

2-2021

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**I held your hand
the road ill-plowed
remember the maker
who sang up the snow**

**your squeezed my hand
we still can go forward
the song is full of clues
the singer only half intends**

**and then we are there
wind from the east
blows the snow away,
is this where we live**

and you answered Yes.

1 February 2021

=====

**I had no dreams last night
so have nothing to report
except the weather**

**yet I've never been able
to chant with all the intelligent
reverence it deserves
the uncanny mystery of snow.
So what shall we talk about now?**

**Somehow we are children
still in the nursery
and every thing we see
is a window onto something else.**

**There, that's something said,
something transcendent.
Never doubt the word that comes.
It is the portal of the temple,
open door to love's boudoir.**

1 February 2021

SNOW

**There is a mystery here
the sublime obliteration of the obvious
and its luminous replacement,
the world reduced to contours,
edges, slopes. A forgiveness
from the sky. A silence.
The street asleep.**

1 February 2021

=====

**What does she dream
while her open eyes
laze on the sky?
She sees nothing but
her dress is disheveled
and her bare belly
sees everything. The skin
is the largest organ of all,
the brain is small,
works hard to deal with
what the skin knows.**

**But what does it know, now,
for her? The ocean
is the part of the sky
closest to us, the sky we can drink,
catch food from, drown in
with rocks in her pockets—
she is tempted sometimes to.
But no, she leaves that to books,**

leaves the sharks and porpoises
to fishermen, a dorsal fin
is just another word
in the sea's vast vocabulary.
She wishes she could dream,
be that graceful couple, silhouette
she reads against the stars,
she'd like to be both of them.
hand-clasped lovers, but she
would settle for being the woman.

Being a woman. Her skin
reminds her how hard it is,
softness and suffering,
a body made into a machine
to make who knows what.
Children playing in the flowers,
little fishes, chubby fisherfolk
ransacking the eternal.

The flower the children pluck
(count the petals, tell the truth)

are larger than the sky, pretend
to be flames, pretend to be the sun—
is her sky weary at last
of doing all the work? Her face
shows little. Listless lips,
vague look about the eyes.
lie on my neck and see tomorrow

always a midnight away.
Can she slip her body through the dark?

1 February 2021
reading the collage by Tirzah Brott

2.

The Questions she asks herself instead of dreaming

How can the flower be a flame

**or is fire itself a flower
of some dark tree?**

Do we know that tree?

**And how can the fins of fish
turn into knives
jabbing upward into our world,
not theirs, ours,
their fierce insurrection from below?**

**And why is the shape of a man
against the sky, his back towards me,
like an ancient coin, time-tarnished,
found in the ruins of the temple,
which temple, which god?**

**I can barely look at him,
his metal so thick with meaning,
and the woman at his side,
is that supposed to be me,
is this the end of me, linked
to some vague other, thrown
into the sky, wasted
into pure distance?**

**O going, going is terrible,
going anywhere is the worst of all,
please, Life, let me live here.**

**But why am I shady
grey and black and white?**

**Is it because colors
are the lies
objects tell the light**

**and I stretch out here
at the bottom of everything I see**

**calm and frightened,
my lips almost parted
to speak something,
maybe something I heard in dream**

to help me tell the truth?

I am the truth. I am right here.

2 February 2021

=====

**You know what doors do.
Well, friends are like that,**

**sometimes open sometimes shut
sometimes locked firmly plus a latch**

**sometimes banging open in the wind,
annoying squeal of the hinges.**

**Friends need oiling. With what,
and how much, and how applied—**

**that's what growing up means.
And some friends never get there.**

2 February 2021

== ==

**The child looks up:
boxes of pictures in the sky.
Or every box has a picture in it.**

**The child grows up,
the girl lies down
and stares up at all the worlds
where she has been.**

*I've really gotten around
she thinks, now I'd better
stay right here, here
and let the pictures come to me.
My eyes are half open, half private.
I let them see what they see.*

2 February 2021

=====

**But what the fisherman
bundling up out of the sea?
Doesn't look like a fish to me.
And are they really fishermen,
maybe dolphin scientists,
shark lovers, archeologists
hoisting treasure from ancient wrecks.**

**Or is it a dead body.
Is it me?**

2 February 2021

=====

**Walk your fingers
down my shelf
and find the book
all about you--**

**my best offer
sun makes shadow
milk the cow of trust
and skim the cream**

**or is that obscure too?
Handlebars but no wheels?
Clouds but no sky?
I'm trying harder all the time.**

**I know it's here somewhere
just keep walking,
you'll find me yet—you'll know
it's me by how you feel.**

3 February 2021

BUT I DIGRESS

**The river
keeps the story straight.
Tell it for me, big water,
on your way to her,
back to the wide womb
we all are coming from.**

**O river, river,
the old cones called you gods
and gave ou dragons,
you must know
what I keep trying to tell,
make the teacher
worthy of his students,
make the farmer
worthy of his fields,
make me worth my words.**

3 February 2021

I ADMIT

**I did not let the word
sink all the way in,
I covered the page too soon.
Now I wander around
thirsty for the rest of it,
all through this tree town,
Dendropolis, looking up,
looking down, watching
the gutters gushing with
the crystal clear waters
of what the word meant.**

4 February 2021

=====

**It's the size of the sun
on the snow
and all the black cars
as in my childhood
go and go, we seem
to be afraid of colors again,
is that why the snow comes
to mind us with simplicity?
Snow always says Start again.
I have hidden
what you thought you had,
now bring out your crayons
red, blue, green.**

4 February 2021

=====

**What would I say
if summer came suddenly
standing in her sleeveless dress
smiling at my door?
So it takes months of winter
to prepare for such a moment,
slim-waisted missionary at my door.
And do I even have the door
I ramble on about?
Isn't a door the rarest thing of all,
rarer even than a summer day?**

4 February 2021

== ==

**In Brooklyn years ago
we tried to grow potatoes once
in the back yard and they grew.
Picking them from the dirt
seemed like finding ancient ruins
in what you thought a virgin forest.
Look, things can grow here too,
not just streets!
And down the block Hungarians
ate peaches from their little tree.**

4 February 2021

=====

**This kind of bird
can come straight from the sky
and pass through glass
and bring its beak to you.
Nothing shatters except
someplace in you you thought
was all your own. But now
the bird has come, small as a dove,
sort of white like last week's snow,
and after one painful introduction
has taken up residence in you.
Your tenant from the sky.
You can feel the wings rustling,
hear its soft cooing sometimes
when your head is on the pillow
teaching you both the path
to the other side of sleep.**

4 February 2021

====

**I don't have to do everything
all the time, do I?
Aren't there some days
when it does it by itself?**

**But I have read the philosophers,
its sense of itself
is different from my sense of it.
So nothing happens, ever.
Apparently I even make it rain.**

4 February 2021

THE TOOL

Unusual tool of the day,
the day I hold in my nhand
to pry time open with
and see, just see.

