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PAL YUL

It is the ordinary language, you hardly have to learn it, it teaches itself to you almost from birth.

Everybody is its teacher and the lessons are kindly, easy, but they never stop. It coaxes you to keep talking, to ask questions. It coaches you to recognize the right answers when they come. They always come.

1 November 2021
SCORPIO

What a beautiful time of year, what a beautiful day, cool sunlight undressing the trees blue beyond with clouds in it, raggedy, shapely, lots of edges, lot, little awkward, a little like scorpions themselves.

1 November 2021
WOLVES

I m a pack of wolves.
We have been chasing women all our years, up the lordly mountain, down the cunning valley. it is what we do.
Sometimes I have been led to think they like the music of our owls, it helps them run, helps them to know who they are, makes each feel proud, how she is sought by so many, so eager, so animal, so persistent. I cannot report that we have ever caught one, don’t know what we would do with them,
are people edible? Won’t her hair choke our throats, her thoughts perplex with their intricacy our straightforward metabolism? We have no information, only the need to pursue, Sometimes when our prey shelters in a cave to sleep we drowse outside, tell stories of famous women caught, vague details, what to do then. And then we sleep too. Often she’ll slip away while we’re asleep, and we wake idle, need to find and chase another. Meantime we discuss
in quiet growls,
the nakedness or attire of this latest fugitive, her gait, the way
she sometimes would look back over her shoulder at us.
Evaluation is an important part of pursuit.

1 November 2021
AUBADE

Handful of Combos for breakfast in the parking lot, gulp of water from a bottle with a blue label— I thought water came from everywhere.

2. Father carrying infant. We all are burdens. Sun in the autumn trees.

3. Long legs short stride then many shorter daring longer,
seems natural, run fast
to be where you are.

4.
No clouds now.
The sky’s a certainty.
I never studied French
but there we were—
can’t find a country
that doesn’t make sense
all by itself.

1.XI.21, Rhinebeck
DE SENECTUDE

I have hundreds of children but not a single son or daughter. That’s what it means to give and give without begetting.

1 November 2021
I think this word
was waiting all day,
hid behind a tree
but which one, ran
across the road
in front of us but I
was looking sideways
at one more tree.
Then the word came back
a little dusty from my neglect,
was it moonlight, moorland,
Marlins hand? Frost is coming,
bring the potted pansies in,
morning glow,, Morbihan?
Why have I been away so long?
Empiricist, limp wrist
we depend on
what makes us fall.

2.
In the cavern of filing cabinet
words change their meanings,
letters turn into manifestos,
dragons growl. Be like you know,
the Chinese poet, who tossed
his poem into the running stream,
moonlight, water heals,
everything reads.

3.
The fact is I have forgotten
what I meant to say.
Is forgetting also a fact,
an impregnation of time itself,
who knows what form it may take when it is born again.

4.
So I’m making excuses.
We all do. The Pope apologizes.
First frost tonight but the euonymus still isn’t blazing scarlet yet.
Pretty blue sky. Worry works its way in.

5.
Growing up in fascist countries
you learn that Truth
is a lie no one dares to contradict.
The Bible is a shotgun aimed at you.

6.
Not much left
of what I meant.
Picture on the wall,
taste like cinnamon.
Leafblowers came
out of the ground
and drove the poor music away.

2 November 2021
First frost,  
the words  
uncomfortable  
together,  
something taut,  
tough has come  
into the system.  
The words  
always know.  

Some uncle in the night
who would have known such things, 
told such things. 
Who defiled the monuments 
in such subtle ways, 
the ground glass in the park, 
a child who did not love 
his parents even once. 
Uncles know these things, 
always they’re at right 
angles to the fact., 
watch it as it moves. 
Facts move, he said, 
can’t get away from them. 
Facts are the dogs 
that keep us busy 
feeding them, walking them, 
I’m glad I never had one.
I still hear his cheerful voice, youthful, hoping to be wrong.

3 November 2021
CHESS

Chess all day long.
I am the pawn
who waddles through the squares
one square at a time
and no turning back.
I envy the big pieces,
envy the other pawns
who sometimes seize
even a Queen! But I have
no house to bring her home to.
I capture no one. I am told
that if I reach the other side
still alive, something fine
will become of me. In hope
of heaven one trudges on,
ever borderline
so hard to cross--let me rest
here a while and catch my breath.

3 November 2021
= = = = =

The world was winter for a while and then the sun came up and gave us back our autumn peace—just for a little while, mind, just for the bright day, to fill our eyes with green before, before all the colors hurry back indoors.

3.XI.21

= = = = =

Leave all one none be gone.
Life’s an antique store: Look don’t touch.

4.XI.21
Betty knew the value of the day, turned her grief into giving, bothered learning only the language of those who most needed her help. Politics, religion disappoint. She turned disappointment into dispensation, Build the republic one needy person at a time. And tell the world what you’re doing, tell it in a gentle quiet voice. 4November 2021
I know what to do--
I will walk to the bakery
in a little French town,
strut home with a baguette
tucked under my arm,
I’ll nibble an almond biscuit
along the quiet stream.
There. Just like an American.

4.XI.21
Sometimes nothing changes. People lie on the sand absorbing the sun, enduring or welcoming the glances of those who are not sunshine. They think like Luther: Here I am, I can’t do anything else, help me o Sun. Waves are good for lulling, especially like these, more Brighton beach than Waikiki, sleep in sunshine, wake a deeper color. Maybe drape a towel over your face, the wind is on your side today. We have been doing this
for a hundred thousand years
whenever we could find a beach,
an ocean, Human is a seaside thing,
we are littorals, never at peace
too far inland. Think of Jesse James.
No crime on the ocean only casinos.
Don’t let the sand het in your eyes.

