

8-2020

aug2020

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LAMMAS

It said nothing
then it spoke.
The silence and the saying
sounded same
but the difference was
I understood.

2.
The calendar shifted
to keep up with the sun,
her balance act of day and night.
Old Lammas slipped
a dozen dawns down
and now we know a new one
come over the hill,
naked in cornfields, raft
of cloud overhead,
angels of air looking
emptily meaningfully down,
soon the harvest begins.

3.

**There are still errors
left for me to make--
times and titles,
answering the wrong questions,
writing the wrong book.**

4.

**The world as is
wants to be loved.
Doesn't mind
a little flirtation
with the Pleistocene
but come back soon.
Now is now. Now
is when you count.**

5.

**So it's wonderful on summer days
the way plump clouds come up
slow over the trees and speak.**

**It's quiet enough to write down
what they say. Just pay attention
to the vowels and the consonants
will take care of themselves.**

**6.
So let the vowels lead you
all the way,
the enormous vowel of the sea
will bear you on,
we know that from today's birthday,
Melville, master of energetic
triumphant loneliness.**

**7.
But in Xhosa there are 18
consonants, mouth sounds
maybe like what we make
when talking to horses or to poultry
or try to write down as tsk-tsk or tut-tut,
sounds waiting to be used,
always something new from Africa**

**the Romans said, remember?
Remember Rome, the Christians
in the Colosseum, the old emperor
studying Etruscan, Princess Julia
naughty in the Arches, remember
the sounds of ghosts, goats,
flute players, the river slipping by,
let the vowels help you remember.**

8.

**Who are we anyway
if the calendar can change?
The little boy asked that
standing in the surf
with his little tin shovel in hand,
as if eager for the sand.
Who are we even
when the wind dies down
or when the crows in the corn
look at us but don't call out?
Or when the cars pass up the road
too fast for us to see who's driving,
who are we when the night falls down--**

why do they say it falls?
The little boy lets one question
distract him from another.
Good little boy. Now he bends
and starts building his castle.

9.
Lammas is Saturday this year,
no mowing, please.
Just bend down and kiss the grass
given to us by the Lord of Time,
let it grow wild the whole afternoon,
wait and eat your breakfast in the dark.

10.
Clouds mostly teach silence
but sometimes they roar,
chide the delinquent
messengers we are.
Their silence means to make us speak--
that in a way is the whole story.
If you doubt me, ask any stone.

1 August 2020

== ==

**Rabbit rabbit
we say in Kentucky
on the first day
of any month**

**but not January when
there are three of them
and the last one turns white.**

**Even now the pure
albino clouds look down
and laugh at me, as if
any of us could really tell
one color from another
and least of all what
any given color means.**

**It's twenty years since
I've been in Kentucky,
I can still smell the dry
tobacco in the warm barn.**

**And anyhow there are
no white rabbits here.
Maybe that's why it's so
hot today, 90 in the shade,
welcome to August,
named for a man with
a lot on his hands.**

1 August 2020

=====

**After music
he comes into the room
picks up a robe
from a chair and puts it on,
goes to the wall
and take down one instrument,
oboe or flute
and plays one note.
Sits down.
The day is in his hands.**

2 August 2020

=====

**Dreamt a poem,
meant to send it to a friend,
woke and remembered
the friend was dead.
So I guess I already had.**

(GYL)

2.VIII.20

SCHERZO

The sky not blue
still covers you
the train
is always late
unless or until,

you know that song,
you hum it in the sdhower,
sham,poo
gets in your eyes.
the song is rough
it rubs along your arm
falls in your lap
squeeze your knees
to hold it safe,
hear it say,
sigh,
until you sing the words of it,
sing it.

wing it
we used to say
when birds could fly
and cherries
sold from pushcarts
were sweeter than.

And then you imagine
how hot summer
used to sweat
all over the pages
of the books
your pretended
to be reading
your own dear sweat
on other people's dumb pages,

o e are made
of soaking

or how the hydrants
leaked, o yes they did,
things happen

all by themselves,
it wasn't always the Italian
kids who turned them on,
wrenched the top nu loose
unscrewed the nozzles on the side.
we are all soaked.

we are all guilty,
we all get wet
get old
get set
for something else,

open the window
ley out the air,
all th yesses
into the no

even now
when you
are so much you
hugging
the moment
sitting firmly

at the keyboard
how soft you rest
above the music,
your skin snoozing
tunes of its own,

type eyes closed
all the words
full of forests and far

typos tell the truth

wide awake
you make me think

but where is music
when we need it
most
to shape the silence
between our knees

but even now
there comes
ant on your ankle

so what's the good word?
I want to touch you
is what everything says,

that's the trouble,
the ant in us
needs to explore
everybody's skin,

Always try
the back door first,
help me find
the old true door
that lets the traveling
thought come home,

the holy door
in everything
knock knock
anybody home?
then who am I
and who am I talking to?

I heard the lions
roar in Central Park
didn't you,
and heard the seals
barking in Prospect?

Go down the steps
past the bronze leopards
to where the animals ;ive,

your body
is the price you pay
for being here

the zoo
should have warned you
there is wild
life in these parts
not all in the gutter
though the best parts are.

2 August 2020

=====

**Dim faces of dead friends
the orchestra begins,
no time for the sky,
hurry, hurry, it's almost now.**

2 August 2020

=====

**Time enough
to meet
the animal
at the crossing**

**everything lives lives,
we all do too
never far
from some road
not far
from the sky,
most nights
you can even hear
a train go by,
lights out, very fast.**

2 August 2020

THE MISSING CANTO

When I was Dante
I left some things out
and put others where
it seemed they should be,

but once one of them
told me where she should belong--

it was Julia, daughter
of the Emperor, notorious
for sexual appetite,
profligacy, lewd behavior,
excess under the Arches.

I would have parked her in Hell
not far from Francesca
but she rebuked me,
explained it carefully,,
so that even I,
a male, could understand;

"It was not love

with me, not like her
of Rimini, no gush,
no starry firmaments
or noble summits
it was desire pure
that carried me
and that I carried
into the busy dirty world of Rome
by father thought so grand,
it was lust, bestial
and purer than any animal
because it meant
no begetting, so claim
of the future, children,
families, inheritance,
genetics.

 it was pure lust
and I was pure
within it, I belong
in Paradise
because I meant,

and meant one thing only,
undistracted.

**And poor Ovid took with him
a scrap of the bedsheet
we once made love on,
took it to the Euxine Sea
when my wicked daddy
punished him with exile
because he couldn't exile me.**

**and the cloth consoled him,
sentimental poet that he was,
still is. I suppose, somewhere
in your quiet heaven,
consoled him with what was left,
a rough spot, a smell,
of the intensity of me.**

**So, feeble poet at your work,
put me where I belong
I belong in Paradis
because I meant one thing
and meant it all the way".**

2 August 2020

=====

**And is the beautiful blue sky
somebody's lie too,
some raptor of feelings
hunting your heart?**

**Think not. Color
may be the only truth.
Pay your taxes and decide
what the wind is telling you,**

**the green wind of August
that hides in the sky.
In your next life
you'll be an admiral--now**

calm down and let me rest.

3 August 2020

=====

**Did Audubon do animals?
I want to see his wombat,
echidna, hippopotamus.**

**Mozart wrote secret
music for the birds--we all
know that, and Beethoven
gave intelligence to thunder.**

**So who will sanctify by art
the woodchuck at our fence,
the streak of sunlight
running down our door?**

**Everything is trying to get in!
O a girl is a gospel of oyster shells,
a boy is a minor felony, grow up,**

**grow up and be God at least
the way everything else is,
permanent, mysterious and true.**

3.VIII.20

=====

**Haydn wrote a symphony a day
for a hundred days
but the days weren't all together,
depending on the weather,**

**sometimes it takes a year
to reach tomorrow.**

**The last ones are the days
I like best, say 98 to 104,**

**but who am I? And who was
Haydn anyhow, father of many?**

3 August 2020

=====

**On some sofa beside me
almost a song, lifted a leaf
of as if it were sheet music
we used to say, innocent score,
fumbling hands. I was alone
with a piece of paper
what could I do but read it,
and it was blank, so
what could I do but write?**

2.

**That's not how it began,
it feels like that still.
The triangulation: muscles
moving in the fingers,
mechanism of the keyboard
object moving in space-
and the sound coming out.
In this triangle someone
could find a self and spend a life.**

3.

But it didn't happen that way too.
You were always with me--
you being the shape of the other,
the answering voice I needed to answer,
the mountain across the river,
you absolute horizon.

4.

That's closer to how it began.
How I began. Before that
the crowded waiting room
called childhood, where the one
lesson is to learn to be alone.
At least until the mountain comes along.

5.

Now we're all here together,
naked in history,
learning to read
by finding the secret lover

**in every book,
childhood is a state that never ends.**

**6.
Time to join
the whirlpool and the wolf,
the hunger and the hurry.
Take in as you are taken in
until you reach the quick
(means living) center of time
(means now) (and you means me.).**

**7.
So on this altarpiece is shown
the transubstantiation
of time to space, space
is what we always have,
space loves us, time
is just an accident of travel,
space loves us, sits always
beside us on the sofa,
stretches out with us in bed,**

walks to the corner store with us,
helps us find the mountain,
lets us lean against the tree
and fish in our pocket,
that special space, to find
whatever strange thing it is
we think we need. It's there
all round me. It holds my hand.

4 August 2020

====

**Sometimes were smart enough
to look out the window
and close the door.
sometimes we close our eyes
and pray--isn't that the real name
of thinking, don't the temples
of Greece and Babylon
show us what we see
when our eyes are closed?
Then the crisis comes.
Open your eyes, open the door.
Your prayers are answering.**

4 August 2020

====

**Utnapishtim saved
the world from flood,
Noah saved the beasts
from drowning.
It was in stories
that we came alive
and learned to love
or merely linger.**

*(The next line of this poem should be a piano
piece by Robert Schumann, I don't know which
one.)*

4 August 2020

=====

**Where does the holy stuff
come from
that clogs the lines of your poetry
and nourishes me so well?**

4 August 2020

=====

No answer yet.
Pineapple slices from the can
so neatly cored,
yellow ciphers,
the terrible sweetness
of logical things,
the song of zero.

2.

Listen, I tell myself again,
a train goes by ,
every night
about this hour,
never exactly the same minute,
freedom is not far,

3.

then why is the train going
and why did it come back
to go again and again
while only the horny and the hungry
are awake to hear it,

busy themselves with its meaning,
the far cities,
the forests of why?

4.

No answer yet
but nothing bores the questioner,
on and on, all night long,
sleep is just another form of it,
sleep is asking.

5.

