

4-2021

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A SONG I SANG IN MY SLEEP

**Time is waking up
time begins to think
of waking,
time is waking up
we have to hurry
when time wakes up
we have to find
a place where we can be.
time is waking up
we have to wake up too,
in a place outside of time,
we have to hurry,
time is waking.**

In my dream I suddenly discovered I had a song, and ran outside to find someone to sing it to. I have a soong, I cried, and three people I didnt know'stood on the street

*corner and listened, and one of them said
That is a good song. I can still ,hear myself
singing, deep voice. I can hear me now, but
music always sounds better in dreams.
Tomorrow I'll worry about the meaning.*

1 April 2021

=====

**Old eyes, many clouds,
hard to see the stars
these nights, those runes
cast on us before we woke,
before we spoke the language
they teach us still, reach us
through the clouds, don't
have to see to be with them,
I feel the night's fingers
write those letters omg skin.**

1 April 2021

=====

**Images linger,
being hungry;
Asian dumpling
on another table
I took to eat
while the men smiled,
leftovers at the end
of something long,
meeting, party, wedding
with no bride in sight.**

1 Aoril 2021

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**Now the numbers begin.
Some day I will get
at last to One, and then
I will rise and fly.
But it's so far, so hard
to climb from Zero--
or am I going the wrong way?**

1 April 2021

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**A battery
is a little like
liberty,
an island of energy
that works in the dark.
Turn this into
a manifesto, later,
when the mind comes back on.**

1 April 2021

=====

**Turn my name
into the names of places
I have never been,
then look myself up
in the atlas, on maps.
the spinning globe.
This is the real
meaning of geography.
discover of what
earth I am.**

1 April 2021

=====

**Deep in the badger den of sleep
the man marries the dark,
wants to bring it with him
when he wakes, carry
its clear voice to moderate
all the specious claims of day,
whispering as it does, as it will,
*remember this, remember this.***

1 April 2021

====

**Beneath the racist rant of history
might there be a quiet terrpr
a simple fear of the identity
we suppose ourselves to be?**

**Who am I really?
My enemies have have
keener eyes
if meaner hearts,**

**and my friends
may be deceiving
themselves and me,
always getting ready,**

armed for a war thqt never comes.

2 April 2021

=====

**Good Friday
dark and cold,
hours to go
before the eternal
rouses its moment
in ourselves again.
So many years
ago I sat in the chair
at the dentist's
huge window and knew
the dark sky
was meant to open,
would open someday
and that would be that.
But the thought about
what that would be
left me cold and empty,
a little like the sky.**

2 April 2021

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**It all changed in the night.
The world is a chessboard
with no pieces on it,
waiting, waiting.
We know all the moves
but there is nothing to move.
So we take comfort in numbers,
as if number itself is
the square root of something else.**

2 April 2021

=====

**Gloomy morning,
the doom has come
and we are what is left.
Good morning citizens,
there must be still
some work to do.**

2 April 2021

=====

**Things have a way
of birding away suddenly,
empty sky, you hardly remember
what that pen felt like,, how
that juicer squealed, that scarf
wasn't too soft on your neck.
Things have trajectories of their own.
Someday I may find it again,
that fountain pen -- and what
a strange word that is, pen
like pig-pen, tall wooden fence
surrounding a herd of fountains,
each spouting full and lofty,
laughing at my endless search.**

2 April 2021

=====

**Sometimes I read philosophy
and find myself laughing at times.
It's as silly as poetry
but at least three are no rhymes.**

2.IV.21

=====

**Be careful with people named Stephen,
there always trying to get even.
And watch out for Guy--
Even I don't dare tell you why.**

2,IV,21

=====

**In place of thunder
the clouds got whiter,
thicker, continuous,
a local sky inside the sky.
Over us. All the things
that are over us, moving
arcanely through the aether,
abbalistic chariots, horses
of the dawn and dusk
and we are their shadows.**

2.

**I who am frightened all the time
and know all the octaves,
all the semi-tones of fear,
even I get worried when the cloud
gets brighter, as if the sun
herself would come to us
only in that watery disguise.
Where are we in the world**

when we are on earth? That
is the question eight-year-olds
dramo their pillows with deciding,
fret yourself to sleep,
hear the midnight freight train pass.

3.

The fear comes in and out.
wobbles, warbles, chatters
like a damelan, and like it
makes music too, Someday
a brave scholar at St Catherine's
should make a great anthology
called the Poetry of Fear, and dare
to inscribe within it all the classic
poems that pretend to be
about trees and flowers, birds
and love affairs but really,
deeply, are about human fear.
But I will not buy her book.

4.

Road

with no truck on it,

sky

without a single bird.

Now

am I being clear enough,

Why

Is everyone always alone?

5.

Sometimes we wash ourselves

with words. Sometimes

the fear flakes off the fingers

and leaves tracks on paper

that you can read, If you

were here, or anywhere at all.

2 April 2021

====

for Brad

I met him with Rexroth
on a deck in California.
what cpi;d be more
American than that?

He was young but knew
everything, everything
about America and what
this country needed.

we needed, to say and sing
and read and understand.
He knew how to be what we need
and find others to feed us too.

No one I have ever known
knew better how to bring all voices
together, and let us hear too
his own voice quiet and strong.

2 April 2021

=====

Met the music
banned it, tamed it,
but the sing of it
went on,
sang me
cleanly towards
what any
music aims at--
you'll know
when I get there.

3 April 2021

= = = = =

**Weak eyes see
sunshine has carved
trees out of the dark,
scrimshaw of pure light
long bones of the earth.**

3 April 2021

=====

Let it be long again,
the highway of breath
curving up through the mountains of desire,
turn timidity into rush,
rush into rapture,

take a long time,
take as long as time.

2.

Language is always adolescent,
true? Always discovering
new desires, new abilities,
new bloodstains in itself,
new whiskers on its soft chin.
Because of the way we use it
or it uses us, saying it all
but never saying everything,

always waiting
for the right word,
the phone call from
the one we dear;y miss.

Language is a sitcom
with a laugh-track built right in--
we look at what we've written
and doubt every word of it.

3.
We are sincere
as any drunks can be,
we mean what we say
but forget what we said,
the truth comes out
but we stumble away
mumbling some word
we heard, over and over,
a lucky charm

**gets us home.
The night is cold
the day is dark--
I have to try and
say it all over again.
There is no right way,
there is only this.**

3 April 2021

=====

**Over the Brocken
the horizon
filled with clouds
that read like words—**

**2.
listen to the trees
with the back of your mind
and to animals
with the sunrise steady
over your right temple,
you know, the place
where the headache lives
to remind you
you are not alone.**

**3.
The Brocken my father thought
was where the devils lived,**

partied, played pinochle with
the souls of men, Germans
assured him, why would they lie?

4.

So much to know.

Sherry's cat knows some of it,

I know a little more.

But not enough. Never enough.

A rubber ball rolls

down the sidewalk—

this too is knowledge,

I mean this too must be known.

3 April 2021

EASTER

every
day every
stone roll
away, walk
into whatever
feels like light.

Resurrection
takes years,
years from
wake till noon,
years before
sunset,
years
of this slow
dance of giving
ourselves to
one another,

deer in the woods
calling the hunter.
We wake to live.
We live to give.

4 April 2021
Easter Sunday

*(for Charlotte, her reading of St. Anna
Breitenbach's tale of the trackers.)*

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**You don't have to be good
to be holy,
you just have to give.**

4.IV.21

=====

Sometimes I wonder
and sometimes
it wonders right back—
who am I to have questions?
Have I brought the teacher
even one apple. ever?

