

9-2020

**sep2020**

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## THERE WAS A WORD

beginning with the letter L  
i meant to say  
but then I fell asleep.  
The pillow knows it  
but it's still asleep,

it's not a fierce word  
like lion, or a lewd word  
like luxurious, or frightening  
like a leopard coughing  
too near you in the jungle  
(remember India?),

no,

it was a a mild word  
like ledger or letter,  
not even stern like  
legal or legitimate.

Something on the short  
side, two syllables  
maybe, accurate but quiet,  
leading the story on,

**beginning it really,  
like a flower  
left on the table,  
who could have left it,  
what does it mean,  
lily, lover, lavender?**

**1 September 2020**

=====

**Lend me your mind  
for just a few minutes,  
I'll lick it clean  
before I give it back.**

**That's what the ads say,  
the ads they call songs  
on the radio, Believe me,  
silence does it better.**

**Or is all art an ad for itself?**

**1 September 2020**

=====

Soft day  
teach me something.  
Pearl sky,  
remind me  
there is yielding  
to be done,  
letting, letting go.

And dear trees,  
some of you know  
how hard it is  
to be green all year round,  
tell me how

or at least teach  
long peaceful sleep  
where I can dream  
what flowers when I wake.

Grey sky  
full of the softest light

**settles around us  
like a the prayer  
of a child  
who has been praying  
from the beginning of of the world**

**1 September 2020**

## **HOLY INFERENCES**

**The streets are wet outside  
and I heard rain--  
I;m being logical again,  
not always a safe call.  
Sage move. The streets  
are open about what happens  
and give clear hints  
of where they go.  
But nothing of the past.  
Who knows where anything  
comes from? This rain  
I infer from heaven  
as they used to call the sky  
with a logic of their own.**

**2.  
And who were they?  
Ancestors clearly  
but how to prove it?  
All the noble DNA analyses**

**tell us more or less  
where someonebodies  
lived or went or came from  
on a long trail of maybes.  
But never who? So  
who are they anyway  
who made us who we are?**

**3.  
Does it matter,  
as the street would say.**

**Here we are, and we  
are mysterious enough.**

**Which of us has looked  
asked Thomas Wolfe  
into his brother's heart.**

**And I don't even a brother,  
if you know what I mean.**



**Just an endless series of I and you  
covering the planet**

**with colza beans and Cadillacs  
as nobody used to say.**

**4.  
Which leaves the streets wet  
and the sky far away  
as usual. I was going  
to say that in French  
but it would sound snarky  
or show-offy, just like me,  
*comme d'habitude.***

**5.  
You can tell I'm struggling  
with anxiety, a whole brain  
full of what its tenant  
doesn't want to think about.**

**Anxiety silences desire,  
shrivels perception, cancels  
meaningful speculation  
about astronomy and history.**

**When smart poets are anxious  
they keep quiet. Why don't I  
just go for a walk. Rain  
never hurt anyone, did it?  
Then I think of poor Chausson  
dead in a bike crash—  
what was the weather like  
that day, and was he singing?**

**6.  
The thing to do  
is not say I today--  
then there will be no one  
to interfere with the song.  
And it all be song and sense and you.**

**2 September 2020**

## REVISION

**Leave everything out.  
What's left is true.**

**2.IX>20**

=====

**School starts.  
The mind dries  
up outward  
to the other,**

**can't hear  
itself think  
it talks so much.**

**Blank paper,  
blank paper  
save me again,  
teach me to sing  
what I can't hear,**

**blank paper,  
blank paper  
it all comes from you.**

**2 September 2020**

## A SHIP SUPPOSED

Suppose a ship.  
Not necessarily that  
trim craft Dante  
with some of us boy poet  
friends set out  
upon the slender sea  
in quest of the magic island  
where the Word grows,  
haunted by a hungry Muse,

suppose a ship, doesn't have  
to be a liner nosing through ice floes  
or an ironclad scared of torpedoes,  
a ship we have to suppose,  
not even a Norwegian freighter  
o that deep blue flag in new light  
lipping at dawn up the Narrows  
between Brooklyn and Staten Island,  
between where I lived and where I worked,

**suppose a ship, of course  
not a cruise ship  
pretending to be a city  
or an aircraft carrier  
pretending to be an island,  
suppose a ship, no authentic  
caravel carrying Aztec gold to Spain,**

**be patient with me, suppose  
a ship. not a ferryboat  
across the Bosphorus, not a skiff  
on the Baltic, bright-haired  
warriors scudding towards  
one more battle,**

**suppose a ship  
instead as calm as the sea  
it proposes to ride, suppose  
a ship empty, sails furled  
neatly, resting at the shore  
peaceful as a sleeping nun,**

**suppose we make our way  
down the sands and climb on board,**

suppose the inscrutable crew  
casts off so we drift  
slowly enough almost across  
the current as the wind  
picks up, no sails up yet,  
we wonder about that,  
the wood of the deck  
is fresh and clean, the taffrail  
polished and smooth,  
is it leather maybe? hide  
of some ancient beast still soft?

above us they're unmuzzling the sails,  
suppose we feel for the first time,  
maybe the first time ever,  
what the sea is saying to our feet,  
subtle sway of limbs, balance,  
suppose its word seeps  
up into us, reaches the shallows  
of loins and heart and mind,

the ship is moving steady now,  
the sails boisterous, loud creak of wood,  
noisy boot-steps of the unseen crew

doing whatever it is they do

and we go! Suppose we go  
and keep going  
as long as the sea  
keeps talking,  
and is there ever  
night on this ocean?

suppose there are cabins down below  
or bunk beds or hammocks.  
suppose we can sail  
all day and into the dark  
then sleep easy into day again  
and go along wittingly with  
whatever the sea was saying,  
saying even now,  
suppose the ship  
is underneath us now  
and we have sailed  
all the way to today,  
storm-free, the horizon clear.

3 September 2020



=====

**Prometheus  
taught us metal  
to smelt and forge and vast.  
But who taught  
us to make glass,  
that sacred, almost  
blasphemous clarity  
from which we drunk  
and in which we see  
ourselves and all  
the world through it  
and it saves us  
from the wind?**

**3 September 2020**

## AGRESTIS

Of the earth,  
the field.,  
the known place.  
The known.  
Walk over to the word  
and take its hand,  
it squeezes back,  
you hear it  
halfway to your heart.  
That is what it means  
'to mean,'  
to be in the middle  
of something and know  
where you are.

2.

The sky looks sunshine  
the trees look rain.  
And now the trees light up--  
surrealism never lasts,

the farmer leans  
again on his shovel,  
the dirt pretends to part--  
the natural politeness of physics  
can be counted on  
but not too far.

3.  
So I wonder  
like everyone before me  
whose breath  
is the wind?  
The question  
does not get old,  
the answer  
shimmies ever  
off through the trees,  
'trees' hear meaning  
whatever we see  
as we go on breathing.  
Asking. Digging.

4.

**There is a big field  
not far from here  
where you can stand and see  
almost to the horizon  
on all sides. Nowadays  
you have to stand  
up to your shoulders in corn  
buty still. Horizons  
in a land of forests!  
Come with me,  
help me to see so we  
can look all ways at once,  
maybe finally  
get a sense lof what  
a field really is,  
coaxing the light down.**

**4 September 2020**

## **NO-WARD WORD**

**still leads in  
by turn.**

**The torque  
is all that matters  
still.**

**And there we,  
awkward and solemn  
as somebody  
else's grandparents  
in an old snapshot--  
how have we come  
to such a place  
baffling as a dream?  
Again, the word  
brought us here,  
the word unspoken  
slept with the one we spoke.  
No we. I mean me.  
DON't let me get  
away with generalities  
as if I spoke for all humans.  
I speak for all beings.**

2.

As I said or was saying  
i got said. Miracles  
still happen, the ship  
did not sink, the ship we're on  
we think of as a chubby planet  
actually is a slim  
frigate sailing through space.  
As I was saying, I was said.  
I was sent to wander  
through fancy very expensive  
old department stores,  
boutiques big as cathedrals,  
my task in that grey-green  
fin-de-siècle dingy light  
was no more than to discover  
an exit, a way out to the street.  
But everything was indoors  
in that dream. Bathrooms  
hard to find, the elevator tiny  
but the people smiled.  
The last to get on was a small  
Japanese--I liked his grey sweater.

3.

Sometimes it's enough  
to close a door to be there.

When you come into that room  
the first thing you notice  
is the flowers--

blue hydrangeas  
in a clear glass bowl  
so it must be summer  
and the sea not far.

Those flowers make the room  
a garden--sit down and be at peace  
they seem to say. But then  
you look around and see  
the furniture of a demanding life,  
desk, table, bookcase, TV.

What manner of creature  
you wonder lives here,  
plagued with images,  
praying to the decent flowers?

4.

Do you remember  
the first time  
you lived on earth?  
And what about  
the time before?  
So vague, so vague,  
like the name  
of someone you thought  
or thought you loved  
once and all  
you can bring to mind  
is a little ruby they wore.  
Try harder, the past  
is scarier than the present,  
yes, I know, but still,  
you are the shadow  
you cast then, and I,  
poor me, am just  
the ground on which  
your shadow falls.