Of course the night
tries to answer you,
always has, since you were s kid
in a railroad flat in Cypress Hills,
windowless bedroom'
cross on the wall,
the dark did all it could.
It lurked and listened---
I think that was enough,
taught me o wait in the dark.

6.

So that the joyous morning
was always a kind of disappointment,
a fruit too sweet, too bright,
too net, and me a clumsy pharisee
hugging the scraps of the law,
the dry leaves left from dream.

7.

I.e., poetry. Who's there?
Did the chest of drawers
shift in the dark?
Why does the floor creak?
Who is your mother?
sometimes I dared to ask the dawn,
Guessing at the answers
no one would give.

8.

Yes, there were windows,
but they were far away.
Even in the kitchen the table
was as far as could be from the light,
there was a war on, I drank my milk

**and ate white bread, I understood
that much at least
about time and history,
eggs are oval, fruit is round,
any minute they'll make me
go to school.**

9.

**The feeling
does not change. it reeks
of morning still. No answer
comes apart from what we do,
every minute of our lives
is our attempt to answer
nobody's question.
And nobody is the most
important one there is.**

5 August 2020

====

The precious routines
of solitude,
 bird on a branch
saying nothing,
meaning everything.

The eyes are given to us
to open and to close--
madness means forgetting this.

5.VIII.20

====

**Politics means
making other people
do what you want them to.
In a true democracy,
being a candidate for office
automatically disqualifies you.**

5.VIII.20

== == == == ==

**Close to the spotlight
the make-up starts to run.
Identity needs the dark.**

5.VIII.20

=====

GThere is no ocean here
to tell me what to do.
Time unwaps something
with its hands. I stretch
my arm through a month
to find tomorrow. Water
or not, that is always the way.
I am here to obey.

5.August.2020

=====

**When Musil watched the pretty girl
traipse through the field of flowers
he heard a song bird he couldn't name
keep time overhead with her legs
in the lavender.**

Or so it seemed.

**He had come from Carinthia
crossing through Carniola, over
the Dragon Bridge in Laibach,
hurrying west into the flatlands
of northern Italy, it all was Austria,
down south where the meadows
were the only mothers, where this
girl kept running further and further away.**

**He would not forget her. Again
and again in his pages she, she
or her likenesses, would show up,
always in motion, only like that ode
of Brahms to vanish into the unknown,
uncertain, unconscious. Like water**

under that bridge.

**o just be simple,
how could a man finish a book,
how could a story ever really end?
And what about the bird—what
are we to make of its semantic song?**

5 August 2020

====

Angel voice
woke me
not brass
or harp as
mostly usual
with the Aloft,

but this
was softly loud
velvety as light,
a skirl of wet cloth
on wet glass squeezed
but higher,
deeper, going away.

Five times it said,
each time further,
maybe neighborhood
angel out walking,
waking the dead
in us from what we thought
and thought was sleep.

**Did I say gold yet?
there was gold in it
too, wake to the danger,
waking is dangerous,
danger is golden,
danger means
to be in the power
of another, to be
in the hands of the day,
one more song
going away.**

6 August 2020

=====

No mail and the sun
coming up.
It would be different
if I could play
the piano,
not always letting
it play me,
but I guess
I have enough
guesses to go on,
akouo, I hear,
I hear.

6 August 2020

=====

**Now go back to bed
and tell the darkness
what you just read
in tist very strange
book, the day.**

6.VIII.20

=====

**I waved at her across the road
and she waved back.
Then I saw she was a shadow
of a wind-nudged branch,
O tender earth
where even shadows are polite.**

6 August 2020

THE CARAVAN

All the blue camels
the bright red oxen,
the green mules,
o and the drivers,
riders. grooms and guides,
they are all colors too.

2.
So the rocky desert rang
with so many hooves,
sandstone echoing—
you could hear them coming
from a mile away
if you were there.
But you were not there.

3.
No. you were riding, tall
on a camel of your own,
salt mules slogged along
around you, you like it slow,

keep the animal spirit low,
give the camel a chance
to think as he steps along.
And his slow pace gives you
the quiet music all
travelers need to sort out
the tumbled archive
of their memory mind.

4.

The god of going had made sure
there are many oases on this route.
Almost every night you came to water,
wafture of sweet fruit trees, soft lively
shade after all those stony shadows
the desert is so loud with. Hurry,
you're here. slip off the beast, let it
fossick on its own, you stretch out flat
in the glad horizontal of the night.

5.

You'd almost think I'm following you,
spying on routine, daring to evaluate
somebody else's reality—it would ne

just like me. But I'm not. My days of traveling are mostly past, I'm happy to sit and watch you from afar. But even from here I can hear the clinking of the camel bells. the sand they shuffle through, your own sighs when every now and then even you wish it could all go faster, even you grow impatient with what's now.

6.

I suppose that must be why you climbed on the camel to begin with. Like so many, you allowed yourself to think that *now* means *here*, and some place past the horizon would be a better now to be in. The camel could have told you otherwise but he's just along for the ride.

7.

I know the feeling,
that's how I got here
too, though to be honest
I never had an animal,
I had to walk the whole way
from the bed to the window
and taking deep breaths
got all the way to the door.
Where I'll be waiting when
some fine day you'll slip
off the camel's back and tap
half timidly on that ancient wood
and all the words in the
world will let you in.

6 August 2020

INTROIT

**Does a Catholic priest I wonder
ever wake up n the morning
and just not want to say Mass?
It's Wednesday, the sun is shining
Low Mass only takes half an hour
but still, he doesn't want to have to.
doesn't to go play golf yet again
or have a beer with friends, no,
just *far niente*, sit and study roses
in the rectory garden, watch the cat
lording it all around the lawn. Sit
and do nothing. But how loud
his vow this calling, down there
in him, in what he has been taught
(and teaches others) is the soul.
O the soul of a man in the morning!
What can a man eo but put
some clothes on and hurry down
and over and put on the rest
then go in, up to the altar of God.**

6 August 2020

====

**The Sodomites were sleeping on the moon
the Adamites itching in the undergrowth
the Babylonians sit in water to keep cool
and we were left alone to do the work,
whoever we are. No names for us as yet,
we are like the trundle bed beneath the real,
the footnotes to an absent text, fully clothed,
freezing half the time, paint brush in hand
trying to write an epic using virgin stone.
We have no identity but are full of noise
about everything we are not, and have not,
poor us, oboes in the orchestra, moaning
for morning and it isn't even night. Guessing
is our favorite science, what animal
was your mother, your father was a tree
but which. Nothing depends on the answer
right or wrong. That is the beauty of our art.**

6 August 2020

AUSPICES

The chances are real,
real as rain.
But chance is no answer,
does not fly
easy in the low grey sky,
unlike the Canada geese
of our private thinking
at home on lake or lawn.

2.

I'm trying to tell about
the sound of thinking,
raindrops, said one philosoph,
and another *a piece by Schumann*.
But most ignore
the noise of cogitation,
care only for the hen-tracks
left on the innocent blank page.

3.

More bird behavior.

The hawks of Wyoming,
Laramie country, summer snow,
we have our own eagles,
gladly, but we have a river
to keep them bright,
skimming s-gill from the west,
nesting near our lives.

4.

Back then I studied the mountain,
dull ornithologist, I need
something that doesn't fly away,
I need to know
who does the thinking in my head
(if that's where it is)
and who she is, or he, or they,
pick your favorite pronoun
and tell me, who, and what they
want, and from what country
do they come, flying silently
through my personal night.
And when they're here

they speak, and everybody
thinks it's me, because I hear
the sounds they make and try,
even now, to make
words of what they say.

5.

Now this owl-craft
some men call thinking,
There is a gender issue here,
earth and sky. Memory and desire.

6.

I like Aquinas.
He was fat and made
tough guesses into songs
some church still sings.
Tantum ergo we mumbled,
intricate argument
simple chant. Now sing,
right now, what I am thinking.

7.

By turning our bodies
into arguments
set to music we
begin to discern
the way to venerate.
I think all by itself
veneration is enough.

8.

Back to Wyoming--
the pronghorns
leaping like haiku
out of quick prairie.
But is that country really
what it looks like
to people in cars
going by at eighty on the Interstate?
Or is it a show they put on for us,
antelopes and mountains
pressing quick or slow
until we're gone
then they go back to thinking.

9.

There, that;s what the word means.

Being conscious of being there.

**Here. All the rest is
raindrops on the page.**

10.

This dialogue with no one

is almost complete.

All it needs now is meaning.

That's where you come in.

7 August 2020

=====

**Twist the rain
around your thought
to feel the friend
who's always waiting.
Like music from
a passing car
the rain blesses you
with interruption--
put out your wrist,
feel one drop at a time.
And oh the space between
one thought and the next,
o Paradise of pure horizon.**

7 August 2020

====

**I'm trying too hard
now try soft,
thinking too loud
too many words
and never enough.**

7.VIII.20

=====

**This little hill
behind our house—
we could walk
easy up it
all the way
to watch the stream
just beyond**

**and could keep going
up Mount Washington
Mont Blanc. even
Chomolungma
and not be out of breath—**

**there is much climbing
to be done
in this world,
,climbing, clambering,
standing still
and looking all around.
This is the top.**

7 August 2020

=====

**Walking on air
and almost there**

**how quiet steps
touch their goal**

**like a picture
asleep in light**

**the eye relaxed
sees things clearest**

**almost there and
perfectly here.**

8 August 2020

PILGRIMS

1.

Come, this is no time
to be time, swagger
of morning through the trees,
no time to be now,

this is the pilgrimage
and by definition
it cannot end.

That woman
lying on the lawn,
that man reading beside her,

these are no pilgrims,
a pilgrim is never here,
here is the perilous place,
the Massachusetts of the mind.

2.

What could he be reading,
pilgrims read only the road,
the crows above them
guiding them carefully,
fork by fork through the dividing earth,
turn this way, my love,
the bird cries out
at every crossroads, signposts
in the sky, hurry, hurry,
here is at your heels.

3.

She sleeps, he reads--
her choice is wiser.
Dream is scary enough
without the paper.
And even if he's reading
some old book, the words
are still dangerous--
the peril of reading is
thinking you're thinking.

4.

But what does the lawn think?
That's what our science
should be studying, this thingly earth
and how it answers us.
But no, all they care about
is why Cicero hated Catiline
or why the moon has spots.

5.

See, motive means moving,
and only pilgrims move.

Crow-blessed, weary-hipped,
they go and they go.

Come back soon
says every place they pass

but they never will,
even if they stumble down those

same cobblestone streets again
it will always be for the first time.

Pilgrim is a person with no again.