2.

Rusty old el train
tracks overhead,
the long street so busy
darkened by all the going
above it, I know this city,
nothing like iron
to make you f eel at home.

3.

At the top of the stairs
up to the station
she crouches,

retrieves something
from the iron meshwork,
something small,
stows it in her white jeans.
This is America
and I will never know.

4.

The reflection of the white lampshade
in the window through which
I study the colorless day outside
all grey and snow looks
strangely like a yellow tree—
I thought you should know.

5.

A voice in the hip pocket
sings an iron song,
you listen a while
then try to write it down,

**a language you can't name
but in words you understand,
seems to say Everything I am
is for somebody else, anybody,
everybody, even you.**

6.

**Who are these strangers
who live in us,
venture out only when we sleep
and then make free
of all our streets, cities,
parts of speech?
What did she put in her pocket?
Was it me? The key
is rusty but opens every door.**

5 February 2021

=====

**What we are able to do
is an avenue.
Trees along it, linden,
walnut, you decide.
Apartment houses,
churches, temples.
I am your religion.**

5 February 2021

[READING A COLLAGE continued]

But what about the men

men in boat

above her

above where her body touches earth—

the sea hides earth

a man in a boat

is trying to be with a woman

a boat full of men

trying to plunder the deep

capture women,

seize the truth from women

she thinks the sea

she thinks: *the sea is terrible.*
is me

I stretch out
I cover the whole earth.

6 February 2021

=====

**There is a little cave nearby
the mansion used it as an ice-house once
in the days when there was money
but no electricity, a little cave
to keep the ice cozy,
wrapped in straw all summer long
and some of it lasted the year.
There is a little cave still,
empty most o the time,
sometimes people do readings there
or put on little plays
for a little audience sitting
on folding chairs or just the floor
a little nervous under ground.
Art happens there
the way it did 30,000 years ago
in France and Spain
but no religion now
far as I can tell, no bulls
or antlered priests patrol the walls,**

**no religion far as I can tell
except what we bring in with us,
all fear and hope and even
a little lust or heaven
and we wonder why this little
cramped cold darkling place
feels so close to truth.**

6 February 2021

=====

for Irakli

**How we sustain ourselves
by what we say**

**what we have always said
from the beginning**

**all the beautiful fabrications
that time turns true**

there was and there wasn't
they start their fairy tales in Kartvelian

**the way we say Once
upon a time, but it never just once,**

**twice, thrice, we should say *Always*
*upon a time this will be so,***

this will be true, true as we tell us.

6 February 2021

AT MIDNIGHT

**In the prison of the self
I translate from Latin
the words by which
I learned the other side of me.**

**6 February 2021
*[from a few days back]***

COOKING RICE, A DREAM

**Boiling softly rice until it swells
and then the question comes:
is eating one single grain of rice
(soft now too, salty from the brine)
the same as eating rice?
Is saying *je t'aime* and meaning it
the same as speaking French?
Is saying it the same as love?**

2.

**We are parts of what?
I am a grain of what?
Is growing up the same
as cooking rice?
Or let me bother you again:
is one snowflake the same as snowing?
I will sit here till the answer comes.
something about numbers,
something about the sky.**

3.

A smiling round-faced girl
brought the platter in.
Can you tell already
that I'm lying? The rice
never left the pan. One grain
only did I taste of it.
Nothing happened but the image did.

4.

Sundays in Heaven
must be special days
when all the fortunate ascended
turn their devotions down on us
the billions of beings
ripening below, each one
of us a grain. Sometimes
Sometimes they use sunshine
to study our dreams

5.

**This morning is all white and grey,
I try to exit from the dream
but once dreams get inside you
you're inside them for good.
I want to be a car, headlights on,
hurrying towards anywhere, even here.**

7 February 2021

=====

**Clear everything away
till I am me,**

**aclean dek top
waiting to begin.**

7 February 2021

WHAT HAS TO BE SAID

the wall between
must let us breathe
we permeate each other,

I reached out to touch
the brick, solid, well-coursed,
and three little blocks of cork
symmetrical above the hearth.
Lean on the hard.
Tell the truth.
Trust what your fingers
know how to explain.

2.
Back under the covers
a world waits.
Soft darkness of the primal permission—
be this person.
Who you are
waits for you in the dark.

3.

Daytime is so specific,
maybe too much so
for the likes of me—

ivy covered my window
and the closet kept whispering
till I grew old enough
to choose my own fears.

Isn't the bright fresh day
something like a reproach?
Isn't everything you know
evidence of your mistake?
Some call it sin,
some call it sense,
I call it a song
I have to sing to the end.

8 February 2021

====

If you had a word
would you give it to me
so I could plant it
right on the edge of my mind
where the trees give most shade

and what would it be,
this word you
are holding even now in your thought,
and what kind of tree would it become

if a tree is to be
as the old man said
waiting for the first
fruits to dangle from the branch
while he could still
lift up and shade
his eyes against the sun
and seize and eat?

9 February 2021

=====

**Across the piazza
to give it a fancy name
there is a church
I have never entered.**

**Have you? Do you know
what kind of principle
is worshipped there
and with what music?**

**I have stood so often
outside the geometry
of colored glass windows
and tried to hear**

**but no organ, no choir,
no bells, not even the tinkle
of sacred objects meeting
each other in someone's hands.**

**Just silence and stone
and a little weathered brick
around the doorways.
Why did I not go in?**

**You tell me, whether you
went in or not, you'd know
the difference between
in and out that so eludes me.**

What is a plaza but a place to stand?

