

3-2021

**mar2021**

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## TRIPPLICITY

1.

Triple city  
of the four-fold heart,  
the five fingers  
Olson found everywhere,  
*jawohl*, I animate these bones.  
animal I am,  
inside the three cities inside me.

2.

Now say it in English—  
I am the dark that lures such light.

3.

Love Compassion Wisdom  
three spires you have to climb  
on your own bare feet,  
no elevator, nothing to lift you  
but the thought of oothers:  
other people, other beings,

**ordinary things to love  
and care for and understand.  
Finally at the very top you see  
the whole city where you began.  
A simple gospel brought you here  
but the swallows do not laugh.**

**1 March 2021  
[start of NB 434]**

## PHASES

Just a phase  
like rain  
or music  
then the cable quivers  
and sunshine  
silences.

The fact of us  
is tedious unless  
the Beethoven quartet.

2.  
Most natural of all,  
the four chambers of the heart  
each one now mum or hums  
and the beat is one,  
the blood feels its way through us  
and long microseconds later  
we understand.

**3.**

**Folly comes in phases too  
like science lessons  
and the prayer called silence.**

**1 March 2021**

=====

**The cardinal knows  
two things only:  
to eat seed and fly away.  
By these all  
of us too are sustained.**

**2 March 2021**

=====

**Cloud in sky  
book on thigh  
look between--  
all the rest  
is just for you.**

**2 March 2021**

=====

**Gnomic verses**  
**write me in my sleep.**  
**That's what sleep is for:**  
**genesis and prophecy.**

**2 March 2021**

=====

**Now the short-bane months begin,  
say them quick and get out in the sun,  
winter's time enough for all  
those -bers and -arys.**

**2.III.21**

====

**Fear that the people  
we get to know in dreams  
we'll never meet again,  
not even in sleep.  
Fear that what happens  
in dream or out  
happens only once.  
This cup of coffee  
has to last my whole life.**

**2 March2021**

=====

**Be brief.  
Build a house of reeds.  
Stay home.**

**Or what is liberty  
but waiting for the bus,  
what is democracy  
but standing in the rain,  
being where you actually are.**

**2 March 2021**

=====

**Sometimes the keyboard  
feels just like a keyboard  
I mean on a Steinway  
so when I type a word  
it comes out music. a phrase  
I've never ever heard.  
hidden in the language all along.**

**2 March 2021**

=====

**Doesn't the fact that I cry out to you  
say something about both of us,  
the existential animal the leaps  
from the one who cries out  
to the one cried out to, then leaps back  
affirming, affirming?  
Isn't *god* a reflex of ancient *\*gaudh-*  
'the one *cried out to*'?  
How can I help it if I know  
nothing more of you than my cry?**

**2 March 2021**

=====

**Send your kids to Mars  
do it again and make it  
tight this time, a planet  
ripe for righteousness.  
Earth was Eden, *capisce?*  
They didn't throw us out,  
they changed the place instead.  
You've had your apple, they said,  
and took all the other food away.  
So we must dig and delve and die  
while that pink paradise hovers in the sky.  
Forgive the rhyme--it's too  
early in the day for poetry.**

**3 March 2021**

=====

Open the door  
go to the store  
go right in  
and sing a hymn  
not too loud  
from aisle to aisle  
as you choose  
all the bright things  
glitter on the shelves.  
sing louder near  
the meat and fish,  
their flesh will hear  
and may remember.  
And if shoppers  
look at you askance  
explain that choosing  
is your church  
and what you pick  
is how you pray,  
lifting each item  
fondly up to all

**divinity, etting  
each on the moving  
belt at check-out  
for the smiling priest  
or priestess to lift  
evaluate and offer up  
in turn, until the sky  
shimmers with numbers  
and the sacrament is done.**

**3 March 2021**

=====

**The metal bends  
hyst enough to spring  
back with a quiet  
thrum of sound.  
So music comes,  
gamelan, harpsichord,  
fingers always  
waiting at the gate  
to sing by touch.**

**4 March 2021**

=====

**Call it by another name,  
what does the river call itself,  
can you tell the right name  
of a city by sitting in the park  
close your eyes and listen?**

**The Romans thought Paris  
was Lutetia, the muddy place,  
it took two thousand years  
to get it right, Lucestia, goddess of light.**

**So how do we know what we know,  
is there something in us  
that when we learn a name  
or a date or a route  
says Yes, that's right?  
I reach across the tabletop  
and touch your wrist--  
is that a fact?  
A fact us what can't be taken back.  
A touch is permanent.**

**4 March 2021**

====

**You let me into the darkest places  
that's what you say to a friend,  
you took my hand and led the way,  
the only way there is, but no one  
can find it by themselves.  
Of course the blue sky  
is full of information, and this stone  
at my feet knows plenty  
but they can't move at all  
unless you, in some dark  
or clear or even hidden way  
say Go. And so often that word  
means Come to me.**

**4 March 2021**

=====

**Once I knew how  
to calculator the house of Jupiter,  
now I look it up on line.  
Now give me an app  
that tells me what my heart is craving,  
an app for listening to the Holy Ghost,  
effortless Elysium.**

**4 March 2021**

=====

I see myself sitting at the keyboard  
writing a poem one letter at a time  
the way we type anything,  
wondering where it is going  
but not wondering too much,  
just watching one word  
whisper to the next, or haul  
it out of the old word-book  
at the back of he brain--  
who knows where words come from  
I mean how they come through us  
to speak again,  
out loud or in the soft clatter  
of a keyboard, this one,  
under my fingers now,  
yellow letters on a black ground,  
a gift you gave me  
that keeps talking on and on.

4 March 2021

=====

**O sun again  
shimmying in trees,  
I try to lean my lines  
here in the green room  
of the world,  
you glad me with a sheen  
in all the dense branches,  
a tint of what will come,  
I'll try hard to be ready.**

**4 March 2021**

=====

**The empathy of blue,  
people on the go  
to work the day in place.  
The light remembers almost everything,  
I'm left alone  
with what the light forgets,  
a]soft stinging in the eyes  
as if to weep  
but no tears come.  
I have built fences on the moon  
to keep my cattle in.  
I am free to talk to you today.  
No, I have never been in Montana,  
but in Wyoming once  
June snow on the mountainside.**

**4March 2021**

=====

*quando ver venit meum*

**A few spruce and hemlocks  
amid the dense leafless trees  
give a vague sense of green  
a month or so to will bring.  
But when a cloud covers the new sun  
the green grows grey.  
Today is today. Shiver in the wind.**

**4 March 2021**

====

**You led me  
into the darkest places  
and became the light**

**everything comes after that  
little river, sagging fence,  
bluebells, spring snow  
melting into earth,**

**earth, geology revealed.  
You led me into the earth  
and made me become.**

**There on the cave wall  
an ancient sign:  
a tree with eyes,  
the moon with hands.**

**4 March 2021**

## **CENTERBEAM**

**Centerbeam  
word walk  
over the gulf  
of nothing said**

**cantilevered  
by sunrays bent  
always a little  
too much to ignore**

**so we assemble  
the stones  
whoever we are**

**stone stone stone  
no book is our law**

**rejoice!**

**It all remains to be said,  
needle and thread,  
bare arm and smile,**

**simchas the Jews say,  
celebrate that.**

**2.**

**There is a vegetable garden near,  
but not much ripe yet in it,  
crisp kale at your service  
even in the snow, but still  
you can walk there, treading  
lightly on the future,  
the future,  
the thing we dare to call  
the dirt beneath our feet.**

**3.**

**So often the machine  
seems to know  
what I am thinking.  
Out stream the words,  
topple stone on stone  
till much has been spoken  
but little said--  
some things it is not wise to say.**

4.

Vaccine at last.

Woman with the needle,  
even her mask can't hide her smile,  
right arm or left she asks

I answer nd the point  
goes painlessly in,  
hydrate, hydrate she says  
so off I go with my wife  
who gave me the whole ocean.

5.

See what I mean about gulfs and silences?  
Come dance with me a waltz of guesses,  
a czardas of near misses--  
we will never get  
all the way there  
that's what it means  
to dance, to go on.

6.

Polyverse seems just perverse,  
look what we've done with the one we have...  
universe must mean a single verse,  
one line of a poem that never ends.  
Read your line deeply  
then shout it out.  
We always need more weather.

7.

Roof I mean,  
roof may be root,

build from the roof down,  
the crest knows  
all that comes below

as from the sky  
we maybe came.

5 March 2021

**AZIMUTH**

**as if the owl  
held it up there  
gently enough  
for such a sharp beak  
and said it, loud,  
I am from whom,  
from whom**

**nothing more.**

**But we had heard  
the high heart talking  
so when he let us fall  
we fell easy  
quivering with the resonance  
of his word.  
And that, dear friends,  
is how.**

**5 March 2021**

====

Some clouds have come  
to call,  
                  to clothe the sun  
as she slips away  
shimmering in  
that filmy sky-silk  
they bring to her.  
Strange days.  
We look for friends  
wherever we can.