4 November 2021
Are we a part of what we see or is all that a part of me? Decide quickly--winter’s coning.

4,XI,21

Looking a hummingbird
straight in the eye—
a little like meeting the Pope
but no papal ring to kiss.
a little like falling in love
on the day you’re moving away.

4 November 2021

When you finally get here
you’ll have a slew of rivers
around your ankles, hunks of mountain
on shoulders and hips. you know it all.
we bring it all with us, no traveler comes from nowhere
Except I think sometimes I am and do.
But here I am, not going anywhere,
a rusted tank from an unfashionable war.
So it’s always, as usual, all up tp ypu.
I read Milton while I wait,
et on that Trailways Bus and fling your living loving Latin presence here,
bringing na new bright colored basket made of straw,
a basket full of air.

4 November 2021
And sometimes they forget all about it and the sun just shines.
Try Polybius. Josephus.
Sometimes even Ptolemy but there is sadness in geometry, taking the measure of your mother.
Sadness is the kiss of time, a bone with little meat around it, pebble in the shoe.
We can’t really help the way the morning spells us, the archipelago of all of us.

2.
I would call the sea a language
if I could speak it
but as it is I pray to it
the way we do to music.
See, I am only one of us
despite my loud insinuations,
my jutting elbows, my noisy sleep.

3.
I learned Greek when I was little
my uncle summoned me
to rule a small fiefdom in the attic,
looking over grandfather’s acres.
But when I learned to shave
he took the fief away,
sent me to an island in Jamaica Bay
where the Peloponnesians
fished and carried on.
And there I stayed, an exile to this day. I still shave but it doesn’t help.

4.
I closed the book, that version of my life and cried our Remember me! to no one in particular--sometimes it just makes sense to shout out the window. A shout can be magnificent depending on who hears it--think of Abraham. Think of three thousand years. Then stop. The truth
lies somewhere in between (how can we say that truth lies?), out in the long text we call desert. Someone heard something, someone stopped, looked at the sky, changed direction and here we are. Ever and ever language is our fate.

5 November 2021

= = = = =

Listen to the pilgrim he has been to places that do not exist, worn
his feet sore on roads
that re yet to come, he
has been everywhere
and then some, as we
(who never moved at all)
used to say. Lust listen:
You got Egypt wrong
to start with, the Greeks
were Vikings, the Trojans
are Chinese. don’t you
see that even now? the Celts
were aliens, you can see it
in their eyes, please, please
try to understand. so much
I can explain, the ocean too
tries all day long, tide after tide,
to help you grasp the truth,
all the books are wrong, Christ is still alive, lives with Abraham on a mountain I can’t pronounce, radiant others with them. so many, come, at least I know the way.

5 November 2021
BRICKS

1. Brickwork. English courses. Dutch courses, how the bricks are laid. We read with fingertips the older wall, wet under the dwindling vine, brick loves rain, fact, clay loves water. *This stone is made by hand.* The ridges the rough signature, man breath left in the made thing. The wall of the house where I was born is the actual wall I have to mean, the only one my fingers understand
and could, maybe, bring to you.

2.
Inside a brick house
you usually don’t notice brick.
Maybe by a fireplace, mostly
indoors is made of smoother stuff.
pale. easy on the skin. But press
a cheek against said wall and still
you’ll feel, I swear it, like far-off
music, the real wall breathing deep.

3.
My mother always said
brick houses are damp
but far as I know she never lived in any other kind. And always by the ocean.

4.
See everything turns into biography, a brick, a cup, a wall, a horse cart dragging through the street, oranges, ripe oranges. Hard to leave where one has been.

6.
So it’s the Dutch painters who help us back away from the wall enough
to see the house, the city, 
crow on steeple, moon in cloud. 
Tender walls of Saenredam, 
who knew he inside is the outside too 
and brick is one more skin of us.

5 November 2021

= = = = =

There was no door there 
but I went through. 
Seemed easy at the moment 
but don’t ask me how.
But I was in that garden
they called it where so much
of what I needed grows
but in the dim light I carry
I could see not much, a few
mall blue flowers--I spoke
to them as I might java addressed
a taller person, and took comfort
from the sense of being heard.
Nothing more. I walked around,
found a bench--though marble
it wobbled as I sat. This place
like all places has its danger.
I stretched out and watched the sky,
there are answers everywhere.
I must have slept then;
when I woke a dappled fawn
was looking at me so
I knew it must be time to go.
Going proved easy enough, and here I am.

6 November 2021
I think the tree sometimes says Be quiet. Listen longer. Let the whale sentence ripen. Then hum the tune.
A mirror that protects from passing shadows, glass that will reflect only what lingers, bird or bride or bishop.

2. This mirror says your name when you stop and see it, tell stories about your ancestors--are those your lips moving or ripples in the glass that make the words?

3.
Everybody needs one.
Teenage boys used to carry
a little steel mirror in their pocket
to check their pompadours,
their curls when boys still cared,
children played on sidewalks
and great caravels full-bosomed sailed the sea.

4.
But when Other happened,
mirrors lasted,
still that suspicious eye on me even now.
I look away to the words
but they are shiny too
and hint at why I write them down.

6 November 2021
Be near
the windmill
you’ll hear plenty,
wise man
who welcomed wind
to grind his wheat.
No one knows his name.

6.XI.21
Not many foxes these days, not many rabbits.
No more pheasants but fat turkeys come and go.
Haven’t seen a wolf in 20 years, a catamount in eleven

but there’s a bobcat on the hill.
Can’t recall the last possum I saw—once they had been everywhere.
But the deer are plentiful and the bears have come back—now all these different religions swell and shrink according to some climate law,
it would be wise to know.
Versions of reality
on soft paws
changing places in the night.

6 November 2021
Alone with the sun
as it was in Egypt
when we were young,
sandstone walls in brightness
every word a symbol
I can no longer read.
Hieroglyphs of the future.

