

10-2020

oct2020

Robert Kelly

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

====

**What color is the bird
that picks the card
that shows the name
of the about-to-die?
You've seen it on the screen,
in a dream, on a perch
above your mind,
is it blue? What is the name
of the bird that picks the name
of someone you've never seen,
will never knew, yet this
much you know, the bird
(what color is the bird?)
has chosen them to fly
with it to the starting place again.**

1 October 2020

=====

Hear me again,
I wasn't listening,
there was a preacher
howling in my head,
made me think,
make me think I was
a tree and he
the wind inside of me,
so hear me again,
I wasn't listening
to what I spoke
he was so loud and I
trying not to hear.
Now you do it for me
I pray, as they
used to say, whoever
they were in the long
night that is not over yet.

1 October 2020

=====

**If I believed in numbers
I would say dawn
is coming soon. If I believed
in letters I would say
the alphabet holds all our secrets,
and it does. Scattered
through all the letters
a woman's voice tells us
how to begin. Mother,
we cry. But it is the dawn.**

1 October 2020

=====

Sometimes I have to write
the poems someone never
got around to writing,
not necessarily someone I knew
or who gave me—by the sound
and measure of their breath alone—
title to fill the silence
with what they might have said.
It could be anyone, someone
I never read or heard so now I
never notice that my words
are filling out their song,
sense, dream, gospel, who knows what.
I mean. I think I'm saying this
but it may really be you.

1 October 2020

=====

**I've spent months in India
and an afternoon in Araby,
months in France, an afternoon
in Annandale, the original
in Scotland. There is a balance
I suppose in these things.
What does geography have to do
with it anyhow? Travel
blurs the mind, blunts the will,
erases two-thirds of what it writes.
It really was just one morning
in Arabia, I watched the sun
come up over the Persian Gulf.
I was over the Black Sea by noon.
Names make it easy to tell lies.**

1 October 2020

====

**(A man who likes
Country&Western
doubts his virility.
Real men like Ravel.)**

1.X.20

WANTING

**Put all your passion
into yearning for
the nonexistent.**

**At best you'll bring it
into being. At worst
the same. The claim
of desire on the shape
of things is our geology.
Mesas and arroyos,
estuaries and the endless sea.**

**2.
Keep wanting.
You owe it
to the other.
Beyond all having
it lights the world.**

1 October 2020

====

**Hope for the habit of dawn,
cloak of your priesthood.
Out of all the years
thou art born human,
a sacred burden go carry,
to know and love and praise.**

1 October 2020

== == =

**Upstair, upstir
fragments of an unmade dream
to fit the arch and angle of the day.
Wake now. Let us suppose
the trees are calling you,
let us suppose those Gaelic
clouds have work for you again.
Wake. The few words you recall
are enough to get started.
Warm blanket, true wife
but the mesh of thinking
is like a hair in the mouth.
Finger it out. Stop thinking
and wake up. How long
must the trees stand and wait?**

1 October 2020

=====

**Woke to the dactyls of Washington classical
radio message
even before the actual music begins I hear
chipper, a masculine welcome at ears that are
hungry for music,
music, not jabber, or cleverness, weather or
least of all news—sing,
sing to me wordless as cellos or oboes, or just
let me sleep.**

2 October 2020

=====

**I paid for the ticket
but slept through the movie,
bought the paper, didn't read it,
got off the bus and walked
the rest of the way home.
I am a good citizen pay my dues,
safe from the ideas of my fellows.**

2 October 2020

=====

**Not cynicism, no.
A new kind of flower,
thorn close to the lip
but safe-- if you're careful
only the color will bite you
make you think you are
a child again in some other weather,
anything but what there is
around you as you bend to sniff
or even pluck this blossom from the mist.**

2 October 2020

VIRTUAL RISK

Working from home
it's harder to hide from myself,
the Zoom screen keeps reminding me
of who it is who's saying my words,
and even when I'm only on the phone
I see this pale hand that holds
the instrument I babble in.
Babble on. Babylon. Bible in
hidden flowers, paint on ceiling
peeling as I speak, see, crumbs
from a tostada, coffee spill,
swill, inkstain, Haydn happening,
o where is the Outernet would
take me to the stars?
Here I am. *moi irreducible même.*

2 October 2020

=====

**The calendar changes
but we fight back.
Spring in autumn, leap!**

2.X.20

PILLOW TALK

1.

**Pillow filled with
empty blue bottles
clank as you tread
the walkways of sleep.
Who is your farmer,
who harries your corn?**

2.

**The colors do it
by themselves,
the autumning. Can
the word come from avis.
when the leaves
fly away like birds.**

3.

**Easy cry New!
when the oldest
thing in the world**

is new every day--
Pound told us that,
he heard it in China
where he never was--
is that new enough?

4.
New enough to be green still?
Early October
the dreams come thick
and waking is a compromise.

5.
Follow the dream
dreams don't
know how to lie
or tell the truth.
They tell and tell
till you are told.
Cling to the banisters
of sleep until, until, until...

6.

Windows shut,
heat turned on,
slept ill.

 The softest
things we know
are full of bones.
I repeat, nothing is easy.
Dawn is a priest
looks at me severely--
every window is a church.

7.

Catenary--the way
a cable swoops,
how a straight line
behaves in the real world,
o pallid geometers.
The shortest distance
is always around some corner.
Lie on your side,
listen to your blood

talk into the pillow.

**The pillow will remember, be careful who you
sleep beside,
morning always asks hard questions.**

8.

**I mean we eat the kale
but do not know the farmer.
We see the lake but I don't swim.
See the difference? What if
the air was pure oxygen,
what would we see growing then?
We need the dark, the quiet one
with tender eyes who tells us No.**

asxa

3 October 2020

=====

**Six sides to the cube
plus silent Sabbath.
The one left over
is the one who gets to sing--
don't count, just hum along
and hope a few words come through
to greet the ears of the one
to whom all music hurries,
all song intends.**

3 October 2020

=====

**Scrawl your name
on every stone
until you find the one
that answers back.
Then you'll realize
what words are for.
Not just communication:
the c-word is useful
only among equals.
You want a language
that talks to the boss.
**

3 October 2020

=====

**How strange to dream
about the bed
you're sleeping on.
T'ang dynasty?
Each word a song?**

3 October 2020

=====

**Dead whale on the beach
low tide left him
ocean from all the earth
is here, anywhere water goes,
dead whale by dead barges
lying on the sand
I see it from the hilltop
and wonder who I am.**

3 October 2020

=====

All I am is anywhere else.
Mountain crag, no blade
of grass, what do they eat
and the rocks Tumble down.
Naked nursemaid flogs a child--
wait, is this religion?

2.

Mars is near the moon tonight,
something red, woke coughing
from an old disease, *la vie
humaine*. Caterwauling,
is that what I? Images
come to us from asteroids,
they pass and leave us
stuck with what they showed.

3.

golden pinecone on the Pantheon,
so who is God when you say the word?
Alphabets all over us, yet hard

to pronounce the stone,
the creep of glaciers
past the sleeping bears.
The child starts crying
and the nursemaid stops.

4.

You see, old friend, hold
firmly to what you don't quite know,
leap towards the unknown
but do it quietly, at home,
in the dark. You can get
anywhere from here.
Sometimes music helps,
the news from Mozart,
listen. Tender moss
you think his name must mean
when you first hear it
but then comes the slow
movement of the ninth concerto
and a whole new century
falls into your hands.
There is no one in the music
ever, only you.

5.

Pay for the privilege
we say, barbers and harlots,
cowboys and clerks.
Everybody is part of the act.
My friends are in Philadelphia now,
for instance, they have their reasons,
rivers, children, universities,
maybe even owls in the park.
A city is naught without owls.

6.

Not trying to be clever,
just trying to walk the boulevard
from the museum to the cathedral
and study the nature of God again,
between what God has made
and what we have made of Him.
If him is the right word
but let it pass for now,
I have so many mistakes to correct
and the trees along the way
are already losing their leaves.

7.

Why are they allowed
to show such things,
crumbling mountain,
starving bear? Don't we know
that images last forever
and what we see becomes us,
terror tattoo of things seen?
I wake between nowhen
and nowhen else
to write down what they told
my eyes, and sleep showed more,
now i have to wash the images
with words so that you know
but are not hurt by what you know.

8.

I said the nurse had stopped,
I mean the child whimpered
his way back to sleep
through the broken alphabet
which is all we have left
of how the world was made.