5 March 2021

=====

**Woman walking dog.  
\I've spent years trying  
to discover or decide  
which frightens me more.  
And walking is scary too,  
considering there are two  
legs that have to agree  
and dyads are difficult,  
binary embarrassments.  
Always some twosome  
to figure out. One way or  
other they both havbe teeth.**

**5 March 2021**

====

Little bell far away  
laughing in the wind,  
a pretty forest walking  
so slowly near us,  
towards us, thirty years  
to come down this  
little hill. Little things,  
slow things always  
advancing, nothing lost.  
Sealskin coat dangling  
soft in the closet. Years!

6 March 2021

====

**Don't explicit too much of Saturday,  
the baron is ill-disposed,  
keeps to his bed. In Mexico  
another earthquake  
not too fierce. The ocean  
weeps all over small islands.  
Lord, teach us to fall  
upward into the light.  
Lady, be my love tonight  
till it's Sunday and away we go.**

**6 March 2021**

=====

**Sportcaster's hyperbaton  
safe at second base is Mookie Betts  
makes the grass grow upside down.  
No, it doesn't. One lie  
does not imply the truth.  
He is not always safe, alas,  
not always stuck at second.  
Words too are a game  
and they're always the winning side.  
An ad for Chevrole comes up  
before we get to learn what happens next. Or  
now what happens.**

**6 Mach 2021**

## OPENING THE MOUTH

I have to talk about  
whatever tells.  
I knock on your door,  
three thuds like a Freemason  
and you reveal.

The open door says come in,  
I enter the mystery,  
the uncanny darkness of  
the next words to be said.

Speak, I whisper,  
and the hallway mirror  
shivers with a little light  
as if it could see the sound—

who really knows all  
the human senses know,  
it's all whistling in the dark.  
Or not so dark now, I see  
a light upstairs, dim steps,

shadows I could climb.  
What language am I in,  
what word is this house?

I rub my palms together  
and remember sunshine.  
Houses don't just happen,  
somebody must have planned all this,  
could it be me?

Be  
careful what you say  
when you're alone in the dark.  
Anything happens. Walls  
windows doors terraces  
flowering borders deep wells  
stone fences. Distant vista.

Where am I now?  
Foot of the stairs I will not climb,  
feel the carpet underfoot,  
lush, from northern Persia,  
I can feel the ochre and the madder,  
the curved colors writhing  
towards a sudden incalculable peace.

I feel sleepy in this word.  
Isn't anybody here?  
Bring me coffee, bright  
kitchen somewhere not too far?  
Fluorescent sandwiches,  
microwave mazurkas, life?

Where is life?  
Some words have pets  
but no cat here. No children,  
that's stranger. No one but me.  
If I could find a bedroom  
I would sleep, but most  
houses keep that sort of thing  
up the very stairs I will not climb.

No, no, no. I'm down here  
for a reason. From carpet  
to bare wood my feet  
find the way, polished floor,  
hallway, and it too seems  
to have a little light at the end.

**But I have traveled long enough this night,  
here I am and here must linger,  
like music on some radio  
you can't find to turn off.**

**6 March 2021**

## ALLEYWARD

Alley guard  
morning glories vining  
up the cinderblock wall  
we kept our car  
in one of those  
profile of Chief Pontiac  
facing into the dark.

2.  
Enough of memory,  
be instead  
the child again  
you thought you were  
instead of now  
when you sit and think  
what would i do if I were me?

3.

Child be,  
grammarless and lost,  
one summer morning in the mountains  
it was 32 degrees,  
the poor rattlesnake  
coiled on the big boulder  
in sun to keep warm.  
That is how we learned  
numbers and cross the road  
and run away.

4.

The futility of childhood  
is proved by what happens next.  
Look at your so-called friends--  
can you imagine any one of them  
as a child? Childish maybe  
but an actual kid? Never.  
The child you were  
is your lost Messiah--  
pray for the Second Coming.

5.

Parousia  
they call it  
where they jive  
about such things,

when the real comes back  
from all the places you have been.  
Don;t blame me  
for my messy theology--  
I was a child once  
and it sticks to my hands.

6.

All this from the empty alley  
where Mr. Hoffman walked his collie  
and I learned the names  
of a few flowers  
that lasted ever after,  
pussy-willow pansy rose.  
An alley was a secret street  
the houses hid,

**cars came to their garages  
left the pavement free.  
Tricycles and tin wagons.  
Once I saw my Brooklyn alley  
in Chicago and suddenly  
a heartbeat told me  
an alley is the noblest street  
because it always leads right here.**

**7.**

**To be honest,  
memory is a big thick sweater  
it's hard to tug off  
so you can feel on your bare skin  
the chill of now.  
Sunday. Cold. No child in sight.**

**7 March 2021**

**BY THE METAMBESEN**

**1.**

**We all are natives now  
and lose our names  
into the sorrow  
of our common speech.  
Clamshells by riverbank,  
serviceberry frees,  
clouds lost in the sky.**

**2.**

**Am I being clear?  
Are you even here  
listening to me try  
to analyze the evidence  
of where we come from  
now. Genesis is mystery.  
We sink into our names.**

**3.**

**Sometimes I wonder if the crow knows best,  
caw three times and flap away.**

**Yesterday the air was bracing fresh--  
that should be enough for tomorrow.  
Because the music never really stops,  
the empty sky it leaves behind  
is full of information too,  
put on the hard hat of listening.**

**4.**

**And the crow said more than that  
of course, no leaves yet  
but the branches are so many  
that they block out the light.  
Crows always show the way to go  
though. That's why they fly away.**

**5.**

**Down Cedar Hill to a little trine  
where water used to settle  
till they built a conduit**

to carry it off across the road  
long after the Frenchman passed *Chateaubriand*  
on his way to Ohio to get the news.  
And now the revolution too is dead  
and our little street still goes up the hill.

6.  
See, the sentimental still has teeth,  
look too long at the cloudless sky  
and your eyes dazzle.  
Call this the Munsee Suite,  
where music turns round  
and bites its maker.  
We belong to their beginnings--  
year by year we come  
closer to what they were  
and what they meant.  
Lost in origins.  
No escape from that song.

7.

Haunted by all I don't know  
I stare out at the rock ridge  
showing through snow,  
this little lift of lawn, trees,  
patch of earth I am said to own.  
Most of what I've said  
is what it brings to mind.  
Grass waking under snow.  
I have not listened hard enough.

8 March 2021

= = = = =

**Waiting for the train  
then waiting for the truck  
to stretch out for  
its long interview with distance  
into the river-bearing night  
and then wait for the night  
to answer?**

**Shane on you  
she says, I am  
the words you already know,  
my name is everything you say.**

**7 / 8 March 2021**

*[Blend of then and now. Text I tried to dictate last night in Gmail, now completed, accepting some of the device's mis-hearings. Truth comes from everywhere.]*

## LOVER OF UP THERE

Endymion  
all over after—

broad daylight  
of an old afternoon—

where is the moon  
when you need one?

2.  
Vulture circles over roof,  
joins another,  
spirals out, in figure-eights  
patrol the ordinary why  
we call the sky.

3.  
Yes, looking up  
is always a question,  
  
and maybe the answers  
are close at hand,

maybe even in our hands.

But watching the raft float  
eventually south  
so this so this must be North  
and this water is  
Mohicantuck, rolling  
from the mouth of the mountains  
into and from again the absolute sea—

3.  
thus letting us get  
from Abay to Coney Island  
and still be a philosopher.

Wait by the waterfall.  
Open every door.

8 March 2021

*[reconstructed with Charlotte's help from  
notes of 2.III.21]*

=====

**Some days  
just getting past  
the bedroom door  
is work enough.**

**The masterpiece  
called This Afternoon  
is waiting to be written  
painted carved composed.**

**God knows what waits  
to be done  
in the workshop of the night.**

**8 March 2021**

**=====**

**I love the sky  
my sky**

**will never leave me.**

**The sky will always be here.  
There.**

**8 March 2021**

====

**Sometimes  
without dying  
we wake up  
on the other side of death,**

**gazing straight ahead  
at the life behind us,  
the life that lived us,**

**bleak landscape  
not too many trees  
sparkle of a distant creek  
house on a hill.**

**And then we wake  
back here,  
death's tollbooth  
still far ahead we hope  
on this very strange road  
the only one there is.**

**9 March 2021**

=====

**Let me hold your hand  
while the world swings,  
hard to stand upright  
when the dark keeps moving.  
let us stumble into morning  
together, whatever that means,  
hands joined? breath in sync?  
Sometimes I just forget  
to feel. Or know better  
than to feel. Sometimes  
the dark is not enough  
to keep me from seeing.**

**9 March 2021**

====

**File the jagged edges down  
sand the tabletop  
lift the sun into the sky.**

**9 March 2021  
(*a Kuhai*)**

## INTERRUPTION

In other options  
we could skate  
across the lake  
even at its widest  
or drive his father's Lada  
all the way to Omsk  
where history was changed.  
Yes, Foenko!