6.
*Give me a spoon
and a cup of water,
cool or not it
doesn't matter
so I can sip it
slow so slow--
I love the way
even at the bottom
the spoon can still
lip up a little water.
I'll drink it on my way
and pray for you
who filled the cup
and all the miles to come
will cherish the spoon.*

**That's the hymn I heard
some pilgrims sing
as they shuffled past
my oaken table
out on the sidewalk
where I sat to imagine
better versions of
all those passing by.
The pilgrims shamed me
with heir simple plea.
All I knew was a pen and a fork.**

**7.
Am I there yet?
You always are.
Do I like it here?
You'll never know.
What religion in this place?
Thunder and rain.
Will they let me stay or make me go?
They do not know the difference --do you?**

**8.
She wakes up now,
he shuts his book.**

**Now the difficulties start,
they have come back to a world
with no going in it,**

**the lawn keeps talking
but they will not listen.**

**They stand up and walk
hand in hand into some house.
They seem to be smiling.**

**A passing pilgrim pities them,
says a prayer or two for them,
keeps going on the way.**

8 August 2020

====

Suppose I drew the day instead,
with a pencil, for god's sake,
a dear old wooden *karandash*,
no ink to spill. no words to spell,
just lines and lines and lines
going out and coming home
or never, off the edge!
into the *néant* but most
stay here, on the paper, round
and round and with pointy hats on,
circles and sketched cubes,
scribble to mean shadow,
shapes like legs and shapes like eyes,
lines folded on themselves
in passionate embrace,
sensuous empty space. room
for you and me and you and you,
a fingerprint of the very moment,
a blueprint of right now.

8 August 2020

WE WATCHED HOME MOVIES

**of myself at five or six—
a graceless lump of a kid
my fists flailed everywhere
and my bat swung down
but I could smile.**

**Years later I remember
I `grew more caring and more careful,
I had some sense of what
my arms were doing,
I could hit the ball a mile.
But the smile was gone.**

**Now when i look at the camera
smiling with all my might
they say Don't frown, try
to look as if you're happy
or at least not in pain. I try,
I am happy, I love my life
and all around it, and I care.
But the smile is just gone.**

9 August 2020

=====

Dream of a writer
named Blackburn
who wasn't Paul.
Tall. arrogant, wealthy,
house full of strange artifacts,
I had only overnight
to write a review of his book
and somehow he mislaid
the copy I was to deal with.

And already I was late
getting home, the car
filled with perishables,
Charlotte waiting and wondering.

And I wondered too
why me, why should I care
about the work of this
faintly sinister character,
does he write poem or prose
I didn't even know that.

**So many entrances
to his big house.
He went back in through
one more cellar door
to fetch the missing book
and left me standing
in the garden in the evening
yearning for aloneness and for car.**

9 August 2020

IN WARTIME

**Write an Iliad
every day**

**until the Greeks
think they've won
and sail off home.**

**And we can be
ourselves again,
near a golden river**

city on a hill.

9.VIII.20

Rx FOR HAPPINESS

**Write the diary entry
before the day
and live it all you can.
Then later, later,
forget whatever was
not written down.**

9.viii.20

= = = = =

Caverns, the walkers
fuse-lit and frightened,
why not, the dark. the in.
Further. Water dripping
unseen. I was one of them
once I was inside. Broken
rock, cracked silences.
And then a pool. darker
than any water ever was
if this is water,. If this
even is. and not a shutter
falling on the eyes. Inside
the earth is not meant
to see. If I fell now the stone
would break me—thqt much
the cold dead air explains.
A cavern always asks: Why
are you here? This is no
place for uright stumblers.
Go while you still can. Every
cav says that. My ankles
are afraid. I begin to lose

my memory of outside.
A cavern fills you with its
own emptiness. Things
fprhet you, forget in me.
I don't know the answer
to its loud question. Back
of me must be liberty.
Can I go back to where the rock
began and the light ended?
I stand there, my hands
pressed against the wall
the stone they still can feel.

9 August 2020

=====

**A day off
is a dollar,
a postcard
from a friend
forgotten,
a comma
in a sentence
far from finished.**

**A day off
is a miracle,
full Eden ease,
nothing to remember
except the flowers
(if summer) or
winter friends.
Strangers everywhere!**

**Exotic birds,
and music they never
play on the radio**

**(Sorabji, Parker,
Pfitzner, Ries),
a sky full of legends
and no reminders,**

**a day off
one perfect
leaf of the linden tree.**

9 August 2020

== == == ==

**In Altamira and Trois-frères
they did not draw or carve
pictures of the gods.
They saw them still.
But by Anatolia
and Babylon thereafter
they had to paint or carve
the faces of the gods,
their forms, their __,
because they did not see them
every day,
because we were beginning to forget.
We needed the image to remind
us of the Being.**

9 August 2020

THE TIMIDITIES

The street is a bone
we flesh along.

Timid ones,

ever asking.

Why do things
suckle us so well?

Nourished by evening
spill the new day.

By the birdbath
she was waiting,
things happen,
happen that way.

Look at the street sign,
guess at the truth--
she will lead you home

in her own sweet time
but will she let you go?

The story folds around you,
that is what they do.

You do right to be afraid,
or cautious at least
like sunrise in the treetops.

2.

Are we there yet is like
the always the song.
Cars are n not equipped
with answers, chariots
at least had horses and you know
they have heads to toss
and yea and neigh.
forgive the pun. The pain
of not knowing
where going
goes and why
and when. And then.

3.

She gave so much
we couldn't leave.
Story of the earth,
Fomenko chronology,
we just got here,
Jesus had seen Abraham,
Babylon is yesterday

and Rome tomorrow
almost, almost are we now,
shepherdless sheep,
green as goslings, we
turn out after all to be
just one more kind of animal.

4.
So zoo me.
Say on my sign
he thinks he sings
and lives the sky.
Bless me, this zoo
as no cages,
the walls are made of roads,
they feed us day
and give us night to drink
and we linger,
restless sleepers
on the brink of knowing.

5.

In this religion
there is a place
called Somewhere Else,
some manage to go there,
plane or train, coracle, ox,
and never come back.
Some come back with pictures,
leafy descriptions of that place,
tattoos they got there,
recipes for cassoulets.
all the fraudulent evidences
of our senses five
arrayed against the silent
beauty of our mind.

6.

I am the first to admit
to my timidity.
Caution cushions fate--
fact. Girl with prayer book,
boy with roadmap
stumbling through the dark--

**we need light to read by
but how to come by it?
I tremble quietly and look away.
Anything can be taken away--
that is the rule of the place
and we learn it as our mother tongue.
Or is there a language with no past tense?**

10 August 2020

REVEILLE

Be up and be now
the weather insisted,
eyes open are best
to meet the maybe.
But the chair is sad
at last, and all the books
have read me blind--
am I only the echo
of what someone else sang?

2.
How the sand piles up
along the shore,
so clean, so clean!
as if it came from heaven
and the ocean keeps it pure,
I dreamed I was bringing
clean sand to the shore,
my gift to the weather
of what things are.

3.

Live by quotation
the way the Japanese
know where words come from
on their way to being said.
Live by creation,, God-like and fresh,
live by rotation,
spinning in place
to keep singing in form,
live by donation,
give everything away.

4.

And still the radicals
cling to the characters,
images persist, their linger
is our language too.
Who first said 'you'
and what did they see
with their startled eyes,
the very first stranger,
the other, the god?

5.

In the climate of repose
is there only one of me?
It's morning, can't I wake up
another in me to share
the burden of light, the quest
of outward, the same old new?

6.

You can tell I'm frightened,
anyone would be
who was me. And you there
with these words on a page
or screen before you,
don't you feel a little edgy too?
When you're reading
you never know what's coming next--
just like morning on an ordinary day.

11 August 2020

=====

**Let's start again
even if there is
no such thing,**

**let's start as we were
if we ever were
the ones we meant to be**

**you whispered
in your lover's ear and he
suddenly knew**

**all about me,
let's start again,
a Playboy centerfold,**

**the Lincoln Memorial,
a Milky Way shared
and everybody smoked**

but we were not us yet
not by a long sht
a shortskirt a shoe

licked off by the brook,
we waded across
where no water was

it left us wet in mind
a long time after,
let's start again

where nothing is,
not even memory,
only the obligatory air,

let's breathe free
again, empty fridge,
empty notebook,

let's nstart by forgetting
who we were
or thought we were,

simple under a tree,
an ordinart tree,
I can't name it,

or realty name you either,
all I know is that
something has to begin

for the first time again.

11 August 2020

SYLLABLES

**Syllables say so
but who says them?
The notebook blocks
the road ahead,
go slow, go slow
you horsepowers of the night,
driver is a dullard
who doubts the go.**

**2.
Roadside mercies
like the flash of deer--
a deer is any beast
turned only one—
your breath is your priest
believe what it says,
its chant is charmed
and knows the way.**

3.

The road can't help it--
it's just a gift,
like moonlight.
its going is a gong,
it's all about sing.

4.

Song I would say if I dared
but the ocean is listening,
my austere master
from my earliest surf
and green waters of East
only called River but we knew better.
The ocean is what's around us
and what's around is always sea.

5.

A suit
of clothes,
a flute
of skin,

who first taught
us to sin?
And sin just said
it is or I am,
being is difficult,
sun on a stone.

6.
So one say
at a time
speaks the Temple
aloft.

7.
Let always
breath decide.
Once you have spoken
the stones stand up,
this blank white wall
shows everything in it.
And everyone who passes
leaves their shadow there,

**the haunted pronouns
of our common speech.
So say it, sister, skim the sky
and pour it out before us. This
is what we mean.**

12 August 2020

PANTRY LESSON

How dark it is in here
where food of the future
is stored. Crowded shelves,
tumbling cans, edgy jars,
the dangers. We fetch things
from the dark and call it now.
It's all right, it's only Wednesday.
Or is it? How dare I ask—
bow your head and shuffle along.
Tuna or salmon, that's
enough for you to know.

12.VIII.20

====

**When I was another
it was so.
But now who knows?
Identity is what is
just beyond our reach.**

12 August 2020

=====

**The messenger boy
grew up to be a girl.
The girl next door
turned into a priest.
You never know
how far will go.
But his message
like her blessing
is perfectly real.
Read it and leap
forward into truth—
you make it true
by going there.**

12 August 2020

====

**Nudge the thimble
off the fingertip
and touch the nerve.**

**Now what day is it?
Now what is your mother's name?**

**So many problems
have simple solutions.
But sometimes it's hard
to get the thimble off.**

12 August 2020

== ==

**Am I allowed to be here,
the day is so soon?
A latecomer come early,
a refugee from sleep.
I am unusually commonplace,
a morning mind for you,
for you all, all I want to be.**

12 August 2020

=====

**It's not a haiku
but it does
hurry to the heart.**

**12.VIII.20
lune**

=====

**Words stick together
you have to pry them apart
to see the streets
of Budapest or whose
streets they were
the light first saw
on its way to finding you.**

**You have to see
the primal emptiness
the huge gulf between
one word and the next
to understand
how we are linked
so close together,
citizens of light.
Otherwise we let alas
the words make us different
as if I really were
myself alone and not
one more form of you.**

13 August 2020

=====

Elizabeth said
she wanted something of me
but which Elizabeth?