Is it all a prison we have learned to love,
a place where the smiling guards
say *Here there is no why.*

I'd better stop wondering,
I'm scaring myself with the empty sky,
the endless riddle of sunshine
no one has evey solved
and even now it asks itself louder
all over this yawning lawn.

4 April 2021

IN THE CAVES

Turn right here. Water rushes towards us now. We call this sluice the Giant's Saliva. He himself is far up ahead of us, asleep. His mouth waters as he dreams of eating his way someday through the whole mountain, eating his way out into sunshine, then reaching up and eating the sun. He has never seen the sun but thinks of her as a small yellow hot thing in the sky. He wants to eat the sun, it's a little the way we like yellow hot things we speak Spanish to and eat with Coke or cerveza.

2.

Be careful of the stone wall beside you, it's always wet. if you brush against it your clothes will get wet, that's not so bad, you think, but when you get home you'll find that the wet has dried to a fine greyish dust. As you try to brush it off, it will rise up, get into your mouth and nostrils, and then you'll have to go to sleep for several hours until the power of the dusty — *dry water* we call it—has worn

off. So hold onto the iron guard-rail. That's wet too, but with ordinary flow.

3.

Why did we decide to meet down here? Who are we hiding from? Turn here, left, always left now, There is an alcove here into which the abrasive light of the overhead bulbs does not much reach. Here. It is dark. We could touch one another here all we liked, if we wanted to touch each other, or anyone, or anything at all. But touch is so dangerous. Remember the wet wall.

4.

Keep going. It goes very gently slightly uphill a long while then flattens out, keep going till we get to the level. Something usually happens there—we find some bones, or some character has scrawled something on the wall with chalk or scraped it in with flint, who knows, nobody can read that sort of thing these days. We don't want to. We are rightly

afraid of what we might learn. About us, I mean. Do you follow me?

5.

Roar. You hear the roar? That is the waterfall, the big water that runs down here and topples from one limestone stratum almost a hundred feet down into the gap where a layer of sandstone crumbled away—imagine how long that took! So much water. And we don't really know where it goes after it plummets. We suspect there are hidden outlets far down in the gulf, and the water is distributed maybe even to the world outside. It may even water the cabbage leaves you eat, or the apple tree you steal apples from even now, though you know you shouldn't.

6.

Do you like this cool air on your skin? I do. It reminds me of myself when I am thinking of something abstract and complex and

suddenly feel a breath of air, a freedom from complexity. I am naïve enough to still think that feelings count, and feeling is simple. And that feeling is better than thinking. How about you?

7.

There are no birds down here but we have bats, sometimes a whole lot of bats, they come up out of the deeper chambers like a black cloud, their squeals (not everybody knows how to hear a bat, but I do) echo around the cavern for a while, then silence as the flying mice make their way outside. I don't know what bats eat, and would rather not know. I do know that when they have gone, the cave through which they passed feels liberated, at ease. I often like down there on a rock ledge and sleep, I call it sleeping in afterness. Have you ever done anything like that? We could do it together some time, but there are no bats at this season. God knows where they have gotten to now. Someone somewhere is deep in noble sleep.

8.

I know what you're thinking—we have been here too long. Perhaps you're right. I am sluggish about such things, I'm always leaving too early or too late, time has its own way with me. I let it, it has the right, time is my master because we are all born into time. Maybe I should say time is our landlord. Even down here in the caves—where night and day do not exist. See, down here it is always only now. How can now last too long?

(4 April 2021)

====

It may have been the difference that woke me.
A different kind of sleep--
tigerless and timid
but a strange taste
where the tongue couldn't reach.
Things like that,
my feet had switched sides in the night.

2.

So there is waking to be done
and it will take more than one day
to scrub away that dream
that was no dream,
just a seeming, a feel
of not being, a sound
I was supposed to hear
but couldn't.
You know the rest.

3.

Bravery, people tell me
to be brave, push
the heavy door, swing
the iron gate until its clangor
sets all the animals free.

Easy for them to talk--
they slept. Or they woke,
wilful children pretending
to enjoy the world they rule.

I am nothing but the chessboard on which
they play.

4/5 April 2021

=====

**Say less
by saying more,
the moon is listening
while we speak,
listening and waning,
a song fading over the hill.**

4 / 5 April 2021

TOUCHING.

**The hand
is a bad
ambassador.**

**Makes agreements
with other bodies,
commitments
it cannot keep.**

**Do not send
the hand abroad,
keep it home
where it can write**

**or paint or draw
or carve the truth
or just lie quiet
in Sabbath peace.**

4/ 5 April 2021

=====

**If we could really
think each other's thoughts
words would be freer than ever,
could build magnificent palaces
where no house is needed,
could sing loud songs
without hurting the silence.**

4 / 5 April 2021

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What is that noise?

**—It's the sound of the sun rising,
I didn't know we could hear that.**

—If we couldn't hear it, who could?

**No, I mean I didn't know the sun made a
[sound.**

—Listen, just listen.

4 / 5 April 2021

EIS TEN POLIN

**Coming up on history
a day like no other,
Christopher Wren,
Bernini, the Bronze Horseman,
the broken lute,
the smoking cigar.
Remember what is to come--
it is the only way,
find our way back to the City
again, the miracle, the mild,
boulevards with linden trees,
look out the kitchen window
down in the courtyard
patches of sunshine!**

**Today a retired admiral,
tomorrow be a harlot
lurking in the arches,
or basket-maker, boy**

with a wobbling hoop,
cardinal of the church.
But which religion
is your street on?

Pisgah on TV, a book
on the sidewalk fluttering
its pages at you to seduce,
touch me with your eyes
it whispers, *marry me*
with your wealthy mind.

Out there the carriages
rattle round the square,
nobody in them but the horses
need the exercise,
not like the bronze beasts
who menace us at the cathedral,
stay away, stay away good Christians,
stay out of temples,

pray in the empty room
like your Lord said.

The voice of metal is so strong,
sometimes I wish I were a pearl,
all compact of brightness,
organic origin, spiritual meaning,
precious, you understand?
Then you know more than I do.

You must live in this city
for which I am not ready
or only as the pigeons are
who gurgle in the belfry
and shit on statues in the park,
yes, milady, a bird
is a transient miracle
whereas a city's permanent
like wind, a feather

falling along the air
taking its own sweet time of it
to touch the ground.
breathe deep. Wait
for the next gust to come along.

There is tumult in the tiles,
the paving stones upheave,
jammed buses jounce their passengers,
rub-a-dub-dub, elbow in your gut,
all of us reading the same paper
but all the news is different,
how can that be, get off my toe,
the ticket-taker squirms her way
to police the exit. Let this man off.
Step careful, sir, steep steps down,
let my people go.

**Is that what you mean by a city,
what has been will always be?
For example, look at the sky.
See? A man interviewing a cloud.**

5 April 2021

====

The steps I haven't taken
lead to you too,
there are mountains over rivers,
just like always,
and seeing them
I am instantly at home.
To move
is to impugn
The here, the now.
Leap up instead
Into this moment,
Let the mountain see
You are his brother.

5 April 2021, Clermont

= = = = =

**I woke and found
my cheek on your arm.
So you are the book
I was reading in my dark,
wordless, tender,
strong with new day.**

6 April 2021

THE WEB

Sometimes it feels like a web,
this sunlight in the awakening trees,
our eyes trapped in stillness.

Wait for a bird to move
or wind to shake us free
a moment before the next
sight lures us in, no easy
way to look away.

I hear their unending conversation,
trees, do I ask them if they
might have any word for me.