2.  
I'm willing to admit  
I'm trying to address  
a huge conundrum  
nobody cares about  
but we all suffer from—

the past is still to come.  
Nothing that happened  
way back then  
will really happen  
till we understand it.

**Till then it's like the stones  
of Göbekli Tepe, standing  
weathered in sunlight  
teasing us with years,  
thousands of years,  
daring us to understand.**

**And everybody has a theory  
about those rocks too,  
yet all the mists have not so far  
condensed into a single  
dewdrop of the truth.**

**3.**

**We skate across or slide through things,  
slap the names of the dead  
on parks and public spaces,  
we see their photos  
in their silly fezzes, cowboy hats,  
slouching midnight blue berets.  
And who are they we never know.  
Someday their time will come.  
And then we'll know who Lincoln is**

and maiden Joan the unspeakable English  
murdered in Rouen,  
and who John really is  
who ate that strange book.

4.

Confess: you never felt  
your great-grandmother's breath  
upon your cheek,  
never felt her father's skin  
or went to Warsaw with his mother  
who mourned her father dead in France.  
Confess: it never happened.  
It hasn't happened yet.  
Will never happen till you understand  
and even then it will be different.  
It will not rain on Waterloo,  
Caesar will stay home  
with a headache that day  
and Lenin lives in Zurich still,  
that sensible old man  
at the cafe along the Limmat  
under those blossoming trees.

9 March 2021

=====

**Mercantile manners  
go by ship  
and spit new islands in the sea  
to grow your coconuts.  
Pineapples to Alaska!  
Beethoven in Baluchistan!  
I shout my ignorance,  
and hope it will sell.  
Euros from heaven  
clink on my tabletop--  
metal coin metal table  
empty ashtray  
I own the world!**

**9 March 2021**

=====

**Analyze silence.  
Catechism of the dark.**

**Doubt every difference  
but hold them firm.**

**The miracle is matter  
after all. That you are.**

**9 March 2021**

== =

**He went to the museum  
so often he became  
a statue. His clothes  
fell away, his skin turned  
marble. His schoolboy Latin  
woke up in his head  
till everything around him,  
crowds of visitors by day,  
the silences of night,  
took on a Roman explanation.  
And he found he could  
stand there for hours at a time  
without feeling the least bit tired.  
Years even. Hundreds of years,**

**10 March 2021**

====

In the shadow of my house  
a man is walking.  
I want it to be a woman  
but it is a man,  
I want it to be a deer  
of even a fox  
but it is a man,  
man I don't know.

2.  
A shadow is a place to hide.  
But he's not walking towards me,  
he's just walking by.  
Dark coat, lateral trajectory.  
What will he become  
when he passes out of sight?  
Who will he be in the light?

**3.**

**This is a psalm of anxiety,  
every perception  
is a plea for help.  
But to what god id it prayed?  
That doo is hard to see in the dark.**

**10 March 2021**

=====

**Little blue bottle  
on the window ledge,  
all the day's beauty  
you keep safe for me.**

**On dark mornings you  
remind me what color is,  
on bright days you turn  
into elegant sapphire.**

**What would I do without you?  
Someday I'll pull out  
this tiny glass stopper  
and drink your vintage light.**

**10 March 2021**

= = = = =

But the door was open  
the chickens restless in the yard  
and who knows what the stream  
was thinking, running  
and running, never  
pausing to explain.  
Oh the world is full of wise teachers  
nervously mumbling their lectures,  
oh help me understand  
I cried, and the rooster crowed.

2.  
Naturally. It's morning.  
Mild for March/  
I stand at the riverside  
and watch the garbage scow to by,  
attended by its flock of busy gulls.  
No. I'm just at the doorway,  
no, just at the window,  
the snow melting.

3.

See what happens when  
the mind gets in the way of thinking  
when thinking should mostly be  
reading whatever is right there  
in front of me, thinking  
is an open door  
not a pot on the stove  
or idling car. Thinking  
is going all the way here.

4.

No scow, no chickens either  
though we used to hear  
a cock crow up Monty hill,  
close enough to make  
the city in me smile.  
That was years ago  
but the Lenape spirits  
still chat quietly in these woods.

5.

**You think that makes me romantic?  
Then walk in the woods with me  
and you'll hear them,  
patient, explaining  
in words only flesh can hear,  
we who have blundered  
into their religion,  
piss in their fallen leaves,  
cut down their sacred trees.  
Hold my hand, we both are scared,  
we hear an old voice whisper  
*Burn only deadwood—  
all life is mine.***

**11 March 2021**

=====

*for Charlotte*

**If words were things  
I would still  
give them all to you.  
Because they are  
and I do.**

**11.III.21**

## REVEILLE

He sleeps to his feet  
and strides up the wall.

No. Something's wrong,  
start again. He wakes  
in Florida, the Gulf coast,  
soft swampy morning  
and low wind.

Better—  
but not true yet. True  
matters, true  
is all we can really  
ask of each other.

Try again. She slept  
but did not feel rested.  
The Sun was in Pisces again,  
you know what that means.  
Birds, branches, weird dreams,  
a fox smiling by the summerhouse,  
a glass of Perrier.

We're getting there.  
The hum of the fridge  
made the kitchen seem alive.  
The mocha in its cone  
awaiting the kettle,  
this is almost right now,

not quite, there is no meaning  
in the image yet,  
things on the table, neatly,  
urns and jars, meaning  
matters, no truth  
without meaning, no meaning  
without truth.

What is he waiting for?  
Maybe he did walk up the wall.  
Maybe sleep has nothing to do  
with feeling rested,

rest happens at waking,  
blinking your eyes at the fresh light,  
sleep was hard work, exercise,  
gymnasium means the aaked place,

**your body under the covers  
striving all night long  
in that wild Otherland of dream,  
dark ocean of No Dream At All.  
No REM.**

**The clock  
remembers everything  
but you forget.**

**High on the wall  
his vision comes to rest  
long enough for him to close his eyes.**

**Her eyes. We are all  
in this together.  
Climb the mountain,  
take the little Alpine train,  
it's your dream, you decide,**

**or is no dream worth  
the pain of waking?  
She picks up the phone,  
ponders who to call,  
puts it back down.**

**They have no phone in dream  
or if they do it won't ring here.**

**I don't want to talk I want to sleep.  
She hears the soft hiss  
of water steaming onto the coffee,  
tiny gurgle of it trickling  
through the cone. Then silence.  
Drink the Inescapable day.**

**12 March 2021**

====

**A spruce tree is a basket  
the light gets messy in  
until it all seems green,  
tyrant of the spectrum,**

**I am a red man in my dreams,  
help me, help me my color!  
Blue might be easier, physics says,  
but I'm not blue, I'm red,**

**the red king on the chessboard  
in bad trouble with the white.**

**The light. It's all my fault,  
the poor spruce tree's not to blame—  
forgive me, all-year-flourisher,  
sometimes the lust for color makes me rude.**

**12 March 2021**

## **EATING THE SKY**

**1.**

**Eating the sky,  
sure. the way the Babylonians  
swam sleek-limbed  
through dry earth  
and we call it stone.**

**Statues. Isn't it a long  
time since you too  
tasted the sky?**

**2.**

**Read me.  
Reading a book  
is like swimming naked.  
Or swimming  
is like reading in the dark,  
the words can find  
no one but you.**

3.

**Before Babylon  
there was Greece.  
Before Greece there was us,  
sitting side by side  
on the subway, A train maybe,  
headed north,  
comfy on the red vinyl bench.  
Sometimes our elbows kissed.  
Do you understand?  
The world begins right how,  
history is what happens next,  
happens to our heads,I mean.  
the pretty girls of Babylon.**

4.

**You know perfectly well  
I use Babylon to mean all antiquity,  
saber-tooth cavemen  
all the way to Charlemagne.**

We start at now  
and go forward into the past.  
I like saying Babylon  
because I'm from Long Island  
and there is one there  
my grandfather owned acres in  
that cunning aunts and uncles  
snatched away from us  
but that's another story.  
Plus Babylon has baby in it.  
Back to the statue.  
Your smooth hips in moonlight,

5.

No one made those statues—  
they came up out of the ground  
by themselves, to answer  
the urgency of our young thinking.  
Always be a child.

Art comes  
only to children,  
wise hard-working children all their lives.  
So when we see statues stand

**in the chill and not  
the least bit comfy museum  
we need to warm them  
with our childish love,  
teenage lust, infant tears.**

**6.  
Sometimes I think what it would be like  
to go to one of those brand-new  
ancient sites, Anatolia,  
Göbekli Tepe maybe,  
and when nobody's looking  
stretch out on a new-born  
ancient stone and sleep,  
sleep all the way to now.  
The feel of stone  
seeping up into the body,  
coming to life along with me,  
comradely, stirring towards  
some incredible sunrise,  
up, up!  
But now is always far away.**

**13 March 2021**

## BIRTHDAY ODE

Sun has risen,  
she paints the sky blue.

