, solo for every single part and then ten thousand more spinning them all together—Trio for Pinky Finger, Jawbone and Navel in A minor, like a mountain rudge.

maybe that’s what he actually did, why he wrote so much and died so young worn out with difference,

and no one knows where his body lies,
one more disconnect!
between the body and the name,
no sepulcher, an unmarked grave

o why am I being
so gloomy,
is it because my tongue
can’t lick
the back of my neck

even though just
the thought of it
makes me ticklish?

31 July 2020
MARRIAGE

for Charlotte

I don’t think I’ve ever told you
how much it moves me,
deeply, quietly
that you make thre bed every day
so neatly, so if I pass
through the bedroom
anytime thereafter, there it is,
eloquent and civilized,
covers turned down,
pillows luxuriant.

*

Why is marital
so like martial?
We never fight—
discuss sometimes,
but never fight.
Mars must have blessed us
by misspelling.
I love to talk with you.
Sometimes
when I’m sitting there
letting thinking
have its own way,
such a child the mind is!

sometimes then you’ll
be translating on the laptop
on the sofa, on the latest
of all your books
and you’ll read out to me
a phrase especially pleasing
or especially puzzling
or both, we love chimeras,

and I will exult at his gift,
this exit visa from my thoughts
into the great world
of language and the other
and your voice, your voice.

31 July 2020