So bright the wall,
people hurrying past
hardly cast shadows,
brightness comes from all aides,
from the wall itself, the ground.
not just the sky.
Egypt. Mall. Wall. Wait.

From market to market they hurry, brightness is their road.
I huddle in my dark car
waiting for centuries to pass.

6 November 2021
Kings Plaza
I could be waiting for you. You see someone standing there and that’s what you think, what could they be doing there but waiting? what else is there out in this blatant public world. Standing still is an invitation, insult, challenge, surrender. Yes. I could be waiting for you when I thought I was just here leaning on a sunbeam and you never actually came along.

6 November 2021
LUNES, NOVEMBER
Let the earth go home—
the morning
is busy enough.

*

The beech tree explained
all you need
is keep listening.

*

The quiet river
remembers
where its rain had been.
*

Castle on a hill
bee on rose—
let your eyes decide.

*

If I brush your hand
all it means
is that I’m still here.

*

Rev the engine, gear
up to go—
distance needs love too.

*

Never stay too long
in a place
you have never been.
Waiting for the leaf to float down, an oboe playing.

Magic mirrors see inside out. We call them eyes.

Wheat field but no mill. Silent child,
all things still to come.

*

Toad on path. a stone leaps aside— we are not alone.

*

Word is work. We all know that. Mow tell us what play is.

*

How I have fallen from my tree! Still, I know its name.
This wall has no door—
be at peace:
the symphony starts.

Blades raise the copter,
sky slices
shove earth far away.

Oiling the car is the road
turned inside out,
it sleeks its way
to god knows where
and there are roads there too. We get there and imagine we are somewhere but that’s all fantasy. All we are is what the road makes us, same everywhere, dirt under my fingernails.

7 November 2021
Leaf by leaf
she recorded it
for me until
the whole book
sprang up aloud,
deep silence,
a human thinking.

8 November 2021
That woke him.
Linden leaf
wear against wicked.
Walk the blue line.
He stared into morning shadow
and understood a little more,
remember children,
how hard it is
to wake little people up.
Erie Canal

great work of the heart
letting the sea into the land,
circulation of the more than blood.
They think better in New York.

8.XI.21
I am watching a man
do what he does
not know how to do:
open a small
shrink-wrapped box.
He cuts at it
with scissors, pries
a nail file under a seam,
works it all around.
The man is me.
I am ashamed of myself--
peel, peel it,
I should have, tug,
don’t just insinuate.
Eventually his thumb nail
got caught on the warp
and off the thing came.
Answer to prayer.
Be stupid long enough
and something comes.

8 November 2021
No wolverines in these parts, 
and only one or two alpacas 
on a farm up past Austerlitz. 
Otherwise you can never tell 
who you might meet in the woods. 
Whom. They people too, 
whoever they are, they have eyes, 
they can see you coming 
and make their own plans. 
I think I will stay indoors today.

8 November 2021
You could tell it wanted
m to say more. So I waited.
I thought a well I looked down
as a child in New Hampshire,
thought of a grey mountain
when all the hills were green.
A busy Oxford Street in London, my
father in a blazer
hopping on a bus. Did it want
me to think about things
that were somehow mine or in me
or was the silence something new,
new to both of us maybe, curve of a leaf, growl pf a cloud?
Should I keep asking questions, a question is always more, but all I could think about was that well, my face looking up at me from so deep—how can I be so far from myself?

8 November 2021
At least to say
the sun hello,
the ady keeps putting
words in my mouth.

2.
Hoot by the trestle,
does the train always
sound a warning there,
warn the cruel
duck hunters something
even meaner on the way?

3.
So early light just falters through the trees, the tentative. Sleep again? Close the eyes again that spy such beauty now?

4.
A suit of clothes for every tree, music shrugged around silence. Consent! Everything else does, resistance is so immature.

9 November 2021
Books do that—you knew that as a kid. They follow you to bed and even there keep talking in your sleep a story different from what you’re reading when you were or will be awake. So there you are at morning, one book with two different texts, or even more, one you read and one that dares to remember itself in your sleep. A whole new story! Maybe your parents weren’t so dumb, pitting you to bed with a thing that sticks to its story,
gave you a teddy bear instead.

9 November 2021
A pillar of light
sands across the green.
This is older than Stonehenge
and right here. Stones stand
to remind us. Look, look up.
There is always something there.

9 November 2021
Religion and science
nibble gently greedy
at what I try so hard
to feel, just feel
when I look around.
Don’t tell me what it means.
Let me go on thinking
what I see and feel is read.

9.XI.21
Pretend it’s night,
it so often is,
already the tail lights
wink crimson reflections
from the damp road.
the sun is high om a blue sky,
a pure contradiction
like Rilke’s rose.

2.
Who are you anyway
to whom I dare say such things?
Are you just a typo for me,
or am I only one
shadow of your mountain.
3.
Landscape always works its way in. Something to do with mountainless Netherlands, gentle heft of the Cotswolds—was I water to have been so many quiet places, only my own voice blithering?

4.
No, it’s not night, let the day alone, don’t try to distil some essence from the hour, distillation tries
to extract the soul of things,
bad for the alchemist,
life for a life, leave the rose alone.

5.
Thank God it’s just an ordinary day.
truck, trailer, lingering leaves.
I ask you again,
not for your sacred,
secret, identity
just for a name to call you by,
we say today is Woden’s,
over the border it’s Mercury’s,
but isn’t everything different in Mexico?
6.
I know a man who wants a dog. How can I explain to him that it’s only legal, speaking spiritually, to have a dog if you have at least a hundred sheep to keep the dog honest and happy. A dog is best when it is still an animal, and knows it, and you know it too. How can I help my friend know that?