*You live by going
we live by staying--
we cannot go,
can you learn to stay?*

**At home gain I carve again
my old motto above my door:**

***Siste viator domi*
traveler, stay home.**

6 April 2021

CITYING

Cities talk longer,
town talks slow.
i want the streets
to be busy again,
run straight as their name
from my hooks to the sea
through crowds of busy women,
idle men, just like home.

I want the city in the country,
woods like crowded buses
full of vibrant passengers,
rushing streams like neon signs
telling me when to stop and stand
and drink and browse.

I want the city in my pocket
while I walk in the fields
with the dumb nobility of stone,

city in my overcoat on chilly Easters,
I want to live as long as cities do,
not just like these gorgeous daffodils
that once were and soon
again will be asphodels.

I want the subway under every path,
I want to get there underground,
whatever *there* might mean today,
get there with roaring and jolting
and crowds of people with me
all hurrying to the same place
differently.

I want
the city in my head this quiet morning,
a city in this kiss, as Schiller says
and makes Beethoven sing,
this kiss kisses the whole world--
that's what a city is.

6 April 2021

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How we choose
the other side
like restless finches
switching branches
god knows why
screaming all the while.

6 April 2021

ANGELUS NUMERUS

or Angelus Numerus Unus, the Number Angel or Angel Number One--I could never get the technicians to be clear about the name. It is a medical process carried out in the dark. It aims to, claims to, draw all the negative images out of the mind, thus healing the patient. That's all the technicians could tell me; they are not physicians or trained scientists, just men trained to operate the mechanism, whatever it is. Now poor Edith is in trouble—she is the patient currently being treated. Something has gone wrong, or gone on too long. Long is wrong. If the mechanism is set too strong, goes on too long, it can suck all the images out (the mind is the sum of all its images) and thus remove the patient's mind, or even soul. Edith is a pale blond young woman, I don't know her entering complaint. Now she may be dying, or even if they keep her alive she may have to live

as what they call an empty child. Or maybe she will recover--I pray she does. I had to leave before the revival process could be completed, so I don't know, But I can hope.

7 April 2021

TUBA SPARGENS SONUM

The trumpet spraying sound
around the world, death
comes to a stop, and nature
with it. Reminds us
natura means all that is born,
not made. What we know
closes. This is what
it's all about, from the beginning,
this closing. When something
else opens. The sound
of the trumpet is like it--
clear, unmistakable, bright.
Nothing else we know is like it.

7 April 2021

=====

Latin on my never mind,
childish tricks
amuse the hicks,
I mean I once
knew something twice,
once for yes
then once for no,
and everything changes.
But I'm still bouncing
pink rubber balls off the stoop.

7 April 2021

=====

**Nobody knows
as much as I do
about what I know.
And you do too.**

7.IV.21

MEMO TO SELF

(whoever he is)

if I were to empty my pockets of silver I would see a cloud forming over my right wrist that cannot be such an event would be a life-changing kind of experience to see those clouds suddenly sat him down on the sea and turn into great ships galleons hurrying towards me through the waves

If I were right now to open the window what kind of Dragon of cloud

But there are more ways than none.

(7 April 2021)

GEODE

**I look into this tiny cave
of amethyst crystals
and see you there,
naked safe, softly
moving from peak
to peak among all
the glistening assertions
of violet transparency
your pale opacity.
Beauty is opaque.**

8 April 2021

HYMN TUNE

**Woolen jacket
wild beast eyes,
cheetah or leopard
or human saint.
Wrap her in winter
soothe him in song.
Don't listen to lies--
eyes are never wrong.**

8 April 2021

COBBLESTONES

The cobblestoned streets
got asphalted over
soft in summer, easy
to plow in winter.
No argument. But deep
inside these smooth
rounded solids like
loaves of bread survive,
I mean inside us too
who knew them once,
when the world all round
was our grandmother
and we never really forget.
So much she teaches us
even after she's gone away.

8 April 2021

IN THE COUNTRY

The car stops
no one gets out.
A message does,
driver on cellphone
smiling at the wheel.
Motor idling, hums.
Deer crosses road
watching car. Caution.
Why is he smiling?
Why doesn't he go?
A stopped car
is a loaded gun.
Rabbits kneel and pray.

8 April 2021

=====

**Scrape the bottom of the mind
and there she is at last, the first
girl I ever kissed, the wind
that blew your kite away.
The mind is made of losses
language lives to find.**

8 April 2021

OVER THE LINE

A lizard waited
on the courthouse lawn.
We didn't care,
we were there
for the weather
of each other
in a desert, desert
means empty
of previous connections,
associations.

New

raptures, new guilt.
Hello, cactus, bonjour
mister lizard, or miss
or how can I possibly know?
I have come here
to be a stranger to myself.

8 April 2021

DENDROPOLIS

What I had to do
to find you
was to spend
pretending
to be a tree.

Then at last
time's aching puberty
delivered me
to wood
and wood I grew'

all round me
the sounds
of their silent voices,
intimate revelations,
parliament of absolutes.

8 April 2021, Stanfordville

=====

**Shadows flutter over me
from the flag overhead—
peril of public buildings—
a library, where only
words are supposed to fly.
And so they do—
and all my life I have
lived in the shadow of words.**

**8 April 2021
Stanfordville**

=====

1.

But of trees to know
the amber certainty,
to live with that
firm uprightness?

A tree is moral,
and it means.

2.

Of course I want you
in the leaves, the days.
The days I mean
fall thick around me,
be patient with me
while I pretend to know
what everything else
is thinking, but not you.

3.

You are precious because

I do not know you.

**You are the body of Otherness
passing me slow in the street.**

I follow, follow,

but will never understand.

8 April 2021

Stanfordville

====

I would be lost
without a way
of writing it down.
Whatever it is.
I am an addict
of the alphabet,
lost without letters
like a pilgrim
with no rock.
Wait, that makes
no sense,
like history.
Maybe some other
way to write words
down, words, words.

8/9 April 2021

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Wakened by dream
of a phone call
old fashioned kind
right number
wrong woman answered,
a different friend,
wrong time, our voices
faint to each other,
the ones I was calling
are busy zooming
and I should be too
she said. And it was dark.
And the whole city
smelled of burning cabbage.

8/9 April 2021

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1.

Another thing I need to know
the weather tomorrow
snow in August
salt in Montreal.

I know, I have been there,
lured by the sound of words.
the sound knows everything,
strange cat mewling at the door.

2.

Maybe it's not enough to hear.
Maybe you have to build something too,
like something out of wood,
soft saw, hard hammer, midnight,
or just light a candle
to please a moth. Then know.

3.

Or not even then.
Ocean between
know and do
And you are no
viking to sail it,
I mean me. Slim
craft of my thought,
drift, drift.

4.

When nothing else is left
the fair begins. Kermesse,
peasant song and merchant dance,
money is the best music, true?
that makes the dance,
waltz with my wallet.
At least I can count.

...8/9 April 2021

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT

**“I am a temple
from before
your time began.
The people who built
Karahantepe had
me in mind, trying
to remember. They built
with stone, but I
was not made from stone.
I was just there.”**

8/9 April 2021

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Why can't it be red
all the time?
Why can't the pitcher
fill itself at the well,
the pillow learn
to answer my head?
Questions inside questions
and this is the Seventeenth
Century still, we struggle
with wizards and gods,
not hostesses and frauds.
Time to move backwards
into the accurate agenda,
metaphysics if matter,
song of the soul.

9 April 2021

MAMALOSHNI

Of course things go
away in the night--
that's what the night is for.
And when you wake
there's always something
new, you didn't expect,
I guarantee. That's what
sleep is all about, a chance
to roll the new world in
piece by piece,
one bird at a time.