4 October 2020

ON THE FEAST OF ST FRANCIS

**There is no other way.
Put it all aside,
stroke the river,
calm the noon.
Everything is ready
to be you. You watch
the sky a lot, and why not,
it's there for you always,
like everything you give away.
Everything is an answer--
just find the question.
And he did. Miracle of silence,
absence, hillside, a man alone.**

4 October 2020

= = == = =

The sound of it
over the dark.
Not the three
a.m. freight train
headed south,
another sound--
isnt it a sound
if we can hear it?
Sometimes we hear
the sounds inside
our bodies, pulses,
gurgle of digestion.
But this is outside
if it is at all. It comes
with the dark and rides
on it, a sound
with pictures in it
so that I wake.
If waking is
what this is, this
antidote to quietude,

**this sense of what
all these years
the night has been
trying to tell me.**

4 October 2020

=====

Now in the dark
I will write a letter
I will regret at morning.
To whom shall I speak?
To you, safest of all I know,
but even you will shake
your head as you read
the things I have to say.
Here goes: you are far
and I am here. No sense
in that. Turn it inside out:
I am you and far is near.
It's Sunday so wear gold
to honor the sun. Here you are
in me, and I in you, but you
may have other colors of your own.
Dear you, it is confusing
to be you for me, and I venture
to suppose you find it likewise
perplexing to be me. Don't be
so formal, you say, we're both

**confused, and isn't that
the point of the exercise,
to mix up what we love with
what we are? You're right--
see, I'm glad I wrote to you.
But who knows what I'll think tomorrow.**

4 October 2020

=====

**Drink the message,
the grease around the rim
will remind you of him
who gave you the word
but told you to think.**

4 October 2020

SERMON, LOW-CHURCH, URGENT

1.

**Walk the maybe.
Walk the wolf—
all the happen
is music now. Bend
your voice this way:
grammar of the heat
one more blue flower.**

2.

**Live in a bower
but night her in a tower.
day him in a letter
blue lines on pale papyrus
imitating Nile, or green.
Then you'll be safe.**

3.

**Though not necessarily from the wolf.
Wolves portend lechery and old age.
Guard against these. Their bite
is hard to cure. But there are ways—
hence the bower and the tower
and the language purling so raptly -
from whose lips?**

4 October 2020

LYRIC, TRUCKS

**the chirp
of reverse,**

**going backwards
is the way to school
the growl of learning
mile by mile
the local roar.**

**2.
O I get frightened
when I think *out there*,
the open places
all ripe for danger,
fantasy,
 the roads
talk to themselves.
Open vistas soon breed war.**

3.

When I drove into Laramie
the first thing I saw
was a huge dinosaur.

They said
it was bronze, a symbol,
science, university
but I'm not sure. Symbols
walk around at night,
their favorite weapons
are our poor little dreams

4.

from which the trucks
of morning
angry wake us.

In my kind of island
you can hear the grass grow.

5 October 2020

WHAT I SAW

Stone monument
abaft the trees.
I can't read
the figure— allegorical,
historical, political? —
upright on the plinth.
Its face is turned
from me, lifted
to the sky. The sky
clearly knows who
the figure is, and why
a ton or two of granite
lifts it here
and now. I do not know
if I should revere,
admire or deplore
the personage this
human form presents
definite as stone.

5 October 2020, Red Hook

WHAT IT WAS

I found out later when we drove out. Across the parking lot from the car I had been sitting in, two trees shaped the gap between them in a way curiously symmetrical, so that the space between them was filled for me with the grey luster of a n ordinary house beyond the trees.

The shape was monument, the grey meant stone. Some deceptions are benign. If I'd been wearing glasses, no statue and no poem.

5.X.20, RH

=====

**What time is it
to come to me,
agile as autumn breeze,
reminding. Putting
mind back then
when it began to think,
streets beach marshes
el trains aloft,
the sound of shadow,
sound of sunlight.
A borough by the sea,
anything lost.**

**5 October 2020
Red Hook**

IN THE UKRAINE

When I think of you
I see you in a wheat field,
tall and slim as you are
you slip easily through the wheat,
tall as you are you can see
over the highest stalks of grain
so you can see the whole field
stretch out to the horizon.
You are lost in the wheat
but your body knows the way,
like a little wolf you carry close
to your heart, it knows the way.

2.

I see you walking there
apparently aimlessly.
shoulders brush apart the grasses
that close on your hips as you pass.
Aimless, but the little wolf knows,

3.

Here you go,
your shadow before you—
it knows the way too.
Sun behind you, her rays
gilding the wheat
and suddenly there is water
at your feet yes, a river
us there, you see a raft
floating right there, maybe
it will bring you to us
all by itself.

5 October 22020

4.

The river took you by surprise.
You wade out and climb aboard,
log raft, you think of Amazon
but this is north, northern limit
of the wheat. The wheat grows,
the raft floats by itself,
pr course with the current,
this is not magic, this
is pure going, and you always have.
Going is always being lost,
going is always being home.
You read the ripples,
you read the glints of sunlight
that look like sudden little fish
but hey have no bodies
only momentary light,
but you can read them,
by now you can read anything,
that comes with always being gone.

6 October 2020

====

I'll tell you at the end
what I should have said
at the beginning. Color
is the child of light, lose it
and you're all alone.
Color is the way things
feel their way to you,
reach out and touch you
without touching, healing
from afar. And I suppose
when we buy paint and spread
it over natural things we
are children try to play too,
red barn, beautiful blasphemy.

6 October 2020

== ==

Orate, fratres
and sisters too,
our best work
is prayer, no
matter who to.

6.X.20

= = = = =

**Almost remember
the rock and the riddle--
the beech tree is trying
to nrying back my mind**

**yes, it had something
to do with leaves swirling upward
the way we feel about one another**

**it's always autumn in the heart,
wind and weather and who knows
what will be here tomorrow,
all that angst
after the proud Augusts of desire,**

**Oh don't be silly, the tree says,
none of that is so,
or at worst it's only so
and not forfever—
and speaking of pride
your dream marches on
without you, it doesn't need you**

to climb its Everests
or spill the last drops of wine
into a poor man's palm.

But, dear tree, I worry how far
the world can go without me--
isn't that a legitimate religion
for a working man?

I just want to remember
the words I thought
before I went to sleep
and left them there
on the empty platform
when the dark took me away.

So dry the mouth when I woke
as if i had been speaking all night long.

The beech tree nods:
Yes, it was, you were, you did
and I heard every word you said—
I thought you were speaking to me,
do you want to take them back?

**The night is more honest than that.
A word once spoken
becomes a stone,
a life of its own.**

7 October 2020

====

**On an armature of water
I sculpt the sound of what I mean.
Go watch a woman walking
along the surf of the sea,
wet-ankled, eyes very wise.**

7 October 2020

TRANSMUTATION

for Vesna

Lift the dragon
in your air,
the warmth which
cheers on his fire

he listens and listens
to all you say
then breathes it out
as rock and steam

from which all the rivers
of earth condense and flow.

7 October 2020

Thanking Vesna for the Dragon Notebook

=====

**Hearing the gospel of that music
I knw there is no hope,
we have no hope
except to goon and on
and this going is our paradise.**

**7/8 October
(*Listening to S-S' Sym,3, 2nd mvt.*)**

=====

Near enough to the beginning
to begin. Sunray's angle
through far trees, not near,
archaic geometry of light
enfolding us.

Thing by thing
it says: **Want more**
to see more. Without desire
there is no perceiving,
Your eyes were your first hands.

2.
The animals come home.
Nuisance bears and foxes,
cougars from the mountain even.
they were gone for a while
letting us get on with it
but now the Return.
They are led by appetite
and on our lives they feed.

**We shrink back and they expand--
the rising sun explains it lucidly.
Animals, humans,
we are each other's shadows.**

3.

**The roofers are on their way today
to protect us from the sky.
Eagles and hawks and the lord of rain,
timid houses afraid of the dark,
afraid of what we see in the light.**

4.

**Hundreds of small birds
hurrying west to east.
Too small for me to tell
which kind they are, quick,
compact, not clustered
but a long spaced out flock,
then a few singletons,
then an smaller flock and then
the lingerers, a few last ones**

**flying higher than the others' path.
I take this for an answer
to a question I haven't learned
to ask yet. What
else can we do with what we see?**

8 October 2020

HAWK

**left a feather
left her a feather
she wears in a book.**

**2.
Once you stop
going to church
it's hard to go back,
church has no back,
it's always ahead of you
no matter which.**

**3.
Every book
is a prayer book.
Simple as that.**

4.

Hard to decide
walls of the temple
face on the altar
cup on the shrine.

5.

Every bird has a feather
different from other.
Fingerprint it leaves on the air.
Or here, beside the old birdbath,
drink or attack or its dues for a swim.

5.