7.
Animals, autos, pretenses, landscapes, running water, oil of absolute. Let the meaning
rest undisturbed, like the corpse
tomboed beneath its marble effigy.
A meaning isn’t. A meaning does.

10 November 2021
Strange noises in the other room. That’s what other rooms are for, *to be real yet be not here*. Someone rearranging reality just out of sight. World made new. Meaning of a wife.
1. Walking along a window, being light. The cave I hid in folded away and left me on the avenue, that tall brick wall around some institution—mad or bad folk inside. But I was free, free and me, and out here like the wind.

2. I try again to get past what I see. There is a suchness
hidden from the eyes.
I try to make it my own.

3.
Why is every song a failure?
Because if it really moved
we would be there already,
get what it aims at,
the goal, the grail, the throne
and in silence wend it
gloating maybe— but for how long?

4.
O power is a sometimes thing, a storm offshore, thunder on the mountain but no water here. Climb the wooden hill to bed. Sift through your catalogue of dreams, choose the right one, the Roman city, the tulip tree.

10 November 2021

LITTORAL

Coastal zone, cliffs of marble,
only the old cry hallelujah!
pippit shells in the sand
glad friction, clean toes,
and then the surf, the far
off other islands. Gull.
Gull. They all know you
always have, the first
time you heard one
you knew yourself known.
The recognition. And green
sea0glass pale, she said
your eyes were like that
you always thought were blue.
What do we know about us
anyway ever? Heels feel
better too. Don’t sprawl
on the sand like a walrus,
be a man, stand there, eyes fixed on distance, waiting, that’s what the sea teaches men to do.

11 November 2021
One hundred and three years ago today a war ended we celebrate the end of, a conflict over there that killed a hundred thousand American troops. We called it Armistice Day when I was a kid, red paper pansies, grizzled veterans peddling guilt. But now they say Veterans’ Day, honoring the survivors of our recent wars, survivors, not the fallen. I wonder will there ever be a holiday marking the end of the Civil War when seven hundred thousand
American soldiers died at each other’s’ hands along with who knows how many civilians, how many of us, bombed or burned, slaughtered along the way to victory. Is it possible that war never ended?

11 November 2021
WAIT FOR THE WOMBAT

to wake, ask him
how he does it,
sleep on his side
and still keep scooping
earth gently away
deepening his burrow.
I watched him once,
marveled at how much
we can accomplish
while we sleep. Go,
watch the wombat,
let his sleep soft into yours.

11 November 2021
High in the hall closet a hat, not mine.Instances of the letter H. Home, heroic, hand. How many other letters do we need? Who wears that hat when it is not in the closet but worn? Cows give milk—that tells us a little more. More, milk, mind. A little spilled on the old bard floor.

11 November 2021

EXPEDITION
Wolf on sidewalk  
Passing us by.  
We tell ourselves  
What we know  
About the other.  
No problem.  
Don’t look back.  
Never look back.

2.  
You know it begins every time  
You set foot out of your house.  
_La vie sauvage à nos seuils_  
The French program said,  
Meaning no worse than  
the mole by the back door,
a dormouse in the thatch. But we know what it eally means—a savage world starts at your door. Whether you go in or out.

3.
At first light the horrid Shotguns at the river, Men who kill waterfowl For what seems pleasure, Proving something, but all The ducks they kill will never teach them to fly. 11.XI.21

ASSERTIONS

The stripper’s here, the rain wind that relieves
the trees of leaves,
help them bare for winter.

2.
Mid-November, a cup of cool coffee for me, the way I like it, I want to be the only extreme--everything else, mezzo mezzo, uguale.

3.
When you translate from Latin you java to remember, that’s all, just remember.
4.
My name means Tuesday
I think, the girl said--
she didn’t look mean or Mars,
a little uneasy, new to the job.

5.
They’re not here now
but on the way, you can tell
the way the earth turns
in case you haven’t noticed.

6.
You see I’m trying to be polite
but I’m a man, American at that
so it’s uphill all the way,
pebble in my goddam shoe.
7.
Some girls are only there in dream. Others grow old out here in Wake-up-land, I wonder which kind she is who faced the wall and talked quietly about her mother.

8.
Language lets you out of your story and into its own, ever-changing, no end in sight.
9.
I thought of Joyce
as I woke, his Scribble.
his voice miming the old
women washing the river.

10.
Scribble is such a wisdom word.
After waking, speak--
when you have spoken,
time enough to be.
11.
Assertions are miracles,
you say something
and it’s suddenly so--
for a while at least
until the next miracle, or rain.

12.
The door was open,
the interior flushed with light,
barefoot, barefoot we go in
walking softly on the light.

12 November 2021
It only has to do
with the tower,
roofless, on Glastonbury Tor
and the exact eyot of sky
you see when you stare up,
stare, not just look.
It only has to do
with the stone flower pot
full of blue poppies
even after a week of cold.
It only has to do with the alleyway
all secret and sacred and ordinary
and full of little garages and gates
that runs between Brown Street
and Haring Street on the other
side of the world,
yes, open the gate if you doubt me,
dunk under the pussy willow,
the sea is half a mile away,
that matters, that matters so much,
it only has to do with sand,
oyster shells, ancient laws
inscribed in cursive
all over the shells but who can read,
it only has to do
with the blind librarian,
I’m sorry, I meant to say blond,
the snow on Mount Wilson,
why can’t you feel the shells
when I say so, damp, slimy even,
so richly inscribed,
why can’t we read anymore,
why do we need to open books, when letters are all over the place, just read them together in peace, marry words! mate with music! It only has to do with stone, that’s what I’m trying to say, stone, the way she lisped, stone, the freckles on the cheek of the girl who held my coat, stone, my thumbnail scratching gently on the pillow so close to my ear I thought, o who knows what I thought, no better than Nick Bottom, stone, a thing you remember, stone, you build your house, stone, I lean my cheek against it,
stone alone knows what I see.