9 April 2021

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**White car rolling down the hill
here how eager you seem.
speed is its own city
especially when gravity
sleeks its streets and down
you come, happy as chalk,
pink chalk all over the sidewalk
but you are white and swift and gone.
Someday I will live there too.**

9 April 2021

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====

**I would carry your discomfort
if you let me sleep in the light.
Thérèse de Lisieux demanded
Give me all the pain in the world
so no one would suffer but her.
No one is brave enough to say so now,
not brave enough to give their pain away.**

9 April 2021

PARMI LES ARBRES

**Yesterday went to a marvelous party,
all the trees in the town were there
along with their relatives
from further up the hills.**

**There was more conversation
than a dozen English novels,
and all of it sober and lucid
and they were kind to strangers
like us,, guests with nervous feet
and terrible short attention spans.**

9 April 2021

== ==

Daylight.

**The sun's long hair
streams by the window
and I wait.**

**But then, almost now,
I have to find
the cave where Astra
waits, the star-woman
hidden in the earth.
Every earth.**

**And so the day divides itself
neat as a Roman calendar,
clean as the edge of a leaf,
a laurel leaf, say,
glossy with stillness**

And all at once
I'm lost
in the sprawl of metaphors,
Astra impatient with me,
will I never come home?

10 April 2021

WHY

do I keep
me waiting?
Why is there always
another thug
to do before
the thing I do?
Just as some
pray before meals
so there must be
a special prayer
to be said
before doing
any special thing.
Find the prayer.
Looking for it
helps delay the deed,
leaves me at peace
in the soft meadow
of the unachieved.

10 April 2021

=====

Little clusters of yes and no
cling to the edge of the plate
like rice cooked a little too long
still worth eating for the sauce,
topaz and ruby and emerald.
Enthralled by spices, we linger.
What I really want to do though
is go out and play chess with the trees,
good honest friends, ever willing
to remind of the rules. Of what
only children imagine is a game.

10 April 2021

=====

What kind of day is it?
A no day with yes weather?
A maybe morning leading
to a why-not afternoon?
Let's go for a drive,
a road is our best magic,
goes from one place to another
totally different, imagine!
And it runs right through things,
always something out the window,
endless book, museum of the moment,
allons! Start the engine!
The why doesn't matter
anymore, only the is.

10 April 2021

=====

**Call a shack a stable
and one day a horse
may show up, lured
into being by words
alone, just like all
rhe rest of us beasts.**

10 April 2021

A GENEROUS NAME

Elizabeth Eliza Liza
Lisa Betty Bess Beth—
and when she's Beth
she's at her best ,
beth means house
and everybody needs
some place to live.

10 April 2021

=====

Cold in the sleep
the dark light yawns
from the body up until.
We have voices
so we know.

A sentence

is a peasant dance
people love to
think they understand.
Marble moments
left from fallen temples,
bathrooms in the park
allied Comfort Stations,
learn ancient languages,
find a live excuse
then rise and sleep.

11 April 2021

=====

Sunday is a sweater
the week tugs on,
chilly with beginning.
Find an abstract word
for starting-over-ness.
Sing: Warm
as my sweater is
my feet are cold.
Take comfort
in how swiftly
the music flows.
Goes. Oistrakh,
Sibelius. Quick bones,
cold enough to hear.
Write a commentary
on what I can't remember.
Your brother is a girl,
my brother never came,
Sunday Sunday Sunday

**is this the way to church?
The stained-glass
imagination of a child.
A fox cries in the woods.**

11 April 2021

=====

**So many things
I want to tell you
with my hands.
Think of them as wind
stirring in the desert,
old, dry, but full
of ancient sand,
all the memories of stone.
They ask no questions,
they are answers
waiting for you
thousands of years.**

11 April 2021

=====

Sometimes you need
something you can find
only in the dark. This is not
another song about light,
this is moving slowly,
very slowly. The mattress
understands, can help
only a little. Stand up,
forward march, hands
outstretched. The war
with ignorance never ends.
Sometimes a window
is open, tells you something
you can almost grasp.
You are so close now
to what you need but never mind.
It's here already. Here.

11 April 2021

=====

**A poet's a miser
of words, fingering
them with tongue
and ear, playing
with them on the table,
paper, arranging,
re-arranging, saying
as much as can be said
spending the fewest words.**

11 April 2021

=====

**What will I do if rhyme comes back
and they start counting syllables again?
Will I be able to retool, or will they just
dismiss me as an old modernist fool.
a left-over twentieth century hack?
My fate is sealed by the words I've said.
I hope they'll show mercy to the dead.**

11 April 2021

=====

Night almost drunk now
on its own meanings
stumbles into the
mere nobility of dawn.
I own nothing but beginning—
we can hear that quiet voice
speaking through the eastern trees.

11 April 2021

=====

**Give them new names
the people you see in dreams,
in thinking, new identities till
the world is filled with their
contra-dance with the actual—
let every person have an Other!
They will keep one another busy
while you hurry back to sleep
and dream some more.**

11 April 2021

CHURCHBELLS

Listen to the church bell
what does it say
can't hear it from here
then listen inside
sometimes distance
is your only friend
remember subways
the doors slicing shut

2.

but how can there be
so many birds and none right here

the ice is melting its way north
they flee before it

shadow of the shark

up on the grey sky

do you think it will rain
let the rain decide

3.

sometimes i'm tired of being certain
want to be a daffodil instead
or the blue-squilled lawn
my wife walks on
both of us balanced
on the truant arms of time
just be what I am until I'm not

4.

any flower can say that
and answer it too
their voices last longer than they do

5.

**I should build a church
just to put a bell in it
something to answer politely
the trees and the rain**

**a bell is a message
all about us
when you climb the tower
you find the pure vocabulary
a bell is metal and fire and earth
gravity and struggle
a bell is the earth answering us.**

11 April 2021

== == ==

**Something worth sawing
tree on the corner
chain-saw venture capital
all sides turn city till
everything is street.
Swindle the birds, enroll
clouds in your fantasy,
this is a movie, only you
can make it stand still.**

**Only you. Shake the web,
slit the curtain, smear
slurs on your own walls.
Your paintings hide the true
images beneath, your poems
stifle the music, each word
an acronym for some new crime.**

How did this all get started?

**A tree fell in the wind, men came,
you know men, creatures
who live to make noise, anything
they think will make the woman
pay attention to them and finally speak.
How silent she is in their dreams.**

12 April 2021

SCARABESQUE

Be small be hard
be hard to find
hard to understand.
Be old be found
hiding in sand,
be like a mind
fast asleep when
someone touches
lightly lightly a sleeper's
skin. The itch of daylight
scratches the dream.
Be hard be gold be old
be true, be anything ever
but be, just be.

12 April 2021

=====

What's in the paper?

Nothing new.

Why do we keep getting it?

So we can celebrate

the sacrament of throwing it away.