9 February 2021

=====

**But of course there is a channel,
old now, brought
deep ships up the harbor
pasyt the crowded island.
It has a name, no matter,m
the water forgets those things,
the ships stopped long ago
as they gpt deeper, cargos
from anywgheere, silent mflags,
ospreys back in command.
Those kills or cuts
made coasts to live on,
Sawkill and Kill Van Kull,
little kayaks, big ships
and out of the mist
hull scream, Norway flag.**

9 February 2021

=====

**Her ears kept hiding in her hair
so how could she hear me,
my voice muffled by my own trees
I hide among, safe
from what we really mean.**

**2.
That is as close as I could come.
A weekend on the Adriatic,
sight of Everest on the horizon,
everything else left
to what calls itself me,
thorn, rose, tattered history book.
Strip off my pretenses--
a crow calls,**

3.

The Greeks dreamed up a world,
the Romans built it for them
then went away. They left us
with a sense of our bodies—
still much to learn—
and a fear of snow.

4.

Somehow I felt though
that she could hear me now,
as if her hair were too
a soft network to catch sense.
Here I am I kept saying
until I almost believed it.
But I can only be
if you can hear me.

10 February 2021

FORENSICS

**My fingerprints
are all over you,
you vase. you way
of holding anything
and fear at bay, you
yoga of the single touch.
Yet I am no sky
to be standing here
saying this. Let me
be your silence too.
The fountain never fails
but sometimes we forget to drink.**

11 February 2021

=====

**Forget the name—
the starlings are back,
dreams also
are guarantees—
you hear that music?
It's all in the tone of voice,
listen, listen, be a ship
afloat on my sea. listen,
I don't mean what I say
but it means me.**

11 February 2021

=====

**Quiet, eightish, greyish,
snow from days ago and sky
that looks like more.**

**There, that's my eport--
now let me take off my uniform
and crawl back to sleep,
exhausted by how much here is to say.**

11 February 2021

= = = = = = =

**Go over to the bakery,
yes, I know it's just across yhe street,
it's easy to know things,
go ask the baker
to build a special bread
with your breath, own breath,
breathed on the flour
before any liquid touches it,
that way the finished loaf
will be full of what you mean
and your thought will nourish
deeply quietly all your friends
with whom you share it—
please save a little piece for me.**

11 February 2021

= = = = = = = =

**I looked out the window
once too often
and saw the first flakes falling.
Everything knows how to change,
now please, soft snow, teach me
how to do it too, how to come and go,
linger or depart, have a bright idea
that suddenly covers the world.**

11 February 2021

=====

**Was anybody waiting,
no, but the tailor
sewed an extra pocket
inside the coat,
over the right lung,
big enough he said
to stow a chicken in,
a stolen fowl, a glance
out the window at
the setting sun. No,
no room in us for what we see,
we need clothes to hide us in
and tuck our perceptions deep
inside what we put on and off,
the thing that is not we.
And yet I know a man who could
fit sun and moon and more inside
his simple cotton store-bought shirt.**

11 February 2021

SONATA

Care comes next.

First the cheekbones

faintly rouged

the slim mascara

I know you've been swimming

the church bells rang morning

surf tickled your toes

the mind is always summertime.

2.

Only then take care of me

remember my name

the Attic portico, the age

you were when you realized

how far away nyou were.

It is dancing you all the time—

live up to the lamp post

live up to the door.,

3.

**I tried to believe
everything you tell me.
It is better that way,
a mind is like a vacuum cleaner,
sucks up all doubt—
but stores it deep inside,
waiting for the moment to let go.**

11 February 2021

DASHA

**A word
in a list
on a page
of a book
in a dream—**

**what is it?
Is it she
or a place
hiding
in the winter mind,
to live in
or leave
just under the horizon,
say it over
and over
to be sure.**

12 February 2021

=====

**Nothing is too
hard to be here.
White bark
on a sun tree,
yes. If I could
intuit the word
for sky in the sky's
own language
I would say it now
and know the answer
or at least the sound
of it coming
down the sunshine.
All my life trying
to give it to you.**

12 February 2021

= = = = =

**I know there is one called Evergreen
but all colleges are deciduous--
the students all fall away
and grow back a season later.
Fact. The miracle of money
sustains them all summer long.**

12.II.21

=====

**The song sings itself--
that's how you know.**

**Otherwise it's all counting,
just counting**

**till we get there,
silence again,**

**that gorgeous mountain
always across the river.**

12 February 2021

BEADS

on a wire
to count your money
beads on a string
to count your prayers
amber beads and iron beads
abacus and rosary
mantras, accounting,
whatever's worth saying
is worth saying again,
beads on a little gold chain
to swim the ocean
round your neck, pearls,
lapis says *love you*,
beads on the sidewalk
glass and marble
children get to master,
learn how to roll
the earth along its way.

**beads on the forehead,
love sweat or work,
beads on the window
but don't look now,
rain explains everything away.**

13 February 2021

=====

**The mind is lyric
but the mouth can cough.
Wake up dry throat
lick the teeth to drench the mouth,
go back to sleep**

**where the mind can be
alone again with its music,
tree tall in a meadow
all alone, the dream
is so close to the sun.
Bad sleeper, to disturb
the church service of any dream.**

13 February 2021

AEGEAN

A woman steps out of the sea. She doesn't know the way. She has never been here before.

So she makes her own way. To spare her tender feet from the rocky shore, she walks three or four inches above the ground—easier than way, less wearing.

Walking in that manner she goes up the little sandy hill, down the other side, then up again, this time a more solid earthen hill, some sheep standing on it, worrying at the grass.

He stops by one sheep. pats its back, tell it to go fetch its shepherd—he is needed. The sheep trots off, downhill, and the woman waits, playing with the other sheep, patting them, tickling them, pretending to ride the biggest of them. After a few minutes she stretches out on the grass and some of the sheep,

turnabout is fair play, nuzzle her side and bleat at her gently.

In a few minutes more the shepherd comes along, led by the sheep who fetched him. He looks at the woman and feels puzzled, admiration, a little fear.

Go build a stone circle here, ten spans wide, and use only white stones to mark the boundary. Take me as the center, and build accordingly.

No words had been spoken, but the shepherd got the idea. He spent the next hours selecting and carrying white ricks up from the beach. When darkness fell, the circle was still not finished. But lying there in sudden moonlight, she made it clear that he was to go on.

So not until midnight was the circle complete, each stone an arm's length from

its neighbor, modest, neat, strange in moonlight.

The woman still rested there, Her eyes were open, but she said nothing. The shepherd sank down nearby, afraid to come too close.

You may sleep now, she said, and he did, what he later called the best sleep of his life.