13 November 2021
ASPERGILLUM

y they called the golden sprinkler the priest scattered holy water from all over us.

Only if we are there, in church, or at graveside, in a solemn moment more or less traditional.

The meaning of the word depends on us being there. No one to sprinkle, the device asleep in its little silvery bucket.

Words depend on us,
we have to be there
for them if not for us.
Be there for them.

13 November 2021
0.
Wake in terror wondering
Does the body rule the brain?
Prayer might help--
can you make a prayer to say?
Dawn soon, our fond distraction.

1.
We are *cellf*
it made me say
the bios of all our logos,
when ere then one had ne’er guessed
the neurons of that monarchy,
pharaonic, earth squashing heaven,
the habit of our house.
Surprise, surprise,
so once I thought what thought me.

2.
There is a pinnacle
not all that high,
tourists exeunt the train
and clamber up,
selfies on the moor,
selfies on the cliff.
Plenty of time for the hotel.
3.
Or a spinnaker
full of wind
shouldering the air aside
to get there quick.
So much going!
Haul the sails down and linger.
This is your mother.

4.
At five a.m. the going’s slow,
home from the gin mill,
still a snore or two ere waking.

5.
There’s that word again!
I do like them old,
helps me recollect
what I meant by being here.

6.
Catholics read Augustine,
what do Jews or Buddhists read
that knock them to their knees
to start again. Immense
power of humility,
everything that happens
is a text to you.

7.
So it’s not all about cells, see,
I was wrong, the cells have ears
and do what we’re told.
Simple as that, old Russian
folksong about a field of wheat
and whom you might meet,
there, and only there.

8,
Some drink kava,
some chew gum.
I wait for the full moon
and rub my chin.

9.
No, that’s not the song I meant
or you wanted to hear,
wasn’t Mikhail Aleksandrovich,
wasn’t Mark Reizen,
wasn’t the Red Army chorus
but still it left you thinking.
And who is this who dares
to speak without singing?
10.
The wheat has all been reaped, the whole vast meadows now neatly shaved and simple in waxing moonlight. Hardly any color but bright. Yet look who walks there still, Hurry, shuffle through the stubble, but don’t worry, your haste a sign of virtue, what you seek is there forever.

11.
Child, you are by the river.
No boat and no bridge.
The other side looks same as this.
So will you do?

The child
looks up and asks:
wat did you do
when you were me?
I am still here, mon fils,
we are still together.

12.
And then at last I understood,
the night itself is nourishment. The man’s sound asleep, running wild in the night club of his brain. The maitre-d’ explains: dreams are not given to remember or mumble to your pallid shrink--dreams do you, they do and they do and every every night you grow more you--is that so hard to understand?

13.
There are two kinds of problems and the only one that interests me is the kind with no solution. That’s where we get music instead.

14 November 2021
She gave me a small stone
I cannot lose,
she carried it for ten thousand years
and handed it to me.
It’s still in my fingers.
Sometimes I think stone,
and stone is the deepest thought.

14 November 2021
for Raquel, remembering José

Death gives a certain dignity to those it borrows from us. But some of those it takes have a dignity of their own, intrinsic, an image that lasts, shows us how a man should be.

14 November 2021

= = = =
Let the word
answer itself: limb
of a tree, our beech,
almost bare now, how
dare I say ours?
skeleton of a fish,
name it, life
in a cartoon.

2.
Firebreak in Western trees,
even a word like west
is a claim, isn’t it, as if,
as if we knew where we are
or what kind of fish,
the kind you see on the beach,
gull ravaged,  
more names than things.

3.  
More things than you have words for me, you with your Tatar boots, cozy ear flaps, odd alphabet. A word before dawn when no one listens.

4.  
Hence, hence, or thence a pure word, for its own sake said.
Communication means exchange of gifts but this is one-way giving. Give it into the morning, ask nothing in return.

5.
Dear tree, Darjeeling deodar, Annandale linden, bright beech even now shimmering with new-lit cloud, pillars of my cathedral, by mine I mean the quiet place I kneel.
6.
I had to put that in about me
so you’d know I meant it,
loudmouth in my quiet way,
heavens, it’s almost light out now--
what could I be thinking of?

15 November 2021
ZZZ

First car on its way to work--
I’d better get back to bed.
Every day is a siècle
and every siècle has its fin.
I go regenerate my purity.

15.XI.21
ADVERT=

Fact: the items in your shopping basket equal in number the people who’ll call you by your name, your own name, this week. Apply here to learn your name so you’ll recognize them when they call.

15.XI.21
Still leaves enough
to make the place green,
light assembles in the shadows
between the two
they drink a kind of color
almost yellow
under the blue sk.
I am describing what is here,
what makes me be.

15 November 2021
1. Aim at the one to find the none the all of us at last, the beautiful emptiness full of everything.
2. Stone Tree Man-- only a woman can tell them apart.
Sleepy theology,  
bird on the roof.

4.  
Wake fast, walk slow,  
spit the cherry pits 
on fertile soil as you go.  
I bought my cherries  
in Paris years ago,  
they still taste sweet 
ark red, back of the mind.

5.  
Indigenous perfection  
chipped by our alien ways,  
begin every day with apology,  
to the trees at first, the dirt,
the stone, the streams
that flee from our touch.
In the old days a river
would stop and say hello.

6.
I know a woman
who likes to swim across
for the sheer pleasure
of swimming back home.

7.
Where philosophy
and theology
snuggle down together
in a tent, close, close,
a flap blows open,
they can see the sky.

8.
I think sometimes
gender is the only truth.
The stone overhears me and smiles.

9.
The day has begun.
Get up and do
the wordless thing
called living.
Roman or vegan or some
suchthing,
busy body, images everywhere,
close the door and kiss the wood.  
Some call it waiting,  
I call it getting there fast.