It must be somebody's birthday.  
A crow flies by  
and brings me to my senses,  
the task that crows are good at,  
those wondrous raving  
preachers in the air.  
I listen, I obey.

It is a day to bless.  
Yes, I know every day  
is birthday too,  
but there are so many genders,  
so much music,  
gold coins rattling,  
roulette wheel clattering  
in the windy casino, Wiesbaden,  
and there's Dostoevsky  
sneaking out the door,

**no, wait, the crow  
pulls me back from all that,  
not then, just this, this.**

**What is the symbol of this day?  
A signpost pointing to  
the magical French town of Hiesse.**

**What is all that noise?  
It is all the musics played at once—  
that's what it means to get born.**

**13 March 2021**

=====

**There is torture in remembering,  
farmlands of the lonely soul.  
She had pale skin, a brown smile,  
black eyes, we passed on the dirt path  
leading to the barn. She went in,  
I walked on. Everything I think  
I know comes from the other side.**

**13 March 2021**

=====

**The taste of the other side—  
its form? Amorphous.  
The song? Silence.  
And even I need in in my mouth.**

**14 March 2021**

## A RELIGION

He thought it was finished  
then the thunder came  
and he interpreted it  
like Abraham. Leave  
this place, So he went  
into a dark month  
and traveled through words  
old and knew  
and made a book.  
A book is a desert  
to have crossed,  
now cross it with me  
he said to his believers,  
the sand goes on forever,  
hear what it says,  
hear what it made me say.

14 March 2021

====

**Nobody answers my letters  
and that's a good thing.  
It lets me write another  
and another every day,  
my words not worn out  
by compliance or contradiction.  
Maybe a little like music,  
songs need no answers,  
they just go on.**

**14 March 2021**

## **CASTAWAY**

**Cast up on the coast  
of morning,  
where is my night raft  
that slept me here,  
midnight cast adrift,  
dawn cast ashore,  
where is the sea?  
Why am I always just arriving?**

**15 March 2021**

## NEED SOMETHING SOLID

A word will do.

*Backtrack*, there's a good one,  
sounds like Central Asia,  
carrying us back  
to where we began.  
Rest there a while  
then begin again.

Give me another word—  
*haggle*, a game  
you play in the marketplace  
where everybody loses.  
*Cesspool*, a thing a house had  
your parents wouldn't by because.

What about *imagine*?  
To know something  
all by yourself.  
And *pedicure*? Solve a problem  
by walking out of the room.

15 March 2021

== == == ==

**Staggered terraces  
behind us now,  
crossing the sand  
in almost no moonlight,  
stepping word by word  
strong as we can.  
And you are the river  
I'll have to swim  
to get to the other side.**

**2.  
That's my true home,  
I belong wherever I'm not.  
Hence journey, quest,  
and all that secret pilgrimage  
that keeps me where I am.**

3.

One of the princely Livingstons  
built his house on the west  
bank of the Hudson, so far away  
it took him so long to come  
back across that he missed  
the big gathering for Lafayette.  
So they called his house Wrongside,  
the name stuck, the house stands,  
they brought me to it  
the first day I came to this place  
sixty years ago and made me come back.

4.

Carl Sauer insist that humans  
are littoral creatures,  
live on seacoasts and riverbanks.  
And we know that for people  
who live on any shore  
the other side is the one that counts,  
comes in their dreams,  
summons their feeble ships to cross.  
The other side is real

**and where we are is just an accident,  
oasis at best, be careful  
of the water, only the trees  
really know how to stay.**

**15-16 March 2021**

=====

**Sometimes the sky  
is full of saints  
or whatever your religion  
calls them, so many  
they fill all space  
in all their colors, crowns,  
haloes, consorts, their arms  
spread wide to welcome us  
or is it to shower down  
the energetic blessing of their notice,  
the great gift of their attention.  
And they sing.**

**Tibetan thangkas  
carved Gothic altarpieces  
Mayan codices try to help  
us understand that special sky  
I love looking up and sometimes even see.**

**15-16 March 2021**

=====

**This is what I can't tell you.  
You happened to me only once.  
Then the river slipped between us.  
I sent you dozens of letters  
some of them in words,  
some pictures, some trees.  
You never answered, even now  
you say nothing, only wear  
green clothing to remind me  
I'm not sure of what.  
Daring to say this now  
I realize that none of my letters  
were questions, so why  
bother answering. Why should  
your silence mean anything  
more than the quiet aftermath  
of some long thrilling symphony  
you sat through politely?  
Your silence reassures me--  
I have said nothing relevant,  
meaningful in themselves**

**but not to you. A little hit  
like music after all. I'm not sure  
you even turn the radio on.**

**15-16 March 2021**

====

**How far does the river go?  
All the way to the sea.  
And where does the sea go?  
To the other side of the world.  
And where does the world go?  
Children ask the wisest questions.**

**15-16 March 2021**

## A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF TOMORROW

starting right now.

Moon two days old.

Exhibit A: the moon.

I swear by dawn we'll see  
a car coming down the hill  
its lights still on.

Exhibit B: map of Cedar Hill,  
once the name of this hamlet.

Names change,  
the play goes on.

I will get up and wash my hands,  
decide my face is clean enough,  
go back to bed.

A sudden holiday happens.

Exhibit C: notice from the boss.

If the wind dies down  
I'll go for a walk.

Exhibit D: photo of my left shoe.

Now I will open the door

15-16 March 2021

=====

**Every triumph  
is also a humiliation**

*Ave moeche! Ave cinaede!*  
**Caesar had his soldiers taunt him  
as he crossed the bridge into Rome,  
coming home in triumph,  
chose this diagrace to ward off worse,  
Hail, you cuckold., Hail, you faggot!**

**getting what you want  
is always losing something—**

**she sent me a picture of herself  
so I knew that was all I would get of her—**

**maybe the 'Love' we sign letters with  
is the only love there is.**

**15-16 March 2021**

=====

**Sometimes strangers come,  
hoot like an owl but you  
let them in anyway, why not,  
you're not a mouse or a vole  
to be scared of an owl, you  
are the whole parliament  
and sanhedrin together,  
you are a human brain as usual  
hungry for the next thing  
to happen around you. To you.**

**2.**

**If birds left tracks in the sky  
not just the snow, this would all  
be clearer. But it's left to me  
to explain. Who said so?  
And to whom? I hope to you  
so you will be patient**

with my explanations.

3.

Plural because there are so many.  
History. Chemistry, Religion,  
the whole junior-college curriculum  
waiting for your fastidious appetite  
so characteristic of the laity.

4.

Don't be insulted by my song,  
is the best we flightless fauna  
can achieve, breastless mammals, men.  
Language means to simplify the sky,  
complicate the tangled forest,  
bring peace to the writhing candle flame  
and still keep its light.  
Language is wind.  
Maybe that's who makes  
that whooing sound at the door--  
*I am the next word that comes along--  
come, follow me.*

5.

**But it's you of course  
to whom the language  
tries to reach, touch,  
bring together with  
all your secret kinfolk  
in this jigsaw puzzle  
we call the world.**

**To bring you all your husbands  
and a thousand wives,  
tower in the desert, cave in the hill,  
all your wishes flourishing  
lush lavender fields of Cavailon.**

**16 March 2021**

=====

**What comes next?**

**Now.**

**Then what?**

**Then.**

**Why is it always so  
simple it feels wrong?**

**Am i really here  
or is there still a way to go?**

**17 March 2021**

=====

Oyster shells are subtle  
in shade and form,  
clam shells make better cups,  
ashtrays, little mixing bowls.  
That much I've learned,  
beauty and utility,  
mother-of-pearl or pale  
shell I lift to my lips.  
It is a day in March,  
spring is four days away.  
I miss the ocean even more.

17 March 2021

=====

**We often wait  
for what is here already,  
sometimes a pleasure  
to leave the eyes closed--  
waiting is a music of its own.**

**17 March 2021**

=====

**A bird is a key  
that unlocks the sky.**

**Who said that?  
A kenning from Old English?  
A man on the run  
yearning for sheer out,  
or Baudelaire, 'anywhere  
out of the world?'**

**No. The sky said it,  
just now, as I looked up,**

**both of us waiting for a bird to come by.**

**17 March 2021**

`=====

**He had been shot, wounded, not killed, and was taken to the hospital. where hee would be healed in a special room called the Room of Colors. All the colors were there, and colors here. Later, recovering, he had been moved to an ordinary room and was soon discharged. When his wife asked him about the treatment or therapy in the Room of Colors, he couldn't tell her anything specific at all. There were colors there, and I got better--that's all he could say. Colors love us.**

**18 March 2021**

=====

**Jesus dsaid to the leper  
he had just cured, Go,  
show yourself to the priests.  
A miracle says more than Moses,  
the priests are lost in their law,  
laws, laws--there is no law,  
there is only the way.  
Follow it and come to me.**

**18 March 2021**

## THE SALTIRE

*for Vesna*

In front of the camera  
she waves her arms  
corsswise crosswise  
and the citty went on  
behind her, moving  
its own way slower,  
thicker, and no smile.