The email didn't say.
the address was unfamiliar,
only the name itself I knew.
aunt of the Virgin,
mother of John?

Another
email came: *I need this of you*
she said. And then another:
Don't stay too long at the fair.

No wonder I feel guilty--
lingering here in reality
as if I had come for the weather.

I look out the window and cry
Who are you, who are you,

do I know you even now
or are you something that happens
later, when the famous
cows shuffled their way home?

Then I remember the poet
Tannhäuser shouting
desperately in tune
that same single name
but he spelled it with an S.

13 August 2020

=====

**Scandal at our door
the size of things**

**the merchant's absence
the hungry fox**

**only the hawk has hope
over us over us**

**I hear the little fountain ripple
its sound as wet as any water**

**and we never know
what comes after.**

13 August 2020

=====

I want a word
long as a cat's tail,

calm as the heartbeat
of a sleeping priest,

a word that says
as much as a book

but says it hast, soft
sinuous, and with fur.

13 August 2020

=====

**The truck groans,
the window moans.
No wonder they
call this morning.**

13 August 2020

=====

**This was the first word
and your hand the second**

**then the darkness came
and wrote it down**

**so ever after men could study
how it began, and judge**

**for themselves how to go on.
And even guess at**

**where that going might go
after the last word is read.**

13 August 2020

AENIGMA CRACOVIAE

When the Emperor Rudolf was reigning in Prague, gathering wise men around him, certain men in far-off Krakow were engaged in an act of a remarkable kind, and you shall judge if those men were wise.

Members of a certain society, they kept their own counsel, and made, unlike the Freemasons of the west, no public statement of their affinities, resources or intentions. They trusted each other, barely, and no others beside.

The project of which I speak was a street. a simple straight unencumbered street paved with sleek bluish flagstones and bordered by a low stone walls. with every two hundred meters a small stone building, alternating left side, right side of the street. These buildings seemed to be shops. inns, apothecaries, peculiar only in lacking any windows fronting the street.

The street ran for a thousand Roman paces, or as we say, a mile. At either end of

that miles an ornamental gate rose---nothing too fancy, one end bore a sragon, the other a griffin. and bith creatures were mounted above a sleeping wolves—all this in black bronze.. you see the like in most any oldercity.

What was curious about this street, and what distinguished it from any thoroughfare of which I can speak, is that it ran above the city, directly above the cathedral, running exactly east and west. The attractive stonework, or perhaps the stone itself (who knows where it was quarried?) had this property: it was invisible from below.

So the men of the society could walk freely in any weather above Krakow and not be seen as they went about their tasks—and their devotions, one of those stone buildings was a chapel, a snug den for meditation. This building alone had a window in it, open to the north, so the light that seeped through it would find the eyes only of those quietly within.

Forgive these details – they still fill me with delighted wonder, and distract me from

the notable otherness of this street in Krakow: it was not just in Krakow. It turns out that the seeming mile of stone road led at one end to the mouth of the Thames in Britain, while the other end reached Samarkand on the delicate borders of wisdom.

Do not bother asking me. I don't know how, or even why, the street could do this. Go there, Krakow and walk it yourself.

Depending on your gait you'll be able to reach Britain or Central Asia in a few minutes.

Walking in wonderful, bracing in the fresh middle of the air. Stop in and say an Ave or an Om Mani Padme Hum in the chapel, write your name in the visitor's book – some amazing names you'll find there—and go on your way.

I don't know how they did it, I don't want to know. But when I get tired of my own company I take the train down to the Channel, wait till no one's looking then hop onto the western end of that greatest of all human highways, the empty old stone street over a city I have never visited except from

the quiet sky above it. I look down and wish I had known those men. Perhaps I would not even have bothered them with questions, perhaps I would have just walked behind them, measuring my footsteps by theirs, and finding out where I would go.

**13 August 2020
from Frederic Chopin's *Krakoviak***

TRISTITIA

The sadness was all in me.
Outside was its ordinary self,
oranges and mirrors, blueberries
and wolves, nothing special,
you know the song
and nowhere noon.

2.

Measure me
I whispered to the moon
but his mind,
that bad boys' crony
was elsewhere, his eye
on different scandals,
just dark by me.
So Measure me
I whispered a little louder
to the tree (American basswood,
our own kind of linden, tilia)
and he smiled the way they do.
The way they almost always do.

3.

So you see how trapped
I must have felt
(the feeling is passing away
even as I speak, scent of patchouli
on a woman who walked past,
Benedict Canyon, so long ago,
so many trucks going by,
where was I?),
trapped
in who I thought I was,
thought, that somber jailer
of our grown-up days.
Desist from thinking.
Hop a ride to Yerba Buena
don't bother coming back.

4.

Life means sleeping
in someone else's bed
every night for all the years
and call it yours.

You know how to do it,
you read the books,
Rabelais and Gildersleeve,
you know that language
keeps its distance from the thing,
you know identity
is the least of our worries
until it falls away
and leaves me looking at the sky,
stiff-necked, waiting
for a meteor to come by
and assure me it is summer
and Perseus is casting darts
now that Andromeda
is sad from the sea,
and stands there in the moonlit meadow
smiling at me, saying
the moon is too bright to see.

5.

When sadness is going
or almost gone
what takes its place?
Fly on the window screen,

wasp on a paper plate.
O yes, it's daylight again,
they do come back, the days,
the centurion with his baton
leads them one by one
out of the dark, not a word,
but have you ever seen
a blue rose? here, take
this one, it grew for thee alone.

6.

But sadness is a fact,
usually the shadow
of someone who has just
passed by on their way
to being someone else
from the one we need.
Smell of patchouli,
street map of the Mission,
a cigarette. The years
seem to be winning
but then the hero comes
and rescues us in sleep.

7.

Don't doubt your dinner
says the wolverine to her cub,
it's the least we can do,
be nourished and be ready.
Grown up to prowl and howl--
the moon needs you, and all
those strange people need the moon.
The wolf cub is too young to wonder why.

8.

See, when cyclists roll by
your house they're always talking,
talking as they wheel along,
loud clear voices and you wonder
would they talk so brightly
if they sat, just sad together
under a leafy linden tree
like the one out back with whom
I hold so many conversations.

9.

Sadness just a shimmer now,
breath a moment
on the mirror then
clear image of myself again.
A window works better,
shows the other Holy alterity,
breakfast in the stars.

10.

But grief too
is a relief,
sadness is a lazy town,
just lie back and frown
and nothing to do except
accept and wipe your eyes
and guess it had to be.
With some reluctance
I tottwer to my feet, walk
down to the station
and take the bus to Fresno
where there is no past.

**But then I remember
that waitress in the TexMex dive
and know that all the past
is my personal tattoo.
Get off the bus before it is too late.**

14 August 2020

STONE

holds cold
holds
what it comes from,
this lapis lazuli
out of Siberia,
this amber from the Baltic
warmed by Europe,
this ruby from Bengal.

This lapis now though
I lift to my forehead
to cool me in warm morning
the blue beads whisper
past my ears:

No,
amber is not a stone,
the Baltic is cold but it is warm,
can't you tell the difference?
We stones are mostly hard
but it amber is so soft, so warm,
it grew deep inside,

it knew us as it grew, we taught
it what we could, but it
went on, luminous and soft, soft,
from the deepest folds of earth,
between the lips of earth spoken;
it grows warmer as you hold it.
it will scorch your skin perhaps
with all it remembers.

14 August 2020

ON A PAINTING BY THE POET TAMAS PANITZ

In this picture
Kimberly Lyons is
said to be present.
If so, she must be wearing
the Spanish lace shawl.
Said to be Spanish
but what do I know—
all my aunts knitted,
embroidered, but
mother did not.
I can tell cloth from flesh
though, that might
after all be enough.
If that brilliant American
poet, whose own work
is rich with magical glimpses
and sudden vistas, is actually
there, I mean here, is she
playfully hiding completely
both face and form
inside that pale cloth
except that among swart

interstices in the weave
(or whatever they call
the delicate footwork of lace)
there are two in which I teach
my eyes to guess at her eyes
inside the too-bright shimmer
of the cloth. *Rompe la tela*,
rip open the cloth of this
sweet encounter sang Saint
John of the Cross, show us
what is permanent inside
this sweet brief meeting
in the flesh. I want to sweep
the lace aside and see
her face so wisely laughing
just inside all this fussy
white apparency. And right
there is a knife of silver
I could even use to cut
the cloth away, an odd
knife, what is it for,
spearing olives from the jar
or slicing fish at sacred
Lenten dinners in Madrid.

But I forget—the Spanish
were permitted to eat meat
on Fridays, alone of all the other
fishy Catholics of the world,
so: Forget provenience. Concentrate
on presence. (A good maxim
in the world of art.) And here
on the table as if right before me
is a cup of what looks like coffee
(but who knows? Moly of the ancients,
the notorious Black Drink?).
My instincts and my appetites
(are they different?) insist
this is coffee. My kind, black,
while the cup itself looks just
like the one Charlotte Mandell
gave to the painter only a few
years ago, floral Italian, Deruta ware,
but who knows. Who really knows
these tings? I wonder if it
is really sweet enough for me.
I worry. No spoon in the cup.

14 August 2020

SPIRIT LUNES

**To be in body
is to be
back in school again.**

**After ninety years
class lets out
and the real begins.**

**That was the Eden
we came from
hounded into flesh.**

**Our pleasure is our
punishment,
out here with mere things.**

15 August 2020

CAGEWORK

**It could be anything
it could be the weather
a tiger back in Yunnan
missing the regular
meals in the zoo
up there in the days when
we are all let go, set loose,
lost into the prowl of
it could even be now.**

2.

**But burdens slip off too
thud by your ankles so
lighter you limp on.
We all in one way or another
seem to be teenagers
coming back from the pool,
wet bathing suits inside our clothes.**

3.

That's how we know.
Conscience molds us,
the process called time
shapes us old.

Acute awareness
of random realities,
the longer the leaner.

4.

I wish I could remember
all the places I hurried from,
all the books I read midway,
all the breakfasts I skipped,
all the music I turned off before the end.
Last night a Bach partita--
but which one?
Through the silence
I prayed my way to sleep.