12.IV.21

APRIL 12

**It is the same today
every year. FDR
was president
when I was born
dies today and I am nine,
and Linda Darnell
the scrumptious brunette
who played Our Lady
of Lourdes leaves us
forever today but
Yuri Gagarin waves hello
at the Kremlin from orbit
and Beauregard starts
his cannonade of Fort Sumter.
The Civil War is always beginning.**

12 April 2021

=====

**As if the pentagram
rose over the roses
gold on their red**

**but from the ground
the hexagram blue and green
leapt up and cried No!
Reality is two people together
not one alone in the sky.**

12 April 2021

=====

**Do you think I could get there by sunset.
shores of that sea from which we came?
Not the ocean you know, but the sea
of which the whole ocean is one wave
and sunset always shows the way to it
sifting daylight out of the sky till dark.
When you sleep you hear the surf of it.**

12 April 2021

RANCONIA

**When I first saw a wishing well
I didn't know what to wish for
but I threw a nickel in anyhow hoping
somebody's wish would come true.**

12 April 2021

THE STAIN

I dream of two young girls carrying a blood-stained white gown through the woods. Medieval England. They are stopped by several men, some version of police, who suspect the girls of murdering someone. The girls explain they are carrying their mistress's garment to a nearby stream, celebrated for its alkaline cleansing properties. But how came the blood to be on the gown, the men demand. Embarrassed but Half-giggling they explain their mistress's sudden copious menstrual flow last night as she slept in her lovely nightgown. The men doubt their word, insist on collaring the girls and leading them back to their manor. Through the woods they go, the girls a little frightened now and getting angry. When they reach the manor, the lady of the manor is right there on the lawn, and she is angry indeed to

see her servants dragged back, her gown still stained. She is a decent woman though wealthy, and rightly turns her annoyance on the men, while sending the girls off to their rooms. Embarrassment on all sides, the men, the lady whose secret blood has been revealed. Even I felt it, and woke embarrassed and annoyed. Why was this my dream? Where is that stream that washes me clean?

13 April 2021

=====

Semaphore the word
keeps coming to mind
year after year when
I sit thinking of nothing.
So many times I have said
or written semaphore
and not much more. I say it
and see the old ones
by the railroad track,
old O&W or Erie line,
white wooden saltire,
a Scots cross in the sky,
wood, meaningful
to the train going by.
Semaphore means
sign-bearer but what
does the sign mean?
Any sign? Any word
is a semaphore, is that

**what I mean? Then why
that word over and
over again, often at waking,
come back to the day,
follow the track, it's all
waiting up ahead.**

13 April 2021

=====

**Choose the precarious first
the one that would fl off the shelf,
the cliff, roll down the hill,
fall from the bridge.**

**Answer me quick: who is it
that pushes when anything falls?
Boffins blither about gravity
but I know gremlins when I meet 'em
or see their mischievous pranks,
ploys, pitfalls, stratagems
to remind us constantly we
are not in control. So if there
is gravity (but how do the birds
float, asleep in the air over Lacoste?)
then that's just part of their toolkit,
the little grade-school teachers of the hidden
world.**

13 April 2021

DESKTOP

**My fingers are plating music
I don't know and can't hear.
But there they are drumming
softly with their tips on any top
not too cold and not too hot,
Bach-ing away fast or Liszt
more languorous. Fingertips.
People hate it when I do this.**

13 April 2021

=====

**Forgive me for being personal
but I woke up someone else today
and am trying to find my way back.
I love coffee, don't drink wine,
used to smoke, gave it up
along with a dozen other things.
Dozen means do Zen.
Almost right. Go to bed. Tibet.
Yes, almost home now.
When I was young znd reading
I wanted Tibet and now I am. I am.**

13 April 2021

=====

Trying to go to sleep
is like playing catch
with yourself, on and on,
lob and volley, toss
till the ball gets lost in the woods.

13 April 2021

=====

**Don't know what
I want so urgently
to tell you, only know
I want to hold you
tight while I say it
and from that touch,
clutch, closeness
words leap to mind.**

13 April 2021

====

**O all the white trucks
rolling down the hill
where do they go and
why are they white
so white, what does it mean
to have a color or drive one
through the unpretentious trees,
how dare they be white,
only doves and ducks seagulls
are really allowed to be white.**

13 April 2021

TELL ME

**the story instead,
the sinking ship,
the four volume history
bound in goatskin,
history left for me
to tell thee, captain
and crew, jaws of even
the peacefulest dolphin,**

**yes, I agree, everything
tends to be like a song
we have to sing along
rhyming with everything
that happens, no
silence in sight.**

**Four
volumes full of prayers
answered, city by city.
a girl comes up with a stone**

in her hand and hands it to me
and I'm not even halfway
through the first volume,
I haven't even come to where
I get born,

car on the corniche,
highway dense with cattle,
a rose caught on a willow bush.
How can I go on without being born?

She wore a red skirt and the rain
glistened on the mailbox
when they still were green—
this isn't nostalgia, it's common sense,
the bus was late and all my fault,

my eyes get tired telling the truth,
then the bus came. Get on
before me, let me watch
our others ascend
into the powerful vehicle,

the one those secret books explain.

Yes! Every car is The Chariot!

Yes! Every cup is The Grail,

didn't you always know that,

weren't you at the beginning

and all of this we call life

is just remembering?

She wore red and was the sun

he wore blue and went to sleep

every night for thirty nights until.

Until you looked up and saw

himself in the sky and said

whatever fool thing came into your head

and so the song crept on,

creeps on still, scary baby-talk,

foundering schooners, pure

rainwater running in the gutters,

tell me more, nobody answers the door,

**tell me all before I fall, tell me lies
I can work with towards the truth,
the boat still floats, the captain
though is just a picture on the wall.**

13-14 April 2021

=====

I grasped the column
firmly by its hips
and lifted. Bot an inch
did it rise, of course,
marble weighs thousands
of pound and I have
only two hands. But I tried.
I try. If I succeed one day
the whole temple will lift
into the air, float away
and leave behind it the truly
sacred space the wise ones found
and hid it with a church.
And on that plain old field
I will kneel and say my prayers.

13/!4 April 2021

=====

**Yo be caught in the middle of meaning
is to be a bird in an uncertain sky.**

**You know how it is
with an old paperback,
the pages begin to fall out
and where is your story then?**

**It's all pure inference
like little pink candles
snuffed out on the birthday cake,
count at your peril, just be calm
and try to leave some of the icing
on the side of our saucer.**

**History is like that, usually
too sweet to believe, swallow
at your peril. Remember**

**somewhere is far away.
Wear sneakers on your pilgrimage
and be careful, careful
of whate you might say—
a word has no other side
to let you out.**

13/14 April 2021

=====

**People I want
to talk to:
a few girls a few
guys and all
the trees on earth.
They remember
better than I do.
Or even than you.**

13/14 April 2021

=====

**But the weather wants it
and the colors come back
with Abraham from Ur
always arriving. Nothing
happens only once.
If it happens at all
it comes again every day.
Because it comes from us
and here we are.**

2.

**-tio words in Latin
mean action going on.
Revelation is continuous,
I hear their camels passing now,
and on the beach I see
Aphrodite wring out her wet air.**

3.

**Always arriving.
Be brave,
those footsteps
are your own.**

4.

**So when the supermarket opens
you're in Benares again or Aleppo,
you choose your wares along the lanes,
marveling at the character
of each shopper in the crowd,
a doctoral dissertation
worth of difference in their moods,
moves, choosing, swaying,
rushing forward. And you
are just like them, just alike
in being different. Fondle
the foil wrapped hunk of meat,**

**decide, decide. Look and weep
and pray for the captive
lobsters dormant in their glass tank.
Compassion is the fuel of conscious life.**

14 April 2021

=====

I'm not sure if I know
anybody anymore,
everything changes
in the night and now
the names have lost
their faces, vague forms
like kids you never knew
in school a life ago
seem to occupy the town,
meaningless e-mail,
letters from places that don't exist,
lists, lists. I did this to me.
I dared to close my eyes and sleep
then everything went away
and comes back changed.
Memo to self: don't look in the mirror.
Mirrors are the mothers of error.

14 April 2021

=====

No need to say but to be said
what is time to a tree
I linger in their green obedience
flashing their tickets at me
when I would be red instead,

caught in the parameters
of her arms who sands to seize
into safety all stragglers
who come out of the sea
onto the shore, her shore,
I mean the now, I mean
the here-I-am-again. Dawn
loud as a seagull to begin.