But she is smiling  
because the arms are  
waving, that's what it is,  
the webcam translates  
her joyous hello hello  
and makes us glad.

Four thousand miles away  
her arms cast shadows  
live shadows on our wall.

▪  
**What she gives  
is a ight of herself,  
herself.**

**Now i look  
out my window at the rain.  
My skin glistens with the sky.**

**18 March 2021**

## ON THE LEVEE

Suppose I saw her  
stretched out on the riverbank,  
wam day, reading a book.  
What would I think?

I wonder about the book,  
I would plan to sneak close  
and take a look,  
spill an enchantment of sleep  
upon her and snatch the book  
before it topples into the canal.  
Yes, canal, not river, I was wrong.

But I would take the book  
and with adolescent excitement  
real the very words that she  
herself has read just before  
she fell on sleep,

                                  My sleep,  
the sleep I gave her.  
Suddenly she is awake, frowns,

**demands to know, to know  
why am I holding her book  
and I haven't even read the words yet!  
Begone, she cries, my book and self  
and not for thee, now tread  
back down the steps you dared to climb!**

**I will go, I whispered,  
but I will take thy city with me.  
Begone! she cries again,  
a book of words and a river  
are all I need—and it is  
a river, fool no mere sluice.  
It reaches the sea,  
and I am the sea.**

**18 March 2021**

## JOSEPH

Joseph was a carpenter  
and what does that mean?  
Someone who takes wood  
and turns it into things  
God forgot to make, or left  
it to people like Joseph  
to provide, intelligent hands,  
dreamy eyes. Make new things,  
make things to use, chairs,  
tables, bedsteads, altars,  
wheels. For carpenter  
is a Celtic word to start,  
for men who made carts  
and chariots. Now decide  
which kind Joseph was,  
supper table or hurtling car.  
You decide. That's your job,  
one more thing left for you.

19 March 2021

=====

**When I was a kid  
this was the day Italians  
(everybody but us  
in the neighborhood)  
welcomed spring, festa  
and parade, food stands,  
marching band, whirligigs.  
Trombone slides went out  
at an angle to keep from hitting  
the head of the trumpeter in front,  
streets full of noise, new blouses,  
sometimes a bus pushed  
through the crowd, or waited  
even, spring comes first,  
Giuseppe day, feast of the father  
of God, at least the holy man  
legally married to God's mother--  
all relationships are utter mysteries--  
that's what it means to be a child  
when I was barely anyone at all.**

**19 March 2021**

**:IRIODENDRON**

**How tall that tree looks today,  
all the taller for lacking leaves—  
if I were the sky I would worry  
about its upward grasp. all  
those branches reaching for me.  
But that's all about me--  
it tells you nothing about the tree.**

**19 March 2021**

====

Trying to get there from here  
without a camel.  
Loaded down with my own salt.  
How to do it. The water  
is in my eyes, wind in my ears.  
And here keeps going with me  
until I suspect I will never get there.  
Don't any of you want my salt?

19 March 2021

= = = == = =

The sun is rising  
through the ancient  
Stinehenge of our craft  
as we still try to learn  
how to love the world  
out loud, the gold streaks  
of sun across the shielded grass--  
as they the opposite of shadows,  
these swords of light?--  
an why swords, here is no war,  
only a long forgetting from  
which She wakes us  
morning after morning,  
ride the light until it tells  
and then sing what it says.

20 March2021

=====

I should eat a piece of bread  
this morning, to be simple,  
to start again. Just bread.  
May I have coffee with it  
or must I go all the way  
back to water? Coffee is water  
to begin with, plus  
that strange taste the gods  
traveled from Olympus  
in the old days to find  
in Africa. Where it all  
began anyway, they say.  
Can I begin again, take  
into me the sacrament of spring,  
sun just over the hill now.  
Everything we ever were  
we are. A child is climbing  
up my spine to remind,

**Vienna, Hawaii, Donegal--  
you can never leave  
anything behind. The sun  
is in the trees now,  
they dance with light.**

**20 March 2021**

=====

**Suppose we could ask  
a tree to come with us—  
not the wood of it, alas,  
but just the intricate  
web of its thinking, rich  
branchword of original  
ideas. Think of those shadowy  
twigs and stems shorthand  
all over your mind, and you  
clear-eyed peering through  
out at a suddenly knowable world!  
O oak you marvel, o ash you sage,  
o linden you lift me higher than th4 sky.**

**20 March 2021**

=====

**How many garages  
are there in America?  
Imagine in each of them  
a little shrine set up,  
plaster, wood, shell of water,  
statue and sacred diagram,  
honoring the deity  
you have been looking for  
all your life, driving  
mile after mile in your  
poor warm car  
towards and towards and  
towards, but here  
the divine one is,  
at peace already,  
in this safe dark place  
fragrant with distances.**

**20 March 2021**

====

**We're not always  
exactly rational,  
we put the number  
before the thing--  
three apples, seven stars--  
and leave the poor  
concept waiting for its thing,  
a three, or a seven,  
for a fraction of a second  
alone in the world,  
pure number in the air!  
Not altogether rational  
but somehow beautiful  
as if, as in John's gospel,  
the word is the first thing of all.**

**20 March 2021**

**THE BASTION**

**Everyone should do this:  
set up a single not-too-often used word  
and bear it in mind,  
a bastion against madness or loss  
of identity.**

**You know yourself  
as the shepherd of that word  
and any time some book or neighbor  
uses it, your identity, reality, sanity.  
are affirmed. Pick a great word!**

**20 March 2021**

**BOLE**

of a tree  
they used to say  
who now say trunk,  
every word  
says more than itself,  
every stick points two ways.  
Come with me  
and say this mass of clay.

2.  
Rivers are silver, some,  
rivers are blue,  
there was an arm of the sea  
wrapped round where I lived  
color of dark jade.  
Oil they said  
made it so  
and things unclean  
but I believed the color  
so I grew.

3.

But that's just personal,  
and words somehow  
live somewhere else,  
in me and not me,  
and they all come from  
the ocean we call you.

4.

Suppose a Chinese bowl  
celadon green  
we watch in a museum  
making the light quiver  
inside the glass showcase.  
Have you come  
to fill that bowl with longing  
the guard asks.  
And then we wake.  
Everything is still there.  
Here.

5.

Look it up in a book,  
a book is full of them,  
maybe not the one you want  
but maybe something  
twice as far or even true  
or even looking straight at you.

6.

And we think birds are simple!  
See them in the tree or in the sky  
and don't even bother to specify,  
just birds, daytime things with wings.  
And dare to call it poetry.

7.

Do you smell something like complaint,  
snuffy, like a bit of wrapper  
caught in the burner  
or something stuck  
to the bottom of the pan?  
It disperses slowly  
but is still there minutes after  
the gas is turned off.

Leave the range. Open a window.  
Think of all the states you visited  
and why you left some out.  
Forgive me, Montana, I was so close,  
oro y plata you said  
and I still believe.  
No more complaints.  
Climb the bowl. Unpack the tree.  
I am, I am everybody else.

8.  
Abide a bad abode?  
Ad for adobe, go,  
do like Egypt,  
do like Arizona.  
A mass of clay  
shaped to shelter  
in its manyness  
a single house.  
You get the picture—  
start now.  
You'll never know  
where this word goes

until you get there.  
Even then a tree tends  
to have a mind of its own.

9.

We and words  
have different meanings,  
crystal on our watch,  
pool of eager applicants  
no fish in sight.  
Help me through this busy night,  
the mass is ending  
but the prayer sneaks on.  
So I leave you with all  
I cannot say, all that you  
eternally know full well.

20/21 March 2021

=====

There is a magic  
when you stop talking—

**not silence but the shock,  
faint recoil of what's been said.**

**20 / 21 March 2021**

=====

*Spring we call it  
but the night is cold.*

We are slaves of time  
we use clocks to try  
to tame our master.  
Let the bell sleep  
in its tower, the bronze  
heavy with remembering.  
We sit looking at the river  
that smiles at us we feel,  
and why? Because it recognizes  
us as comrades, we too rushing by.

20 / 21 March 2021

====

Midnight jonquils--  
four a.m. and they  
have just blossomed in my hand.  
Wake up in the dark?  
Everything is known—  
I cannot see the flower  
but I know it's here.  
What color is it?  
A subtle shade of now.