5.

The tiger is still in his cage,
maybe alas. The meadows
of Somerset lie low in late sun.
I keep getting born around here
but here keeps changing.
Brighton Beach. Alston
in the Pennines, highest town
in England, sorrow, sorrow,
the lead mines all closed down.
So there is still silver in the ground--
that's what they mean when they say
being born is a consolation prize.

6.

Noises spoke us
alert in the dark.
Language everywhere,
no breath without its word.
No air without its breath.
We tried to understand what it meant
but it did not speak again.
What could the night possibly want
after all that we have given it?

7.

**Little tufts of freedom
here and there,
enough to feed your rabbit
of a soul, your dribbling river
of a single tear. Try, try
to make me say something
you can understand
under or over all this mumble
of my guesswork.
It's up to you to make me speak.**

8.

**Eden? Yes,
but there was no love there,
no passion, no embrace.
It was a glade of soft obedience--
and sometimes we pray to God
we still could be there,
make do with flowers and the changing light.**

15 August 2020

THE PHILOSOPHER

I would lie on my back
if there were anything behind me,

I'd lie on my front
if I could find the way

but I sleep on my side
so I can slip between

entre être et néant
cozy, dozy.

15 August 2020

PERIOD PIECE

**I read her letter with a certain relief—
new apartment, new friend, new part of town.**

**One more person I don't have to worry about,
the envelopes get thinner all the time.**

15 August 2020

=====

**I sit at the desk
nibble a graham cracker
or even two.**

**There is no wasp at the window,
soft tattered nimbus up
where we're always pondering,
sciencing, holying,
nice white clouds.**

**Alone with the food in my mouth
I gradually consent to the day.
This is hemerology, the oldest
science, reading the signs of the day.**

15 August 2020

THE DOME

So sometimes less to say
dome of the white church
reflected in the canal
so green was the water that day,
the Christian boatmen
jogging on the shore
o lift me over river
they sang, lift me
over canal, let the dolphins
sway me to the altar
where the chaplain waits,
the man with such tight boots—

but I knew what they meant,
song always means the same thing.

2.

We learn it early
the East is not a river
the Hudson is

but flows through the sea
by the time we get to know it.
We live on an island,
America is just across the bay.
Paumanok, island of skeptics
who in desperation if not despair
take to song.

Make
language pure again,
sing it to sleep.

3.

This is all about
theories of education.

Here is mine:

Surround the child with everything
and leave it alone.

Because you know by now
everything talks.

Silence is fierce listening.

4.

Forgive me,
I have opinions
which are even
worse than ideas.
It takes hard work
to get rid of them,
purify yourself
from what you think.

5.

And you don't need to be a Platonist
to climb over that fence--
it's made of stone
but crumbling, light
shows through it where
you get a glimpse beyond--
a breathless moment, hoist,
and you're over it
on virgin ground.

6.

Cool first time this morning,
speaking of over,
my bare skin reminds me
autumn may yet be coming,
not yet, not soon, but some
day I will close this window
and the wasp will have to
fly away hummingly home.

7.

The dome could have been
in Williamsburg or Venice or India,
the canal anywhere,
but the river had to be here,
has to be here
where you hear it,
words can't lie by themselves
you know, it takes me
or you to skew them, no,
the river has to be here,
running past, running fast,
running to keep true.

8.

Only the dome stays
more or less where it is,
where we see it shimmer
in swift current, lingering,
but notice how the image
has to keep trembling
to stay still. We do it too
and call it breathing.
The dome on the ground
we guess is behind us,
it doesn't budge, we call it a church.

16 August 2020

=====

Let there be
this difference
between us,
a breath
as wide as a street,
a word as dark
as the cellar
of your aunt's house
when their dog
was barking
outside wildly
and you never knew.
Apart from that
I am here for you.

16 August 2020

=====

**Though he actually was
the mayor of the town
so what? He still worried
as he wondered
where his mother
learned to smile
so indulgently,
so patiently at all
the things he felt
were so important.
Rule others (he decided)
since I cannot rule myself.**

16 August 2020

STORY

I've been thinking that Story has no shape until all its stories have been told.

I'm thinking a writer has no, or not much of a, masterplan in view when setting out. One thing after another happens. The shape comes out of the tales told, just as the shape of my body comes out of the myriad instructions, events, transactions of the individual cells. The master plan, in other words, comes at the end. Brave writers write down everything until somehow it stops in them—or the shape shows.

So don't fuss with shape—let it work with you. Do your part, tell all that happened, tell all that comes to mind: I think that's what I'm sensing these days as a way, the way, forward.

So if I were writing a haunted house story I would start, say, with climbing the stairs to bed, the clock is striking eleven, not too late, and halfway up the stairs I meet something coming down. It has no shape, no face, just a complex, tough feel I pass into, a, stopped by, gasp for breath, push through and shove up onto the next step, panting with relief., the clock still striking its strokes, my mind filled with an image of someone I have never seen, someone who now looks at me from inside my head. Say. Little by little the house will have

its say, and I will suffer its torments or its revelations.

Or is it a haunted life one leads. Remember that summer day when you climbed onto the bronze leopard at the zoo, straddled it and pretended to ride, and yours friends laughed and shouted. remember, but soon the heat of the sun-warmed metal rose into your thighs and up into your body and you were riding, fast and wild, on that sinuous back over a yellow desert, and you were crying out words your friends couldn't recall when they finally pulled you down and cooled you off, remember?

The story grows out and onward. Tell it all, one detail at a time. If you write down one event every day, small or large, fierce or bland

as pound cake, think what a structure your efforts will let Story build, by itself, in a month, in a year.

16 August 2020

====

Move from the margin
away

But doctor
isn't the margin
the exact center
of Something Else
the place
pr thing we need
so need to be?

Not certain.
And if it is the center
exact or otherwise
isn't that eactly
the point from which you move,
isn't all movement is from the center?

That is the basic problem
of poetics,
the science of making the world?

Poiein , to make.
Simple as that,
 all along
we should have known,

every word we speak
makes it more so,

it being whatever there is.

You can't beat Greek
for turning arguments
into the starry firmament

and Perseus's meteors shoot
brilliantly harmlessly down.

16 August 2020

3.

No faces yet.

Image is not identity,

image is the other

singing at us

from across the canyon,

arroyo,

river of no water.

An image is all beckoning,

questioning,

a catechism, a mid-term exam,

an image is a question

that no one asks.

4.

We are left with what we see,

as that woman must be,

alone in the desert

where movement is implied

by absences alone.

The mesa vanishes.

The hawk is gone.

5.

It is as when we dream
we wake with a single
image in mind,
nowhere to go with it,
no one to take it away.
Get up out of bed, that
theater of the night,
shake my head,
the green cloth flipping,
whose footsteps are they,
where did they go?

17 August 2020

=====

**Be a thing
that waits for morning
then stand up quietly
humming the anthem
of some vanished kingdom
and write your own name
on the table top
with your own fingertip
dipped in a glass of
but how could it be
milk, but it is, and leaves
when it dries a kind of thin
sheen like lacquer
on the old wood, your name
toremind you
all through the day
of who you thought you were
when the dream
finally let you go.**

17 August 2020

=====

**No answer comes.
Because there is no waiting
there is only asking.
Hence the tree. The rock
embedded in the hillside,
even the sun.**

**It is a game
of course, lila, sacred play,
game with only one rule:
Keep asking.**

**Never
mistake a question for an answer.**

18 August 2020

MONTRIOND

In that town in the Savoie
with a little church
with a tin steeple
bulb and a spire
there is a slender lake
where one night every year
the people hoot and holler,
fireworks and music.

I think of this because I think
of all the things we must endure,
we and the hills and old sheets
of metal warped by weather,
we and the music, we and water,
everyone everything shouting all at once,
everything hears it but people
notice only once a year.

18 August 2020

AUGUST

**Named for an Emperor
named for a tool
the gods use to keep us
in our places, our minds
on real things like love
and language and leaves
and stones, and keep us
from ruling one another.
Pick a poor fool to do all that,
call him an emperor,
give him a golden kind of hat.**

18 August 2020

DEAR FRIEND,

**I didn't ask for much.
All I wanted was for you
to say enough of yourself
into an envelope and send it to me.
I would take it to the library
and carefully look up
molecule by molecule
all the meanings you'd sent me
until I have the sense
of someone, is it really you?
standing nearby me,
sensed, not seen, sensed.
not heard, and all the hundred
thousand books around me
smiling in their sleep.**

18 August 2020

=====

**This day marks
dark of the moon.
We need distance
to see anything at all.
They are too close
together, children
are scared at new moon,
mother and father plotting
together, a child
feels free only when
the parents are further apart,
mean different things,
leave some room for me to be.**

18 August 2020

=====

**Be spoken
like weather,
dust on the mirror
what is left to us
of all our seeing.
We are the word
that has been said,
I am the echo.**

18 August 2020

=====

**Don't disparage--
a lifeline's waiting
dangling from
your neighbor's words--**

**listen close and choose!
The sound he makes
has your river in it,
the one you need to cross**

or raft your way on till it comes to the sea.

18 August 2020

=====

**Listen to someone else
for a change, not me, hear
instead the you in me,
the words you're really saying
using my mouth, watching
your own movie when I tell
what I thought was my dream.
But we have minds for one another--
that is the secret,
why language works,
why the gods can still
look at us from the walls of Greece.**

18 August 2020

TO A FRIEND IN BROOKLYN

You know who I am
but do you know who you are?
You are wiser, stronger,
your heart full of power,
the power of the place.
Places make us what we are.

So I hope are you still
live in mad mean magical
Brooklyn, so by my theory
You are if so kept safe
by the Ocean stream that
brings life from all the world
and holds the island close,
won't let it go, keeps it pure,
just far enough away from
the narrow money-grubbing
greed of slim Manhattan.
It keeps you safe in water
in the never-ending flow.

**Everything you do in Brooklyn
counts, counts double, triple even
above what gets done across
the water in America over there,
under dim clouds in the west.**

**So swing up Nostrand, will you,
for me, with me, pretend
to be me so I can be there
again, all sentimental,
do the summer bench scene
on Eastern Parkway nights,
dare the zoo, sit on the stoop,
laugh at people and get laughed at back.**

**And take pictures of it all,
your words count as cameras,
cameras count as angels'
eyes seeing the truth, follow
the shadows on the sidewalk
they're your rabbis and priests.
Glory onward! Avenue and street,
dance the shadows of those
shimmering leaves of ginkgo trees.**

**you know the streets I mean,
names too holy in my head
to say out loud--who knows
who might be overhearing us?
You're wise to live there
and living there makes you wise.**

18 August 2020

MUSING MUSIC

She says:)

Why not a symphony
why always just a song?
Don't we have words
enough for you
to press together
in your fingers, loop
around whole
meadows full of silences,
sling round mountain tops.
lasso angels as they pass?
Can't our love
be the chord you analyze
to get the engine started,
can't you even be
Mozart for half an hour?