15 April 2021

=====

I lick your skin
to taste
the other side
of time

and that is rational
enough
for any lover
to insist

time passes
but this
kiss we share
just is.

15 April 2021

=====

**Old words come back
quarantine household
safe distance mask,**

**the enemy is different
but the fear is the same.
All the old poems breathe
out of the books again.**

15 April 2021

=====

**In some way
poetry is the purest art
because the poorest.**

**No other art
is less rewarded
in contemporary society.**

**But they give us all
our materials free
and let us do with them**

**whatever we please!
Born rich or work for a living,
our words will be our home.**

15 April 2021

=====

He is the In
of injury and injustice,
he stands sneery smiling,
old enough to know better,
too young to do what he knows.
If we're not careful
he'll buy a white
pick-up soon
and drive around hating.
What can we do?
It's a real question, how
can I get him to look into my eyes?

16 April 2021

NOW IT'S TIME FOR SOMETHING ELSE,

**rain on rainday, a graham cracker
even before breakfast, a hair
at the corner of the mouth,
someone else's. Why are month
and mouth so much alike,
what does the mouth of time
open to take in, or like
a cave mouth open to reveal.
These are not real questions,
just brick scraps waiting for mortar,
a heap of anything can make a wall, that's
what we need,
I'll get dressed and go make a wall,
hardly matters where,
somewhere I can fool myself
into thinking I have found
the boundary between in and out.
What do you do with your days off?**

16 April 2021

=====

**How to store clouds
in heaven's larder
then spread them out
to shield our eyes
on summer days, Lord,
put me in charge of the weather**

16 April 2021

=====

**Explain yourself
the old black maple
said to me
and I've been
trying ever since.**

16.IV.21

=====

1.

Thick sick mind
purges its stopless
thinking by speaking,
whence the broken
organ music of our temples,
the vile versations of our congress,
maybe even what I'm saying
now, we both must be careful,
but the reader be carefuller.
You can tell I worry what I say,
chew and spit out, doubt,
try to hold back until it's right,
it's never quite but here it is.
Sometimes one wakes up
with nothing much to say
and spends the whole day saying it.

2.

**This is as far as my confession runs,
if you need more, hurry to Rimini
and look at the sea, the dark
(it's night there) that keeps you
from Diocletian's palace,
everything happens backwards
in history, did you know that,
fossils are dreams of the future,
the first triceratops is waiting to evolve.
Don't they teach you anything in school?**

3.

**This is rant, and rant is good,
gets the feathers off your head
from when you lie abed too late
and half your intellect is still
on furlough in the pillow. So:
just keep talking. My father
always said that running water**

**purifies itself in a hundred feet
or yards or I forget but anyhow
it does, and this does too, this
river of our speech, just keep
talking. And then comes listening.**

4.

That's harder, isn't it?

**It's so easy to turn
the damned thig off,
slam the book shut,
look out the window
where another kind of language waits.**

16 April 2021

=====

**This is the birthday of someone important
they all are but this one
has the trees turning green
in this hemisphere and it's dark
at five in the morning and
who are you?**

**You are the saint
of this day and the tax
due to the government
the idle rich who claim to rule
the trajectories of birds and stars,
no, this is normal,
you are at home in the world
as only saints are, healing habits,
curing lovers, watching
on mountain tops for the next
thing we learn language to evade.
You are dawn and a duck
on the river, a bag of rice**

slung from the ceiling safe from rats
and you sing:

*Is it dawn
yet? Nyet.
Is the sky
same as my?
Look and see
me try to be.*

But nobody listens
why should they
music is everywhere
the goal is silence
after everything's been said.
And who are you then?
I dredge the sludge of my memory
the marshlands of my desire
and all I come up with is
someone important, born
today. Not sure. Maybe every day.

17 April 2021

====

**Geology is an occult science
hides the world around us
under its history, explains
that we see herds of beasts
shambling over the vacant
tundra of the Holocene.**

17 April 2021

=====

I keep trying to learn
the dialects of sleep
but waking keeps
slipping in my native speech.
I know the dark well
but how to drink from it
and doze in the shade
of that vast-spreading tree.

17 April 2021

====

Lesser observations
as in palmistry
to know the feel
of the other's hand
before you read
the linear script
the burin of fate
as they say has
etched in the palm.
The lines say fate,
the touch says love.
It's up to you to guess
which makes more sense.

17 April 2021

=====

That day he detected
a fingerprint on the sky
and took comfort
knowing we are not alone.
Later he passed
by a euonymus bush
fresh with first leaves
and asked How is spring
treating you and the tree
sighed happily and told him
Now I can breathe again.

17 April 2021

=====

The wheel of the barrow
grates in the gravel--
things make their own music,
mildly mad we listen.
Provoke me to great
acts of hearing! Understand
stone, sympathize with wind.
It's all part of the intimate
pathology of love,
hearing is your unknown
lover's touch.

18 April 2021

=====

**You can never be sure
but it might be now.
And where does air
come from anyhow
, this convenient atmosphere
that lets us breathe?
Think of something else--
morning is not made for mystery.**

18 April 2021

=====

So she went down to the stream
and kicked off her shoes.
Still on the dry rock she
felt already the cool renewal
that running water is.
No need to go in. Shoes back on,
climbed back to the path.
Nature is like a birthday card
in a foreign language--
you get the point just by its being there.
On her way home she wondered
How dare we learn to swim?

18 April 2021

=====

The wick is cold
but the room is full of light.
It must be day,
the words will tell me so
if I start speaking.
Hello, I say, just to be friendly,
simple, America, nice.
The light doesn't go out
so I must be right. See?

18 April 2021

=====

**Have you ever wanted to eat a cloud?
They look sometimes so soft,
mousse-mushy, easy to digest,
maybe not too sweet.
But trees are closer, and minute
by minute the green
gets greener, I mean it,
spring morning, sun coming out
from those tasty clouds.
I'm not hungry anymore--
could I too be filled with light?**

18 April 2021

AN OLD SAYING

**No long song
so long as air
aria they used to say
when they were other
abd we listened,
always listen
to your other
your mother said,
only the other
knows who you
really are.**

2.

**I have spent my life digressing,
which I take it is my job,
to chatter off sideways
from the official businesses
of each day, wander wordy**

down pointless pathways
deeper into who knows what.
Serviam, I say, I will serve
(unlike Joyce's hero), that
will be my *modus operandi*
*more Latin, sorry) until
I have hearkened to everything
and obeyed all I could.

3.

Because things serve each other
and things are good.
For instance the hawk
serves the sky and the sky
serves the hawk. But ah!
the music of their difference!

4.

Difference is what it's all about,
only by serving someone or something
can you know what that person or thing
actually is. Otherwise
it's just a shadow percept,
some random opacity
between you and the light.
You've got to have method
and method is a road
that goes everywhere.
To hear is to obey.

18 April 2021

A LONG POEM ABOUT GOVERNANCE,

**radical politics and belief
wrote itself across my sleep
page after page, I could hardly
keep up with the reading.
Governance inhibits chance,
fights change, depicts a universe
where power is at home
and knows where everybody lives.
There is no hiding anymore.
And so one takes up some sword
history left lying and with it
duels usually futilely against the is.
The is is so strong one winds up
hating one's own name,
all the evidence of belonging
to the is. And one begins to doubt
what language even lets us write.
But even in my sleep**

I knew that went too far.
The words were all I had
and sleep was leaching them away
and I struggled to keep
the last lines straight

And this is how it ended:
Dawn, no candle on the table,
just enough light to show
the difference between
me and what I see.