20 / 21 March 2021

====

**I broke off a piece of the river  
and shaped it like a woman,  
knelt down and prayed to her  
and in the morning the mountain  
was there again, clear, divided  
into gulleys and ridges, sluices  
to carry her back to her people  
when I am done with my prayer.**

**20 / 21 March 2021**

## FINDING THE SHRINE

*The tree he wore  
reached up through him  
into the sky.*

He said  
there was an Order  
called the Shriners  
but I'm sure he didn't mean  
the Florence- Fleming  
carnival Masons who  
have fun and do good deeds.  
I'm sure he meant  
a different order rules him  
or he ruled, and knelt  
before a different shrine,  
one you too are part of  
or maybe one you actually are.  
So what would a real Shriner be?  
Someone who would ardently say  
Take me by the hand and lead me  
into the shrine you are.

2.

The wise one,  
man with a tree  
who looked so old  
was wise enough  
to be your votary,  
opening day by day for you  
relevant chambers of yourself  
so he and his acolytes  
can march in chanting  
with all the hullabaloo of worship,  
incense, holy implements  
uplifted, hands touching,  
hands, hands.

3.

*For all we are is what we touch*  
his missal says, the shrine  
is always there, the shrine moves  
with you through the guesses of the day  
leading you by your own identity.

4.

Take me with you when you go in,  
I want to visit those chapels snug inside,  
make my devotions there,  
run my hands along the mottled walls  
spangled with memories,  
gold-leafed with desires.

I want to stand

in that special crimson darkness  
anxious for every sense to speak.  
signal from still deeper inside  
the truths that I find only here,  
feeling my way always further in.

5.

In all the old cathedrals  
birds know how to make their way in  
You hear them chattering in the dome,  
fluttering by the clerestory,  
darkening a pale blue window an instant.  
You never know how  
many birds are there—

mostly they keep silent  
the way we Catholics do in church.  
deeming our presence to be prayer enough.

6.

But here I go again  
telling about my way  
when I want to go  
your road, your word  
to follow always further in.  
Because the sea is where I came from,  
Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach,  
I hear the sloughing of the waves  
even now when I try to to sleep,  
that darksome replica of your holy nave.

7.

A shrine, a saying, a book  
to read in the dark. A hand.  
Here to be complete. Robed

and rational, music never lies.  
Hear its breath—it may be mine.  
Take my hand again and tell.

8.

In the blue shrine  
the green girl sits.  
In the red shrine  
her youthful aunt  
pulls tawny fur  
around her shoulders.  
In the yellow shrine  
an empty chair.  
You can hear the preacher's  
voice everywhere,  
no chapel safe from her song.

9.

Take off your clothes,  
the voice is very soft,  
the word is a hand,

**a spring breeze on  
the skin of your back.**

**(21 / 22 March 2021)**

..

=====

*It's my word  
that woke you,  
it's my word  
you say*

heard out if the dark  
the mind behind  
the stumble-mind

tottering through  
the ancient gate of now.

2.  
We'll never really know  
what it's like or who we are  
when we're not awake.  
Simple as that. We know now  
and taste in-between  
but never who that is  
on the other side

3.

who woke me just now.  
Annoyance and reverence  
mingle, cracks in the church wall,  
echo of a hymn I just missed.

4.

No use in fleeing,  
Jonah's fish is always waiting.  
On this sea  
or sometimes land  
we struggle on  
to the sentence's end.  
And are spoken.

21 / 22 March2021

====

The dry throat  
has one word in it.,  
forest me fresh  
with falling sky.  
I don't know the name  
of who I need.  
Try to find the word  
then drink it down:  
now you are  
everywhere it's ever been.

21 / 22 March 2021

=====

A voice woke me  
with four lines today.  
All the rest came  
poltering after,  
my guys, your guys,  
who can say,  
they all look like girls to me.

21 / 22 March 2021

== ==

I seem to have a new relationship--  
every night round three a.m.  
I wake and meet myself,  
a Few words sparkling in the dark  
muzzy me tries to understand.  
I should have brought me flowers.

21 / 22 March 2021

=====

I press the button  
beside the back door,  
a window opens,  
a bird flies out  
at first I think  
and then I see  
it is the shadow of  
my own hand waving—  
I stand on light.

21 / 22 March 2021

=====

The dark is not about anybody  
else, she is just herself  
all round us, wife, mother,  
planet, sound of the sea.

21/22 March 2021

=====

The wire stretched  
across the room  
when room meant space  
at all above the cleft--  
we teeter-totter brave  
across the gulf of words  
o the relief of silence  
when the sentence ends!  
We call the wire What I Mean  
but mean has too many meanings--  
cheap or lowly, ungenerous,  
right in the middle or just unkind,  
the wire sways, don't fall,  
laugh at the mean kids you  
suffered from in school.  
But if you think too much  
the wire might you know what--  
so close your md and let  
your tongue lead you all the way.

22 March 2021

====

After the phone rang  
long silence.  
Who is calling her now  
and what are they saying?  
I wait for some sound  
from her, little yesses or demur,  
but no sound comes.  
I go into the room and see  
no phone in her hand.  
Spam, she says, and I recall  
the streets of Honolulu,  
never crowded, the smell of pork  
sizzling near the little footbridge,  
pure white birds stepping on back roads.

22 March 2021

=====

The city had changed.  
Larger, darker,  
the stores all elegant and old  
crowded with nice things  
to look at, think of buying.  
Interesting people  
crowded in the streets,  
wide avenues, dicey crossings,  
bracing to be here in traffic.

Yet had no phone  
but plenty of money,  
no phone and forgot the number  
of the person i was supposed to see  
and be with somewhere else,  
miles away. Anxiety, what to do,  
why had I driven a friend here?  
Because he asked me to.

But mostly I forgot all that  
and just took pleasure

**in all the things I saw,  
so much to see and handle,  
merchandise, colors, people,  
shapes and shadows  
in the night street.  
Doesn't this sound like life on earth?**

**22/23 March 2021**

=====

**When they say  
Back to Square One  
what game are they playing?**

**When they say  
Now Is the Time  
what was everywhen else?**

**When they say  
Tomorrow is Another Day  
why can't we have another**

**another instead, like yesterday  
again, or tgis sweet day toujours?**

**22/23 March 2021**

## YOUNG WOMAN FROM ST CATHERINE'S

She studied art history  
so I showed her my palms.  
These lines left poems  
in the world, and pOems have  
pictures in them if you learn to look.

I don't want the maker  
i want the made!  
she cried, appalled,  
it is from such hands  
I have fled all my life  
into the safety of images--  
Holy Virgins, cornfields, clouds.

22/23 March 2021

====

**If you were weather  
what would you be,  
what would you do,  
and what would I be  
on a day like that**

**or is it night already  
deep in us and we in it?**

**22/23 March2021**

=====

**Permission is a game like chess.  
If you win you take a train  
and interview glaciers and cathedrals  
If you lose, you close your eyes  
and breathe the after all reasonable  
air of where we always are.**

**22/23 March 2021**

=====

**Waiting for the castle to come  
we whittle a wheel  
for it to travel on.  
This is the ancient  
philosophy of Gaul,  
all of us Celts taste of it  
faintly, the wheel, the cart,  
the waiting to become.**

**22/23 March 2021**

=====

Across the game board of our senses  
a little rodent runs  
smaller than a mouse even  
but big enough to scatter  
all the pawns and checkers  
we put so carefully in place  
by all our thinking.

This animal

glossy fur so thick and soft,  
swift and silent, color  
of burnished metal, gold or silver,  
this creature is the Other  
and any moment now it will be here.

23 March 2021

=====

**Mahogany banana  
three days in the fridge,  
mushy as ice cream  
but not so sweet--  
it takes so many things  
to make a simple day  
even without opening  
the door you know it's there.**

**23 March 2021**

## WALL

The white wall  
followed us  
as we walked  
up into the hills,  
we came to a chapel  
where some sort of priest  
was chopping dead branches  
so you took it into your head  
to go to confession to him  
and you began.

The wall

looked on. I tried  
not to overhear  
what you took to be your sins,  
I know what I know  
and don't need your innocent fantasies.  
When you stopped mumbling  
the priest mumbled something in turn,  
in some other language.

Then he said what sounded like  
he had never seen an American on his knees  
before,  
then he went back to chopping wood  
and the wall moved forward,  
uphill still, and we followed,  
anxious to read our shadows  
moving on it as we walked.

2.

A wall is a friendly comrade,  
doesn't need food, holds tight  
to all the light it can, a white  
wall especially. You and I were  
lucky to have one for a friend.  
We thought at first that it  
was with us, then realized  
after a few miles that we  
were with it, it guided us  
uphill by the gleaming  
glamor of its emptiness.

**3.**

**We were at the hilltop now,  
a few boulders scattered about,  
evidence some glacier past  
had shaped this land. Xenoliths  
you remarked, foreign stones  
I understood. The wall rested.  
I wanted to know why  
you had told the priest so much  
you never told me, did you want  
me just to overhear so as not  
to have to respond? No, you said,  
I was talking to the wall, wanted  
our wall to know the company it's keeping.  
But don't you know, I said,  
awal knows everything?  
Every person near a wall  
leaves his full history in it.**

4.