(He tries to answer—)

A symphony needs summertime,
a season by the sea,
a symphony means ocean coming in
bearing its incessant news

of elsewhere and its strangers,
a symphony needs shells
to crack and waves to breast
and be engulfed by,
a symphony is always out of breath.
surfing the highest combers.
lusting for the swimmers,
fleeing from the barking seals,
a symphony is full of sharks.

(She replies:)

Your timidity does you no credit
and Mozart never saw the sea,
he made it up
or had Sarastro make it up for him,
and Mahler made do
with a little lake in Austria,
and could get eighty minutes of
music out of that.
You and your ocean!
Might as well say you need
to be swinging from a star
like some pop tune of the past--
are you going to let

**your laziness define your art,
like grumpy Debussy
or poor Rossini's last sad years?
Up and at 'em! Cheat the stars,
set fate to music,
see what the timpani
will do to your timidity,
rub the double-basses,
scrub their strings with your self-doubt,
do it, do it long, longer,
stretch your limpid song
into a turbulent river of emotions
and never mind where that stream goes--
you'll know when you're finished
when I stand up and press
my hand across your lips,
like this, see how soft it is?**

19 August 2020

CAR TALK

**If I were a white car
I would roll right along,
not bother with people,
just go by myself
mostly in mountains
on the way to the sea
and all that going
would be enough for me.**

**Don't you think cars
have been around long
enough to think
for themselves,
a will of their own,
a will to where they go?**

**And don't tell me
that color doesn't count:
a blue car can travel
only to the sea, whereas
a black car can go anywhere.**

**And white car can go anywhere
it chooses too,
but people always
look at me, point at me,
as id I had some strange disease.**

19 August 2020

THE POEM

**Let it break cover
come out
out in the open
suddenly
there for you
before it hides itself
in the words,
those trees where it grew.**

20 August 2020

= = = = =

**To commandeer
the moment
is to sing**

**the baritone of
hums your head
pictures flicker—**

**you have no brother
there is no news
gamblers lost it all**

**the day though
keeps coming back
with more money**

**I'm never ready
but just begin
to be what happens**

**lose the drift
but still arrive,
the river's on my side.**

20 August 2020

=====

**Morningly
and by hand
like opening a door
that isn't there
but still get in
to be out there.**

20 August 2020

=====

One streak of early
sunlight across the lawn
then gone
 and then another
comes, points
to a different place—
all these destinations,
the sun playing with me.

20 August 2020

====

Long song?
The lyric animal
set free?
But long not slow,
the leaps and dodges,
scamper and simper
and skip breakfast,
that kind of going
the music goes
when words alone
are left to do it.
And do is such a strange
word for what we feel.
Butn do it anyway--
now you be the strings
on David's harp
that Lorca saw him cut away.
We have come just in time
to turn the music on--
the long song must recur,
a simple tune takes heaven on.

2.

*Surge of interest in classical
music among Millennials
and GenerationZers*
--headline

No wonder the young
are turning classical,
an orchestra
is cosmological,
is democrat, is all of us,
our expensive minstrelsy
that plays us to sleep
then Beethovens us awake.
Until the whole old complex
world is here again.

20 August 2020

=====

**Can't escape it,
we live in boxes.
Sometimes a box
all by itself
but usually
boxes inside boxes.
Four walls, a floor,
a ceiling over
to seal us in.
A box to be in.**

20 August 2020

AS IF BY HOPPER

**In all the diners
of past time
spilled coffee
on the rouge formica
tabletop reflects
the fluorescents overhead.**

**A man is studying
the look,
he is alone
with his misery
and his piece of pie.
He doesn't finish it,
leaves most of the crust
and even some apple,
but drains his coffee
and waits for more.**

**It comes, the automatic
way, the wordless
waitress refills his cup**

boiling hot, weak as tea,
and moves away.

He watches her
and wonders whether
but he never.

There is no time
for that,
or ever.

He thinks about
whatever he can,
the day, the light,
the way his coat
hangs from the hook,
about the stiffness
of upright things,
the yieldingness
of flesh, the way
time seems to yawn
in his face,

the radio
knows something
it tries to tell,

**Gene Hermanski
hit a homer
at the Polo Grounds,
the subways
is full of rats.
The war is over
but so what.**

21 August 2020

MEMORIA

**Memory
is a kind of lace
endless
intersections,
countless joinings,
endless gaps.**

21.VIII.20

=====

**Life is a little
song, little
quarrel of good friends.**

**21.VIII.20
lune**

=====

Waiting on the other side of the river
a mountain has been lying there for me--
I saw it before I saw it
if you know what I mean,
o I had seen mountains big and little,
but this one came tome in mind.
And there it is, lying
opulent and smooth across the water,
my special western horizon,
the curve or swerve that language takes
to bring us together,
lovely blue mountain.
your looking-glass between us,
faithful mountain
teach me to be like you,
everlasting permission.

21 August 2020

== == == ==

Five A.M.
What can
***now* mean**
when everybody
is asleep?

21.VIII.20

THE SAINT

He kissed the leper
he tore off all his clothes
and ran naked,

wrote poems and never
became a priest,
never took vows,

wrote poems instead,
praised God in everything
everything he saw he said,

he said it with the sun
and with the wind, the rain,
and every word was praise.

Tore off his clothes
and went naked to the world
knowing God was all he needed

maybe the tunic that hangs
in that secret room at Assisi
is the very garment he threw off,

or maybe all the cloth
has blown away
and only the words remain,

he kissed the leper.
he stroked aloud
the petal of a roadside rose.

21 August 2020

*Of John Bernardone, whom they called
Frenchy)*

=====

1.

The answer is somewhere
soft pale sky of almost dawn—
what does the word mean
after all but what the night
does, its work, its masterpiece?
We live the art of things.

2.

As it is, it's all
a conversation,
and dream is no excuse,
no furlough
from that kindergarten.
We are kids in school
till our dying day.

3.

**As if the other kind of dawn,
ceremonies built into
the nature of matter itself,
star-matter when you come down to it,
everywhere else
suddenly here.**

22 August 2020

=====

**Fancy words
for I don't know
but hope it's so.
Streetlights
just went out—
makes me feel
they trust me at last.**

22 August 2020

=====

Ultimate cosmetic
the sun
brings some color
into the trees,
even the old sky
takes on hue—

no wonder women
are closer to the world
than men, we
surly strangers.

22 August 2020

TEXTS TOWARDS A HYLONOETIC CANON

.

To the end of something
sticks a glistening caudal structure,
scaly with lights, and floating
towards a new beginning
necessarily.

 This is a *me*,
an entity that comes to know
and know itself, slowly, longly,
over who knows what arc
of time experienced or otherwise
slept through with green leaves.

2.

Start-ups on all sides.
The politics of hiding in the trees
because they are there
before us and endure
our trespassing.
What do children think?
Whatever it is
they will do it all their lives
along the Mississippi of their grief.

3.

So cut and run.
Be for once
another kind of animal.
Revere the difference.
This is going you know
to wind up in church—
you pick the altar.
Or become it yourself.

4.

How slow this is
to get where it's going!
That's because it's here
already, and you are
(as we used to say
in hide and seek), you are it.
It's up to you to find
the god or goddess
hidden in the woods.
Or their word left over
in wood itself.
Hold a piece of it
up to your ear and hear.

5.

See, there's an image.

A piece of wood.

None too clear. Taut maple,
easy pine, the text
won't say. Just wood.

Hold it, hear it, let
it tell you what it is
and what it knows.

6.

When years ago I moved up here
from Asphalt Island
therewere trees a-plenty.

And now there are so many more.

The density of the dendropolis
has grown more than even I
could have hoped with all my
over-the-top romantic wish.

The trees are many and men few.
I feel like an intruder as I walk
among them, reverent, and they

don't see to mind, some even
welcome me and tell me this and that,
I am not at liberty yet
to tell you all they tell.
But they do talk, they are kind to me,
I feel like a cat in a crowd of people,
tolerated, even liked by some,
allergen to others, a furry foreigner.
But no fur, just little me among
the gigantic trees, fifty foot oaks
and ninety foot tulipiferas.
This is what I've been getting at
all along—we are in hre minority
on land, a bunch of noiy immigrants.
We would do well to take care
not to offend these innumerable elders.

7.

Hylonoetic:
everything that is or was
in any sense alive
has consciousness.

And everything with consciousness
can talk. And does talk.
And we can learn to hear.
Wood or metal,
carapace or bone,
winged or worm—
they all report.
Things think.
Matter sings.

8.
It's the weekend now,
Sonnenschein und Wochende
the Gernans sing
to the tune of Happy Days Are
Here Again, less sinister
than our election anthem.
Sunshine on the Weekend
they sing out, and weekend
means get ready to decide
just what kind of religion
suits your personal weather.

**Sabbath or Sunday or some
darker name or brighter song,
Mass or *minyan*, mosque or
here we sit within our ancient
cavern in the mountainside
where thinking runs quietly
and goes as far as mind can go.**

22 August 2020

IN SABBATH CALM

Softly
as if to say
the sky

and startle
no one
breathe
the light in

2.
He read that
in his hands
as if the morning
wrote it there

the way things do.

3.

And then it said
they will laugh at you
for being quiet
among all the donkey
bray of nervous poetry
down in the city
of lost loves.

4.

And then no more--
go back to water,
the ale of age,
tree leaf orgy,
write your dissertation
on the cantillation
of the white-throated sparrow
that breaks your heart
sometimes at evening
as they say.

5.

Does it have to be a mystery?

**Yes. Does it have a correct
solution? No. Does it lead
you somewhere? Go see.**

Are you teasing me?

**That's what mothers
do to babies to get them
started, catch their attention,
the tickle of the other
to wake the new skin.**

The baby lies there.

**Eyes are windows
that work both ways
but how soon we forget.**

6.

Get outta town
we used to say.
and get real.

Does anybody say that
now? Does anybody
ever really get up and go?

7.

If you see where this
is coming from, you'll know
at once where it is going.

But will you go with me?

U have to choose a scarlet
cloak to keep you warm,
a ruby-crusted smart-watch
to compass-point you on,
I have to be new and old
and wise and innocent--
really, you ask a lot of me
just to keep you company.

But you are you,
and that's my reason to be me.

8.

Are we there yet
I can hear you asking
again and again,
all the stuff about the sky
the tree the child
the secret gospel of the passing cloud,
haven't we heard all that before,
what good does it do
to say it all again,
piece by piece, logs for the cabin,
breath after breath?

