

3-2021

mar2021

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TRIPLICITY

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 have 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 was 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.**

7.

So we remained.

It rained, and we remembered.

**The wall indeed was lovely
in shimmering, awash with downpour.**

**We kept to the lee side of the wall
that kept us wet but not drenched,**

**The wall itself had some
colloquy with the wind,
the way they do, arguing,
the wind toying gladly angry
with each new obstacle
while we shivered.**

**You were glad
you had gone to confession.
I wished I had some sins to confess--
I thought about what sins
I would have liked to have committed
until the rain stopped.**

**We shook our clothes, tried
to act normal, followed the wall**

**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