18/19 April 2021

=====

What we were waiting for
was already behind us,
like winter in April
and we never knew.
So seldom turned around
as if we too were moveless
in a hurtling world. I worry
mostly in vain--change
is subtle, often disagreeable.
Or imperceptible. Or even
when we see it coming
it sweeps past us in the dark.

18/19 April 2021

=====

Those mountains across the river,
rounded, mounded, nothing jagged,
eroded peneplane the scholars say
and we say hills, I see them
I stroke them with my eyes,
the miles of their gentle curves
and some days they mirror
in the river so then the tide
can caress them too.
I think this is how it all began.

18/19 April 2021

=====

**The kingdom of going
somewhere else
and almost anybody
can get to be king,
the throne moves
as you move, the frontier
always safely in the distance.
This is your country,
this going! Keep moving,
moving is the mandate,
moving is the chrism
o you by heaven anointed.**

18/19 April 2021

=====

**A love letter
from another time zone
shimmers on the screen.
Or is it from another species
horned, hoofed, wings aloft?
How can you tell my words alone?
Anybody can use my name.**

18/19 April 2021

SOLOMON

He sits on his throne
of the passing moment,
his dancing girls
are the birds
buy all around him,

his wise men and courtiers
are the trees of the forest
who cluster around him
whispering precedents and advice.

His jester is his own shadow
sprawled silly on the grass—
just try to watch your shadow
and keep a straight face.

I am a man, am no permitted
to visit his harem but I think

**his thousand wives are words,
and they give him good counsel too.
This is the great king,
a man alone and never lonely.**

19/20 April 2021

=====

**Memory is embarrassment
that mind makes smooth,
turns images into legislation,
learns to love the actual
lewdness of the moment,
strange religion of unchoosing.
From space we come and space become.**

19/20 April 2021

=====

I should have listened instead
to what the wombat said
curled on his side
in the Catskill park
sleeping zzz but one paw
gently scooping earth
beside him, deepening
the little hollow of his sleep.
Sleep is a blueprint,
a construction project,
a house we're building
on another planet,
this one when we someday wake.

20 April 2021

STRANDED IN MEMORY

a girl at the gate
ironwork and hedge
clearer than she is.
Open the gate,
open the girl. No,
memory a solid,
no probe to dissever
what seems from what is.

2.

Maybe not even a girl,
maybe shadows the rememberer
gives youth and gender to
so that the shade at least
has life again and may
its own time swing
the gate open and go in
or go away.

3.

**O the poor rememberer
who cherishes such things,
things he isn't sure of,
things he doesn't even know.
How do things get inside him
anyhow? Is there a secret
language in the brain, a plague
of neurons busy on their own?
He's almost ready to cry,
open the gate for god's sake,
go through the hedge.
Then he thinks she turns
and looks at him, her face
clear, no one he's ever known.**

21 April 2021

=====

**At least know when I am
in the turgid vortex
slow of time's genetics.
Born every day
is easy to say
but what if it's true
and all this [gestures
wide sweeping arms]
is all there is
and wasn't here before
and tomorrow be
only its shadow?
And I am the great
grandson of some
unchronicled Monday
and all of us like good
sleepy children must**

**every morning trudge to school
and spend all our light
in the classroom of the actual
learning the simplest
prepositions all over again,
what does of mean?
And where is in?**

22 April 2021

=====

I woke in the dark
and she told me all about
the retarded cousins of the Queen,
I know the queen, she was born
the same year as my friend Paul
and Allen and Amy and she alone
survives. In the dark in the dark
I think about lasting, and hiding,
and what it means to go on
when your friends are all gone
but the government remains.
I wonder if I'll ever sleep again.

22 April 2021

=====

**They've made the streetlights brighter
to deepen the dark.**

**A big truck came by I'm told
idled near our house
to change the bulbs.**

**Is it stupid that something in me
almost joyful towards the light,
oozing out of all the dark
and not knowing why.**

This magnet tugs my iron heart.

22 April 2021

=====

**I look at the calendar and observe
Kant and Lenin were brn today.
Better go back to bed. Too late--
maybe thinking is the ultimate
revolution against what is.**

22 April 2021

=====

He was taught early
there is a girl inside
every banana. Not just
a girl but a saint,
a holy one who gives
herself to you as you
slowly, reverently!
slip off the yellow robes
and net as a monkey
take in the pale meaning.
And when the fruit is overripe
the grandmother pulp inside
will feed him still, new taste,
same blessing. What kind
of person would tell a child that?

22 April 2021

=====

The Lama once explained
carnivore or vegan
all eating is a sin,
tearing the world with our teeth,
greed and ravaging.
Your mildest salad is a blasphemy.
So eat it humbly, thankful,
forgiving and forgiven

22 April 2021

=====

Let us know the little mind
rehearsing all its lessons
while the big mind
sleeps silently above us in the sun

And when the rain decides to fall
we find to our amazement
little tiny drops of wet
spread all over our copybook
the landscape where we live.

22 April 2021

APRIL PASTORAL

for Billie, on her birthday

**There were shepherdesses too
and their long legs
kept healthy oily
from lanolin in the wool
they rubbed against,
o the dense wool of their sheep,
the sheep of Helicon
that kept them safe from the sun.**

2.

**Physical, poetry is physical.
Always some part of the body
whispering to make itself heard.
Who taught the skin our language?
Or did it teach us to speak?**

3.

Wool woven into fillets
dyed crimson or sky,
sheep looking on
marveling at what becomes
of their words on the loom.
Fillets looped around the brows
of shepherdesses, around
their shoulders, waists,
all the places color can go.

4.

Years pass as I brush your thighs
the lover sighs, and she
to whom such words come
smiles and in every moment
roves back to the beginning,
hillside in spring sun
as if there were nothing else.
Yes, she says. tenderly,
the way she would comfort her sheep.

5.

We go to visit the shepherdesses
so we have some climbing to do.
They like to set up camp
on the steep slopes of a grassy hill
where the sheep tend to stay put
and don't scamper this way and that
but stand content to munch
the sturdy mountain grass.
The first we see of the shepherdesses
as we climb towards them
is their legs, then their bodies,
then far away their faces
high above us, as if they're in the sky.

6.

But when we get to them
we don't have as much to say
or tell them as we thought we had.

So we lie on the grass and loo
up at them, hoping they understand,
understand what we don't know
and we can't say, but it's there,
isn't it, or else why would we be here.

7

Even from close up
their white dresses
remind us of clouds.
It's good for the soul
to look up, good
for the mind to stay
quiet in the calm
certainty called Listening
when no one speaks.
The shepherdesses smile
often at us, at the sheep,
at the clouds. Their smiles
remind us of something
but again we can't say what.

8.

Of course we try to touch them
embrace them, make love
but their oily skin gives us the slip
and before we know it there
they are, sheltered behind some sheep
who actually now look like real animals,
with musculature and teeth
and minds of their own.

So we invoke the gods and the muses,
what else can we do. Night
is coming soon. We will lie down
and who knows who might
come and lie down at our sides?

22/23 April 2021

OF POETRY

The Bannerman's Arsenal
of poetry, a Melville isolato,
a castle stuck in the tide
firmly fixed in all that moves.
Or call it the eccentric
center of human thought,
the useless indispensable.