9.

All I know
is what silence
asks me to say.
And I swear
that when you speak
I will listen
hard as I can.
O dearest word of all
try me now.

23 August 2020

=====

**Sly Sunday.
Sit on lawn
pretend
in church.**

**Join the throng
of worship
everywhere.**

**Breathe in
the sacrament.**

**Be lazy--
the world is here
already.
Be busy,
keep it going.**

**Listen to the crows
they know
their business,**

**hear them
and learn yours.**

**There,
the softest sermon,
no collection plate
no parking lot
no dressing up.**

**Just sit there
and be the whole world.**

23 August 2020

=====

**Why are there voices
when there's no one there?
The runners pass,
they leave their words behind.
That must be
the origin of poetry.**

23 August 2020

=====

**Tawdry touch of not an animal,
he got his pet from an angry book
and let it bite anybody who came close,
words hurt like hell, especially when
that's where they're coming from.**

2.

**Lock your garage,
don't let that car in,
you know the smell,
from the blazing
of that special gasoline
from angry sand to you
by way of cruelty.**

3.

**I can't say what I mean
but shut the door anyway,
I'm too honest to tell**

== == == == ==

**Nobody uses hammers anymore.
The nails are digits
and seep through the soft
until the image stands.
The set is on, we read
what we are told. Not bad
for this end of the Middle]
Ages, we wander through
the plaguy streets, our
noses sunk in flowers.**

**2.
Flowers of cloth
flowers of gold,
the zoo is closed or
we would go to see
creatures even less
free than ourselves.**

3.

I don't want to carry on like this,
i want to bell out my baritone
like old Gremin or not-so-young
Onegin. to be about love
and the material world, love
and the forgiveness of things,
love and surrender into quiet
joy. Joy--it really is there.
just unwrap the crinkly old words
and find it for yourself,
the song of sheer saying
will save us in the end.
From my crushed hat I pull
this eager rabbit—his eyes
are open, and he gives a hop.

24 August 2020

=====

**Fear furs the fingertips
weeps the eyes--
blur of morning
sopping wet from
seaweed of dream,
memories of the night before
before before before.**

**I think there was
no time before fear.
And it needs no tiger
in the dooryard
to kick in. This engine
may be the oldest
flex we have.**

**Some chant
in poems the names
of the celebrities
like altar boys mumbling Mass,
if we live to be entertained**

then those who entertain us
seem our gods, their names
are healing, old folk smile
on their deathbeds
at their so familiar songs.

No. I will not smile.
My celebrities
will be the rose,
the ferns in the thicket,
crow on the lamp post,
shadow of a stranger
walking half-hidden in the trees.

24 August 2020

=====

**Good. Now
I have swept the floor.
The dust has gone
somewhere else and waits
the next installment
of our long relationship.
I stand the broom back
up behind the fridge
so I dream of northern Italy
where cold rivers gush
down German-speaking hills.**

**Now wash my hands
by an obvious association
of ideas. English
is a mishmash of a language,
half-Latin and half-Saxon
with some weird fractions
stuck in here and there,
worse than French even,
no, that isn't what I mean**

to say, I'm still in my kitchen
with its deep blue walls,
stainless sink, old stove,
and the broom has a tendency
to topple sideways and be gone
so I have to deal with that
and reaching down into
the narrow dark I realize
I've left out the Celtic,
mother Irish and father Welsh
and all the Anglicans between.

O Christ I love this language,
it drives my fear right out the door
where the dust is waiting
smiling small, waiting for some
book to open so it can slip
inside the pages of
to read and sleep and know.

24 August 2020

TREE OF RESPONSES

Wind-argued linden.
we wait for one another
patient as Asia.

I told her in a letter:
you have as many arms,
as many hands
as you need, as long as you
have a tool for each one
to hold, to wield.

She didn't answer,
she was thinking of those gods
in India with so many arms,
she thought I was calling her a god.
Or maybe treating her like a kid.

But the tree understood--
I could hear the wind in the leaves
explaining what I meant,
could hear the long bone of the trunk
assenting. Asserting.

I wrote again,
this time carrying on
about roses and sea birds,
piano lessons when I was eight,
the mountain tunnel through the Vosges.

This time she understood,
wrote: Tell me with things,
tell me with places,
don't tell me what you think you know.

When I read her letter,
I felt bitter, they love
things more than they love me
I thought, natural enough.

But then the tree complained,
and I heard the leaves explaining:
sayings yes and saying no
are just saying, just saying,
her silence might be wiser
than her answer but how
would either of you ever know?

**The leaves of the linden
are shaped like hearts
for good reasons. Every day
I get to hear their quick
sustained analysis
of the human situation,
this puzzled man
standing under their branches.**

25 August 2020

ANTICIPATE

**means grasp it
in your hands
before it's even
here. Words
are the frontier
of the impossible.
Touch it and
it's suddenly gone.**

25 August 2020

FUEL

**Think of the gasoline
pooling quiet in your car
cool in the shadowy garage.
This liquid exudate of
ancient rock is a permission
for you to drive to the lake
on this hot day or bring
some crumb cake to aunt Beth.
No animal required. Just us
and matter and a few strange
men far off on desert sand.**

25 August 2020

TODAY

**is the feast of the obvious.
Say it out loud, let the sparkle
of sunlight twinkle on the gold
or plastic or wood or paper of it.
It's here! What more can you ask?**

**Say it out loud, each thing is listening
waiting to learn the part
you want it to play
in this solemn mystery
of an ordinary day.**

**Be loud, be clear, call
the tree O tree and call the bird
any whistle you can manage,
lift your sweaty face
and kiss the sunlight.
All the room in the world
for fear and love, just
say it, don't keep them waiting.**

25 August 2020

====

Open the door--
nothing here
but what you knew
already.
Aren't you glad?
An empty box
is full of everything.

25 August 2020

TO A DANCER

You do it with your eyes
the mind-tossed sea
of how you seem
but the bone is quiet,
the rafters of the womb
and the blue mother
window in the apse
are quiet. At least
letting light through.

2.

This is how you dance I mean.
Cerebral and sly,
convulsed by thinking
while the fleshly body
sleeps frantically
all over the place.
The place is what you mean.

3.

Call it calf-love,
encyclopedia,
call it catch-all theorem,
star map, silk slippers,
tympani clang of brand-new
garbage cans, o steel on steel,
o island with no coast,
it's still your body that you're calling
it's still how you answer you.

4.

The mind is what I notice first,
you think your move along the fact,
fact is anywhere, is air,
musculature striving
against all the whatevers of the world,
you move so firm I feel you in my teeth.

5.

The main thing is move,
it always is.

If that, then everything.

It follows. *Movement
is a shadow of the mind.*

I could have said that and been done
right at the start but

I wanted to have my dance too.

26 August 2020

ENGLISH WORDS

**It's getting light
we say
but what can we do?
There is no alternative
to what happens--
that's what happen means,
more fate than luck,
more karma than fate.
So the sun comes up
to remind us yet again.
For purposes we don't know
and may not exist
but fun to think about
and what else is there but fun?**

26 August 2020

FROM A METATRIBE AT DAWN

self-substantial glad galvanic

semi-starstuff and half tomorrow

milk of mind and mill of matter

**They PHRASES happened at the tattered
though lacy edges of dream,
scraps only of a long meta-tribe
it wanted to call itself, a discourse rubbing
itself away, maybe? Those phrases are all
that's left of it now, whoever it was that was
speaking, about what I cannot tell.**

**But the words can! Look at them:
mind-milk, half galactic matter and half time
to come, the self a substance to itself—
do I need a preacher to reason me that?**

26.VIII.20

A WRITER IS ALWAYS BEGINNING.

**It is my last day on earth
and I am just beginning.**

It is my latest day, and just beginning.

**Last, or latest, who knows which,
aren't they the same,
is there ever anything after now?**

**A writer is always beginning,
it all has to be told, all of it,
and has to be told right,**

**beginning and beginning
as a way of going on.**

**THE END is the biggest lie of all,
but a childish lie
we tell ourselves
so we can go to sleep.**

26 August 2020

NEMUS

In the summerhouse
embraced by the grove
young trees and bushwork
a deer comes strolling,
red squirrels left
over from the Middle Ages
climber on and off the roof.

The grove.

The density of trees.
The ancient caverns here and there
that are shadows,
shadows you could walk small inside
and never reach the end..

The grove.

The trees
so many, various, articulate,
harmonious. This afternoon
being among them,
the orderly assertion of their presences

**is like listening to a chorus
sing an ancient, complex anthem--
that kind of meaningful
conversation.**

**The grove is the silent choir
in this vast church.**

26 August 2020

= = = = =

will this wander
or will the absolute
come out again,
dragon from its gorge,
and roar
at all the heretics
we are?
But we do not fear--
we are its children,
born from the cracked
egg of its certainty.
Your wings are rough,
dear mother,
but you can fly.
Bring us to
the tile labyrinth,
mosaic floor of the golden
Temple of Holy Doubt
where we will rest
a piece in quiet,
listening to

what silence has to say,
and measuring it by the wit
you gave us,
precious tiny
scraps of our shell.

26 august 2020

=====

**And then the morning came
and came again
and told us:
What you thought was dawn
was only playing,
the works you thought you did
were more like dream
than waking,
now the light is here
for real
so arise and achieve--
or do you fear
I'm fooling you again?
Or maybe hope and pray I am?**

26 August 2020

EDGES

Ledges
where the words
leap off
into the immense
implication.
cloudy sky,
an eagle passing.

27 August 2020

THIS IS THE DAY FOR SOMETHING ELSE,

**parsing the linden leaves
the way children read daisies,
day's eyes,
 the way
the weather reads us,
taking our temperature
every morning when we're
parsing the sheen of oil
on the breakfast plate,
the wren yelp at the window,
yea, the sunlight on the carpet
I bend to pick up
thinking it a fallen note.
But from whom? Parse
emptiness best of all,
look into the woods and think
colors that are not green,
Do you understand? *Capisce*
like we used to say in the street?
Sometimes just thinking about it helps.**

27 August 2020

====

Soon else.
Then more.

Wordtwist
broken awe.

Relax the milk,
shoulder high now
corn at Four Corners.

Maize. Waiting
is praying. Every
knowing rouses.

Marks on the skin
two thousand years.

27 August 2020

FIG TREE

Or else
what could it be
they wrapped it snug
every winter,
it leaf'd in spring
but never a fig.

In church we heard
about Christ cursing
a barren fig tree--
what could that mean,
the Lord of mercy
cursing something,
something cursed already
by its own sterility?