And when he woke, the woman was gone, and the stones, the stones though had grown up in the night into great stone pillars and had grown a roof over themselves, and him. He got to his feet, alone in the empty temple, as he thought of it, having seen such things before. Alone, but his sheep all waiting for him outside.

13 February 2021

TWO CUPS

**Two cups from Tynan
larger ruddy smaller pale**

**for blood for lymph
for ocean frenzy, calm
inside each curl of wave.**

**Every cup remembers the Grail,
the Holy Grail
and why is that cup
the holiest object of all?**

**Because the God Man
held in His hands
blessed with breath and blood
a cup. the first thing
we ever made,
humans, first
invention, thirsty ever, a cup
to scoop water from a spring**

to catch water from the sky.
Holy. And these are holy
because all the elements
join together, clay of earth,
water, formed firm
by the heat of fire,
and when they're resting after
they are filled with air

so these are holy,
two cups Tynan made
and sent them,
a gift for Charlotte,
tea cups, yes, for her morning
jasmine, maybe one
for the evening turmeric.

Holy because made
by human hands,
holy from ancient skill
riding his young fingers,

**holy from being empty,
clean, sunyata, *all form
is emptiness*, holy
because they sit on the table,
one larger, faintly darker,
one smaller, pale, open,
holy because a heart
should be like a cup,
always open, always filled,
waiting, filling, giving.
hailing the whole world,
lifting a cup.**

14 February 2021

INCIDENT IN FEBRUARY

Slow waking
close close
to each other,
our hands clasped

I felt the heartbeat
but whose? my head
against our shoulder
too sleepy to decide
your heart or mine?

and then you said
it's Valentine! so then
I understood, wake
in the weather called
together. And it is day.

14 February 2021
for Charlotte, all my love forever

= = = = =

**There's nothing left to be toucht,
just enough to bewilder
the *us* that used to be me.**

15 February 2021

[hummed and varied all through sleep]

=====

The sun brings light, light brings color, and what does color really bring? Black and white movies, the sort I grew up adoring, they scare me now. They try to suck color out of my mind to heal their achromia, I'll call it, is there such a word, is there a hunger in the look of things that makes us sad on grey dreary winter days, sad because the colors are somehow being drained in us by what we see? The icy sky hauls all the blue from my heart.

15 February 2021

=====

Woke just a little
before the streetlights went out,
I think I was reading
Novalis in my sleep
or someone like him,
green early 19th century meadow,
young man sketching a bird
that flies off the branch
before the drawing's done—

that kind of sleep.
But the waterwheel
was whirling gladly
in the quick stream,
I don't know what grain
they were grinding in the mill,
I don't suppose the water cares
but you never know,
the minds of elements are keen,
powerful and keen.

**I will not name the grain,
it is not licit to make up
a new part of a dream after waking,
the dream mind is stone mind,
the wake mind water,
tremble to pretend.**

**A dream can't lie,
can it? And if we tell it,
the truth flies off the branch,
maybe into the limitless sky,
maybe to settle on a neighbor tree
and sing for someone else,
should I try to
finish my drawing from memory?**

15 February 2021

WAKE WOOD

wake water
if you would be day,

a word in your pocket
rouses to say
what you must hear

for language
brings fire to air,
warms it to word—

that is not silence
inside your clothes
but a vast dormant vocabulary

you must wake to comprehend.
The world is a quick
translation of your body.

16 February 2021

====

**Haley, Bolger & Lahr
best lawyers I ever knew
took you right where
you had to go and
charged you only a song.**

16.II.21

=====

**Private Caller
it says on the phone.
but I'm waiting for
Corporal Caller,
to answer my body at last**

16.II.21

=====

**Wake on the other side of town,
trains roar by none too slow,
the girls wear jeans, look mean,
older guys in hoods and hats.**

**Do they still burn coal around here,
the streets look shiny but is it slime?
I drink my coffee in a paper cup
wondering about etymology.**

**Which word came first of all,
what was the first meaning
anybody meant? And why
does mean mean right now**

**how the girls look, angry,
sneering, maybe
also a little bit afraid?**

**The coffee is feeble,
more tan than brown,
not sweet enough but at least
it was there when I woke

safe in my warm hand.**

16 February 2021

=====

**Icy silver shimmer
misty in the trees
as if another kind
of leaves and flowers
winter grew overnight.
Why can't I see
between the trees?
No mist on the road
pr on the field, just there,
in there, wjere they stand
talking in silver
to one another, can't
get through their words,
delight in the sound, foreign
language of it, Tree Tocharian,
I see
what they mean.**

16 February 2021

=====

**Now that the dream
has been told
what is there left to say?
Everything speaks for itself--
should i make things up
to talk to me? I am not
that lonely, I have thee
and me and thou and you
and both and all of us.
Saying so, now I understand:
I have to speak to each
and answer every--that way
the tale will never end. Begin!**

17 February 2021

== ==

**Walking with color
blue hip red lip
yellow leaf shadow green,**

**walking is a kind
of seeming to be listening,
, the colors carry on
quiet conversation,
we almost hear.**

**Or that voice
in your pocket!
That shout
around your shoulders
all dressed for business.
What is business but money?
And what is money
but the color of time?**

17 February 2021

RITUAL

Hoodwinked by daylight
I am an initiate of the day.
Close to the cliff edge
one always wakes--
just in time. One more step
and the dream would
catch me again. What d ream.
There are so many. At least
out here the w weather
is always in our faces,
reminding. And so
I begin reciting
the endless alphabet
of the ordinary.
Short breath. Quick
decisions. Arise. Remain.

2.

Legs in the rapture of decision
stutter into gait, smooth now,
the dark avenue of the hallway.
All the books along the wall
are people still. Everything
for me is a street. Going
is a song with nothing gone.

3.

Bathe in Mahler
shave in Telemann
shiver into clothes
monkey in a suit
they used to say.
Or lie there and wait for spring.
Far niente. Doing nothing
is a music too. A ritual
when all the words have flown away.

18 February 2021

TEMPLE WORK

1.

**Build with stones
you make yourself,
condensed from sheer
we can't call it thinking.**

2.

**But something goes on
down there we call inside
and there the rock lies,
limestone over sandstone
over limestone over the dark.**

3.