5.

Words are folklore  
nothing more  
the scholars claim  
but John said otherwise  
and I want him to be right  
but I want it to be  
folklore too, the truth  
we pass along unconsciously  
while we talk about spinach  
or taxes or the cool morning,  
a word leads nowhere  
and everywhere at once  
and it is such a joy to follow,  
trusting, trusting  
the lore, the folk, the God  
the word was that spoke us  
and we spoke. All  
of this is answering.

6.

Whorf was excited that  
the Hopi had no special  
verbal form to say past action.  
O thy could tell the present  
from the past but their verbs  
did not contain that information.  
A verb is permanent  
as an action is. It is true  
whenever it was or will be.  
Imagine Whorf in Connecticut  
thinking about all that,  
around the same time Wallace  
Stevens was busy in Hartford too—

o time, time, you mean  
so much to me  
and I so little mean to you.

7.

Into the trees then,  
the true,  
the words they speak  
that aren't ours

but we can listen.  
Not the lazy listen  
we give to bird song  
but eager, open-  
hearted hearing  
reverently available  
to what we don't understand  
but does keep talking,  
and will until we do,  
the other word,  
the word that is out.

5 September 2020

=====

**I was a different person then  
I had a mother  
and I was her son**

**the lights go off and on again  
the weather changes  
cool tonight for Virgo**

**and no more needs to be  
said about me  
whoever I turn out to be.**

**5 September 2020**

=====

**Knowing something is  
going there,  
being there again.**

**6 September 2020**  
*lune*

## ZEBRAS

I saw two zebras fucking  
in the zoo of course  
I was alone on the path.  
The huge male was ramming  
her from the rear,  
straight on. straight in,  
his hooves pounding away  
on her poor backbone  
and he was roaring  
like horses I suppose they are,  
the male clambering  
to his private heaven  
up the bone ladder of her back,  
two thousand pounds  
of animals making love  
as we call it, and not a sign  
of how she felt in all this,  
the ground trembling  
a little beneath us  
as I hurried away.

6 September 2020

## **SMALL SOUNDS**

**The small sounds of before  
no louder than a bird a block away,  
the mini-fridge, the breze in leaves.  
These quiet voices say Again.**

**2.**

**The first thing you notice  
about children  
is how loud their voices are,  
piercing the educated  
calm of the ordinary day.  
School mutes them, eventually  
teaches mumble, buys silence.  
silence is best. I was a child once  
but it didn't last. Now hear  
my whispering roar.**

3.

Culture seems sometimes  
built on blame.

Eve's temptation,  
Prometheus's presumption,  
lots of Latin words for  
how bad we are and why  
all things we have seem stolen  
and money masters mind.  
And all these years we race  
to put things right.

4.

A stone, any stone can be  
a column in front of your house too,  
Socrates, to lean on while you think.  
that wordless dream  
from which sometimes  
truth wakes to speak.



5.

The trees of course know better.  
They proliferate  
and thereby civilize.  
We think better in their shade.

6.

I keep trying to figure things out,  
cold fingers, Wallace Stevens,  
compass on the dashboard,  
Bruckner's Ninth, tomorrow  
turns out to be one more today.  
I don't dare close the window.  
If I had a fireplace and a fire in it  
I'd tear the calendar off the wall  
and toss it in. But no calendar.  
Just the wall. A wall is good.  
Pray to the wall and close my eyes.

7.

And then she woke again  
and was the Sun.  
The Moon in his sly way

had left her once again.  
The planet lay outspread  
before her, breakfast,  
this sumptuous reality.  
She smiles now as she feeds  
us from the sky, we eager trees.

8.  
Wait. Go back to Hartford,  
Whorf and Stevens  
due east of here, an hour  
and some over away,

where Charlotte was born,  
my wife, my life renewed..  
And their river too flows  
both ways, sea slips inland  
and heals the country silence.

Maybe not so strange they  
both were businessmen by day,  
the linguist and the poet--  
what more could love require

**to sing itself into presence  
and overwhelm the doubt?**

**I watch my sleeping wife  
and learn to speak.**

**6 September 2020**

## TRANSFIGURATION

The feast of that  
,more mysterious  
than miracle--  
the day we see  
things as they are,  
truly are, beyond  
our habits of sight.

*Trikaya*, Christ  
between Moses and Elias,  
and who were they  
anyhow, and why  
did the apostle name  
them so, the two  
vision figures  
on either side of  
the One they  
thought they knew?

Teach me to understand,  
to doubt what I see,

**and doubt my doubting.  
Ask the stranger  
Who are you?  
and pray your ears  
are clean enough to listen  
in case an answer comes.**

**6 September 2020**

## ARCHIPELAGO

**Express  
the moor montage**

**rufous towhee  
on bare branch  
over heather**

**heather**

**mild you to mean it  
dream we live on**

**dirt under glacier  
heather path  
to hilltop  
either**

**therefrom  
scrutinize the sea  
never hurt to**

especially now  
the wind so  
rare from the east

the bird in you  
hearkens

hear everything  
while it can

speak

whose house  
had crushed  
seashells the  
path to it

suspend judgment

take the winner's  
side for a change

heather  
Lent in August

**promise no names  
have all been spoken**

**blue pebble  
sand all the way  
up here**

**the things they do  
rain pool**

**whose hips  
happening the hill**

**bird scare  
fox in heather**

**heather**

**mind is where  
names are stored**

**mix them up  
as music**



**on the parapet  
a silence**

**left over  
from so many wars**

**from far  
green of  
aspen down there**

**woodcock  
in hedge**

**the bird says**

**if you miss  
the island  
you still have the sea.**

**7 September 2020**

====

**Consoling the absence itself  
says a man who is always late  
always rushing to catch up.  
spitting the words out as he  
races towards the temple of silence  
the goddess who ends the day.**

**Console the absence**

**for my presence**

**he chants,**

**console the sun**

**for my shuttered eyes**

**turned away,**

**console the past**

**for abandoning it,**

**left in its tracks back there,**

**back there,**

**console time**

**for my hurrying**

**away from any now**

**into the fantastic obligation,**

**the must that drags me**

**as if now is a prison  
from which I must escape,  
must, must, what a dull  
music, a comma  
in an endless sentence  
lets me breathe a moment,  
not too long, and once  
to long meant to desire  
with all your heart to be  
in or with some other  
self or sense or citadel  
above an all-forgiving sea.**

**7 September 2020**

=====

**How could I have given  
a nice girl *War and Peace*?  
Because I think she  
was better than that,  
a Bad Girl, who did what  
she wanted, even if other  
people wanted her too**

**so that many a night  
as she lay on her back  
and stared at the ceiling  
after a meaningless male,  
some so-called lover  
rolled off and snored away  
into his football dreams,**

**many a night, she's staring up  
and sees what Prince André felt,  
or she feels what the Prince saw,  
the sky ever opening eternally  
and everything changed,  
everything is the same,**

**and everything has meaning,**

**as he lay on the battlefield**

**wounded into clarity**

**so she**

**looks up into the beautiful**

**emptiness and sees**

**with a sudden thrill**

**some part of what**

**everlastingly is seeing her.**

**7 September 2020**

## **MAGYARS**

**They came from the other  
side of the forest**

**Pan was just one  
more a stranger  
they passed by  
on their way to**

**the center of the West.  
He didn't scare them,  
they smiled their slim  
mustachioed smile  
and passed by, Liszt  
already on their minds**

**and their blue river  
that still flows to us.**

**7 September 2020**

=====

**And then it didn't speak.**

**No wonder. The hedges  
were too close, the mulberry  
in the middle  
was listening again.**

**I am only a child,  
I explained, smart  
or my age but still young,  
I'm only trying to understand.**

**Still no answer.  
The stone lion on his brick pedestal  
was still asleep, no hope there,  
but I rubbed his rough back  
anyway. I tried again:**

**I know you're far away  
but we can see each other well,  
you are blue and I am me,  
please tell me what to do.**

**At least you're asking,  
a passing blackbird said,  
the right question.  
And the little turtle I'd seen  
under the hedge remarked,  
slow and solemn: If  
you know the right question  
you must know the right answer.  
And that was all the help  
I got that day; it was enough.  
Some years later, just in time  
I got an answer from the sky.**

**8 September 2020**



=====

The next port of call  
will be tomorrow,  
small city, busy waterside.  
The immigrants swim ashore,  
the rest of us wait, passports  
in hand disguised as money.  
I think the dollars here are blue and pink,  
we'll see if they work.  
Doesn't matter if I can't  
this time go ashore--  
seagulls are what I like best  
about the shore, and they,  
large and loud and pale  
come out to visit us--  
who needs the ground?

8 September 2020

=====

Pale sky,  
my favorite why,

loud road  
stepmother  
of my morning

a feather  
you brought home  
to know  
a bird by

or anything  
by what it leaves  
when it's gone

identify  
the real  
time, no  
clock knows that.