You doubted that. I admit  
my statement was extreme--  
no flowers and no birds,  
no pretty people gamboling on imagined  
lawns,  
just the sense of things sinks in,  
the sense of us, Bach's music  
deep in the walls of that Leipzig church.  
speaking of priests.

5.

I suppose I was right.  
I suppose the wall would have stopped me  
if I said wrong--  
A wall is a most truthful friend,  
couldn't even lie if it tried.  
And it doesn't try. So you and I  
are left with our xenoliths and the sky  
while the wall breathes patiently  
alongside. It will rain soon,

**I think, please, wall, take us home.**

**6.**

**Not so fast--rain loves you too  
the wall explained. And think  
how I will glisten as  
rain sleeks me down!  
You hvaen't even heard  
the question yet-  
-how will you know it  
when the answer comes?  
Stay here with the sky.  
stay here with me,  
a wall is the only real thing  
humans ever made,  
a silence in the endless song,  
a comma in the unending sentence--  
forgive my eloquence,  
it's all I have.**



**downhill this time, the wall  
speaking to us of a river,  
a river that was to come.**

**24 March 2021**

## ASTRONOMY REVEAL'D

What did it mean  
when the bear fell up into the sky?  
People had ideas, still have them,  
and Pound sat in the garden  
at St Elizabeth's, forgiving, almost  
forgiven. Upside down  
the dears in the sky. Those heretics  
who fled from Galatia west  
all the way to cross the Irish sea  
claimed that the sky  
was full of misspellings, words  
broken in half, letters upside down.  
*No One Can Read The Sky*  
was their big book, *No One But Us*  
because they claimned they could  
by looking up to heaven  
with half0closed eyes  
and feeling with their hands

the body of a friend beside them.  
*Touch Tells All* they shouted  
and it was suddenly spring.  
The dolmen stones, the arches  
let the sun straight in the door,  
down the street, painted  
doors on every wall so  
*We Can Go In Anywhere*  
and everything becomes a house.

24 March 2021

=====

A little copper piece  
smaller than a penny even  
(remember pennies?)  
lying on white formica  
otherwise clean and blank,  
a piece of copper  
like a word in another language,  
a piece of color  
that has no name but 'copper'  
on a countertop  
and nobody there,  
nobody there.

2.

Forgive that attempt at a song.  
Copper is of Venus, and She  
makes me do such things,

hum and murmur and guess  
which word comes next,  
what word will touch you most.

3.

The opposite of copper  
is a kind of blue  
drifting towards green  
which is Her color too.  
No wonder I pick it up,  
the little piece of metal,  
slip it between two fingers,  
a little fin, swim it away  
from the counter, now  
there are no words at all.

25 March 2021

=====

It looks like rain  
the ground is dry  
we live in paradox  
a town in the sky  
right around us  
though it looks so far.  
Wait. I was trying  
to tell you something,  
but now it's too late,  
m road shines with rain.

25 March 2021

=====

Pick up a trowel  
and plaster the gap--  
no need to see  
what's waiting for me.  
Please recognize at last  
I live inside a tree,  
any gap leaves room  
for birds to come in.  
And squirrels and worse,  
No birds needed  
on this side of my wood--  
let them sing outside  
all they like, robin sweet,  
annoying finches, squealing  
eagles, who knows how high.  
Everything I hear  
I reason is the sky.

25 March 2021

=====

**Organic outside  
the star accelerates—**

**pour the wine  
out on the table top**

**let the wood get drunk  
and you be sober**

**the world tilts  
messages slide**

**you close your eyes  
stay safe inside.**

**25 March 2021**

=====

Every stream is Jordan  
every dip a baptism.  
You know what that hill must be--  
come, climb it with me.

26 March 2021  
[liminal]

## THE MALL IN THE MIDDLE

Bone me. Unfeather my fears.  
I was a mountain before you  
and I let everyone climb,  
my springs sprang high,  
sluiced down into your dry fields?

2.

Was that me singing? No,  
it was you in all your windows  
glad of my rain. I admit  
you learned the song from me  
but you sang better:

There was  
a woman walking  
on the road  
in wet clothes  
though the rain

stopped long ago,  
long ago, some  
water lasts forever.

You must have liked the song  
you sang so well.

3.

Remember the Pyrenees  
when we first began,  
pink chalk dust all over your hands  
and three flat stones  
to hold the kettle over  
the meanest fire charcoal ever set  
and yet we drank that tea  
lime leaves and honey  
and an eagle feather fallen in the pot.

4.

I shaped you,  
I hope you know that--

grow a little more this way,  
a little less that.

I was the Donatello of your dreams  
and when you woke  
we both were complete.

5.

When I get around to it  
tell me the truth,  
how long we lingered  
in such crowded markets  
until there were  
just two of us left, and I  
bossy as usual called  
one of them you and one of them me.

The crowd was gone,  
the stalls were empty,  
windows all shattered in the storm.  
We're used to ruins  
(we live in them, remnants

of an earlier reality,  
we still stumble on their bricks)  
used to ruins so in the collapse  
of this economy felt right at home.  
That was before you decided  
to become a mountain too.

6.

Who was that wet woman?  
I can hear your curiosity.  
She was your missing sister Sarah,  
the one who believes in religion,  
no day without its baptism,  
I tried to stop her for a chat,  
a sweet tisane, a Turkish cigarette  
but no, she was late for vespers  
or a seder or some such thing,  
left me with a little pamphlet,  
its pages all stuck together from the wet,  
something about triangles, gods, hearts.

7.

Now I;ve lost track  
of all the times I've told  
and you believed  
enough to make it true.

And you told back to me  
a reasonable commonwealth  
not too close but still  
this side of the moon.

Every day turns out to be Election Day--  
and why not? All we ever have to do  
is choose. I still have  
that eagle feather, dry and stiff,  
stuck between the pages,  
an excellent bookmark it makes  
but I'm not sure which book.

26 March 2021

## 1921-2021: AN ORIGIN

Phil said to himself  
I don't need Andy  
I'm as automatic  
as anybody  
just all by myself.  
A few meters west  
Andy felt the same.  
And so poetry  
at last began.

26.III.21

## TRUTH IN MATH

Turning the numbers inside out—  
that's what we do  
while the parents sleep.

We sleep too but they call it play—  
how could they forget so much  
and still be so tall?

2.

Take a 3 and squeeze the milk out,  
take a 7 and carve  
your name in a tree  
and hope the tree forgives you  
and helps you stand,  
allows you to dance  
in its longevity.

And that's only the beginning,  
the little bit we share  
with adults when they really want to know.

**3.**

**But it is hard work  
so we need a lot of sleep,  
all kinds of sleep,  
the kind you know  
and the kinds you forget—  
where does it go,  
all our ancient learning  
gone when we grow up?**

**26/27 March 2021**

=====

**Antiquity  
is relative,  
children  
live in Eden  
suffering  
in splendor  
till they find  
a gate open  
as they disobey.  
Any moment now  
I will be Adam too.**

**25/27 March 2021**

=====

**Not much to do  
at four in the morning,  
can't turn on the light  
to spare the others,  
too cold to be outside.  
Sit in the dark. This  
is how philosophy is born,  
language squeezed  
out of helpless dark.**

**26/27 March 2021**

=====

Relatively orange  
a bruise on the wall.  
How color come?  
With what strange accent  
light sometimes speaks.  
Instructions: sit  
in the dark and think  
about colors. Which color  
wins? Which comes first,  
which hurts least, which  
whispers something to you  
even now, hours later  
or is it still now?

26/27 March 2021

=====

If I sat here a little longer  
the dawn would find me,  
man in a bathrobe with open eyes—  
a kind of noble figure in a way,  
the robe's folds pretend to toga,  
the eyes imitate intelligence.  
You'll see worse before evening  
so go easy on what shows now,  
the poor man is still just  
convalescing from dream.

27 March 2021

## EVOLUTIONARY VARIATIONS

Rats,

Tsar,

Arts,

Star—

so we do get somewhere at last.

26/27.III.21

====

**The simplest things  
are the hardest to do,  
the shortest distances  
the furthest to go.  
Why does this seem true?  
Because starting is hard  
but going goes on by itself.**

**27 March 2021**

== == == ==

Happy birthday every day.  
morning hymn  
sung to seize  
the sleek haunches of the day

and stay. You are born to be  
with me, and all the rest.

I am your son, your secret  
father who made you be  
so you could make me.

And all the rest. You pretty  
mother you spring sky today

27 March 2021

=====

I am in dormition sweet,  
the ceiling breathes for me  
and tells me prairies  
full of foxes fording freshets,  
wild turkeys shuttle down the lawn.  
I keep waking up, dry,  
Mojave of the mouth,  
if only it were ordinary sleep  
and I abed but no,  
there are too many cherries on the tree,  
more trees than people,  
alas, more mes than yous.