**Every house is a temple,
every town Jerusalem—
that's what the bible really means.**

**I don't want to find it
I want to make it up myself,
stone by stone. I am nothing
but a blank book my mother
gave me—help me fill it up.**

18 February 2021

STREETS OF YOUR CITY

**Among all these northern trees
Chestnut, Walnut,
Pine and Spruce
there is an Orange.**

**You planted it near your house,
you brought it from Izmir
where oranges grow small and sweet.**

**I know these things
because I make them up
in the back of my head
where they lurk when I go
to look for them when
in need of knowing, quest
of being certain,**

**to know
for sure the name of that
hidden sultan who still rules**

earth from that same *tepe*
where you sat once and let
all the thoughts of the world
come towards you and become you
stone by stone,

and those too
you brought home,
touch
of your hand.

One day maybe
we will share an orange.

18 February 201

====

**Diamonds and emeralds and pearls
archipelago of gleams
spread across the jeweler's leather pad
I woke and knew it was the sea again,
the word gave itself away,**

**it snowed last night
but how to pronounce it now?
Riverboat? Handyman?
Irish spoken on this shore?**

**Of all objects a jewel
best understands itself
but what are we?
You know how in old time parks
iron cannon stand beside
pyramidal heap cannon balls
some sort of ornamental threat
that this too is war and once
men died to stand on this hill**

**though God knows why we
would want to know that
nibbling our Cheezits on the grass,**

**o spoilsport Time
I only wanted one bright thing
to slip it on her finger so
she'd be happier than
this shiver of a day,
emeralds before diamonds,
Taurus before Aries,
what is the world thinking of,
everybody knows that red came first**

**Step up to light and let
the pigeons loose from your brain,
the randy rooftop of the house next door.
Tell them for me
we can always use an extra island.**

19 February 2021

== ==

**Broken sleep
and who will mend it?
The staff of night
shattered and the knobs
in the bamboo jab
untimely into the sleeper's side
forcing abdication. Wake groan.
Whose fault is waking?
Where are the children?
We have none except the drooling hours
waiting for the day—
sometimes light puts us to sleep.
Why do I do this to me?**

19 February 2021

SEA MERCHANT

Have you in your pocket.
Keep a voice inside
incase of sunrise right now.
Say it. Unicursal peace--
with one stroke of the brush
let the quiet come
so we can hear her silent self
in all the raw tinnitus of time.
White noise on the shore,
pale slippers toeing at the sand,
hush. Rush of waves,
ancient joyous never-ending hoist,
always up and always more,
pop music of the gods.
Sometimes the edges ache
but the core is sound.

19 February 2021

=====

**The snow is getting brighter
brighter, maybe the sun soon,
maybe we'll see a shadow again
to explain once more
the mystery of light
after three days of protestant austerity.**

19 February 2021

= == = = =

**We try to do what's right
with what is left.
No wonder history is a horror show,
it washes us ashore
and leaves us on the beach
with crabs we have to figure out for food,
clams we have to open,
weed to wrap around us,
plus all the theories to work out
the infinite et ceteras of
what the great shrink called
(omigod) Everyday Life.
Broken clamshells in the sand.
You an tell ot's almost two years
since we stood by the sea.**

19 February 2021

=====

**Jaundiced, the shunned dish
left for no Prophet on the table
the point is there is always
something not to eat, a trifle
crust, a labile spoon, chutney
from no Pathankot. the border
is too close, run away,
runn away while you can.
There is always something
in the mind dangerous to think.
a thought once thought may
never leave you alone. Leave it
instead at the side of the plate.
leave it to the local rat to nibble
after, from the refuse heap, happy.
There's always something
someone else will cherish. That picture
on your aunt's wall, the taste of liver.**

19 February 2021

=====

**You frighten me,
I find you in my mind,
did I put you there
without knowing
what I was doing?
I don't want random
people bback in there,
it's where I keep my
meanings, keep my self.**

19 February 2021

THE DIMENSION

Not Napoli. not a rim,
of an old city.
not a wall.

A cat on the fender
of a broken down car.
A street between vacant lots
well lit by streetlights.
A tumbler lying in the grass.

Remember summer?

Provence,
fields striated with lavender,
hilltop I patrolled by swallows?
We keep trying to go on.

Move with the tide
shrink away from the shore,

**hurrying somewhere else.
Where is the sea's pwm home,**

**tomorrow? Remember tomorrow?
It really is the only thing we have.**

19 February 2021

=====

**Mind-making miracle
marble and mosaic,
the mother letter watches us
from Egypt like an owl.
Tell that to your teachers
when they complain
and ask you why you do
anything you do.
But you should feel free to do
whatever the owl tells you to.
Because pebble by tile the picture's made,
and a thousand little chips
sets the statue free.
And you know what happens then,
money, religion and the rights of man.
Which turn out to be
the rites of Pan.
So ask the owl if that's what she really
means.**

2.

**When you see a bright cloud
it means the sun is there.
This paradox will haunt your life,
you poor prisoner of perception.**

3.

**Marquetry too, and marketplace,
and mind your little sister,
the time is coming, duck fast
and let it pass over your heads.
Clothes too tight, sun too bright--
see what I mean?**

4.

**So at length we come
back to the dictionary
(wordbook they call it
not too far away),, words**

are a kind of morning,
near as the mole on your chin,
say, or somebody else's aftershave.
Have a glass of sleep with me—
even if I were an old man
dozing by the fire, I would have
at least a fireplace and a wall
for it to live in and a house
to hold us all. And if I woke
the fire would still be there
depending on what is not me,
not ever me, or you, for tht matter,
post-horn on the wall, Saxon dagger,
color photo of a none too recent Pope.
The letters fall into place
and spell out our poor names.

5.