8 September 2020

====

**A knife is the first  
worst thing of all,  
it taught us  
how to kill  
and be carnivores,  
it taught us war.**

**8.IX.20**

====

**Somewhere what I said  
is safe.**

**The leaves listened  
and the wind  
translated.**

**A pine cone falls.**

**8.IX.20**

***Kar sem izrekel, je nekje na varnem.***

***Listje je poslušalo,  
veter je prevedel.***

***Storž pade.***

**Slovenian tr. by Vesna**

## NOCTURNE

She lay there  
on her back  
almost alone,  
studied the empty ceiling  
each paint peel,  
every crack in plaster  
like a star  
in that sky

she thought of the sky  
outside  
the empty sky  
full of stars

like the page in a book,  
empty, empty,  
just all the words on it  
scattering in pale  
emptiness

sleep was not far.

8 September 2020

=====

**Not need—  
a seed  
of something else.**

**2.  
Hear the organ?  
Synagogues have them too,  
pleasure  
creeps in everywhere:  
the seed we mean.**

**3.  
It's not enough  
to enjoy the weather,  
you have to invest it too  
building a bankroll of sensation  
itself, pure, never  
mind your handkerchief.**

4.  
Seeds,  
everything a seed  
of something else,  
to come or having been,  
we give birth to the past.

5.  
And that is the terror of need,  
this rosary of lotus seeds  
on which we count our prayers.

6.  
And always more  
than we need  
and never enough.

9 September 2020

=====

**Allowing for revision  
the Mayan calendar  
says rain. It's often right--  
experience keeping abreast  
of the ancient word.  
Pleasant when Woden  
smiles on Wednesday  
even if few of us care  
oreven dare to look.**

**9 September 2020**



## ALBORADA

She woke  
and the ceiling was still there

se didn't dream  
or iff she did  
it stayed with her now

soft as he sky  
she thought  
and thought  
*we have to teach  
the day how to be*

then she got up  
to check on the sky  
banished the curtains  
and looked,

everything was there  
again, at least  
she didn't notice anything missing  
but then we never do

until we do  
and then it's gone

*be good to me*  
*today*  
she prayed  
not sure to whom

she went outside  
and suddenly felt  
the emptiness of the room  
she had just left

all that space  
behind her  
warmth of sleep  
pageantry of dream

nothing there  
her old air.

9 September 2020

## TUNNEL

From a six mile tunnel under the mountains  
it happened to the wide open plain.  
The trees skipped the way they do  
to dodge the hurtling machines.  
For a lovely morning moment  
everything was just as it is.

2.

She remembered that  
from her place on the balcony  
you could see only a little of her  
through the lattice under the poppies  
(*Eschscholzia californica*), boxes  
of cereals on the ledge  
peace offerings to the birds.  
She was busily remembering  
a whole other continent  
sometimes it's amazing  
to think one is actually here.  
When two white-throated sparrows  
(o how sad their song can be!)  
flew away she went back to her book.

3.

Back in France the trees calmed down,  
the road had the look of noontime,  
empty, everywhere somewhere else.  
How small we animals really are  
compared to what is actually there--  
you could feel the quiet sun  
hinting gently something like that,  
o so many reminders needed  
and every step a road of its own.

4,

When the rain began  
she shook the first drops  
off the page she had forgotten  
to keep reading, she hurried  
inside and left the flowers to the rain,  
such things need such things.  
She shook her hair dry  
and went to the fridge  
where the past was stored  
mostly in glass--nobody  
trusts plastic anymore.

I really was there once,  
she thinks, I really saw  
the tunnel end and the world  
come back the way it should always be,  
just there, calm, leaving it  
to me to do all the being,  
moving around. Nothing  
caught her fancy in the cold.  
She shut the door--better  
to go hungry than blunt  
the keen arrow of human appetite  
by eating something not desired  
just because it's there.  
She wishes it would stop raining  
so she could go sparrowing again.

5.

Less done less to regret  
she remembered an old nun  
saying that, Outside  
a car went by hooting its  
boy noise out its windows  
never mind the rain.

**Never mind, those things pass by.  
She watched the wall, aware  
that it was telling her  
a little bit about what she  
didn't want to think about--  
one more reminder!**

**OK, Wall, what happened in France?**

**You loved everything you saw  
but wanted something else.  
It cost so much just to get here  
where you began, just to see  
me again, your brand-new wall  
that knows all the secrets of  
every room you ever lived in,  
what one wall knows, another  
can repeat--that is the fact  
of walls that humans build,  
one wall knows all.**

6.

That's all about you  
she cried almost angry  
at the plaster, but  
what about me?

Are you so different  
from me? said the wall,  
don't you know you are  
everywhere you have ever been,  
that tunnel under the Vosges  
debouches I think the word is  
right into your living room,  
right here, city, actual. holy, blessed.

O wall I'm sorry  
I know you mean well,  
or mean wall,  
whichever is truer, better,  
but what am I after,  
why does the book end  
and leave me here alone,  
where do sparrows go  
when they don't see me?

I pray for you, said the wall,  
because I only know  
what you know,  
I am your wall, plus all walls,  
when they first built walls  
ten thousand years ago in Turkey  
they said their own prayers  
so that all walls should be  
a little bit like gods,  
holding and protecting  
and even remembering--  
but no more. A wall  
doesn't know the future--  
if it did it could not stand.  
But I can pray, and do,  
and keep the thieves away.

7.

But maybe she wanted the thief,  
it takes a thief  
to show you the worth  
of what you have.



**What they want to steal  
is where I should begin  
she thought. The rain stopped,  
so did a bus at the corner,  
she went onto the balcony,**

**there is clarity  
even in not knowing,  
knowing, knowing,  
the sparrow said.  
Maybe just trying to know  
is a kind of knowing  
and maybe knowing is enough.**

**10 September 2020**

## EMPYREAN

from which one falls  
back to the practiced earth  
as a sleeper  
wakes into the grain of day.

2.

The tiger walks around the house at night,  
stops at the doorway and looks in  
to watch the peaceful sleepers breathe--  
how sweet the breath of humans is  
when they sleep! Sugar of dream,  
oil of darkness, horizontal innocence--  
he is content, turns and pads away  
down the hallway no one knows.

3.

These things will happen us  
until we rouse.  
And even then the night

is full of plebiscites and fall elections  
the day must bear to love with,  
find your way home,  
finish the food on your plate  
if you can find it. And so on.  
The dream broke like an egg  
and you fell out--  
that's what the doctor told me  
when I asked was I OK.  
Daytime is dangerous  
I think she meant, the sun  
sees everything and remembers.

4.

Away with wee fears,  
the everlasting fire  
the sky catches its light from  
sustains the toad  
or whatever kind of creature  
you think you are.  
Fear is good for you,  
you notice more and jabber less,  
lie in the lap of the biggest fear

**and suddenly there is nothing  
there at all, just you at peace  
in the blue sky, shapely clouds  
here and there, all the answers  
everywhere, ready for your questions.**

**5.**

**The sermon ended,  
I looked around to see  
what would-be god  
had spoken so, I saw  
my own shadow on the rock,  
a rock I didn't know was there,  
a world simple with surprises.**

**6.**

**In the old days they thought  
the sun was a sweet tear drop  
from a ring of holy fire  
around everything that exists.  
They thought the mind  
could find its way**

**disguised as soul  
out to the limits of that fire  
and know itself suddenly  
part of what it beheld.**

**7.**

**The women and men who had  
gone there and come back  
did not have much to say.  
Go, see for yourselves--  
that seemed to sum up their report,  
Go, be a soul and travel,  
slip through the cage of the actual,  
be a new being and come back.  
How long will it take, we used to ask--  
Between one breath and the next  
you can go there and live there  
and grow old there and come home.**

**11 September 2020**

=====

**Think of me as the piano tuner  
come to get your instrument  
in perfect tone by giving  
endless little irritating  
twists and jabs. You call  
them criticisms, I call them  
getting the music right.**

**11.IX.20**

=====

**They looked like strangers  
so we called them friends,  
had them sit down, fed them  
milk and blueberry bread,  
no meat yet, not sure what  
their religion. And they ate.  
They called the bread muffins  
and the little fruit inside  
they called huckleberries  
so we knew we had nothing to fear.**

**2.  
She kept looking back  
as she ran ahead,  
made sure we were following  
and we were, though she'd  
stop sometimes so we slower  
could come close to catching  
up with her, then she'd run on  
and we'd follow. We follow.**

Every now and then  
she gives us a breather  
and then again run on, o  
that look on her face  
as she looks back over her  
right shoulder and runs on.

3.  
And so it's never clear  
if we are the guests or the hosts.  
Food changes hands. People  
run and stop. We go indoors,  
we settle on sofas, a phone rings  
and we're off again, she looks back  
to make sure we follow.  
What would happen if we didn't,  
if we just stood still,  
or sat there on the couch,  
nibbling, parsing the shadows?



4.