That is fanciful,
hence wrong.
The shape of the feather
elongated oval,
the stripe steps ascending.
There is no money in the air.
Everything is here.
Hawk feather by the water

**cherished by hand,
tucked in a bundle of pages
to read her way home.**

9 October 2020

====

**(Plague is an angel
or a devil who changes
as nothing else can
the relations between men.
A kiss from afar
is no kiss at all.
To save our bodies
we deny them to others,
deny them to ourselves.
I wonder even if a song
from far off is a song at all.**

9.X.20)

ORCHESTRA OF LADDERS

men working on the roof
painting the metal
pointing the brick.
Seven, already a little
blue in the sky.
The nature of work
fascinates, the oldest
hobby of humankind,
work for a living,
why do we it, is there an if
in the situation? So many
of our friends don't
do it at all, trustifarians,
deeders on family,
slopers, sleepers, smiley
get-by-ers, why do I,
why do I. To pay
for the roof over our head,
the desk I sit at,
the light I can turn off now
the day has begun.

9 October 2020

= = = = =

(after B.C.)

Read me the room
this word once was
I misread from the screen,
read and wanted
to love there, want to,
waving out the window
if need be, to see three,
to be in and go out and still be
and still be able to be back in,
a room! A word
of my own!

Every mistake
is where the real begins,
the real poem,
the word you let me live in

not matter what color the sky
lets itself be, natural,
o Nature you darling,
but in Asia they pump

color in the turquoise
and here we say out prayers--

how big the smallest word is,
room for us all in it,
no kayak of lewd privacy
but a three-master full-sailed
with breath enough for us

and isn't every day a sea,
a place to be, and to come from,
water streaming from the calves,
we are salt are we not?
See, I have lived in your word.

9 Oxtober 2020

====

Never get around
to counting the days.,

they take care of themselves.
like the hairs on someone's head—

I wondr whose.

9 October 2020

HIPPOLOGY

Slap her on the rump
and shell go faster
but who will she be
when you get there?

*

My father made it clear—
if you love women
you must love horses too.
The first is easy,
the second I find hard.
Bad child. I try, I try.

*

A horse is that big brown warm thing
between the small blue policeman
up there and the even smaller
me down here, me with a sugar lump
just doing what I'm told, with frightened
fingers Feed The Nice Horse.

(6.X.20)

9 October 2020

====

**Dream exhausted my
creativity such as it is
for today, expect
nothing of me.**

**The vast
factories, ironworks,
smoky winter landscape,
temples, basilicas and all
those men and women
each so distinct, articulate.
And the old crusted snow
we clambered up or down on,
streetless city, Anachron,
city campus built of broken time.**

**Four hours the dream lasted
before I found the building
I was meant for all along,
a party, civil, going on,**

they mocked me for my teetotaling ways,
gave me apple soda to drink,
not bad, shallow cup, shallow
smile and then I woke at last
into the sacred silence of the trees.

I mean here. Where I have
nothing to report, no plan,
I have built all the buildings
once today already, the Ionic
columns stand by themselves
and the smoke goes up.

The beech tree waves at me now,
always something left to be said
it says. I sat with friends
at the table and wanted nothing.
The absence of desire
is the strangest country of all.
The vast factories are empty
and all the ironwork is ice-cold.

10 October 2020

TALKING TREE

The talking tree
full of signs
or signaling
when all the other
trees are mute
or only mumble
at the moment,
a wonder. A beech
I think, I held
a leaf of it once still
safe on its branch,
thanked its symmetry
and let it go, it rose
up a little the way
we all do when set free.

10 October 2020

WHAT THE TREE SAID.

*I open my ARMS for thee
to see the darkness
that serves me well for heart,
the current full of life
that flows from the unknown,
the four chambers of our lives,
past, future, dream and waking.
I spread all my arms and change
the way the light comes at you,
leaf and branch, sun and shade.
intricate alphabet of give and take away,
hold me in mind,
I will never stop talking.*

10 October 2020

ETZ HAYYIM

**Lift your castle
up on my root
and set the tree
of life on fire?**

**No need for that—
it always is
a blaze of meaning
and we are the flames
of it, our souls
the veins of its leaves,**

**arise, that much
we can say or cry,
lift up the castle
and let it rest
on the air itself
from which such
notions come to us,
the air that feeds the fire.**

10 October 2020

= = = = =

Talking to her
is like climbing a tree

she is tall
but I am taller
how can I climb
a tree shorter than I am

and when I was a child
I always wanted to climb
a tree but never did
never could I think
and they wouldn't let me
anyhow but will she?

What will it be like
when I do? "I want
to know you," I said
and she looked at me

looked like a birch tree
in springtime, leafy

but with its mind
on something else.
Just looked. Silence
I suppose meant
I was stuck with myself,
my wants, my pleading
for knowledge. Trees
don't go to college.
They know. Her look
said What more could
you hope to know
than that I am?

10 October 2020

ASCENSIONS

Lao-tse on his ox.
they all go away
at the end of their day
and where they go
is deep and high and far
inside us, heaven
of the human heart
into which Moses climbed
and Lord Hesus simply
strolled away through the sky.

11 October 2020

=====

**The tree tastes,
passes on
the air's information,**

**whispers This
is the boundary
to which you've come
between what can be said
and what can be known**

**call it winter
if you must
the silent world,
waiting for a new name.**

11 October 2020

====

**Of course I'm allowed
to use Hebrew--
I had a mother.
What more do you need
to prove you belong?**

11.X.20

====

**What year is it
after all**

**and why did we
start counting?**

**Suppose it had
no name but now—**

**how could they tax us
and who could they be?**

11 October 2020

=====

**My breath is short as a dove this day,
white and murmurous on the branch.
We all had other creatures we had to be,
remember I pulled your tail once, tiger?
Remember how we swam in cloud
when Brazil still kissed Africa?
It's not so bad to be little a bit
until the word comes back
and makes the wings grow long
and I can shout again over this busy sea.**

11 October 2020

====

**Really listen--
it's hard enough to hear
through all the silence,**

**listen hard.
the quiet percolation of desire,
soft sand settling sound of song
ready to be sung?
Whine of wasp in the window?
Too loud for music, this silence.**

**Fold it in your hands,
smooth on the skin
quiet as the lines in your palm.**

11 October 2020

FAMILY TREASURES

I think of the words
my great-grandfather whispered
into his wife's ear
before he left for India.
Never came back. She never
told them to another,
never write them down.
But they must be somewhere
still whispering in space,
no words ever lost,
where could they go?
There is no Orient for them,
or if there is, it's where
they all are coming from
in the first place. The First Place—
that's where I;m going.
Maybe that's what he said.

11 October 2020

=====

**I like to type the word October,
something satisfying about its shapes,
round and enclosing,
the sweet lie of calling
our tenth month the Roman eight,
those two extra months
luscious in my mouth
like a big forkful of huckleberry pie.**

11 October 2020

=====

**Two joggers just flashed by,
dark clothed in the bright day.
What strange people,
there's something mad
and magical in what what they do,
they fling open the door
of the house they live in, leap
out and run all the way home.**

11.X.20

COMME D'HABITUDE

**Hurrying
to be now**

**catch my breath
before it tells
dark into daylight—**

**then where would I be?
I'd never catch up.**

11.X.20

====

**They care a lot about the rug
they sleep on, the stairs
they stack their books on,
the cats in the alley keeping watch.**

**Everything in its place,
just like a dream. Pistons,
obsolete diseases, tokens
for the subway long ago,
fresh milk poured on your
very own ankles, warm, warm,
the inside comes out.**

**They care a lot about antiques,
they want to be old, old as Louis XIV
or at least Victoria, remember her,
mother of most of the world?
Back when bodies worked.**

*The leaf is torn, the woman laughed,
don't you find that funny?*

**A page is torn out of a book
and flutters to the floor.**

An owl calls outside.

This is that page.

12 October 2020

COLUMBUS DAY

**On this day we decided we were found.
Before that we were other people,
rusty swords, broken roof tiles,
cuneiform tablets, you name it,
anybody but us. Then the sea
coughed up one brave Hebrew
in his three Spanish boats
just like Jonah in another book.**

**But this book is ours,
the pages are still turning,
read fast, little brothers,
our sisters are running out the door.
Five hundred years and we still
can't understand a single word
the rock and the tree and the river speak.
And they keep talking all the time.**

12 October 2020

=====

**Alps are mostly edges--
how about you?**

**Are you content with waffle irons,
school crossing guards, chewing gum?**

**Won't it all go away pretty soon
like ring-necked pheasants
and the autumn moon?**

**Some things come back--
but how long since you
in particular smoked a
cigarette, not king size, no filter,
no cork tip.**

**Not to get personal
but you see what I mean.**

**Can you still smell the eucalyptus
air of Oakland anyJanuary,
are you a ferry? Can you waltz?**

**At least I need a shave. Certainty
eludes philosophers, comes prompt
to the hands of businessmen.
Everything causes trouble.
Everything costs money. Paintings
make walls stand still—fact.
Çatal Höyük told us that.
Paint a goddess above your bed,
a guardian catamount over toe door,
a sailboat over the mantle
and soon we will all be safe.
Or gone, which may be the same thing.**

12 October 2020

IN THE SHAFT

**The elevator stops
at different years,
doors slide open
on 1942, Santa's Workshop
and a world at war,
1990 death all round me
but a love is born.
Different people, different people
on and off at every stop,
who am I fooling, they're
all just me, just me
like some old song,
Charles Trenet, *mon enfance*.
Or something leaner,
sweeter, like the leather belt
you chew when you're jittery,
the nun's rosary swinging from her waist,
so many pieces all saying same.
I am all alone in this sluggish thing
they dare to call this box a *car*.**

12 October 2020

=====

**An autumnary day in Oxtober.
Your ankles take first chill
when you go out slippered
to cast the offerings, seed
for birds heaped to hem the wind.
JNot much moving through,
leaves still quiet on the deck
as if they were enjoying that
sleep that eluded me but maybe
you slept well, I hope you did,
I am not envious but I wish
I could sleep better these days.
What is there to fear in autumn?
Winter coming and the snows of time.**

12 October 2020

WAKING TO IT

Less said than better
sand alarm the glass
it slips through: damp
slows. Water stops time.
The little glimpse we
take as fact. Less said
than hummed, less
sung than heard--how?
by watching the changes
in the light, it takes
a life, there is nothing
more to know.