Melt with ruth
the poet said,
let compassion

**dissolve that stolid
self you bear
so long, so long,
let the truth
out of that cage
you caught her in,**

**unthink the obvious
all over again.
Open the gate,
the empty table top
means liberty,
melt with pity
and let her go.**

**6.
The mosaic's almost finished now,
a few thousand more days
to glaze,
to set into place.**

**And then the picture's done,
almost, but not quite--
a picture must be seen to be.**

**Letter by letter. Tree.
Owl waiting for night.**

20 February 2021

=====

**Sidewalk cafe,
empty chairs,
waiter gone home.
but oh the gleam
of those clean
ashtrays on every table.**

20 February 2021

=====

**Harlequin Caesars
hurrying to bed.
ersatz-Cleopatras
clambering up pyramids,
it's all a holy mess
only midnight can clear up.
wolves and pachyderms
trumpeting, suddenly
silenced by dream In dream
I don't meet anyone I know
and all the midtown streets
are thoroughly different
from what they think they are.
Memory is a trifle
before the ,majesty of dream.
Dean of all difference I fall asleep.**

20 February 2021

=====

**Nine going on ten
heard on the radio
about the Adam Bomb,
heard it had already
destroyed a city
I never heard of
in Japan, o hearing,
hearing, this bomb
from the beginning
of the world, Adam's own,
now to end us
town by town unti everything
is empty Eden again.**

21 February 2021

[Remembering my own confusion, vuictim as I was of the notorious New York City accent intervocalic D/T confusion(e.g. 'the baddle of Geddysburg') of which the announcer too was a victim, and for which thousands of kids, me too, were condemned to speech classes in college.]

== ==

for Charlotte

**She posts photos
sky over Annandale
stream beside our house
deer on the lawn
hawk on the branch,
they comfort me,
little by little I begin
to believe where I am.
Hard for a man like me
to trust my own senses,
that herd of hungry beasts
ravenous for something else.
Bless you, darling,
for giving me what is really here.**

21 February 2021

=====

Lent lament.

Previous is precious.

Words have us in their hands.

Go back to the beginning

before we spoke,

we knew even then

something came before.

We invented language

to tell one another what it was,

the previous, the came-from

that mothered us.

I apologize for all I've spoken,

and even more for what I haven't said.

Attrition is contrition.

Lent ends but what then?

Forced march to the beginning again.

21 February 2021

= = = = =

Slingshot
the Brits call
catapult,
they levy a tariff
on birthday presents,
their gardens are fussy,
their tea too sweet.
O mes ancêtres
from Devon and Bedfordshire,
Manchester and Bristol,
how did I get here
and get all the words wrong?

21,II.21

=====

**Write me anew!
I cried to the trees
passing,
 spin me
the few words I know
into fresh complications
so as to sing
not quite this and
not quite that, all
the ominous fibrillations of the real,**

**I ride, I ride
but you know still!**

**Let the schematic
f your shadows
stay with me**

**scattering, patterning
even when I face
the warm room alone,
habit house, sitar music,
raga of the passing thought.**

21 February 2021

=====

**Stone sledge
drag the mountain
to the village,
what is a *henge*,
a kope uplifted
to surround a mystery
suddenly when
you're in it utterly known.
Sunrise and evening star
because we are,
and are of their nature
as any stone can tell you,
the bigger the louder,
always stand in the center.**

2.

**Or in your backyard
a dial of pebbles
will sing the same song**

**you just have to
listen harder.
A snail sails under a leaf
fast enough for this still sea.**

3.

**At a certain point in life
you have to make everything up yourself
before the extern certainties
swarm back in—
a day without a book or a device,
you're all alone with the swaying
seductive dances of your guesses.
Does x really imply
a history of y ?
And is B true daughter of A ?
Nobody knows,
so you must be Nobody now
and declare all by myself
all the roots and branches.**

4.

**Stand by the stone and say
Stone, stand by me.
Lean on i if it lets you
and confess:
I am not Nobody
but I am Nobody's father
and I leave this grotto to my son.**

5.

**The stone will laugh
a little at that
the way they do—
you can feel it in your fingertips.
Or pick the pebble up
and bring it everywhere.**

22 February 2021

BORDERLAND

**Meaning comes at you
snowplow at dawn
roaring the road clear
meaning has at you
in the old ways, swordplay
of contrary ideas.**

2.

**So soliferous, the woman
bearing the sun,
open the blinds, roll
away the stone. Morning
is the first idea--
now what to do
with all you dreamt,
wordless images of
parts of bodies, parts of trees,
o blessed blank white wall.**

3.

**You have to take
all the things you thought
or thought you saw
and fill your arms with them
and drop them in the well.
The water of will never fail.**

4.

**Why is he mail?
All questions and no answers.
Spread them on the table,
on the screen. Analyze the obvious.
Sweep them together, turn
off the device. No meaning
in what we say to each other,
the meaning waits, lurks,
deep in the body of the sayer.
Come towafcs me now! you
cry to the empty air.**

5.

The next part of meaning is a stone.

You pick it up and hit with
or build a wall.

You decide. If wall,
you'll need a roof on it.

If hit, you'll need to run away.

This is your education.

I want to say History
is pebbles on the shore
of an unknown ocean—
can I get away with that?

6.

There are consolations, though,
for meaning. Words

flutter from my lips,

paintings from your fingertips,

et cetera. I feel like Byron in a bassinet,
not quite sure what I mean.

Morning is such a pretty child,
round eyes briefly wide.

7.

These are tales
the snowplow told,
curves and mounds
and sudden falls,

Kipling now I climb
your hills again
Darjeeling, garden
of the thunderbolt,
tool in a strong hand.

dorje ling

8.

On days like these
colors get lost—
that's what meaning means.
You woke with low green hills
like Neolithic mounds
left by only God knows who.
Yet each hill is still alive, green
I wonder where winter went.

9.

And then the kettle
as they say sings,
and morning has its clothing on
and we have to be ready,
ready, ready. Everything
is on its way all over again--
you know that song,
fierce chorus that ends
your favorite opera *The nlight*.

23 February 2021

=====

**I am not licit to lead
but I know
something of the way
so I may go
to be honest
and if I go
and happen to fall,
then take my body
as a sign
and follow
all the way there.
We are arrows only
and we go.**

24 February 2021

=====

**aWhatever day this actually is
I'll call it now.
I'm allowed to be wrong--
that is a privilege of my species.
Other animals can make mistakes
but only we know how to make
and keep and cherish them,
temples and night clubs
and public schools. the yellow
buses of confusion
throng the morning roads.
Only at night the truth flickers
here and there, brothels maybe,
child sobbing in bed, a dead
rabbit on the lawn.**

24 February 2021

INTIMATE LIGHTHOUSE

Intimate lighthouse,
shape of the night,
hold the beam steady
till you see the dark clearly
and just the dark.
The let the hounds of Actaeon
mumble their master.
Sleep at the feet of the Queen.

2.
But then language happens
even then. A word
humps up from the ground
like a mole from new-turned soil—
you know the way, you don't
need me to tell you.
But you have me
just as we both have sleep.

3.