**I feel ashamed for even asking.**

**She is to be followed.**

**They are to be fed.**

**Somehow it coheres**

**and we are where we are**

**at any given moment home.**

**This is not wisdom,**

**this is fact. Now calculate**

**the distance between.**

**She's looking back at us again,**

**I could almost swear she's smiling.**

**12 September 2020**

= = = = =

**What does a tree  
think of grammar?  
Grammar is our grain  
I guess, subjective,  
objective, genitive,  
ablative, conditional.  
future perfect, past.  
The tree knows all that  
in one moment, one  
glimpse of bare wood  
tells more than books could,  
And there is a winter  
in language too,  
when the leaves fall away  
but the meaning stays.**

**12 September 2020**

=====

Sometimes one  
sees the same,  
a long line divided mind  
two directions of the  
(always) heart.

The merit of melody,  
the shimmer of—  
truth is always a reflection,  
cathedral upside-down in running stream  
it's so quiet you can hear the air—  
but science tells us that air's  
the only thing we ever hear.

12 September 2020  
*listening to Alvin Singleton*

=====

If ever it told me the truth  
a green leaf  
a month from now  
will be yellow or tan or brown  
or red,  
          time is full of colors.

2.  
We say: this too  
is a messenger.  
Or the message itself—  
how can we decide?

Carpet the truth with lies—  
protect it from  
the scuffmarks of easy passage,  
praying with your mind on something else.

12 September 2020  
*listening to Adolphus Hailstork*

=====

**Sometimes  
there is  
something left  
to say.**

**A gilt tower  
over inland  
waterway—**

**where I come from  
everything pretended to be sea.  
And Ocean am.**

**12 September 2020**

## ROOMS

The rooms  
that enter us  
and stay.

We know the doors of them  
polished by dream,  
the sunlight or the shallows  
in each room, bedspread  
table Monet print on the wall,  
the old-fashioned telephone,  
the empty vase.

Springtime

seldom comes,  
no one speaks Latin,  
the bathroom always far away.

Facts torture with images.  
Room after room.

2.

And sure enough  
when you wake up  
you're in yet another,

and this room too,  
mainland or island,  
Anglophone or otherwise,  
will play its role  
in some night opera  
from which you can barely  
awaken, like now,  
into the freshness of the familiar.

3.

Nothing leaves us.  
There is nowhere  
for it to go. no border  
it can cross to flee  
the immensity of here.

4.

Warm sticky danish  
coffee in a paper cup  
and late to work.

The Apollo gallery in the Louvre.  
Melville's writing desk,  
dentist's office, closet  
on Brown Street with the black  
seal fur soft inside tt.

There is no distance.  
And difference is only  
a taste on the tongue,  
and that too soon fades.

13 September 2020



## **BOY ON HOLIDAY**

**Outside the breeze  
makes tree leaves  
dance wild shadows  
of your future wife.**

**You can learn almost  
everything from them,  
the moves, the play  
of light and shade.**

**You have come here  
for this, your rite  
of ;passage from artifice  
to actual.**

**She dances  
for you, all of them do.**

**13 September 2020**

=====

The speakable breeze  
discovers a way in—  
release is a species of migration,  
the tribes lumbering out of Siberia  
into the civilization of your breath.

Wake up. The day needs you,  
who knows why?  
You have come  
from so far  
to be here.

2.  
Things know you.  
That's how it starts.  
chalk on the sidewalk,  
pansy by the garage.  
Then things say their names,  
moraine, steeple, pussy willow.  
Yes, it's all beginning to work.

**Morning anthem,  
Get up and see.**

**3.  
So there is still some freedom left,  
between your nostrils and your diaphragm  
the kingdom spreads  
rich and fertile,  
true.**

**The true  
outside is inside.  
As I think you always knew.**

**4.  
Who dreams us when we dream?  
In the old days people knew the answer:  
sky. Why else would it be there,  
shielding and shining and raining?  
And when winter comes  
we dream a house  
and creep inside.**

**5.**

**So many questions.**

**A car goes by outside--  
where is it going?**

**Suppose we had to know,  
really had to, or spend  
the whole day in doubt.**

**Who is driving?**

**What is on their mind?**

**Now tell me who dreams  
my d reams in me.**

**Or do I have to work all the time?**

**14 September 2020**

=====

Now is  
not the same  
as time.  
time is an arm,  
now a hand  
at mst.

                    Touch me  
it says.  
Now reaches out,  
you feel it on your skin.

14 September 2020

=====

**Something about the place.  
A point where sounds  
conjoin, feel at home,  
live between the ridges,  
reverberate.**

**It looks calm  
where the road forks  
and the stream runs fast,  
but once there were  
three mills and a hotel.  
on this placid stretch  
of woods and grass.  
They are gone, but the sound  
remains, ghost sounds,  
like Bach's music in that church  
in Leipzig, or the sound of the sea  
all round you when you read  
the Bible with any care.  
There is no silence here  
and all sound is more.**

**15 September 2020**

## WAITING

1.

Wait for the water.

Swim at noon.

Miracles happen,  
a woman answers the door  
and it's someone you know,  
friends everywhere.

The water isn't ready yet,  
things know when to flow,  
when to lie doggo in time  
as they used to say  
in another time, a smaller  
island. Wait,  
the bird is waiting too,  
adolescents walking on the road,  
all of us. Her road,  
the one that leads  
in time water to us.

2.

This information is just for you.  
I can't help it,  
I look up at the sky and remember  
the specifics of our conversation,  
wordless, far apart,  
rain glistening on the windows,  
all the pretty cars going by.

3.

Pardon me,  
I'm just letting,  
letting the words  
take me there,  
there where the water  
comes from.  
I'm not impatient  
I just want  
to see for myself  
the colors of its genesis,  
the shine of origin.  
And then I'll go on waiting--



**will you wait with me?  
Is there time in this  
hour for both of us?**

**4.**

**Just following, as I said,  
Sometimes my shadow  
goes in front of me,  
an eerie feeling, isn't it,  
as kif it knew better than I do  
where there is to go,  
where we have to go.  
But I have to follow,  
he word that came before  
summons the one the comes next,  
I hurry to attend,  
to leap that silence where they meet.**

**5.**

**Far off I hear chainsaws in the trees,  
modern vexations in ancient woods--  
the city's not the only place**

of acoustic strife. Listen  
anywhere and time creeps  
out of the air and presses  
in your ears. Airs  
carry menace. No sound  
in a vacuum. What am I  
waiting for?

6.  
I wait for water,  
the tree waits wit me.  
I mean from  
the hot water faucet,  
it means from the sky.  
Amiable, we wait together.  
Somewhere they are getting  
ready to answer us,  
whoever they are.  
Waiting is a technology of its own.

15 September 2020

====

I've gotten where I meant to go,  
are you still with me?  
The door has closed behind me,  
the sanctuary is dim with natural light--  
colored glass, polished brass,  
luster of old wood.

But no altar yet.  
What form will it be,  
what Platonic solid  
says the most to me  
right now, right here  
in the intense uncertainty  
of the living day?

Because it's day in here too,  
time doesn't stop at the threshold,  
Altars have to be the right shape,  
pure as a prime number,  
capable of supporting  
the immense weight

of a single piece of bread,  
a cup of, well, I'm not sure  
it will be wine. Water  
turns into all of us,  
and we're here too  
pressing against the altar  
pressing on each other,  
the little weight of us,  
so needy, so thirsty,  
allk our lives. Help me  
roll away this rock.  
Help me squeeze the cloud.

15 September 2020

=====

Look right intro the dark  
and see, she said  
and I said Why? and she  
explained the targets of the night,  
the things that look like  
stars outside but in here  
take a different form, just look.  
I heard no crow call to tell  
me she was right, but even here  
crows don't talk at night  
so I had to decide by myself.  
I like well enough being told  
what todo, but this, or she,  
was different and I doubted.

II.

Still, I dared to be obedient again  
and looked and looked  
and what I saw took shapes

inside me: freighter on rough sea, long-legged  
shadow galloping  
through suburban woods, church  
ablaze with colored lights  
but I see that all the time.  
What was different was the hand  
reaching out towards me,  
elegant, relaxed--was it hers?  
I waited till it touched me  
before I let myself wake up.

16 September 2020

=====

Let me see  
where I have gone  
an old kingdom  
in the mountains  
lost long ago  
into another language.  
Tin steeple in moonlight!

2.

Down Crescent to the sea,  
the marshes minded me  
I think, cat-tails, green heron.

3.

Fire house's glistening brass pole,  
nobody on it or in it,  
the biggest door you ever saw,  
only a spotted dog.

16 September 2020

## **TRAVELOGUE**

**I never saw a tiger in Bengal  
or rode a gondola in Venice.**

**But I saw a ghost in the garden  
right where the wisteria  
meets and joins the old brick wall.**

**Mkes me think travel  
is for the unimaginative.**

**Everything else  
is actually right here.**

**16 September 2020**



## ON THE LAWN

Figure all in white  
cross-legged perfectly still.  
Personish from afar.  
A Buddha statue made of cloth?  
Is that what we all are?  
A laundry bag, a paper Everest,  
a book turned inside out?