2.

Inside my chest
a forest seems to grow.
Smaller, a woodlot
maybe, I feel it breathing
its million leaves on
one soft breeze.
We are afraid of everything

that lives inside us.
afraid of wind and water,
stone and sigh, but I dare
to wander in my woods.
The paths are clearest
late at night, thinking nimbler.

3.
It seems to take
woman and man
to make a child.
If so, hen when
it comes to the poem
language is our mother
who is the father?
We can learn a lot
from being us.

4.
Quiet rain washed the colors out
no leaf moves in any tree,
even the most talkative.

**I suppose grey is a color too,
it has a name, after all,
what more can we want?
The right name for now!**

5.

**Remember the movie where the girl
counted all the orgasms happening
that moment in Paris and came
up with fifteen?**

**Unlikely scarcity...five million
people in one same dark
and only *quinze*?**

**I think she must have meant
a different kind of rapture,
a basilica comforting its hill,
a statue busy in its little park.
We do not know enough
about how things make love
even though our own dreams
are filled with their kisses and caresses.
Every night an orgy outside
and the walls of our house**

**are making lovetoo. A wonder
we can sleep at all, or ever
bother to wake up
from that unstoppable rapture.**

13 October 2020

RADIATOR

**The hiss of habit
happens. Notice
seldom, comment
seldomer. Is that
a proper word?
Or just more water
gurgling up the pipe
to warm the morning
and rouse the new day?
After all, what else
Is language for?**

13 October 2020

=====

No sun
seen yet
but a little
color
coming back.
Step by step
tottering
we learn the light.

13.X.20

= = = = =

A leaf caught
on a phone line
trembles.
Nothing else
is moving.
It must be listening
to words or
even better pure
current running,
the ever-changing
nothing-at-all
we learned from amber
that tells us
almost everything we know.

13.X.20

MIRROR

mirror
on the wall why
can't I learn to smile?
I think I'm smiling
but the mirror asks
Why are you mad at me,
why don't your lips part
why do your cheekbones
glare at me, monster?
I can see amusement
in your eyes but for all
I know it's at my expense.
I thank the mirror
for its candor, maybe
running water would show
me smiling. Or at least
show less of what I seem.

13.X.20

=====

**They say things loom.
Words always show
the way
weave is coming towards
the pattern we are caught in
day by day,
maybe as thinkless as sparrows?**

**A day goes by
and we know no creature
goes without thinking,
thinking is walking
through if and maybe and then**

**there you are,
with the spider webs of thought
tickling your neck
where the collar doesn't cover,**

collar of all our vocations—

**what hinking calls out
loud in the back
of the mind in the dark**

**and we hear it.
We are chosen.
We are woven**

into the endless cloth.

14 October 2020

=====

If you wait too long
the milk flows
back into the cow,
the river hides in the rock,
and in bright noonlight
you seem to hear an owl casll.

If you wait too long
things change their tune
in other words,
things pretend they don't know you,
stare out at you
like a Higland bull behind the fence,

if youwait too long
you begin to feel again
the things lost long ago,
sluippers and spoons and quotations
you wil never bpre your
children with again.

If you wait too long,
the curtain slides back
across the window
all by itself
and where is your daylight now,
your arbor grapevine,
your new-leased car?

Things change color
when you wait too long,
every banana tells you that,
and walls and waterfalls,
don't be so sure
time is on your side—

yes, that might be an angel up there
or just a Japanese teenager flying his kite.

14 October 2020

=====

Moments under the microscope
a lost étude of Chopin
composed under the influence
of a student of Anton Mesmer—

the composer confursed Mesmer
with an ordinary MD at the Salpêtrerie
who raved about microbes and mystery
enough to set off a chain of intervals

soon quieted into tune, transformed
counterpointed slyly and changed key.
I'm surprised you don't know it—
I hear it every time I close my eyes.

14 October 2020

,

THE GIVEN

1.
Silence is an entirety
around me,
the fur of distance
is not stirring.
Nothing breathing.
Amiable dark,
the clock relents.

2.
Wake now. Be another.
Any other.
You have been the sea too long—
earth yourself a rock or three
even if a few mermaids
sun themselves on them.
Listen!

3.

**There is liberty
and there is lawn
stretching rabbit-cheerful
towards the boundless forest:**

Q: What is both land and sea.

A: A tree.

Q: How is that possible?

**A: Ask the soft wood,
the hard wood,
the wood always knows.**

14 October 2020

TODAY

**is a far cry
from now.
Now is naked,
today is cluttered in
dirty old clothes.
Now sings pure tones
that may or may not
form words
but today mumbles
yesterday's news
and ancient anxieties.
Today is a trench
waiting for war
but now is a vast plain
fertile and green
all the way to the horizon,
now is a door,
a leap through the door,
a fountain, a mountain
a bowl full of cream.**

14/15 October 2020

====

**There are people who have sisters
and others who have brothers.
There is a powerful seldom-noted
difference between
brother-havers and sister-havers.
A new anthropology
would start with this,
the radical difference
that nobody notices.
And then there are those
strange almost extra-
terrestrial beings who have both.**

14/15 October 2020

=====

**Watch the diamonds
fall from the sky
as the sun comes up.
I'm waiting, I'm waiting,
I need a splendor
in my hand or on my finger
so I can look up to the light
and know now I am part of it too.**

14/15 October 2020

=====

**Cast pebbles in the sea.
If you toss enough
you can walk on them
if you walk quickly
all the way to where
the last stone fell.
And there you'll find
a person waiting
whose gender complements
your own. And there
you'll stand and say
This is my country. Yes,
they'll say, it is ours.**

14/15 October 2020

=====

**You can't hear it
but it's music,
you can't read it
but it speaks.
Signs everywhere
longing for your sleep.**

14/15.X.2020

CHANSON D'AMOUR

**Tail-free primate
walking on all twos
why do I hanker
after you?**

**Because
we fit together
not easily but well,
I am the sound
and you are the bell.**

15.X.2020

=====

**Tossing the talk
back and forth
an Irish dream
leaves on the lawn,
o autumn is an anxious
neighbor, a hum
to come, time
slipping from our hands.
But the talk
keeps telling
what more do we need
but what we are?**

15.X.20

=====

**My anxieties are general
my desires specific--
that's how we know
I'm not some other kind
of animal but just human.
We spend our lives choosing,
Nietzsche or the movies,
up to our ankles in the slosh
of change we dare, our job
the invention of difference.**

15 October 2020

=====

**Naturalists
are scary people
they believe
in what they see.**

15.X.20

=====

A little uneasy
you seem I said
in German but
no movement
of his shaggy head
signaled whether
either of us
had understood

*

Among the night philosophers
so much discussion of dawn.
Children plan summer vacation
mountains and meadows
and secret places. I am
the only one who knows who I am.

*

The sky is grey
they love me with,
chalk dust or chowder--
it is a hungry science

they know me with.
I mean the kiss.

*

It happens sometimes:
got her, letter
before it was sent,
the words left dancing
by themselves
in the empty room. Talk
about religion! Prayers
dancing before the altar of.

*

Doubt is precious
among the night scholars,
those scientists of maybe,
Certainty leads only to silence
but loud and sweet
the singing of the mystified.

*

In the story it told me
he never answered me,

never gave a sign. Just
sat there glum at the bare
formica table top, pale
as his hands. A long table,
as in a school dining room,
nothing on it, not even his hands.