**Like the light at Gayhead
there's a white phase and a red,
and any decent light will swivel
so all the anxious dark gets lit.
It's all like a sea out there,
uneasy, never at rest
and no one ever really knows
all the beings who live in it.**

4.

**The red phase shows me
who I am, the white phase
what I want. In sleep
those things get confused.
And even in sleep we know
how to close our other eyes
and not see the sweep of light.**

5.

If I could send
one word through the dark
all the way to you
what would it be?
You're the only one who knows.
In ancient times
they would have called this love.

6.

So it turns and returns
and nothing's green,
the rocks of Kingston's anticline
glisten with new snow.
The dream says Hope
and put on your chasuble,
the dream says your prayers for you
while you dream about skaters
on the frozen canal,
yes, you are a child again,
every thing you see is holy

**but are they holy too,
who ride on the skates
leaving strange scriptures
graven in the innocent ice?
What are people doing
in this world? The dream
explains that we are stranger here,
intruders, absent-minded guests,
stumbling back, ignorant
into the only Eden.**

24 February 2021

CARDIOLOGY

for Pat Smith

The heart like any tree has leaves,
two or three at a time
they breathe the sunlight in,
the sun that comes up inside
when we wake, morning
is just a mirror of it. The gold light
rises (autumn? elm trees?
the sea not far?) and the mind
is suddenly there. Where
have you been, the sleeper asks.
finally conscious. And what
was the heart thinking while he slept?

2.

After a certain time the heart
that noble Rolls-Royce in the chest
gets cranky, edgy, holes

here and there, a valve too lax,
a squeeze too tight,,
quivering, shivering, but the wheels
roll on, the gas tank is always full,
still, it's easier to go downhill.

3.

It's worse when you're Irish.
I mean it's better
because you always have a song,
it's in our DNA, the druids
drank deep and we're still slightly
tipsy from their mystery.
Doctors don't understand the Irish,
they said my father had angina,
he didn't,. lived till ninety
and stopped only then because
he wouldn't not live alone,
Another one of our diseases—
wedding marches last forever.

4.

**But back to the problem.
Trust the heart,
it's the sun inside
and what it shows
can have deep shadows too.
I swear by all the fibrillations
in m my atrium I will write
everything it tells me,
shows me, beats out at dawn
the morse code of the blood
until I stumble up
to write it down. Draw it
write it carve it sing it,
those are the only ways
to satisfy the heart.**

24 February 2021

3.

Whenever I'm in the room alone
I think of you climbing the dark,
bedded swerves of ancient rock
at the end of the Rhinecliff bridge.
The rock is winter wet and slippery
but you have cunning in the bone,
muscles that analyze contours
while you listen to birds sing
over the highway hum,
I watch you shift and rise,
and I always look away
before you reach the top.

4.

All poets are amateur geologists.
That's how we know
to look away before the hard part comes,
the dreary numbers of all explanation.

**Dig between,
enter the fissures
between the layers, each
layer a different mineral
or different time,
pry the words apart
elbows and fingertips
shoulder your way in**

**but o my dear ones leave
before the music stops,
the rock will still be waiting
when you wake.**

25 February 2021

=====

**Have I ever explained
why we always want to touch?
Probably not, since I don't
understand it myself.
Skins are different, but not
that different, flesh is flesh.
So why the need, when I
have plenty of my own?
This mystery has been with me
from the beginning, with us all
in fact, and names aree whispered
to comprehend the yearning,
statues of Grecian deities with
torsos and thighs as if stone
itself needed to reach out
to touch us, as I need to touch you.**

25 February 2021

=====

**Broken barrel,
staves in the snow
an iron binding
sprung, hoop happy
freed into ice.**

**Things I found in the woods,
osmoke barn in Kentucky,
church in the Catskills,
Catholic for a change.**

**Where do we begin,
Broken windows?**

**when you write your name
some letters are left over.
You can't just leave them out,
plant then, maple sap,
gather such unlikelyt spring,**

women working in office
knowing language into lace,
mothering the numbers,

scholarship of apple trees
how small they look in snow,
walking down the hill.

Ski with me the cloud persuades,
sleep alone the preacher cries,

there are chariots in every sky,
Babylonian technology,
run your fingers down my arm and see.
Halfway to me.

The organ
can be heard on summer days
the sweet blasphemy of monotheists.
Pan and his fauns listen like trees,
we all are children of a myth,
Athena's nostrils breathing out the Law.

Time to sleep now, the winter says,
and all the leaves come out
thick and soft. blanketing the bones
to keep snug and warm the sleep of Time.

25 February 2021

= = == = =

**Trans gendering theosophy
while we sleep
so that each and every thing
wakes in and as
its divine nature
and we live in a godded world again.
For the real gender chasm
is between a being and a thing.
Erase the difference,
heal the agony of that open wound.**

26 February2021

=====

To meet us into morningland
the mild, the wild—
I must try to tell you
what the agent said
promising a blue dawn.
Roses soon. Fast frain
to the capital. Starlings
when needed, crows *toujours*.
Of course I wanted it,
with a slim swift stream
my father would have called a rill.
Wanted. Signed the contract. Woke.
And the world was still there--
that's the part you'll find
hard to believe, the spaces,
the spaces we forget
between between.
Even now how can it be now?

26 February 2021

NORTH BEACH FUGUE

**It was not anywhere I was.
The I who is speaking
is no one either of us knows,**

**a cellar in North Beach,
Gillespie's trumpeter cheeks
heard in the street**

**haunting smell on my fingertips,
bus home, bus home
another woman's house—**

**all of this engendered
an irretrievable identity.**

2.