Ah window, window,  
you give on fairyland again  
where all the gold  
is made of light, and any thing,  
any blessed thing, can  
celestially be anything at all.  
At will.

But whose?

The figure doesn't move  
until I finish all my guessing  
and then it does, just enough  
to prove it can. Fool me again,  
be perfectly what I can't know.

**When I look back, the white  
has turned red, is bent forward  
over something it is studying  
some scripture I will never read.**

**16 September 2020**

**OF DREAM**

*towards a new hypnology*

**1.**

**Dream is a stern schoolmaster.**

**The naiads of Malibu  
were not on offer,  
Waikiki nowhere to be found.**

**Instead a science lesson,  
viscous transparent fluid  
in a slender glass tube--  
behavior of, in such  
and such conditions.**

**Could that be my brain  
trying on a new image of itself?**

*I flow slowly  
but I flow far  
and thick with light.*

2.

No, or maybe. But maybe  
we have been wrong about  
dreams all along--  
a dream is a *social* event,  
maybe even societal:  
we join with unknown others  
in a language all humans speak.

Dreams don't need  
therapists, analysts--  
they need ethnographers  
to study how my dreams  
are your dreams too, whoever  
you all are dreaming  
the music and magic of this  
seemingly so private dream  
with me.

3.

In dream  
I am a part of a conversation.  
Study me the dream, o scientist,  
the truly last frontier,

**the door we have been afraid to open  
since Jonah dreamt we was  
inside a fish  
and the religion of a million  
people changed.**

**17 September 2020**

====

**It's not all done yet.  
There are still some words inside,  
song birds in a silver cage.  
Hold the morning  
firmly in your teeth, squirm  
on your webstool and begin.  
This is how it started you.  
They said something in your head  
and you shouted back  
suddenly out loud,out here,  
and it began. Out here  
where those who know you not  
can read the mind that meant it,  
whatever it was. And you  
by now might not even remember.**

**17 September 2020**

=====

In the old days  
white meant danger,  
the leper van  
dragging the poor  
Chinese laundryman away--  
my old uncles saw that,

and white-coated doctors  
lobotomizing teenage misfits,  
and the snows in August  
that bad year in New England  
and earlier still those ghost-  
pale Europeans sneaking  
ashore in Gosnold and Jamestown  
and before you know it  
we were all mostly whitish,  
white and dangerous.  
Melville caught on first--  
the whale meant white  
supremacy, and white means wrong.

17 September 2020

## **THE SECRET TRIBE**

**I dreamt a small tribe of Native americans. They lived on Long Island and still do. When the Europeans started sneaking in, the tribal elders intuited that these were not settlers, they were invaders. Taking thought, they soon decided not to combat--they knew they would lose, knew that their old ways were finished, and so they took them inside. So that: at the present moment the tribe is still intact. Ghey live together, nlot on a reservation, but in a single neighborhood in Maspeth, Queens, New York itself. There in an area of a few square blocks of middle-class suburban houses the tribe persists. The men work almost exclusively in the chemical**



**industry, as alboers, technicians, scientists. They come home at night and are themselves again. As they grow older, they are initiated more and more into tribal religion and world view. They speak their own language at home, but never teach it, never make public acknowledgement of their identity, never say Indians, never even say we. In this long sincere duplicity their freedom rests.**

**17 September 2020**

***The dream was on the night of the 13/14 September 2020. In the dream the tribe was called the Quachadke.)***

=====

**Clover at her heels  
lover at her knee  
over her shoulders a shimmer of stars,**

**vertical testimony  
erotic rheology  
revealing boundary-less dream,**

**we live by appearances, disappearances.**

**18 September 2020**

== == =

**Who knows best.  
the chalice  
or the alkahest,  
chasuble or wizard's peak?**

**Guess your way to God--  
doesn't that make sense,  
or isn't that what sense is for,  
to know the road by feel,  
ignore the snickering figure  
by the all-too-open door?**

**In folds green the land is dressed,  
a limber walker surfs  
up and down the glacial hills,  
finds a bower where some *frau*  
\*old German word for goddess)  
has woven grape vines over pale  
pinewood pergolas--nothing lasts,  
even the hills get tired and stretch  
out some autumn night all flat,**

**flat and possible and still green.  
Rosh ha-Shana, the year begins  
when the season's over, the corn  
is cut, the apples counted.**

**18 September 2020**

=====

**So where is magic now,  
and where is science when the rain  
won't fall on California and the snow  
melts on the beaches of Greenland,  
the mermaids getting ready for their tryst?**

**Out of control they say about fires  
as if we had the wit or even will  
let alone the ability to  
control anything at all.**

**18 September 2020**

=====

**In just one tree out my window  
the wind is busy fussing  
while all the other trees are still.  
What does this say? What I call fussing  
is the universal language of reality,  
movement, irritation, consolation, repose.  
So many words for what the wind  
says so soft and quick.**

**18 September 2020**

=====

**Start again.  
The mirror sneers  
at those who pout.  
Those wrinkles  
are going somewhere,  
mapping a territory,  
writing a book.**

**2.  
Age aims.  
Time is going somewhere,  
time has something on its mind.**

**3.  
Think of the desert:  
thousands of years the wind  
has been combing the sand,  
arranging, lifting, shifting,  
heaping up and smoothing down.  
A day will come not far from now  
when all its work will be done—  
every grain of sand will be**

**at last in its proper place.  
The wind will rest, the rain will fall,  
the grass will grow.  
Sahara will be savannah then,  
prairie, farm land, I hear already  
e cattle bellow in the rain.**

**18 September 2020**



=====

**Cooler than yesterday  
that's all we ever need,  
flute in the bedroom  
and voices outside--now  
is always enough  
if you hold it the right way up.**

**18.IX.20**

=====

**In the Tauric Chersonese  
the story came to rest.  
The hero kicked his sandals off,  
the goddess wrapped some clouds  
around her and the sailors slept.  
We are the vertical ones  
so all day all life long,  
how good it is to be for once  
horizontal with eyes closed.  
We all know that story  
so at that point we close the book.**

**18.IX.20**

=====

**Whisper my name  
into the crook of your elbow  
as if you were stifling a cough.**

**The name, once mine,  
will course through your veins  
back into your heart—**

**your heart, from which  
(or whom) all names rise  
to be spoken.**

**2.  
This is how we begin.  
This is language,  
the Latin word for love.**

**3.  
Wind stops me right there,  
slams the door open,  
here, before I commit the sin  
of understanding**

**what I do not understand.  
Enough has been said  
to lead us both astray  
then lead us home.  
Joyous, your arteries  
give me back to me.**

**18.IX.20  
Red Hook**

=====

**Everything takes an hour  
more or less.**

**That's what *hora* means,**

**the length of now,  
plash of the fountain,  
skitter of dead leaves  
across the pavement,  
sun on a brick wall,**

**I tremble with presence,  
no clock ever stops.**

**18.IX.20  
Red Hook**

## LIBER DAMNÆ

1.  
Book of the woman  
lost into color,  
all the revisions  
of the light  
shifted the shape of her  
towards us and past me,  
and the light knew her  
like glass  
so that my words  
reached out and reached  
out and touched  
only the cold smooth of  
all that she was.  
And down the streets  
of the dream white  
mail trucks hurtled  
in trafficless silence.

2.

There were three texts  
that had somehow  
to be compressed together--  
not by picking and choosing  
but through a massive silent  
twist or pressure process  
of its own, so that the three  
would become  
choiclessly one.

The texts were different colors:  
one pale, two dark  
and they were like shallow bowls,  
pie crusts, the words clear.  
I watched her hands arrange them  
fitting one on top of the other,

the text was pale,  
her hands paler.  
Then something started  
and darkness shrouded  
whatever was going on.  
And what came out is this.

3.

So now it's up to me  
to make something more,  
not just dream smatterings.

I have to reclaim  
the noble spacious distances  
between all the words  
of the original,  
the texture of emptiness,  
artifice, ligature,  
the feel of forward in a classic text,  
epic or animal.

I want it to be enough  
to wake and see the wind in the trees,  
the light forgiving me  
into the timeless present,  
but those images persist,

three must be one,  
she must be lost  
into what she has spoken



or made me speak,  
lost so that the text  
alone is left, and she herself  
lingers in her own way  
behind the glass,  
smiling in her own eyes,  
wind on its way.

4.  
Am I done,  
is the music ready?

Arsis and thesis,  
where is the downbeat  
that tells me to step,  
to stop, the *light foot*  
Duncan got from Bowra got from Pindar,

it's not all dancing, is it,  
my fingers clumsy at the keyboard  
but the tones are true?

**In holy sleep the felonies are healed,  
I wake to say so, empowered  
by the Lost Woman  
who is everywhere, lost  
from grasp into gravity itself,  
I'm bantering theology,  
it's not all up to me, you know,  
I'm just trying to peel apart  
the baked pages and read  
the book that woke me,  
no cover on it but the words themselves,  
I'm just trying to catch the tune,  
it's always only the tune that tells.**

**19 September 2020**

## AMARYLLIS

A flower  
and an old  
French song,  
o Lingua, Lingua,  
how can I learn  
to sing  
without music,  
can I word it  
a few more years,  
wind in the trees  
be my breath,  
saying my song?