6 October 2020

=====

**What do you do
with a dream?
Like any other
word you say it,
write it down.
Dream is a worldwide
discourse, give back
generously as you
are given. Maybe
all we really are
is answerers.**

16.X.20

THE MORNING

was waiting for me at the crossroad,
both of us a little bleary,
me from listless dream
and god knows what
was on its mind. But here
we are, among the roads,
each one beckoning, trees,
lamps, vistas, basilicas,
shopping malls, garages.
The street maps were still on,
a few of them, reading
the dark of the day. Well,
I said, what are you telling me?
The morning smiled and waved
one hand at the little woods nearby
and the other hand patted my chest.
I got the message. Go back
to sleep, you left something there
on the other side of light.

16 October 2020

=====

**Fool me with fall leaves,
fool me with names.
I try to remember
what each one means,
where each comes from,
so many, so many
and yet I have to know.
How else can I ever
know who you really are?**

16 October 2020

=====

**Enough ink
to think with—**

that's all you need.

16.X.20

=====

**In a place where there are seven rivers
stone walls still stand
never roofed-over—**

**hey did not fear
what comes or could come from the sky—
and in those open lucid chambers**

language was born.

16 October 2020

=====

**Am I a month already
from me?
From time?**

**When I was asleep
from what spring did I sip
to slake what thirst**

**or did I dare
the waters of the brook itself
that flows past me still**

**on its own way home?
Not like me to take risks—
I repose on uncertainty,**

doubt soft as a cloud.

16 October 2020

TOUT ECRIRE

**I write whatever
comes to mind—**

**who am I
to block that traffic?**

16 October 2020

=====

**The shoppers
in their masks
hurry in and out
of the big chain
pharmacy.
Beyond the cars
the trees too
are changing color
as we speak though
no word is said.**

**(15.X.20, Red Hook)
16 October 2020**

THE DIFFERENCES

walk through the trees
to know
the burden of identity.
Blue to be a bird,
and then the yellow falls
from sun sky to be green
and you know all the rest.
But not my name.
The names are hard.

2.
Given the color and the shape
you reach for a book.
Given a book you reach for a word.
Given a word you give it to a friend
at least you think you're giving
but who are you
and who is he, or she, to bear
what you have found?
We silence children
to keep them from telling the truth.

3.

Only late in the morning of life
have I come to understand
the peopleness of trees,
the talkative, the tender,
the fragile, sturdy, enduring.
Qualities we emulate without awareness,
we lean on them, we build
our boses from them,
we burn them to keep warm.
But maybe all this is
part of their plan too.

4.

Identity means plan.
Blueprint. Architect's
rendering with no
architect in sight.
On site. Picture a tree
before a long flat house
lots of windows in a metal wall.
The tree is a blue spruce,

conical and tall. Now tell
from this information alone
who lives in the house, and who
their true love will be, and how
many children will they have.
Will it be real. Will the crow
deign to perch on such a flat roof.
If I were an artist I would
draw cookies on the lawn to tempt the birds.

5.
See how far our investigations have come.
The radio plays The Gift to be Simple
which if we were a decent people
would be our national anthem
and no more rockets' red glare
and no more flags. Mother Ann Lee
who learned the song from the angels
is buried not far away, runway
of Albany Airport, where no
fatal crash has ever happened
though it is the oldest airport
we have, almost as old as the song.

See what I mean. you walking museums,
you scholars of the ordinary,
you wave your hands politely
at the beings you should be
becoming, the ones you should be
among all the notorious identities.

6.
I look at all
that I have said
and wonder
where I got it.
For the moment
I don't wonder
if I have a right
to speak--I'll
go on till they
stop me, or they,
the others,
stop coming
close enough
to be said.
When I say Listen

to me I mean
Forgive me
for speaking
words from elsewhere
hungering for you,
you right now,
to hear is to be free.

7.

OK, I can't dance,
not worth a pebble
in your hoe to show me
how to do, no,
I am of the slipper folk,
the shufflers downtown,
the stand here until
that gorgeous sun comes up.
I tell my beads a thing or two
and wait for the lady--
does dance always have to be moving?
I remember Yvonne Rainer
leaning standing by a quiet wall
motionless except for all

the little ways a body moves
when it's at rest. This
was the most dance I ever saw.

8.

So we should really need
a passport to be silent,
enter unspeaking into the
quivering dark from which
all language comes. Passport
to the other side. Signed
by your mother tongue
and witnessed by your true love.
Who knows what you'll learn
in that country, and when
if ever you come back
what language you'll be speaking.
You'll stand in the market
and speak clearly
until someone comes along
who understands what you say,
just like any poet since the start of time.

17 October 2020

TO LUTOSLAWSKI

**The décor falls off the wall
the widow waits at the well
and so forth. Democracy
is the most fragile song.**

**Hear me while you can,
mouse-foot shifting sly
among the little bottles,
ink, cosmetics, juice**

**to nake the world else.
You remnember else—
you were there before
palm trees and pilgrims,**

**before all the bother
of belief. Come back to now,
beloved, all m my noise
is a carvavan to you. Thee,
as we used to say. But then.**

17 October 2020

TO MARTINU

To hear without thinking—
what a bird that would be!
It could fly haldway to forever
right to the seacoast ofnow.
Softly said, a word is waiting,
your soft fibgers, maiden,
feel it spaesking, warm
in rough rock—always a stone
beside the sea. Surf me, o Sea!
she cries. Let the dragon
grammar of ordinary life
cool its flaming meanings
just for now. Let me
be the Sea! Yes, I heard her
cry that, it sounded like,
what was it, the wind hurrying
to get home? Subway doors
sliding shut and a man
cries Wait, wait? Glum
silence. The train goes, wind
falls. You have to say it all
over again. It's so quiet

my fingers too are trembling
as if I had to play a great
harp that had no strings, beat
my fist against air alone
to keep time with, with what?
Every silence is a question—
did you know that? In Prague
in the old days they stood
up on a tower and shouted
their questions into the wind—
the river was kind enough below
to flow their inquiries away
and leave the silent steeples
to give their saint responses.
Don't make me keep reminding
you of all this—you know it too,
you were there when they
(remember them?) first brought
the sea to your attention, first
showed what water could do
when applied to human skin.
And we were born without knowing!
Everything takes so long—
that's why silence counts.

**And now I hear the answer—
it's so quiet it always means you.**

**But a new wave comes along,
erases what I said in the sand.
Infidel articlesm to lose so quick
what my life meant to proclaim.
But the maiden still can run along,
stirring countless messages,
grains of sand falling from ankle,
instep, intimnate squees of toes,
yes, everything can be read,
even the unwritten. Yes, this
is the unwritten, the glass unbroken,
the shadow never cast, rise up
and see what happens then,
No meaning but in doing, so arise.**

17 October 2020

TO BACEWICZ

Easy to be glad to be gone
or at least cool in going.
Not a gong—not a gun
to start your run. Something
slighter, amusing even,
bird on a street sign,
child in a puddle. light,
light, called so for a reason,
light, light, shimmer
in the spine. Keep going
as if you had to,
you have to. the light
is watching every move,
even the sweetest swing
you ever rode from the old
chestnut tree still
depends there, attending

*

but you come
and sit beneath the branch—
no need to swing
from it these days,

**the world swings for you,
shunt and hunt and count
the stars that no one sees.
You know they're there,
you feel their Paracelsian
potency in your pre-dream
REMfree repose,
what we never know
stirs all we are and do and know.**

17 October 2020

TO M. CAMARGO GUARNIERI

What to do now
when it does it
all for me> Why
did I sling on
this silken tie,
lace up my shoes
and wobble up
the creaking steps
to the dance?

Isn't there a role
for me in this
mystery? Sleuth
comes easy,
villain maybe
but please, please
not the corpse—
my feet keep twitching
and my breath is loud.
All dressed up
and no one to be,

I feel like Gulliver
in Miniland. useless
and very conspicuous.
Give a kid a drum
and you know what comes.
But they are kind to me
in their way, these little
people passing through me,
friends from god knows when
and elegant matrons
glimpsed in dream,
kind to me, retired rabbis,
children of the wind.

I mean the mind
but then I always do.
And it can be scary too,
this empty dance floor,
barn dance, smashed guitar,
urns of still warm milk
waiting for one more
character I've never seen,
the one who brings the mlk to yoi.

Maybe I'll do a few
turns on the floor
all my myself,
you never know,
the dance may bring
the dancer, the way
air bings the birds—

something awry
with that comparison,
birds have wings
and I have none.
Or none I can use,
none you can see,
but Wisdom hath
a telescope the good
book says, and she
may behold even me
swoop above the battlefield
saving the fallen
from the jaws of hungry dogs
who whine like violins
when foiled of their prey.

**And yes! The dancers come,
ginham and phony-folksy
pigtails and cowboy boots,
hop\through the wide doors
around me, welcome,
o dancers from the sky!**

17 October 2020

=====

**These trees
what do you think
these very trees**

**these trees
are thinking
about us,
you, yes
very you**

**so what are you thinking?
Not about—
thinking, like poetry,
is not about.**

**It is itself
yourself
in you,
your very self.**

So what do you think?