16 November 2021

= = = = =

The white wall  
knows all.
The longer you look
the more you remember.

2.

in sunshine and in shadow
old song,

ikd Irish song
the white stucco sings.

16 November 2021

White sky wake the living.
Attitudes vary in the tilt of wind.
So many names by now forgotten
litter the antechamber.
But noise means boys still, armies come roaring over the hill. no. it’s just a truck speeding by, one more male mistake.

2.
Look at the facts: it’s loud, it hurts more than the ears, it goes on and on. Masculine was perhaps your first mistake-- why does quiet make us so terrified inside?
3. Because we are waiting for a question that never comes. Beat the drum to dull the wait. Blow up bombs. Be Beethoven.

4. Even I try to make th best of it, growling as I go, lass mich schlafen. I groan out like Wagner’s dragon, do what you want but let me sleep. sleep is the only silence left.
Is it right to be ripe when the road is empty?

We drove in an open car, rehearsing our speeches, the colors we wore were supposed to be meaningful but you’d have to see us passing to decide. My speech was in Russia, on climate. Or was it in Prussia, on heimat, homeland?
So hard to remember
what hasn’t happened
and he road was empty
and we’d been travelling so long.

17 November 2021
The archers stand baffled at the shore.

So many waves!
Each thrown at them from this living lapis lazuli vastness

but who coyled havetold them that this was their enemy?

17 November 2021
Did you ever hear stone scream? I did once, not even in a dream but in the place where a dream would be if I had been sleeping.

I try not to go to parties, walk if I can, avoiding taxis, sometimes the other has its way with me, cup of milk, ladder on the lamppost, what can I but listen to the stone?

17 November 2021

FACES OF THE MIND
for Pat & Marla Smith

Cautious Cathars
peer out of where
they hide in us,
the pure ones, the ones
whose purity lights up the mind
when we see their eyes
in a Bronzino or Raphael
or that girl you think you saw
that rainy dusk in Edinburgh.

Cathars, because pure,
Cathars because always at risk,
persecuted by the authority
of the ordinary
that will not look at them,
that will not see.
So they take refuge in your hands.

18 November 2021
On the other side for instance of the wall there hangs a mirror showing clear every feature of an empty room. Now be that mirror sit down and be at peace.

18 November 2021
This to start with
a syllable aloft
where the edge of the sky
licks the gold
trees of November,

Oh

she said, the trees, the trees!
then we were among them
and no need to say.

2.
Because in a way everything we do is answering, so close are we to the Mercy, the quiet never-ending question.

18 November 2021
Shafer
THE PATH

Call it a path,
they come up along it,
people, people
from the past,
the past turns into a path
and they come.

I haven’t seen you in years,
why is that, and why now,
are we just wooden figures
on a chess board somebody
is moving around? Is it a game?

Are you really here?
I mean is it really you coming up the path at me, a little fuzzier around the edges, saying my name?

2. So we sit down in the garden or at the dining room table and we impersonate the ones we use to be, theater comes naturally with time, we pretend we are each other as we were, smile on cue at triggered recollections, drink something, nibble,
often cake comes with the path, and talk, well, you know what they say about talk.

3.
Did I live with this one once? Did we travel to Montana, translate Pessoa together, play Schubert’s four-hand fantasy, close to marriage as music comes?

Somewhere inside me isn’t there a tiny vessel still filled with feelings? I’ll never really know.
The only thing to do
is go outside and sweep
dead leaves off to clear the path.

19 November 2021
If it were a word
I would say it—
wouldn’t you?

It is there, potent,
present, loud even—
but not a word.

Or not yet—
go ahead, call out
whatever comes to mind,
your cry
will be the answer
a word needs to exist.

19 November 2021
Rail for a curtain
to hide the world.

Is that horizon
or one more mistake of mind,
waiting for the truth
to unfold its clouds and stand bare
over sea, over mountains, over me.

The things we need,
our simple subway hearts
hurtling in the dark, take care,
some lines run out of city
and them where are you.

*trees and fields and me.*
You know that song too well.
I think the world is tired
and wants to go to bed in me.
I have resisted long enough
for one day. Let the dark sing.

19 November 2021
THE MIRACLE

The beard keeps growing though the gardens of Greenwich are closed for the winter and few seals hop onto the shore and votaries for some reason drag corn stalks and pumpkins into their shadowy churches so the reverend has to rewrite his summertime sermons, and car windows are closed as they pass so you can’t tell what your neighbors think is music and even I get tired at times
of looking out the window
or standing on the corner,
choosing, tired of choosing.
But the beard keeps growing
though it’s years now
since I last let it have its way.
It’s telling me something,
bristly harsh or next day softer,
a fluent message every day,
or goes on forever, like the grey
pigeons of Manhattan, always
there and always reminding.

20 November 2021

= = = = =
When you ask a machine what it wants for breakfast--rock oil? spirits of wine?--you’re playing the game. The only game in town: talk to everything and listen to what they say, then speak again and so it goes. But don’t talk too much to people, don’t distract them from the game.

20 November 2021
for Charlotte

I wanted to buy you
a furry stole, faux-fur
of course, I wanted
a sealskin coat for you
faux-phoque to be sure
but you had one of those.
Hmm. Ten days on the Azores?
But I hate travel these days
and dread being alone.
What does a selfish man
give to the love of his life?
Only his self, I guess, I guess
he has plenty of that,
doesn’t even have to order it
from Amazon, or cadge
a ride to town to pick one up.
Here it is, here I am,
I mean all I am is yours.