19 September 2020

= = = = =

One tree out there  
always seems to have  
all the wind in it,  
its leaves heave sand shimmer  
when other trees are still.  
And it's almost the tallest  
tree out there--  
what is, who is, this  
dancer of a tree?  
I'm not sure the name  
will help me, but I'd like  
to know it, to praise it  
with the name someone  
long ago gave it, by now  
it might almost be true enough.

19 September 2020

=====

**Am I anyone  
you ever knew,  
night of stars,  
afternoon of the clouds?  
Time spins us out  
onto different spools.  
ready for someone  
else's weaving.**

**19 September 2020**

## NOTABLE DISTANCES

1.  
The fever plants  
of the Tampa coast  
help the music  
to decide.  
Whistle or wander,  
warble or wait.

Wade  
    with me  
in the shadows.

Shallows.  
We belong  
to what we hear.

2.  
The notation is usually  
accurate, the performers

sober and alert, The cellist  
hides behind her instrument,  
the blatant trumpeter  
of course has to blare on  
even though a modest type  
himself. (But why choose brass?)

Outside, the low wind  
stimulates the chemical habits  
of those mystery plants  
said to cure faints and fevers--  
brassica family, like leafy kale  
but pale. The sea celebrates  
just beyond the quiet leaves.

3.

We need these things.  
It can't all be Chopin, Debussy,  
another kind of rigor is required,  
growl of granite, lust of limb,  
someday they'll let us out of school.

4.

Music for midnight—what kind  
if you had to choose?  
Wind or water? Name that tree?  
Which king of France  
built the coast of Normandy?

To be simple about it,  
the Hungarian prairie  
is very far away. And yet.

5.

Is it cold enough to be tomorrow?  
What did they mean  
when they asked that?  
Fine tune your sweaters before breakfast.  
buy roses from the south?  
Radiator's warm, fridge gurgling.



6.

We're still here for a little while,  
as I heard a wise man say  
as we stood together on the plain  
counting hilltops on horizon,  
here a while and then an answer,  
condescends. Descends I think  
was meant but there goes  
that music again, this or kiss,  
albatross or arabesques, help  
or harry, or marry, or just  
this sun in calm trees now,  
blue ointment of sky  
a function of our longitude.  
Far away as it is, I pray  
I mean I think I hear the sea.

20 September 2020

=====

**Can't even make  
the same mistake  
twice, Heraclitus,**

**mistakes mount up,  
they keep count,  
each one gets worse**

**until the last, lost  
continent of everything  
you ever meant,**

**incoherent ocean of again.**

**20 September 2020**

## A ROAR OF GRATITUDE

*for Vesna*

**You gave me dragons,  
you gave me words  
I couldn't read,  
couldn't even say  
out loud but words  
that said what I meant  
and said it to so many  
people I have never met.  
You made me speak  
Dragon talk, made a bridge  
over the turbulent ocean  
of all our differences, over  
distance, a bridge over silence  
well-guarded by dragons.**

**20/21 September 2020**

=====

**The antithesis of the obvious  
is a low undersea mountain  
acave in its side,  
I mean a word spoken in sleep  
by a person sleeping alone.  
Or do I mean sunlight,  
we see everything it shows  
but not itself?  
Is there an antithesis to anything?  
And from the dark of the Bible  
an answer whispers:  
a brother to his brother.**

**21 September 2020**

=====

**Too simple, such.  
Need more black keys  
in that tune,  
sharps and flats,  
the misery in melody  
that carries it all  
the way home  
to music's heaven:  
the change in us.**

**21 September 2020**

=====

**Be mean, Molly,  
Poldy  
needs the chagrin.**

**21.IX.20**

== == == == ==

**The runner makes the path,  
right? The bird makes the sky.  
Trees talk to one another  
under the confidential ground—**

**the wind in their leaves  
is for us, gentle love songs  
they hum to us--  
their real words silent**

**speak from root to root.**

**21 September 2020**

=====

**I thought I was  
telling the truth  
but it was only me.**

**21.IX.20**



=====

**Things sometimes get  
too far apart  
and then we require  
a troubadour to rise  
and sing them back  
together again. This  
is the secret of poetry.  
Without it no ship  
could ever cross the sea.**

**21.IX.20**

=====

**I mean a forest  
is a conversation—  
aren't you?**

**21.IX.20**

***Or, qua Lune:***

***I mean a forest  
aren't you  
conversation too?***

== == == ==

**Showcase  
emeralds sparkling  
and I want so badly  
to give them to you.  
But they are waves  
rolling in sunlight  
and the sea is far.**

**21.IX.20**

## MUSIC OFF

Are there voices  
in the horn?  
Why do I hear  
what no one says?

In the woods again.  
*Wood* used to mean mad.  
hearing voices  
not even in your head

just *there*, out there  
in the dark we move,  
stumbling over the roots  
that sound like words.

21 September 2020

*[hearing from another room Vivaldi's e minor  
concerto for cello and bassoon.]*

## UNDER THE SEEMING

Milarepa

under a leaf  
sheltered—

himself and a friend  
from the rain,  
the leaf no bigger  
and they no smaller  
still they sheltered  
beneath one leaf

2.  
the leaf  
a word  
sheltered  
them from the rain,  
from the seeming

3.  
to dwell in  
o twist  
the story:

**in the seeming  
they sheltered  
from the seeming—**

**miracle of Milarepa,  
the mind large  
enough to shelter under,**

**the radiant seemingless  
safe beneath all seeming.**

**21 September 2020  
Red Hook**

**[IN LIBRA]**

walked in and the wind  
was calm. The names of things  
though clattered round the head,  
occipital fairytales trying  
for frontal rationality.  
Fat chance. It's mostly dream  
anyway, the thick dream  
called the dictionary. As if.  
As if words were things  
and were there, here,  
to be with us and comfort us  
as we limp fown the mountainside,  
who am I fooling, the meek  
hillock of the day to day.

**2.**

The shadows under big trees  
are richer and deeper than wine  
must be for those who drink  
but do not chalice it. The dark  
is sumptuous, full of subtle,  
touches and departures,

**bright eyes suddenly seen  
seeing me I thought I saw.**

**3.**

**Wouldn't it be useful if  
you could look back suddenly  
over your shoulder and see  
what you'd been thinking just  
a few moments back? As if  
the thinking left a trace out  
there in matter world, sidewalks  
and shadows, crowds of people  
you thought you had forgotten?**

**4.**

**Let us suppose, the pompous magus  
declared, that the world right now,  
this very instant is the sum  
total of what every human in it  
thought ten seconds back.  
And not just humans. I declined  
his supposition, slept on,  
a causeless victim of someone else's dream.**



**5.**

**That's a gloomy way of putting it,  
sun in Libra and cold nights.  
In my dream an inch of snow  
lay on the porch, wake up!  
is the solution. But there is  
no problem. Or none out there.  
but much further away. Why  
does power make those who wield it  
hate and hurt the ones they rule?  
Send me your answer by Capricorn  
when the fang of weather really bites.**

**6.**

**Remember the rosary  
a prayer on each bead  
and no reason to stop,  
round and around.  
A year is like that, any  
day can be a pause for breath  
or take a rest. Or say  
a different prayer.**

**22 September 2020**

=====

**Ladies and gents  
I am the oldest  
child you'll ever see,  
nine decades of pure  
fantasy. The only diff  
is I know it and maybe  
you do not. If so, grow  
young along with me.**

**22 September 2020**

=====

**If the words say it  
for me, what am I doing  
in this dance? Am I the floor,  
or the wall some shy  
youth leans against,  
half-hiding from his desires?**

**23 September 2020**

=====

The trees are thick  
green fur today  
at their lushest, lastest.  
Equinox has come and gone,  
the harbor here is empty,  
not even the sea. All green  
on the way to gone. But such  
soft seeming in their fur--  
my sight cuddles in it  
homing, mama of the world.

23 September 2020

=====

**The little time the day has left  
for being something else--  
even at first morning. Wash  
the night away and see.  
Use it wisely, minute  
squeezed out after minute.  
But what is wisdom when  
a clock has wheels and we  
stumble mumbling to keep up?**

**23 September 2020**

***DOLCE FAR...***

**You need a slow day  
to lug out that instrument,  
bass fiddle of a new idea  
and pluck at it till it seems  
at least to your own ears  
to sing.**

**Earth is close to heaven  
at least in comparison  
with anywhere else—there,  
that's something to work with,  
the astronomy of theology,  
leave your telescope behind.  
All you need is will to word.**

**Word it like a warble in the woods,  
word it like a leaf.  
Trees turn into books  
when they die, some of them do,  
leaves we say, and morning pages.**

**But I distract. Here we were  
on the way to heaven and  
ideas ensnared our ankles  
and we fell. The Fall of Man  
happens a billion times a day,  
every time we think  
then turn away from what we thought.**

**23 September 2020**

## A SIMPLE SYMPHONY

Now is so long ago.  
The mysteries of Egypt  
in these young trees.  
I sat once by the water  
and i all went away.  
The politics of intimacy,  
shadow of a red rock.  
Before dawn it's anywhere,  
the clock rolls downhill.  
There are two parts to anything  
but I can give you only one.