27 March 2021

=====

**Birds always tell the truth.  
One of them just flew by—  
blackbird maybe, too fast to be sure—  
and swept a mess of fancies  
right out of my mind,  
left me alone with the truth  
that looked very like the sky.**

**(26 March 2021)  
27 March 2021**

=====

**What I would tell Ptolemy:  
an arrow across heaven  
pointed at me.  
Any me.**

**The stars  
slip off the sky at dawn.  
Light is oily, light is what we use  
to keep all those wheels inside  
spinning smooth,  
speaking true.**

**Now I too am washed with it  
so I can safely swim through time,  
full of futures like an unread book.**

**(26 March 2021)**

**27 March 2021**

## **PALM SUNDAY**

**We went to church  
and got long strips of palm,  
dry, yellowish, hard  
to imagine greening on a tree.  
At home we'd make  
two brief lengthwise slits  
in a longer piece and weave  
a shorter through it: a cross.  
This palm cross always made us glad  
strange gladness considering  
the tortured death it symbolized,  
but who were we to question  
long tradition of celebration,  
so the palm cross stayed up,  
pinned to the wall or stuck  
into a mirror frame, a cross  
to bless our house this year,  
a small holy thing, maybe  
six or seven inches tall.**

2.

We did all this just because  
we were Catholics, or Irish,  
all the people in the neighborhood—  
from Sicily, Naples, Calabria—  
did it too.

Who knows  
why we do what we do.  
And where did crosses come from  
anyhow? Dry scholars claim  
we were them round our necks because  
Viking ancestors worshipped Thor  
and wore his double-headed hammer  
tiny round their necks.  
Is that the hammer that once  
nailed Christ to His cross?  
It hurts me to think of what we do  
to those who love us,  
love us enough to come talk to us.

4.

My fingertips still can feel  
the dry tough smooth  
of the little palm cross,  
months later when we took it down,  
stuck it in a prayer book.  
bookmark, eternal souvenir  
of what we don't understand,  
why we do what we do,  
why we are who we are.

28 March 2021

## WINDOW

I went to the window  
and the window talked back,  
looks wet out here and not too warm.  
a day for indoor enterprise.  
How artivulte windows are!  
And how much they know  
about those who look through them,  
trust the lucidity of their report.  
The window knows just who I am,  
my parameters (one of its  
favorite words), my aptitudes.  
I look again out at the grey day  
and the window whispers kindly  
Take out your crayons, child,  
and color your mind.

28 March 2021



=====

Windows help you  
stay where you are,  
like gravity and real estate.  
Being somewhere is best,  
and here best of all.  
The window shows you *there*,  
that fascinating unreal place  
across the garden. And  
the garden is not altogether here.

28 March 2021

=====

Blue is day and black is night  
and grey is in between.  
Every child knows that.  
And half the year is green  
and sun comes yellow  
but where does red come in?  
Is it only inside, meat and blood?  
Sometimes it's at the edge of things--  
no wonder it's the child's  
favorite crayon, the world  
always needs more red.

28 March 2021

## LA MÉTHODE

How to forget  
what never happened:  
lift a an empty cup  
and turn iupside down.  
Hold it like that  
while you recite  
a prayer or some  
poem you learned  
at school or just  
the names of all  
your closest friends.  
Then fill the cup  
with water from the sink  
and drink. All  
the fear is gone now,  
only the taste  
of water, cool water.

28 March 2021

====

Did I sleep all the words away  
he wondered, or just their meanings?  
He mouthed 'desire.' nothing happened,  
said 'window' and it still was dark.

What did I do with the night?  
Am I the same man who went to sleep?  
And where is sleep  
that we dare go to it?

But he doubted his right to say 'we'  
when he wasn't even sure of 'I.'  
He wonders what will happen  
when he opens his eyes.

29 March 2021

=====

**Are there really such things  
as vitamins, real energies,  
not just one more round dance  
of the alphabet? Vitamin Q  
makes you cute, Vitamin M  
keeps you from talking too much,  
Vitamin O rolls you out the door  
and Vitamin Z makes you snore?  
There are no chemicals in us,  
science one big fake, we're all  
words spelled right or wrong  
by the endless alphabet itself.**

**29 March 2021**

=====

Trying harder, like a sore finger  
or a merry-go-round still going round  
no matter what music the calliope plays.  
We're all just music anyhow  
but some words often get spelled wrong.

Do I make myself clear, or is that just  
a church bell bonging far beyond the field?  
Pesky images, on a par with gnats,  
dither through the waking mind, reality  
is made of little parts, here's one now:

men loading logs onto a flatbed truck.  
logs sawed from a tree wind knocked  
over two days ago. We saw it fall.

29 March 2021

=====

The daffodils have risen  
Holy Week in the woods—  
this is the resurrection season,  
when we finally get to know  
how much we really know

and it stands before us  
in white garments  
and crimson doctrines  
softly from its mouth,

the risen flower, the man,  
the birthday, the mother,  
the meaning.

29 March 2021

=====

As if there were another key  
lying by the garden gate  
steely silver in the morning sun  
and we went in. As if the fountain  
lifted its plume so high  
the top of it turned mist  
and shivered us with dew.  
As if the marble benches  
were warm already, and birds  
chattered around them eager  
for fragments of our food  
and we sat and ate. As if  
the whole morning were one  
conversation and the afternoon  
had a whole new science to teach  
and we were good students of it,  
As if night never got around  
to coming, or else that key  
gave light enough to see by

lovers strolling through the trees,  
children interviewing rabbits,  
the moon leaning on the garden wall  
waiting to recite his lines  
and we were finally at home.

30 March 2021

=====

Too early to be me  
I'll be the Green Man instead  
and sit in the woods  
on a fallen tree to wait  
for the lost maiden to come by  
haphazard through the bushes  
and I will take her by the hand  
and lead her to a glade  
where we will learn  
each other's language  
and climb the sudden  
staircase to the sky.

30 March 2021

=====

**Hist-  
ory is myth.**

**Scuttle the ship,  
undredge the channel.  
They have brought *there*  
too much already to us.**

**All that we need  
we must find here  
where there is only  
ever today.**

**30 March 2021**

=====

I want to talk to you  
so I look up the name of our street  
then find it on the map  
and whisper onto the paper  
what I want you to understand  
then leave it to the city  
to do all the rest.  
The work pf the city  
is to make us us.  
By night you'll call your reply.

30 March 2021

=====

I can't get to now,  
old language  
sticks to me like wet leaves,  
stale images, landscapes  
I never knew.

I want to be at least as hard  
as a highway (and asphalt  
softens a little on hot days),  
I want to be as present  
as a car roaring past,  
this second, this hot steel now.

30 March 2021

=====

If I could get there in a wagon  
I guess I'd buy a horse  
and hitch it to some dumb idea  
and be on my way.  
But there is too close  
to get to by travel,  
when you walk on any road  
you're just carrying here with you  
and you'll never get there.  
There has a logic of its own,  
start by sitting perfectly still.  
It helps to close your eyes.

31 March 2021

=====

The hidden antecedents of the obvious  
scatter like dust deep in the wool  
of a carpet, lost in the opulent geometry.

Your mother told you this  
fifty foot oak tree came  
from a seed the size of your thumb,  
your little thumb, and you're still  
trying to believe her.

And then the kids at school  
explained you yourself came  
from inside her. How  
could you never have known that?

You don't even have leaves  
the same shape as hers,  
so to speak. The sizes  
are all wrong. Am I an acorn  
is a terrible question

**to ask yourself at night  
when you should be asleep  
dreaming of jungles and tigers,  
proper objects of your never-ending fear.**

**31 March 2021**

## I AM ALTAMIRA

The cave walls of my skull  
are covered with ancient marks,  
people and animals and things  
that have parts of both.

And in such colors, faded but deep,  
old blood stains and sunbeams  
shattering through cracks  
in the fortress of the brain,  
those so-called senses.

But the ancient walls hold firm,  
the pictures swell with damp  
and fade with too mch thinking  
but they are there, always there,  
from the beginning of the bone.  
If I love you I try to let you see them.

31 March 2021

=====

**The spectrum  
is a heptapus,  
each brilliant tentacle  
wraps around us,  
embraces us deep  
into this visible  
world our sea.**

**31.III.21**

====

*for Vesna*

You let me speak a language  
I never learned, gave me  
wild fantastic creatures  
suddenly real and strangely wise,  
you waved your arms at me  
from four thousand miles away  
and I could still see your smile.  
You who can translate images  
and fly dragons through space,  
no wonder you can translate  
dusty books and make them sing,  
sing so ordinary people  
thousands of miles away can hear  
what someone like me dares  
to scribble half-awake some rainy day  
thanks to the magic of your gift.

31 March 2021