**Classic jazz, spotlight on the moon,
you need a different bridge
to cross the Elbe,**

**names of old pianos
clank like rain gushing down the grate.
natural purity of the gutter,**

**C major almost every time
her fingers told me where
to put my hands,**

**fierce evangelical religion of music,
even Variations
have rules of their own,**

**the bus was empty,
they let me open the window
so I could hear what wasn't happening,**

**only the mild wind
and we made that ourselves
bothering the night, daring to move.**

**3.
Sometimes your shadow on the wall
is your best psychiatrist.**

**Who am I today,
all shoulders and no head,
my arms gone AWOL,
I am a sack of laundry maybe,
or one big chunk of coal.**

**Analyze the merest resemblance
always: that is the rule.**

**Yes, San Francisco felt like Bushwick,
music is so empty sometimes
thank god there's room for me inside**

**yes, all busses are the same bus
depending on how many souls
are stuffed on board.**

**Empty plastic seats,
one window just ajar,
the wind came in,**

**I smelled my hands—
do they make music too?
I left my cell phone in my pocket
nobody needs to hear about this.**

**Just look at the shadow.
And always, always, dearest of friends,
listen to the wall.**

27 February 2021

= = = = =

**Snow is slipping
inch at a time
off the cable line,
the melt is on,
already the cable
looks like white words
just too far away to read
coming my way
along a black road.**

**And I just saw a photo
of the tannish stone
at Göbeklitepe carved
with coils above and
maybe a vulture below
and in between a text
of glyphs I'd swear
was human writing.**

**Maybe we always knew
how to write, maybe
it's reading instead
that took to long to learn,
until we simplified
for our childish minds
all script into some
meek alphabet,
sword-tip Viking runes,
tender bosoms of Kartvelian.**

27 February 2021

INHERITANCE

If I had a handle on the sky
I'd soon have it open
to see where the light is made,

what dismal 18th century factory,
shadowy, shuddery, dirty,
they built to refine bare space
into that glow we read
silly books and scriptures by,

even sunlight we can take inside,
breathing it in to bathe the heart.

2.

I see Piranesi jails, or maybe
just blueprints from Manchester
where my own ancestor
worked to earn his way
out of the dark and to America
the bright, on his way to India

**en route to the gold of New South Wales
to dig up and find, send back home
that gold he wrote about but
that never got here. Somebody
nabbed it on the way or else
in the sky that gold is stored
still, waiting for us to be where
we should be to make sense if it,
good use of it if it ever comes.
Someties I see it when I close my eyes.**

27 February 2021

A PHOTO FROM WROCŁAW

I don't know when it was built
but if I grew up near the Tumanski Bridge
I would dream all my life about snails—

the great transparent curl of emptiness
holding peaks and steeples
as if this snail of light had
swallowed the city

and someday it will carry
so very slowly the city
over the Oder—or if we pray
maybe we can keep our city here.

Not my city. Not my bridge.
But it is my snail, the same one
I had when I was three,
that crawled up the organdy
to eat the sky—size is no problem
for a snail, the spiral by nature

**is infinite, all the way out is till
deep within its coil. Curl. Shell.
And in hat city the shell is made of air.**

27 February 2021

THINGS WAIT FOR US

**doesn't lack a sparrow
to lift that crust up
off the sidewalk.**

**Things rise by themselves-
nobody needs to tug
the sun over the horizon.**

**We are restless children
in this infinite opera house
and the singing never stops.**

27 February 2021

STONE BECAUSE

The words we say
pebble the shore
or boulder it.

The sea
says keep at it,
there's never enough stone,
never too many,
speak.

So little by little
the continents were shaped
and go one shaping
and shaping us.

They call it geology
but linguistics is what it is,
the singular plural of all we say.
Play the stones,
language is gamelan before metal,

**and let the stones play us,
deep timbre of each rock
rehearsed by breathing.**

28 February 2021

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**The new roof leaks
she said
or did she mean
the new root leaps
or the leeks root deep,
wraiths look from the moon
but no the moon is full
you can't tell if what you hear
in dreams is what it means,
words are to be unwrapped
and then and then
I think she meant
Get up and know
the road leaks new distances to go.**

28 February 2021

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**Metambesen is the stream
that curls around our house,
under the road and down the falls,
we live in its loop.**

**I think in Munsee days
it meant a healing river,
swift and shallow,
washing pain away.**

**I think native peoples
came from far away
to drink from it, and be
at peace in the forests all round,
the cleft it runs down to,
carries all the woe away
into the wide north river,
our Mohicantuck, the one
that brings it to the sea,**

28 February 2021

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**Let's talk about next.
Crow on the railing,
noble visitor.
Thank the guest
that brings the god.
Let's talk about
what is to come,
the text of after
scribbled clear
on the page of now,
how big the crow is
seen up close.
Wise bird I would be
your nephew, slow
maybe but still
learning what you know,
all you teach by what
happens in my head
when you cry. Or call
from the tree. Or just**

**fly by. Or sit there
looking at me as if
I were really here
in this same world.
One word from you
tells me that I am.**

28 February 2021

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**Clearing out the mind
so a new month can begin,
thirty amber beads are strung
or thirty one, and each
excites a litany of praise,
sometimes one word
lasts a whole day.**

28 February 2021

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**Why is a month in France
the same as me?
Do I have thirty chances
for genuine identity,
or twenty-eight or thirty-one?
And if I use them up
and still not achieve
that union with reality
they call 'to be', what then?
Or maybe leap year, 29,
like Rossini who answered
these questions by writing
*Sins of My Old Age.***

28 February 2021

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**My office chair squeaks
when it swivels
or squeals. I can't decide.
Sometimes, rarely.
things are as vague as I am.
Usually they speak their mind
clearly, and docile I listen.**

28 February 2021

BY THE SEA

**The sea drove up in a blue-green car
it startled us.**

**Sorry, it said,
didn't mean to frighten
you and your dog.**

**He is not a dog, she spoke
with spirit, he
is my husband bold and true.**

**You can't fool me
the sea replied,
husbands wear hats and work all day,
don't sprawl in their underwear
on my sacred sand.**

**That isn't underwear,
it's my husband's second best
bathing suit.**

**So you say,
the sea sneered back,
but he doesn't even know
how to swim, he's never paid
that meager entrance fee
i ask for the right to play in me.**

**So you *do* know him, aha,
my wife replied.**

**Indeed I do,
I have watched him for years
panting on the shore, studying
my every move, his tongue
hanging out with yearning,
and stumbling home to write
Poems of the Sea. But you,
you are different, you have swum**

**in all my oceans, swum wit my seals,
I sound jealous, don't I, and I am,
seeing my beauteous naiad
bumbling with a lubber on my beach.**

28 Fenruary 2021

DEEP NIGHT SHALLOW RAIN

now if only
there were some
simple thing
to hymn the body
i try to sing with,
a piece of cheese, say,
or heel of pumpernickel,
not sweet, not hot,
a little salty, chewy,
dark. If only the hymn
of breath alone
understood all things.
So let a glass of water
rule the night. O lord,
this simple sacrament,
between two chapters
of sleep a piece of bread.

28 February 2021