2.  
There, my quickest symphony.  
I learned it from the radio  
when I was five years old.  
Or ten. Or last Tuesday night,  
remember? Right now  
is the sluggish slow movement,  
just wait. It's all here already



**but like everything else  
nobody ever notices.**

**3.**

**The spooks along the Nile set sail  
magic this way across the sea  
and reach us here, cleanse  
their images in the cold  
Adirondack flow, mercies  
of our little streams. Dream  
remit the images of day,  
a little polished, a little stained  
by all the otherness inside.  
Stag brays in the woods, fox  
shouts in ferns, crow decides.  
The music can stop now--  
the truth is out, the generosity.  
One word spells a happy life: Give.**

**24 September 2020**

====

**Being a birthday  
is always half  
asleep again.  
The REM sleep  
of the new-born child  
happens in the mind  
turned back over its shoulder--  
the mind has muscles too,  
and brittle bones and firm.  
Awake, I whisper to myself,  
put the dream away, today  
you have to be you again.**

**24 September 2020**

=====

**Pallor of the mountain sky  
I heard Nietzsche talking in the attic  
to someone, maybe the squirrel,  
they try to get in everywhere  
as winter walks towards us,  
Fritz was relaxed for a change,  
light-hearted almost, discussed  
briefly the role of the imagination  
in eating an apple--our apples  
are stored up here and his words  
were sometimes muffled by one  
he was enjoying as he lectured  
the fortunate beast or bird up there  
or just the shadow of the tree  
slaps through the tiny window.  
Strange, attics, so close  
to the sky, are the darkest  
rooms in the house. His own  
light shines better there.**

**24 September 2020**

=====

**Enough said.  
The poltergeists of politics  
are rattling the spoons again.  
A moment's quiet  
might amend the world.  
Try it and see. But first  
put all the guns away.**

**24.IX.20**

=====

**1.**

**A warmer day  
a quiet green storm  
calms the trees,**

**yes, light has weather too.  
this bright calm intense  
sweeps doubt away.  
Or some of the doubts  
that spoil the flavor of the day.**

**2.**

**Food and weather,  
is that all I have  
to say, to talk about  
on the way to work,  
a work that never  
goes away thank god?**

3.

I'm trying to confess  
that what the trees eat  
makes me strong.  
Not a leaf is stirring—  
nobody disagrees.

4.

A suite of seeming  
serenades the day,  
evening in the morning,  
quiet tune of light,  
sleepy waking,  
dream for breakfast.  
Life without a clock  
is sunlight in my fingers.

25 September 2020

=====

**When I first saw her  
I thought she'd be a nun.  
I saw it in her eyes,  
intensity of yearning,  
intensity of doubt  
I could tell she doubted  
everything and everyone,  
doubted the whole world  
and wanted only the perfect,  
the thing we're taught in school  
to call God, and taught too  
that nuns are married to Christ.  
And I saw that she had not yet  
found Christ or God or what might be  
the Lord or Lady worth her  
radiant intensity. Such eyes!**

**25 September 2020)**

▪

▪

== == == == ==

**Trail across the desert  
gold and silver  
Canadian border  
who is really America  
left for a nickel  
pure silver  
ashtray tiny from Hokkaido  
silver smooth a serpent  
on the little lid on a leaf--  
mark what the dream tells  
there is no other vademecum  
chaste as your eyes  
allow the loom to weave  
no foot on the treadle and yet  
spin me with your eyes.**

**2.  
Spin me a tree  
a beech for bravery  
a book meant beech tree once**



**all literature a scribble down  
fast as poor mind can  
the story stories the tree tells  
even now out our window  
the beech is waving  
when all is still.**

**3.  
Imagine this whole world  
the engine of a vehicle  
going somewhere  
can I come too?  
peer under the hood of all things  
hear the purr of the engine  
the coughing now and then  
of our blood its gasoline  
our breath the vapor it needs  
it's frightening to be so close  
so close to the roar and the heat  
only in dream do you dare  
to lift the hood and look.**

4.

So much has been changing  
but children still wait for busses  
carry them to what is called the truth  
as much of it as they need  
to get married and get a job  
the other way round it they can  
and birds still presume to sing  
just last afternoon a noble wren  
my hearing is not good  
sing louder, river,  
flow faster, oriole  
the bus is on its way  
sidewalk shows the difference  
when girls hop their skirts float  
beautiful wings in the air  
when boys jump they stomp the ground  
ugly ugly with the sound of take  
wait with me and hold my mind  
the bus will come and cure us soon.

5.  
if there were a number  
it would have to be me  
as it is though the river flows  
east southeast and then due south  
the ocean is always listening  
always hearing our confession  
I have walked along the ocean floor  
there are hard places down there  
shapely pinnacles and grottoes  
where the frail wings of fish  
negotiate the mystery of air  
where is it in all this splendid rush  
silver and gold the sunlight folds  
and we do breathe  
we make our choices  
they dream the land we dream the sea  
simple as a lawn party  
polite and with sweet tea  
Latin quotation I start he finishes  
people remind you of dead friends  
close to the border now  
the car rides through the sky

**we are taught the truth by cartoons  
we'll be there soon wherever it is  
you decide they tell me  
no you, it's your ashtray  
you brought it from Japan.**

**26 September 2020**

**SATURDAY**

**You don't have to do  
anything today  
except be.**

**Yet they dare  
call it a day off.**

**26.IX.20**

## GROTTO

A grotto always makes you think of somewhere else, a grotto is a thing you go to to be deep and quiet with it, rest there and start thinking, even that old-fashioned kind of thinking they call prayer.

\*

A geode is a grotto too. one that has a will to go to you, to be there quietly and let you in, even if there is no freshet but your thoughts, no mountain spring except the way its crystals catch light and make it twinkle, that is, make it move. And all light moves, though we can't see it.

**But the crystal can, and tells  
the tiny grotto what it sees  
and lets it let your vision in.  
Doorway with no door,  
entrance that is forever going in.**

**26/27 September 2020**

## GROTTO, 2

Is there a word out there  
that says the sound inside the stone?  
It winks to me that you're  
the one to say it.  
we Americans are so explicit,  
we have such clear voices,  
  
so tell us, tell us the word we are.

\*

That much I trust Moses for--  
he went to, goes to,  
the mountain to learn what to say.

I stand dumb there too,  
leaving it up to the rock  
to teach me my lessons,  
stand and wait and read and write,  
what else can an old child do?

27 September 2020



=====

**Stepping off the ladder  
is a wonder dance,  
between the last rung  
and the nearby earth  
just a dozen inches of pure space  
but such a marvel in that passage,  
coming back from mansard roof  
or down from paradise  
and being here again, here,  
a foot swings low in quiet enstasy.**

**27 September 2020**

## GROTTO, 3

So call it a cave you can set  
on a desk, a fountain of dry  
water, yes, there is such a thing,  
we think it all the time  
and cure our thirst,  
or let it be  
just points of color, each point  
a different destination aiming  
as if some foreign language  
wanted to sing in you too.

27 September 2020

## **EPITAPH FOR ANYONE**

**No one will ever  
be me again  
but I will be everyone.**

**27.IX.20**

=====

**My eyes that used  
to spin the wheels  
and gobble up the road  
don't let me drive.**

**Drive no more  
but I can ride  
and spell the words  
as trees flash by.**

**27 September 2020**

## SEPTEMBER SABBATH

*for Crichton*

I hear the fridge  
gurglie its quiet business.  
Few cars pass, soft,  
no church to go to,

the trees at rest.  
Only the gently  
articulate beech  
is saying something.

So much green!  
But some paleness  
promises their work  
will soon let them rest,

these immense flowers  
will let their petals take  
on pretty colors and fall.

**And I remember now  
how you took a blue flower  
and petal by petal  
offered it to the sea  
between your shore and my island**

**and as you did you thought of me.  
I thank you for that thinking.  
it makes me feel noble,  
upright, a little like a tree.**

**27 September 2020**

## HALF A BALL OF WAX

*for Ann Lauterbach*

I wonder if the earth  
is like this too  
if we lifted it open—

the famous fierce fire  
at the core that science  
argues, maybe it's just  
a little candle flame  
whose flicker shapes  
all time and all our lives,

as a single idea can churn  
vast thinking and doing  
in the mind, or as in  
a lover's thought the simple  
silly name of the beloved  
lights up a whole life.

27 September 2020

## SUMMATION

*asked for by Heide Hatry*

**No need to shout  
give all that you can**

**expect nothing**

**praise everyone  
and thing you can**

**answer all questions  
write everything.**

**Write everything.**

**28 September 2020**



== =

*for Nancy Goldring*

The streets of somewhere  
you know where  
the shadows are golden as they fall  
queer as music on the empty street  
so full of something going on--

is color an accident of love,  
the way things light up their very selves  
the luster of their surfaces  
when someone -you-- looks at them  
attentive as sunlight

then make us see too?  
Is that how it is,  
in the old country  
where most of our light got made?