18 October 2020

DE ARTE SCRIBENDI

**Sometimes it's worth
walking there
with a word on your wrist
like a falcon
you hunt with, ready
to fly off any moment
and seize up there
(where? where
is it hiding
in the broad sky?)
the thing you mean.**

**The walking matters--
your movement
animates the word.
Muscle has meaning--
to move is to mean.**

18 October 2020

THE TALISMAN

On the other hand
a talisman
something lingered
from her genesis

this morning everything
was long ago again
the squirrels on the lawn
ruffed like Queen Elizabeth

scattered as she walked
holding lightly in her
first hand a glass of water
our earliest sacrament

and the talisman
was amethyst
a gift that carried
weather with it

she could always feel
inside, where light
came to rest
after she has seen it
glisten in crystals.

18 October 2020

=====

**A child's wooden ruler
helps you decide
how many centimeters
in an English foot,
how many ducks
should be on one pond,
how many miles
till the music starts?**

18 October 2020

=====

**Persist
in being green.
The measure
changes. Frost
last night
in the hills however.
If I were a painter
I would say Blue
falls out of Green
hence yellow leaves.
I know what is blue
but not what Blue is.
Help me. Persist,
let the changes tell
till we are blue
ourselves so let
the winter come.
We have lived
in this town before.**

18 October 2020

=====

**The darkness decides
every night of our lives.
What obedient children
we are to our weather,
that wizard who waves us
for reasons of its own.
Light and dark—how binary!
Will we ever get to trinity?**

18.X.20

=====

**Poets
are like prisoners
scratching images
on the wall f their cell ,
pretty pictures
making the best of silence
by what they say.**

**(16.X.20)
18 October 2020**

WITCHING SEASON

Witches worry us.
The conversation
goes on inside, core,
fruit inside the rind.
Peeled away, the word
comes out, orange
in autumn sunlight, yes.
But we worry.
And why not? The juice
of what we fear
is somehow sweet: ask
any child if they'd rather
meet a wizard or a priest.
Somehow all our many lives
harvest is the time of fruit and hear.

2.
Rheostat, regulate
the flow. I slept
too soundly
to have anything to say.

3.

But dreamt about *faux-amis*, words that mean something other than what we mean when we pronounce them, write them down, whisper them to someone else. False friends, it means, and maybe the dream meant them too but made me think it was all about grammar not about grief.

4.

The pallor of things known compared to the somber colors of the guessed-at-- children love that, dressing up means lots of color, even that blaring white more shocking than scarlet.

**Color what you know
with what you don't!
Saturate the senses
with loud maybes,
call it dressing up for Halloween.**

**5.
Sun on Rainday
uh-oh.
Have I betrayed
the calendar again.
Or is it waiting,
my big glass of water,
out and up
beyond the conscious trees?**

**6.
We can find fear
in the meagerest evidence,
shadow of the witch's hat
falls across what we are reading,**

her cat rubs by our ankles,
her warlock husband growls
from every passing car.

She herself
is hidden, though, so deep
inside us we will never see.

19 October 2020

=====

I keep wanting it to be
the other side of it
whoever she is. I mean the one
in the sky we see
often with most casual eyes,
ours, regarding, then
shielding self, turning away.
i want it to be where
it comes from, across the sea
or whatever that is we breathe
and then no more atmosphere,
space they call it
but is there room in it for me
for all of me, the part
i am trained to call you?
for we are one thing,
a person in the night
a person who is almost here
the words are fluent already
someday the mouth will appear.

19 October 2020

BIRCH WHITE

Man carrying saplings

birch white little

recent trees

half a dozen

over left shoulder

why? Mystery

of little dead trees

in the cellar, why?

What is this house?

Why is this man?

2.

Gymnasts stretch

a ladder on the lawn

flat, jump

through its loops

like girls at hopscotch.

Left foot leap

up and right foot down

they do this

in plain sight,

secure as any mystery.

3.

Late afternoon,
colors quiet
the man carries back
a bigger load.
down the cellar steps
with him. with him.
the colors are going away,
windows stay dark—
isn't anybody home?

4.

Downstairs the saplings wait.
Not a fire for them,
I bet a construction,
art is on his mind
who bought them here,
Sculpture. Autumn
animal, the soul
with so many legs.

5.
I am outside
of anything,
outside and wondering.
Bring your own light
the evening says,
then carry me home.

19 October 2020,
Red Hook

(VARIATIONS ON TWO CLICJES)

ABSENCE

Absence.

Absence makes.

**Making means making something
that isn't here already,
making means elsewhere.**

**absence means elsewhere,
go to elsewhere and begin,**

absence makes the heart
**because the heart is never
here to begin with,
remember the Tin Man
in *the Wizard of Oz*, "If I only
had a heart,"**

**the road
goes to where the heart is gotten,**

absence makes the heart

and shows the way,

**the heart is a habit
that haunts somewhere else,
absence makes
you feel which way the heart must lie
beating true and faithful
in the desert of somewhere else,
go find the heart,
absence shows the way,**

absence makes the heart grow
**because the heart needs you,
the heart needs you to find it,
enfold it, surround it
with energy and eagerness,
chemicals and doubt and desire,
you need to grow the e hart,**

**absence shows you,
absence grows the heart in you,**

**by being far away
we know each other better,**

**the heart has hands
to hold you tight
and elsewhere is
the only way to here,**

**here where absence is
and *makes the heart grow fonder,***

**makes my heart go find her
the song said to wake me,
if I had only a heart
I could still find my way through
absence, absence close alongside me.**

20 October 2020

**OUT OF
SIGHT
the seeing
hunger in us
wakes up
in us
to make us
make up
purely
to make up
out of mind
alone what
we have seen.
the one we mean,
love, imagine,
never forget.
How can we forget
what we make up?**

20 October 2020

GRAFFITI

Do people still scribble on bathroom walls and toilet stalls? I want to found a society that neatly and without fuss writes subtly true and secretly encouraging remarks on such surfaces, tile or plaster or metal, little words but big enough for the elderly, tricky enough for the kids. Things like “What are you doing while your body is doing this?” or “Why are you reading me?” or “You don’t need a pumpkin to be Halloween.” I don’t know, it’s been a long time since I’ve been in a public bathroom. They must be lonely places now. We need to cheer up the walls themselves.

20.X.20

=====

**To close my eyes
and see
the other side again**

**the land I came from
over some uncharted sea—**

**could I still know how to tell
the church bell from the wishing well?**

I come from the strangest country.

20 October 2020

=====

Am I here yet?
Is this the puzzle
I was meant to solve?

The birds set it
by their silences,
each one a different kind,
all the colors of silence,

all their still wings.
To be here
is to be adequate
like light in the sky

a little, just enough
to tell it's been raining,
I hear something now
like voices, or wet hands.

21 October 2020

====

**Voices loud but far away,
words dissolve in distance
like salt in water
did you know that?
The taste is there a little
but no crystal left to read,
just the scary taste of loud.**

21.X.20

====

**Change
is the constant,
the most
frightening of all.**

21.X.20

====

Then who in dream
was so priestly night,
married two women
or rather explained
church merely blesses
their union, they confer
the sacrament on each other,
you may kiss the bride
I said to each, standing
firmly upright in the moving
train, compartment, England,
Essex, headed south. Later
in a new bookstore in Rhinebeck
shabby old books on shaky shelves
just being set up by a friend
I blessed them in good Church Latin.
But I still don't think either
of me was really me.

21.X.20

=====

In Fairyland where I was born
my mother kept a seal coat in the closet.
Outside the windows of our house
it slowly turned into America,
mulberry tree and winter coats,
Gerritsen Beach and coal to be shoveled,
but inside the house the Fairy silence lasted,
Catuso on rhe phonograph,
MacCormack, Stokowski,
Fairy music from far away
and ivy twitching in the windows.
It's stll America outside now
though less and less each day
as the trees come marching back
trying to calm our cherished fears.
I stay inside these days
and stroke the toy seal on the sofa.

21 October 2020

=====

**Hard to read
what I said,**

**fell asleep before
it all came out**

or is this waking?

21 October 2020

=====

I had no word to say
to the word that woke me,
sharp simple pain
with fear of worse to come.
Fear is natural, never
be without it, it is the air
which any effort needs
to breathe and be and do.
The hurt is small, the fear is big--
so it should be. Why
do we need so much sleep?
Why is pain always a surprise?
Walk the pain off a little.
Lie down and feel it more,
there, in the dark when
there's nothing but you and it.

22 October 2020

=====

**That's not what mother
taught me language for,
complaining; explaining
is a little better, but making
things up is what really counts,
stories and theories and little lies.**

2.