20 November 2021
O river ocean-wide these days
water and sky one color
and the hills fading on both sides, excites me and I can’t say why,
the wide, the wide open, the sea coming deep into the land,
land opening at last, the live continuum we humble through
saying prayers to brick and stone, exalted to see this deep openness
and we dare to call it a river and give it a name.

20 November 2021
Legends laugh at reason—the Bible stands firm in its goatskin mantle, teasing interpreters and why not? Eating apple means eating anything, turning a spiritual entity into a machine that eats living things, urns them into itself. Or did you thin an apple tree is not alive?

20.XI.21
Without forgetting fence the garden in--
enclosing the space is more important than what you plant there. The flowers and trees are incidents of travel in this now sacred space, vines are rivers, birds are messengers, all it takes is marking off the space, temenos, the sacred grove, no trees required. Without forgetting, stand inside. This is the place. the miracle,
a little like the space
we give in our heart-mind
to those we really love.
But this is outside, clear,
clean, so we can stand in love.

21 November 2021
All I keep thinking
about these days is you.
How I can make things
better but I can’t find out,
can’t remember, improvise,
even hum a tune that satisfies.
I can’t think my way to thing,
thing to give, thing to snake happy.
I seem to have lost my taste
for thing. Now what?
When time and place
are all I have to give?
I cannot find a thing
I think would make you happy.
Friends and food and music, 
film and narrative--those do the job 
but I am not them, or not 
them enough so when I say 
I give myself to you 
it feels not like a gift but 
like a burden laid on your knees.

21 November 2021
Someone walking up the road at a decent pace, too far to know, identity is difficult in a moving world. Gone out of sight now, trees and such, a person, a whole Iliad in a big dark coat. What are they thinking as thy go? Is it actually what I’m writing down? We leave our prints on one another, doesn’t take much, no actual touch, just a glimpse, a shadow on a path.

21.XI.21
for Charlotte

I think or want to think there is an island, small and rich with difference, deep inside us, one island inside the two of us, and as we move the island grows caves and meadows, deep woods and marshes, a pond where seabirds come mingle with the birds of earth and we hear their voices speaking in us, song and spell, fairy tale and deep theology. We are this island, I say, and I dare to say it because
you taught me what island means, you gave me one, a jewel in the near Atlantic, to show me what an Island is and year by year you taught me how to be the island that we are.

22 November 2021

Happy Birthday, dearest love, I bless the day we met, and thank you forever.

Let us determine the day
said the bird at the window
before she started singing
in her other language, o
the song one, the one like
lamp light reflected in a bright
window on a sunny day,
as if to say: haven’t you light
enough with all this and me?

2.
Music accuses.
We all know that,
hymnbook, show tunes,
the Bach chaconne--
there’s always a finger
leveled at you—did you,
do you, finally get what I mean?
3.
So many languages
and even one is hard to learn—
ask any two-year old
how hard it is to forget
what he knows and learn
English instead, or whatever
they speak where he got born.
His round eyes in that round face
tell you that language itself
is an instrument of forgetting.
You think to pat his little nose
but his eyes follow the fingertip
and you think better of it. Close
your eyes and join me in forgetting.
Let the star loose in you she said, I heard the Czar instead and lay back ruling the modest steppe landscape of my sleep.
She spoke again and said
I will be good to you,
but in my daze I heard wood
and tried to build a house
from what I heard, sleep
seems true architecture.
Then she spoke again, so softly
I couldn’t catch her words,
but this time I understood.

23 November 2021

= = = = =

Clouds come in all sizes
it’s good to remember.
The Sun is just one--
to see Her in the sky
is to know yourself a single
voice amidst immensity.

23.XI.21
Lift the latch
old lovers
lift and sing.
The tongue
is always young,
a wild child
let loose.

23.XI.21
They speak in their sleep too but listen quietly—
hearing is louder than speech sometimes. the vast
gasp of waiting for an answer.

Just watch them mildly,
corner of the eye, let conscious mind play
with some mere idea but listen softly enough
and the trees will speak.

24 November 2021

|= = = = =
'm thinking of a friend
three thousand miles west,
it’s just dawn where she is
but I bet she’s still in bed—
nights are heavy out there,
the sea over the hill, the cry
of wildcats in the chaparral,
and dreams are different there too,
dusty with what drifts in from Asia.

Come on, wake up, I need a friend
in the arroyo, need to hear
what you see when you wake,
need to hear what’s going on
when you walk, all day,
hills and houses, stone and story,
write me a letter, sing me a song.

24 November 2021
Petty Cury meant the little stable, fashionable yard bookstore and snug coats, autumn day in Anglia o I remember, friends bring forgetting, I chatted with I think he was a priest and he remembered for me, notch of blue sky over and a long walk to that church on the edge of the woods.
I hear a dog bark, 
barking, not a good sign. 
But the sun is shining 
and it’s above freezing. 
if you listen hard you’ll hear 
me trying to make the best of it, 
a kind of barking noise 
at the back of the mind.

24.XI.21

= = = = =
I don't seem to write too much at night
I wonder why that is
sometimes I think that light
floods the words with energy
nut the dark is loud with word.
Sometimes I think I just get tired and
the dark lets me be.
Or is it just as simple as I can’t
see the keyboard in the dark
and my fingers can’t find the words
that all by themselves
would turn into a chaconne?

24.XI.21

Thinking about Palestrina
the church where little Mozart
sat and listened and memorized. thinking about the cold Adige flowing down from the Alps past the Council of Trent, thinking about human prejudice, the right to go on living, music talks about it all the rime, go on goon and find the thing you mean, to the rest of us it will sound like silence, hush, applause and lights come back on, the priests leave the chancel and you are what you really are.

24 November 2021

= = = = =

It’s not that one thing leads to another. It’s that
it leads to the other, the one precise shadow the present casts into the future, place where everything turns real. Wishing is a magic trick that often fails, but thinking always works—there is always something there when you arrive, out of breath, but with a smile.