The streets of somewhere  
are full of slants, bare walls,  
windows messaging with sheer surface,

**the streets of somewhere  
where you walked around  
your eyes sleeping deep  
in that dream we call seeing.**

**28 September 2020**

=====

**There is a hook  
in very book  
usually sturdy  
but you never know.**

**From it a rope may  
be slung, down which  
you can rappel  
(I think the word is)**

**down the cliff faces,  
gullies, grottoes,  
caves of its meaning.  
Its meanings.**

**A printed page  
is sunshine glazing  
a vast wilderness  
spread out for you  
bold athletes of interpretation.**

**28 September 2020**

=====

**If you lose  
or mislay something  
the first place to look  
is in the mirror.**

**28.IX.20**

====

**How long do I have to be  
the line asked.  
Until I come home  
the circle answered.**

**28.IX.20**

=====

Subway door shutting  
so smooth my  
hand can't stop it  
I'm trapped by another  
destination north away  
from what i mean, blue  
slick door shut because  
two tiny children ran by  
and startled me. All in white  
the first one was, then slightly  
bigger in reds and brown.  
I was afraid they'd trot out  
the door and be lost  
but I am the one who's lost  
crowded train growling  
all the wrong way. So now  
who do I have to be?

28 September 2020

=====

**Don't decide—  
just write it down;  
All the mistakes  
will still lead you on.  
Water the growth  
with guesses, blunders,  
hopeful lies—  
the grain of truth  
knows how to grow  
through all our weathers.  
Just keep it wet with words  
and enough sunlight of silence.**

**28 September 2020**

## THE INFANT'S PLEA

I want to watch you  
change your underwear,  
want to watch you ride  
that crocodile, want to know  
how things get done, how  
you turned into you so  
I can turn maybe into me.

I want to watch you sing  
your song, your lips seem to me  
to say more than the words do  
and the way the tune  
makes soft movements  
in your throat, let me stroke  
my fingers on your neck  
to feel what singing is,

what it does to the one  
who sings, I want to watch  
you do everything, if I see  
with my own eyes what you  
do with your own body



**I will surely learn how  
to stand and walk and even sing.  
Teach me to sing,  
let me watch, touch, listen,  
hold me while I try to sing too.**

**28 September 2020**

= = = = =

Wait for me at the corner  
where the street runs out  
and a Dutch meadow stretches  
stretches to the sea, yes,  
just like painting. I hurry  
past the sleeping cars,  
the rusted mailbox, the cat  
somebody is looking for  
if I believe the poster  
stapled to the phone pole  
still made from a single tree.  
I can see you there, back to me,  
watching for whale spouts,  
tattered sails, submarines,  
you're always waiting for something,  
not just for me. I'm thinking  
fast as I can, pitiful pace,  
stumbling oven images here  
where the sidewalk runs out  
and gravel gets us to the cross  
that marks the city's end

**and where the waiting game begins.  
You hear me coming now,  
turn and see me, smile ,  
then look back at the forgiving sea.**

**29 September 2020**

## **EDGEWISE**

**Yes, I was born along  
the edge of things,  
the marsh that holds the city,  
migrant birds singing foreign  
in the cattail grass, the whole  
horizon a closed eye. Edgy,  
they say, always on edge, yes,  
how could it be otherwise.**

**2.**

**The letters I wait for  
I have to mail myself,  
stay up late to write them,  
wait for the mailman  
to bring them back  
romanced by otherness and far.  
Or, to be true to my seaside start,  
I have a long, long conversation  
with an oyster, the rugged kind,  
from the south, makes me do  
all the talking, I am both sides  
at once and no shell to keep me safe.**

3.

**What a way to talk about a friend.**

**As if the whole world**

**were a waitress**

**you're flirting with**

**in some midnight dive.**

**What a way to think**

**about philosophy, theology,**

**Gothic spires, sleek**

**hips of Aphrodite by Phidias.**

**You get me all confused--**

**one night Olson and I**

**walked all the way**

**along the Santander corridor**

**to the Bay of Biscay to see**

**Britain far away, walked back**

**to his place in the Fort.**

**Weird how distances disperse**

**while humans talk,**

**cup of black coffee, hidden Grail.**

4.

I hope I'm hapening you.

You're there,

between the closet and the sink,

cigarette smoke dangling above

but who's smoking?

We don't do that anymore,

it's like the Roller Derby

or Robin Hood,lost in time.

But there you are, intimate

authority, leaning on the sink.

If it were up to me, every

kitchen would be full of chairs

so we could sit and think

about the food, and what we mean

by feeding it to one another,

the whole epistemology of choosing

what to eat. Dark matters.

It's your fault. You make me think.

29 September 2020

=====

**And when the polar bear  
begins to sing, we know  
that paradise is close,  
the opera will begin again,  
the ice float in our absinthe  
and the Pope will be from Italy again.  
Why polar bear, you ask?  
Why not, I reply,  
one fur is as good as another,  
call it the grizzly if you'd rather  
or skip the bear altogether  
and just sing. You do it. Sing.**

**29 September 2020**

=====

**Truth is messy,  
lies are compact.  
That's why we go  
to High School  
to enroll in the  
Almost-Fact.**

**29.IX.20**



=====

**Eros**

also is a messenger  
brings you together  
but the bed you love on  
is floating subtly  
night after night  
to bring you both  
go the singular destination  
Love had in mind  
all the while.

**29 September 2020**

=====

**Remember to remember  
the infinite distances  
between any you and any other  
and that infinite can mean  
endlessly vast or very small,  
and then remember what you mean  
when you look at the bright  
face of a new friend  
or learn that an old one has died.  
Remember that distance  
is a music that we sing—  
be close, be close to them in mind  
and everything will come out well.**

**29 September 2020**

=====

**If I were the sea  
and if I had a son  
who would it be?  
If I were the sea  
would I be myself  
the only one, all  
the globe in my  
wet hands or am I  
several ones at once,  
one or many, father  
or mother? I must wait  
until my son grows up  
then one day he'll tell me.**

**29 September 2020**

## **CROW**

**It's not about me  
not about me--  
that's what the crow  
is always calling,  
warning, guiding, look  
all around you,  
choose another path  
through the woods,  
hurry home now,  
think a different thought,  
clean your mind  
with pure listening,  
come, go, it's not  
about me, not about me.**

**29 September 2020**

=====

**Three armloads of hay  
for one baby lamb—  
who do I think I am  
who can barely tell  
a turkey from a tree?**

**All things move  
in their own way  
except for stones.  
si I may be a stone.**

**Things wait for me to decide.**

**29 September 2020  
Red Hook**

=====

**Watch the world happen—  
it wants you to.**

**Every breeze an invitation,  
invocation. a welcome  
whispered on your skin**

**It all wants to be touched,  
pondered, written about.  
gloried in, seen.**

**You were born  
to behold it. Take hold  
of your pen and see some more.**

**29 September 2020  
Red Hook**

**IT RAINED HARD  
we needed it  
after the rain  
what else was true?**

**On stone he rested  
till he knew  
that change  
meant suffering**

**and change itself  
cures suffering,  
the stone was dry  
where he had been**

**the leaves were wet,  
still dripping  
though the sky  
was slowly clearing**

**above him from the north.**

**30 September 2020**

=====

**The beech tree is talking again  
telling all animals should be free  
but no harm in setting aside  
woodland and prairie where they  
and they alone can work out  
their destinies without our wills  
intruding on theirs. Leave alone.**

**30.IX.20**



## DECIPHERMENTS

If you weren't so like yourself  
I wouldn't be me--  
that's the oldest song in the world  
but nobody sings.

2.

When you were a little kid  
skipping up the alley  
past the lilacs and pussy-willows  
where was Moses with his books of stone?

3.

Clouds are commentaries,  
nothing more.  
Sometimes they bring rain  
as our reward  
when we have thought the matter through  
and brought the silence safely home.

4.

I thought it was done  
but it was still blue.  
A bear in the backyard  
trees too are hiding something  
it is to our advantage  
not to behold. There,  
Pascal lays down his pen,  
quill from the finest  
geese in Normandy.

5.

Evidence abounds.  
Big cloud very white  
invites attention--  
count the birds you see,  
be a Roman cheerfully,  
numbers keep you from thinking,  
almost as good as drinking,  
they add up to what goes away,  
count the birds o count the birds.

30 September 2020

=====

**Feel free with me  
do anything you please  
but leave my name alone,**

**untouched, untoyed with,  
My name belongs  
to someone else, someone  
I still have to be.**

**30.IX.20**

## LIEBESLIED

*for Charlotte*

**You'll still be here  
when the numbers run out,  
you catch the sunlight  
as it topples through the trees,  
keep the light from breaking.  
When the numbers are all gone  
the words will linger, answer  
all questions, reveal the truth  
kept safe in your quiet smile.**

**30 September 2020**