**The middle of the night
is someone else.
You know her well,
you have heard often enough
her hands smooth down the cloth,
a small sound like far away
birds in autumn leaves,
sometimes you've even heard
her breath forming a word
or two in your mouth.
Say it. The dark is waiting.**

22 October 2020

A= = = =

**Il the women
of language.
Each must be
satisfied.
Gratified. The words
are barely enough
but are enough.
The slower you talk
the more of them
can hear you. Slow
means thick time,
thick time means rich
nourishment. Dark
can be construed
as a smile. Begin the praise.**

22 October 2020

=====

**Sandals beat the sand.
We know that song.
The woman's angry at the man,
he hides his head in business.
We move from room to room
throughout the day,
there is a rhythm to it
but we don't understand--
no need for knowing,
immensely slow dance
of ordinary bodies in ordinary
space. You know that song too,
it wakes you like a twisted pillow
overheated from your very head.
Or noise outside, the Others
at their chores. Go back to sleep,
it is the last song of all.**

22 October 2020

====

**What else could it be but a cloud?
Paler patch in pale blue sky--
could the sky itself be less
than uniform. different kinds,
textures, texts of space?
Must be cloud but not there now.
Must have been. Space
took it back into itself.
And down below in the trees too
colors are changing the world.**

22 October 2020

=====

I spin the top
spin it again

suddenly this is
or I am the whole

world turning—
this is what

really is.

22 October 2020

=====

**Anyone who misbehaves
goes overboard.
This ship needs simplicity
of implication,
crew members with first
AND last names,
It needs horizons.**

23 October 2020

=====

Try to see it from the other side--
heart in hand, hound
tethered to a neighbor's tree,
truck going by.

Be simple
about it, men need to shave,
women not. Or not often
and not their faces.

Simple,
a doorknob, an empty cup,
you missed sunrise yet again.

Simple. Clearly I'm afraid,
I clutch the talisman
of the conventional, finger
the rosary beads of the ordinary.
I'm holding on. I saw a bus
only yesterday, and you heard
a wren at the window.

What
more can I ask for? Fear

has a comfort of its own, an old coat but still keeps me warm.

**Or whatever this feeling is.
Or is it even feeling? I wish
sometimes I could learn to drink
or that the Bible didn't have
such tiny print. The size of things
is a problem of its own.**

23 October 2020

=====

**When you talk
to the disciple
you hear the master,
when you turn
on the faucet
you hear the waterfall.**

**The roots of air
grow through words,
you hear his breath
far away, warm
against your ears.**

**We live in Echoland
among joyous trees.**

23 October 2020

=====

**What's on your mind
said one witch to her sister.
They picture us as old and ugly
though we are young and cute.
That's because our beauty
is what scares them, not our cats
and brooms and magic spells,
just the way we look as we walk
all innocent past their hungry windows
and they look out and see and want
and wanting scares them most of all.**

23 October 2020

=====

**A leaf
fell past the window
a bird flew by.
They're playing
that song again.
That must be why.**

23.X.20

=====

**Athena's face
they said was pale,
her bird is the owl,
known to be wise
always looks surprised.
Where the goddess looks
everything is new.**

23 October 2020

=====

**They've all stopped
talking to me
and I don't blame them.
It's been a long day
since i talked to myself.
What would I even say?
I know all my tricks,
my toolkit of excuses
is empty. Is half
an apology better than none?
If ever we get around
to talking again, I'll
ask myself that.**

23 October 2020

=====

**Autumn philosophers
passed this way,
the snakeskin of human thought
lost among dead leaves.**

**24 October 2020
[hypnograph]**

(A small poem that kept thinking /dreaming/ saying through my sleep I want to call hypnograph, 'dream-written.' There have been others before, and I should have labeled them— and will so hereafter. Thank you, You who dream me!)

=====

**Hip of the lower tower
feel from here
across the wide field
of so many years.
Wheat, rye? I am no
farmer, have no eye
for such distinctions,
only the tower holds me
as if I were close and could
reach out and cling to it,
the sides that sunlight makes
seem so smooth. Distance
is something we're allowed,
always, to feel. Feel it as we can,
this hand has stroked the horizon.**

24 October 2020

=====

Today the writing
is for others--
responses, recommendations,
letters of gratitude.
The words go out
to please or help,
leaving me to cope
with my own silences--
can you spare a sentence
for a frightened man
or a man in love with
what he sees, rain clouds
deepening the autumn colors,
can't I just talk to the trees?

24.X.20

EXPERIENTIA

All these years later
the same is true.
The same is always true;
We rush from room to room
forgetting that a door
is still a door, and further out
is also somehow further in.

2.
it began with something said
or written down
half a life ago just now.
Shotguns in the woods at dawn.

3.
The other thing was early,
early thing a word
scooped out of time
I had to run with to get to now.
Deadly pellets hurtle through the air--
how can we escape what we remember?

4.

Pale trees of morning,
bless me with your calm.
I have been again so long,
nameless shameless peace
of the sold slow road. There,
not every door is visible.
Not every room has walls.

5.

Morning feels better
when the dream has been said.
That must be how language
really began so you could tell
another what only you had seen,
seen in dream, and done, and learned,
the wake world can make do
with pointing and shouting.

6.

I feel better already.
A cup of coffee, French mocha,
sings like Gurnemanz,
wise, leading me through
all the distances to now.

Everyone is Parsifal, of course--
that's the point of music:
everything is happening to you,
you in particular, no matter
how many might be listening.
Only you go through those doors.
Only you can go out all the way in.

7.

Awake now
I taste it
on my tongue,
I mean the one

that licks
at what I see
curls softly
round what I
only remember.

8.
But such remembering!
Rings of Saturn,
rungs of Romeo's ladder,
crinkly letters
folded in a dresser draw,
kisses, chestnuts,
the surf at Church's Beach
crested gently on your ankles.
Here I am again. Are you ready?

25 October 2020

THESE

suites of poem I've been writing all this summer and fall, not the long poems of former summers but brief, three or four page sequenves. Sequentiae. Suites. What are they? Sonatas not, no rule to them, at least none I know I'm following. . Partitas? A noble title, nabbed by Lila Dunlap for her good book, and these are not like those. These maybe aren't even like these, or not enough to claim a category of their own. Long poem doesn't say it, poem makes you expect something you can read with your hands doing something else, no need to trn pages. So what are there? Suites is a good name for such events in music, but that's music, and sounds Frenchy and a bit precious, if you know what I mean. You always know what I mean. You read me right to the bone. I like sequence, but that's Churchy and Latin (and I'm not??). Steps! No, I used that once already for a book of not-like-these. And that's too German, like *Stufen*, a famous book of its own. In a way they're like stanzas, though irregular in shape and size

and breath, and stanza means Room in Italian, and I used to live in Brooklyn's Little Italy, so why not call them Rooms? This is why" each section pf these long poems could be called a room, yes, just like Mama Italia—but then the whole *they form wholes, adfter all, at least I thinbk they do) must form a house. I don't want to call these houses—you don't have to live in them, you pass through listening, whistling, and go on your way, carrying whatever you choose to feel about that experience. Like anything else. Tone rows. Tunes. Journeys. So many days at sea. Sequences seems still the truest simplest way of alling them. A summer of sequences.

25.X.20

POCKET

To be in the pocket
of someone is to be
in their control.

Yet
think of what being
in the pocket lets you be.
Or do. Sleep secure,
Bite the hand that comes
to lift you. Take comfort
in the softness of the flesh
against which you are pressed,
the intimacy of that soft trap.

And think all the ways
you'll find yourself being used--
pen knife, corkscrew, flashlight
no bigger than a fountain pen,,
copper or silver coin, maybe even
a talisman or your rosary beads.

=====

Things far away
like Schumann walking
with his fingers in a forest,
where distance
is the same as time
and now is long ago--
Wittgenstein is after that one too,
the sound of when,
the shadow of time,
we all know that, we
have fingers too, hum
among the alders,
we know the feel of wood.
And what is wood itself
but time incarnate?
Lean on me, says the walnut tree,
before and after you I am.

26 October 2020

TRAILS

Fresh paths through language
in the density of time,
this one time, this now
I'm always trying to find
my way to, the words are helping,
the words are the way,
the way to you I think,
but you are many
or sometimes not even one.
Sometimes trails peter out
in boy-scout tame wilderness,
campfire and not much.
But sometimes reach the sea
and keep going straight ahead,
yes, words can walk on water!
And all the salt revives the truth
of what each word tries to say.
But here we're still in the woods,
stumbling among the adjectives,
darkling, hungry, but on the way.

26 October 2020

ZARTES LIEBESLIED

**You bore
 of my weapon
you jerk
 of my wrist
you sap
 of my maple
you creep
 of my kitten
you thief
 of my heart—

don't ever give it back.**

26 October 2020

HEARING THE WAY

Heard nothing
but it was waiting
patient as color
enduring the changes
in the light that made it.
A wall is like that,
even with its impatient door.