Years and years to think about that,
and years too before I tasted a ripe fig--
I knew well enough
the chewy dried ones
that came on straw ropes

**from other alphabets--
but the curse? The taste?**

**The meaning of such things,
leaves, trees, winter, care,
the burlap wrappings round
the trunk in our backyard
where the Hungarian landlady
and her daughter minded
now and then this bent fig tree.**

**Things grow from thinking,
everybody knows that.
But are there barren thoughts?
Then a voice inside whispers
Don't you really know
what Jesus blamed,
schools that don't teach,
priests who don't bless,,
people who don't love--
when love is the only
thing we really have to give?**

27 August 2020

== == == == ==

**I cherish what language can do to us, to me,
more interested in that than in what we can
do to it.**

Is that what a Romantic means?

To choose Olson over Cage?

But Bach is all of them.

Language is what happens in the head.

27.VIII.20

=====

Embroider me a coat
or just enough of one
to get my arms through
and tug over my head,
I feel the rough net
pull past my eyes
pageant of images,
round coins woven in
with pictures of gods and goddesses,
you know who they are,
pale houses and lush trees
and delicate diagrams
as if from the French
Republican calendar,
what day is today, spinach,
horseradish, scallop shell?

Give me all of these,
wrap me in pictures
I can live with, pictures
that teach me how to live,
pictures that live for me

while I sleep, my awkward
arms snug in the weaving,
my empty hands dreaming tools
to build the great work.
Thousands of images,
thousands of knots
you and you alone can
artfully knit in the cloth,
and get it done by morning,
so I wake in a new world.

27 August 2020

=====

I look out at the empty rain and think
a block umbrella'd with citizens
when men wore hats
just to doff at ladies

how many lives have i lived through,
lived through?

Be patient with me, Sun,
there is a little hint of Java
in this New England air,

my fingers do not tremble,
I keep watch from the quarterdeck
while you move the sea
past me into the day.

28 August 2020

WORD WAKE

the trim embroidery
from dream,
vocabulary
bleary-eyed at waking.

Just say it
to the sleep beside you

or write it down
at the kitchen table
and puzzle over them
when you read them
hours later-

-what else
are words for
but to enrich the present
with musical confusions,
I mean the future.

So write what is to come.

28 August 2020

====

**A rosary of torts
I finger
to forgive each one
praying that the other
all the others
will forgive them too.
I am guilty of no felonies
but o dear God the
million little sins.**

28.VIII.20

THE EPIC

You can tell I feel lonely,,
at the port of embarkation
and no ship,
not even a passing cloud.

Africa is beyond reach,
and there are no islands,
remember, where types
like me can brash ashore.

If I got there at all
I would have to simper and smile
up the beach by night
and hope the terns don't screech
to give my pilgrimage away.

You can see I have been there before,
the island of Anyone But Me.

But it's time to leave

so I have to walk out on the sea
singing her name
who sent me.

Anyone can do it,
just linger in the image--
I walked across the Thames
to Lambeth once
dry-shod in an ordinary dream—

I felt a little fear
but not much now,
just the salty tang
of being where I shouldn't be--
there is a kind of pleasure there,
you know how it is,
the window's dirty
but the sly is clean.

Recall how the song began:
across the frozen Baltic
to the gates of Troy
on foot to free her
from winter...

something like that.
The land is nowhere near me ow--
I must be almost there.

(Epyllion they would have called this song, a little scrap of epic leading nowhere. But here we anywhere are.)

28 August 2020

=====

**Warum
lieben wir
nicht
das Gedicht
die Frage
selbst
Antwort.**

28.VIII.20

= = = = =

Be my green
triangle
my aftershave
I mean my
dragon cave
the ball rolls
out and down
the cliff
i mean cleft,
= canyon,
an arrow falling
through the air
lower and lower
lies harmless
on the ground
and points to me
I mean you,
never mind
the question
just be the answer.

28.VIII.20

=====

**I never write in Spanish
though sometimes in German or French**

**I never write in Spanish
because an incarnation I was
lived there once,**

**in the reign of Philip II
and I had my fill of the place,
courts and courtesans,
Catholics and secret sects,
cruelty and comedy**

**plus I had to ride a horse--
I still won't ride
if I can escape it,
elephant ok or even an ox,
but my chivalric days are done.
I never write in spanish
and am suspicious of the Sun.**

28 August 2020

THE REAL STORY

Another word was waiting.
The Trojan War. An empty
bottle floating in the surf,
volleying gently back and forth.
The shore. A spoon
to catch the sky in.
Mesdames et messieurs,
an ocelot for sale
on the left bank of the Seine
Sunday morning,
what kind of church is this.
Tumult of religion
when race is bad theology enough.
Open the side door. A moped
with a priest on it, all in white
and going fast. Car left idling
while the driver pees in the woods.
A familiar story
obscurely told, to quote a review.
What was the matter with the war,
why did it fizzle out, like rain,

is human violence
just a part of the weather?
An alabaster urn
to hold and honor emptiness.
Strange packages in the mail,
seven little roughly paper-wrapped
items covered with stamps,
how expensive to send me
and who would and what are they
small, each one a few ounces,
can rest on my palm, feel
soft inside, and seven of them,
stars? Dollars? Gleam
on the windshield of cars,
evidence of the sun,
Water of the saint's canal
gently oozing south,
really, we always call water
by the wrong names,
wrong color, we don't understand
water, we use so much of it,
our bodies are mostly it, yet,
we gaze on it as a thing apart
when all you are is ocean am.

You are not the first person
to lose your way in these woods,
i have been wandering here
a thousand years at least
and all the roads lead further in.
Maybe the core is what it means,
like the old alchemists' *vitriol*,
what you seek is deep inside
but you must purify yourself
and it to find it--something like that
their motto meant. Please,
feel free to use my telephone--
remember when you had to pay
long distance rates to call abroad
(five dollars I recall to buy a book
in Oxford once and thought it cheap)
but now everything is here.
That language on the notepad
is Slovenian, from a city
where dragons guard the river,
water is sacred, like language
but some find it easier to learn.
I wish Achilles had stayed in Thessaly,
he'd speak good Turkish now

or maybe even Bulgarian--
Helena was so happy here,
lovely she looked studying us
from up there on the parapet
as if the whole world
were in her hands. Stay home,
traveler! Turn your daggers
into tuning forks, to coin a phrase,
get all the instruments in tune,
sing it, play it, sing it louder,
drown out the actual
and your city will not fall.
This is what magic means,
and magic is all we have.
They read the wrong book
and the gate is gone.

29 August 2020

WALKING AROUND THE REAL,

**gently, gently,
no ideas,
whatever happens
is philosophy enough.
I;m not just saying
watch the birds
like some old Roman augur,
but there are worse
books you could read.
Just walk around,
the river can take care of itself,
the storm has passed,
only your cuffs are still wet.**

2.

**Have I told you
more than I meant to,
buzz in your ears,
some placid music**

you have to rinse off,
and the rain has stopped?
If so, blame the air,
blame the holy human breath
that breathes and breaths
and every inhalation
is balanced by a word
that must speak out.
It's only a little bit my fault
that I'm not a quieter animal
with a small vocabulary of growls.
No, breath masters me,
my words pester you,
for the sake of all that's holy
it's just a dance.

3.

I woke this morning
to the almost supernatural
clarity of Mendelssohn,
first piano concerto, end
of the first movement
and understood as never before

how free this music was
from moral obscurations,
empty emotions. It was pure
delight, an angel enraptured
by his own angelic freedom,
notes on the keyboard
as many as stars. And all
through the next two movements
the healing work went on.

4.
The you I keep bothering
with lyrical effusion
is a variable quantity,
a pure crystal glass full of listening.
But there is this me
who keeps saying I to you
dragging the whole business down--
not to earth but to some
grey middling neighborhood,
more dogs than trees,
windows dark by 10 PM.
Those clean dull streets

could that be the real
to which the poem summons you,
calls us both, stern
teacher with her mind on something else?
No--it means to creep along
like a minor Mendelssohn
joying in the sounds it makes,
trusting the breath
to make the world yet again
real enough to walk around in,
the birds louder than a book.

30 August 2020

=====

**Chalk the sidewalk
lead the day ahead
follow the marks
the children made
but you don't have to hop,
just follow the lean
instructions of each line,
the sidewalk's rough
it holds what has been written
until the stormy angels
wash it off. Make haste
to let your body
read this fragile text
before who knows what happens.
You could be like Saint Augustine
(I missed his feast
a few days back,
maybe it's not too late,
saints are good at forgiveness),
like him learn from a child
the vanity of so much thinking,**

and yet go on doing
and saying and even
now and then, when
the street leads to the river
or even the beach
stand there and see for yourself
what every child knows,
the interminable possible,
the maybe, the sea.

30 August 2020

=====

**Follow the line
and see.
It reaches
all the way from you
to you again,
that other you,
bright one, who
stands on the horizon.
Follow the line,
its aim is true.**

31.VIII.20

IF THE WANDERER

**to call her by a fancy name
ever comes home
from the music, the keyboard
silent, the breath
of the aged pianist all
that can be heard, if
the wanderer comes through the door
in the indicative mood
at last, her trim but weary
frame rests against the piano
(Bosendorfer, a dozen feet long)
and vaguely smiles, you will delight
in greeting her, exuberant,
excuse the pianist from the room,
leap to embrace her
only to hear her say Home
is the weirdest place of all.
Some people like weird
you say, ever-hopeful.
But her eyes already are far away.**

31 August 2020

=====

I wrote a novel
sat on the porch
and wrote every word,
wrote a novel
but the birds
carried it away.
i hear them every day
reading aloud from it,
o lovely thieves
who know exactly
what I mean, or meant,
they know where
the story's going
but I forget.
I listen carefully
each day to discover
what it is I meant.

31 August 2020

OSSIA:

*I wrote a novel
wrote it on the sky
in pale blue ink
wrote it and the birds
carried it away
every word of it.
Next time I'll use
a stick of wood
write on the ground,
give the wise ants
something to criticize,
analyze, revise.*

31.VIII.2020

=====

**always wait for the caboose,
the business is not finished
till the nice man waves from the roof.
You heard it before it came
and you hear it still
now that it's gone by,
you roused to the thundering
glory of its passage.
You waited; the road you want
led you here, the long pause
while the vast procession passes,
then the smiling guy
waves at you from the roof
and you can go on. Go on.
Go on. The solemn Mass is over,
you have seen the signs,
the symbols hurtling past
and you have been blessed--
sometimes he even waves a little flag.**

31 August 2020

=====

The glint goes by
and comes again—
Cleopatra's long
slim crescent
moon of a nose
lingers in the mind—
sunlight off
a passing car.

31 August 2020