23 April 2021

=====

**How much of what we really
need to know is kept
strictly out of the curriculum?
Warmth of a car hood in winter,
chattering fridge, dialects of pie,
if only we could gve up eating
and all the other absolutes,
just keep love and touch and sparrows,
shadows and the midday tide.**

23 April 2021

=====

Letting myself in the door
I wondered what house
I was supposed to be today
but that's just me, glorious
in my uncertainty, orchestra
of blatant doubt. Not a sound.
No answer from the staircase,
what do rugs really remember
of those who walked or rolled on them?
A house is just a habit, and I
just a habit of saying so.
Knock knock. Nobody home.
Now you can be me.

23 April 2021

=====

**Open the leaf
read the creed.**

**Doing and waiting
can be simultaneous.**

**Things come to life,
a few flakes of April snow.**

23 April 2021

=====

**Waiting for the waltz,
remember? Open the hydrant
let the kids splash,
Mercury is coming with yet
another message, ready or not.
A city is its own weather,
no man can waltz alone.
Now open the envelope
still warm from the god's hands.
Read what it says inside:
the answer to any riddle
is in the middle. The hardest
thing of all is to find
the actual edge of anything.**

23 April 2021

=====

The girl's hair
was caught in his heart.
The surgeons were divided
what to do?
Operate now and tease
the hair out pr use
chemistry to dissolve it
or yet let time do that work—
isn't time the remedy for love?

23 April 2021

SILENTIUM

A stroke of business
along the boardwalk of the mind,
the rolling chairs
propelled by captive doubts.
no sea anywhere in sight.

2.

So there are paradigms of loss--
in sand, in surf, in targetless
forgetfulness-- and gleams
at times of o there you are again.

3.

Notion is nOcean, the saddest word,
all that we need, and not just salt,
unshriven we pass into sleep,
dry, dry, dust ,otes
on the lenses of our will.

4.

Stop thinking and open the door.

Stop thinking and all will be there.

Only what is there matters.

The ocean that isn't there

has washed everything else

even itself away.

24 April 2021

====

**And still it sings
spite all our doubts,
dawn sun in trees
our best words
sung back to us
rinsed with silence
so only the music speaks.**

24 April 2021

=====

muss ein lieber Vater wohnen

Beethoven sings
with Schiller's words,
somewhere up there
a dear father must be living
the kind who takes care of us
if we kiss each other goodnight
and lay down our tools,
fall asleep in language, wake
in music, always a new day.
But o the sadness of that *must be*
when all our yearning begs for *is*.

24 April 2021

=====

**Come back to what is,
just is.**

**There is a chair there
and a table, a couch
and a kitchen,
 it's all here,
even a window
to watch birds,
even a door.**

24 April 2021

=====

**What did women dream about
before there were men,
no gods, no guardians,
grand-pas, gauchos.
only moonlight on the sea?
From that inconstant light
did they fashion rough
approximations of their form
with experimental changes
that somehow persisted
even when the moon went down?**

24 April 2021

CIRCUMVALLATION

1.

carefully avoiding
what I'm thinking
I map out all the roads
around it,

 I am geography,
a box of salt,
triangles all over the lawn.
Here is the sawmill.
the icehouse in the side of the ridge,
from this particular elm
still standing healthy
you can see the spire
of the Lutheran church
so you know there's a town
with Americans in it
and maybe that's enough to know.

2.

**Forgive the situation
what else can you do,
nothing ever changes
except by itself.
Call your lawyer
change your will
it doesn't matter,
you went to the wrong
college, took the wrong
courses, got great grades
by giving all the wrong answers.
Just like everybody else.**

3.

**Daffodil, you early blossomer,
console me now
so when I linger
after you've gone
some sense of you lasts,**

echoes of music
from a distant room,
loud as sunshine
in its moment but now
is only now again.
a sweet blur of yellow in my mind

4.

But that's just where
I don't want to be.
Safer out here with the squirrels,
dawn wind shivering my knees.
If only radio had been invented
and the air were filled with messages out here,
sweet gospel
of other people's words!

5.

All roads circle round
an absent fact.
Call it religion
if you must,
as a child you saw
pictures of it
on what you thought
was a wall.
But there are no walls.

6.

Reactionary energies,
Republican rabbits obsess the lawn.
And you think the Civil
War has ended?
Subtle sabers
of cowardly legislators
rattle in the dark assemblies.

7.

**But that's only the wrapper
on the thought I won't think.**

**A man in his own house
should be his own master
but there sits that autocrat
perched on the pineal gland
and no hope of no thinking.**

**Use symbols. Collect stamps.
Play the recorder but its toot
would wake the neighbors
and all their thoughts would
rush at you like terriers,
a name that reminds us
the earth itself has teeth.**

8.

**The words are roads
that lead you safely
through what you do not
want to know
out into the beveled landscape
of the utterly new.
Or so it said before I closed the book.**

25 April 2021

WHY IS THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?

So that.

But what?

Why is the middle of anything?

So you know

you're there.

But isn't there more?

Yes--when you're awake in the dark

and keep your eyes open

you can see

things you've never seen,

could not see in the light.

So blow out the candle

(remember those?),

perch in the darkest

corner of the room and watch.

The parade is on its way

you can bear it through the closet door.

25 April 2021

=====

**Make every verb an active verb
and all nouns in the nominative
or agentive some languages prefer--
do it, do it, do it and never be done.**

25 April 2021

=====

**When you're in doubt
set your left hand
palm flat just below
your waist where the hip
begins its gentle swell,
close your eyes,
hold a deep breath
and wait. you will all
so suddenly know.**

25 April 2021

=====

**A voice on the speakers
was saying long lines
of a long poem in some
language not my own
and all over the big room
people were scattered
reading along with the voice,
following the lines
and all of them reading
from notebooks wherein
the lines were all written
in longhand, each book
in the script of its owner
as if they all had written it,
all their energy and care
had written the same poem
an unseen voice was saying.**

26 April 2021

LEGERDEMAIN

I twist the rod
on the venetian blinds
and let the whole sun in.

26.IV.21

=====

**Nothing is easy
but why should it be?
Most people weigh
between one and two
hundred pounds—
think of the struggle
with gravity just to be.
And every day it gets dark.
Listen to trees then,
our best counsellors.
They flourish and stand tall,
content not to go anywhere
but just be, be there and
breathe green five hundred years.**

26 April 2021

=====

**I just want to tell you
something you never heard before.
But you know everything already.
So that's where music comes in--
you know all the words
but here comes the song.**

26 April 2021

A LEAF

can be torn
but not broken,
just as the words
on a page
never forget.

26.IV.21

=====

**On a country road
maybe it's always
the same car passes.
, keeps changing its clothes,
looks different every time
but it always comes along
one car at a time and then
a long time passes and here
it is again, downhill, slow.
Things tempt our recognition.**

26 April 2021

=====

**Music is plucking
candy out of the air,
here, dear child,
sing a piece with me.**

26.IV 21

ROTA

**The wheel turns
because it must.
A perfect wheel
cannot stand still.
This is the true
meaning of prayer,
rolling reverent
with the world.**

26 April 2021

=====

**On this safari
up the sky
we go unarmed
except with eagerness
to catch a cloud
where it sleeps
and watch it wake,
taking pictures of it
all the while with
the blinky camera in the mind.
I need to show you something
when I come home,
sunburned and weary,
so here, here is what
they told me up there,
a word is a stone from the sky.**

26 April 2021

READING STEVENS

I got to see
all the zebras of Connecticut
wandering through town,
horsy heavy, horsy big,
and bo policeman to ride
their bony backs. But ah!
(as poets used to say), ah!
the shimmer of their stripes,
more brown than black,
or are the whites the stripes?
That is why poetry is so hard,
you can't tell the figure from the ground,
the native from the immigrant.
And like the Connecticut River
it's tidal, flows both ways,
that's what the word means,
like our Mainicanuck, just poetry.

26 April 2021