2.
So much to tell you.
Sleek haunches of the naiads
slipping through brightness,
yet you'd expect to hear
the slishing merriment
(if that's not too fancy)
as they pass, water always
answers out loud
even the quietest gesture.

3.

Other things too I think
you ought to know
that I know about you,
we are not night
to each other
even though we do
have so many hands.

4.

Palm trees, royal,
on the esplanade
above the sea
in Santa Monica,
for example. I know
how urgent they were for you,
how many nights you stood
close as you could to one,
facing the tall houses,
pretending the sea was not there,
right there, behind you.
The little blasphemies of adolescence
trickled down your cheeks,
wanting the many and not the one.

5.

I know about such things.
We name our cities for them
and then forget. She brought
her son to the new God
who gave him all the rest.
That story. Always by the sea.
When you tried to turn
into our meager many-world
I felt myself at your side
trying to turn you back
to face the sea. My sea.
You won't remember this
until it says so. Words
work that way. Your body
remembers for you,

6.

Still heard nothing.
Bird seed a-plenty on the lawn,
on the branch. Wait.
I'm used to waiting.
What else is time for?

7.

Let me be precise.
We stand in the forest
and think about the sea
out loud in words still green
or starting to turn gold.
Old. We are one thing
and want another.

How dare
people lean to swim--
it amazes me still,
as if codfish came out
and shouted sermons on the sand.
But you know best,
some people have naiad in them
while I'm still trying to learn
how tive in air. All this
is the mystery of breath.

8.

I think I'm starting to hear
something, a thin sound like a letter
slipping into the mailbox.

**Slim sound. Sly sound.
Soft as the sky and now gone,
silence again.
When you get a chance
go to the museum, a big one,
and listen to the colors on the wall,
they call them paintings but so what,
they're colors for us, and tell us
what they think we ought to know.
The way I know so much about you
and you know about me
though you don't know you know.
Stand in the gallery
and read one color at a time
all around the walls,
una alla volta, don;t they say,
one thing at a time, one word
until the next color speaks.
Forget the images--an image
is just a sudden hand
on your shoulder, soft
finger on the nape of your neck.**

9.

**And that's where all our travel brings us,
a place where we can make up
another person's memories**

**and give them back, a place
where colors shimmer and swimmers
shiver as they come up for air,**

**a place where cities even
stretch out their arms to the sea,
houses are romantic by nature,**

**architecture is two-thirds sentiment,
we know so much about each other,
so I keep telling you more and more.**

27 October 2020

====

Word me answerly
all I ask of any tree,
I tuck my book my
fat business card
into the elbow of a branch
of this tree I think.
So it knows I have called.

2.

Finger on the door
traces a name in dust
I hope is there. Modified
by what doesn't happen
I persist. Who said that?
Who wrote that book?

3.

A dream is like a fruit,
all seed and pulp and rind

around sweet nutrition
trickles down your throat
the holy juice. Getting
the rind off can be hard
as pineapple or deft as tangerine.
How much of the fiber
do I dare swallow?
And what will seeds become
if they grow? And do even I
want to live in that country?

4.

In the boudoir
beads arrayed
neat on a round
rack. Pearls
and amethysts
for instance.
But there are more.
Why is a bedroom
like a whole year?
Every day a different
stone. Some precious
some forgotten.

**5.
For example.
What else
have we to go by
but what just went?
Bird with a twig
building a nest.
One bird alone,
all future in its beak.**

28 October 2020

=====

**The girl that Yeats
wanted to embrace
is long dead now,
and his distracted politics
turned into war
and ten million others died.
His rhyme persists,
desire lasts, wind
sweeps across the empty plain.**

28 October 2020

AMONG THE HULDRA FOLK

If they weren't women
running through the trees
what were they? Or put it
a different way, if it wasn't
a boat came slow and dark
across t the channel to the island
what was it? What do we
really know about water,
about wood?

2.
Still dark.
The questions
linger.
You'd think
thinking
would bring
light the way
praying
brings peace

at times
to those who share
that strangest
of all conversations,
doesn't it?
The nights
grow longer--
do we fear
the Sun?

3.
Close to the other side
a bell is ringing,
when we stand beneath it
we can actually see
out into the dim green meadow
all the way to the horizon.
No hint of what comes after that.
But the bell is clear.

4.

I sit here scribbling runes on stones
little stones I toss into the stream.
Who knows what good they do
and I hope no harm.
The signs are washed clean,
what they mean, if anything,
soaks off and spreads
quick through rushing water.
I toss stones into the rapids.
supposing I feed words to the sea.

5.

Is it light yet?
i want to know
without looking outside.
And why can't I feel you
this morning, you're only
two hundred miles away--
are you going to let
distance stand between us?
I want it now is the only song.

6.

I look the word up
in some book and find
your face smiling out at me
smirking almost at my long
forgetfulness, a thousand years.
Why can't I see you
even when I don't know enough to look?

7.

Why do children call
each other nasty names
and laugh and run away?
This may be the most
rational question of all.
Sticks and stones we sang
can break my bones
but names can never hurt me!
How brave and wrong we were,
bruises fade, insults linger,
fester, turn into attitude,
resentment, politics.
And all the mockers too are mocked--
who teaches us to hurt with words?

8.

So I dare to stare
into the trees once more,
dark enough to be safe
from seeing who
they really are who move there.
Spirits of another world
prowl elegant in this one,
the nameless woods of now.

29 October 2020

=====

**All cars are fast
now they all go
slow. Time tells,
time told. Once
we wanted what
we now have, now
something wants
something from us.
Go fast again, roads
go nowhere, go fast
without moving. Free.**

29 October 2020

LA MÉTHODE

Lock the door
and put on tights,
the roof is coming
upside down,
this is the way to dance away
the grievous demons of our atmosphere,
run around the house
mouse up the cheese
and cat up the milk
and run out the door too,
all around the yard.
do all the ordinary things
ordinary things do
and when you're done
become the Sun
and all will be clear
as you gaze thereon.

30 October 2020

FIRAT ANOW

They woke me up
by singing white,
It was snowing in the wind

and still is, lawn land
blanching as I watch.

Should I close my eyes
and change the real?

Why can't we make weather
by ourselves?

Or maybe we do,
wizards in Kashmir
are snowing in Annandale?

2.

First snow of the year,
Pound's birthday in October,
last snow was in May,
the four safe months are past.

**Was it the snow that woke me,
strange song each crystal sang?**

**I so want that to be true, song
each separate thing or self
sings into the world—forgive me,
I'm as sentimental as a drop
of olive oil on a cutting board,
a fingertip can weep me far**

**and sometimes I would rather
guess than know. And all
the birds are hiding as I speak.**

30 October 2020

THE DEVOTED

**She found the god in him,
found him in the god—**

**when she thought about either
the other came to mind**

**too, the two are one,
the omne is two.**

**30 October 2020
Red Hook**

THE LINEAGE

maybe,
a Trojan wrote the Iliad
but who was Milton?
Would a Christian know,
care, so much about hell?
Blake said Milton was
“of the Devil’s party,”
a Whig in spirit, a thorn
in God’s side. Maybe.
Maybe we all are Jews
and never knew it. What
is there anyhow to know,
we say what comes to mind
and praise fine weather.
The lineage is language
even if we lie, even if we seem
to praise killer Achilles
our hearts are safe in Troy.
eternal tower, Helena
at the gate welcoming
all of our fervent mistakes.

**Call this the lineage, the line
we stumble along, hoping
it leads us to clarity
through landscapes of beauty
alonne. Hum, come along
with me, we'll sing our way
there yet, line by line, just
a few songs more and we're there.**

31 October 2020

CREATURES

hollow even
in its fears:
people who turn suddenly
(this happened last night)
into wire scrubbing things
like animated Brillo pads
but stretched out, scraggly
all shapeless, talking
still in their own voices,
indifferent to heat and cold,

and nobody could tell
what caused the change,
and they, the people
made of bent metal hair,
did not know either,

they felt no different
but we felt fear, hollow
fear (what could they do
to us after all?) but that
kind of fear is even worse.

**I remember the first one I saw:
dark greasy wires lurching
like a haystack towards me,
four feet high and speaking
in a timid voice.**

**It is awful
to see people afraid of themselves,
fainting before mirrors.
They rustle brushy as they move
and they do move, glide,
no hands to help or hurt,
no mouth but a clear voice—**

**and that first one said Don't
let me happen to you.**

31 October 2020

====

Sun on far car
parked in trees

glass and metal
sing together.

Strange [ale
song among green.

31 October 2020

=====

**Wax waits.
Scratch wood,
fill scratch in.
Do this for years
and years
and get a country
of your own,
all wounds healed
into identity,
language. flowers
even if you plant
the thought of them
deep in the gouged wood.**

31 October 2020