24 November 2021
Ancient people standing by the door disguised as fluted wooden doorjambs—run your fingers over to make sure—or even stone pillars, their voices like water in the baptistery scarcely stirred by some holy dipper’s hand. They stand beside every entrance, because a door—think about it—is always about going in. There is no way out of the world. 2.
Children learn it in churches, museums, even schools bring the doorish wisdom home. Then their own house can offer miracles--you see the little ones standing in the doorway sleepy-eyed, but brave enough to stare, their hand resting on an ancestral knob.

3.
Were things here before us? The answer is not clear, the scientists are distracted by far galaxies, noisier beginnings.
Were things our ancestors
or just our teachers?
I just got an early
Christmas card from the beech tree,
it seems to lean towards Yes.

25 November 2021
Holiday morning
all the cars asleep,
lazy windows barely
keep their eyes open,
the trees are still,
motionless, graceful
as an old engraving.
Nothing to see.
Everything to be.

Thanksgiving 2021
It begins with a syllable carved on a stone in ancient Rome before the carver lost interest or was snatched away. Two letters, hard to be sure, PA it seems, but is it Latin (;father,’ ‘suffer’ be open’ ‘Pan’) or Greek (‘rod’‘Rhadamanthus’)? And of course we can think of dozens more, possibles, possibles, what did someone mean to carve before he or the stone was swept away? 2.
Of course it just looks like Dad to us, Father Stone, stone-faced father of a timid child, stop right there, a syllable is scary enough.

3.
But why, why the stone, and why it comes to mind? I walked through Glanum on an easy day, Roman town left in the south of France. This isn’t Rine but what it does stone houses, its language dense in our vocabulary--we can’t leave home without it.

4.
He was one of the three judges of the dead, guided Greek afterlives to the bardos of atonement, adjustment, beginning. Three kings to do all that work!

25 November 2021
Not even a bird comes by to stir the vista. But the color seems a little different now, sun from cloud or tired eyes? With a world like this, you can never tell.
What time is it?
It’s dark.
What day is it?
That too.
I have told
all my wishes
all night long.
Short of breath
now saying
so much.
Only the clock
tells lies.

26 November 2021

= = = = = =
The rebbe roared
his benedictions,
sounded urgent,
angry even, blessing
is an anxious business,
fiere metabolism
of wishing good
on other people, all
other people, bless
till out of breath.

26 November 2021
Problems of being here. Anywhere. Here holds you by your feet. Gravity music all day long. But sometimes in the night it mightt let go—and then where are you, dreamer on your precipice?

26 November 2021
THE GARDEN

A walk in the garden used to mean talking a lot and bringing home what you said and all you managed to hear.

Walking in the garden used to mean Babylon and Rome, messages from your own skin. massages by this busy earth and water, water, pools for floating, no beasts, only birds, and only those who know how to sing.
Walking in the garden used to mean music in the glad gloom of a rain day dawn, cellos and oboes and all the grey silence.

Walking in the garden used to mean a hand in your hand, a smile passing by, love and no law, a lady studying every flower, a knight by every tree on guard, who knows why, there were no enemies
in the leaves.

Walking
in the garden
used to mean a couch
alongside the stream,
silken or woolen
bedclothes for every season,
lie there and read
the cursive of the clouds
until the story ends.

26 November 2021
LAP

A lap is a when
not a what.
It’s gone when you go
but when you sit down
it spreads out to welcome
a laptop or a lover,
sitting down is pure offering.

26 November 2021
Let me linger.
Lingering is love song,
lingering is morning
all day long.

26.XI.21
Quiet, friend.
Sometimes a flower
is enough to answer,
even in autumn,
sunflower, purple roses
from the florists,
money adds meaning,
haven’t you ever heard
a rose roaring?
So b patient, dear friend,
I’ll get around to answering you.

27 November 2021
VAJRAYOGINI

In crimson glow of sunset
her body says:

Ride me to the sky.
Through the ardor of inward
or garce of sliding up along
the outer contours of what I am,
ride my bdy to beyond the sky.

27 November 2021
Systems interlock
at the level
of the individual.
You are where
they come together.
Each of us a different
set of systems.
Is that what a galaxy is,
network of systems
that overlap and interact
at the points we call stars?
I look out the window,
morning, try for a minute
to count the systems
that engage me, entrap me,
define me, make me.
I’ll leave the jb to you,
you have them, you are them, too.

27 November 2021
Ring clinks on keyboard.
Everything wants to talk,
everything is part of the poem.

27 November 2021
Without getting smaller
or the leaf getting bigger,
Milarepa and his friend
hid under a fallen leaf
to shelter from the heavy rain,
Don’t ask how that is possible.
Ask how it is done.

2.
Wisdom’s not a thinking thing,
wisdom is a doing.
Think all you like and then decide
No, I will do the right thing,
do it right, save me
and mine from heavy weather,
from all that seems to come down.
3. Not that I know how to do it. I just do it. Milarepa both did and knew—that’s the difference.

4. Start by trusting the earth beneath your feet. If you can trust the ground the sky can’t be too far. They roll around each other incessantly, and here you are.

5. Never wait for the answer,
let the doing be the answer. 
Hurt nobody, help everybody, 
calm yourself and count to three.

6. 
Almost sas simple as that. 
But don’t trust me. 
Am I the ground beneath your feet? 
Am I the least bit like the sky? 
I talk, and that’s the use of me.

7. 
They don’t seem like miracles 
when they happen. 
They just feel right.
It’s only later, in talking to one another, or in that sinister conversation called thinking that a holy wonder seems the least bit strange.

27 November 2021

= = = = =

Six A.M When the real men get up. Hunters,
harriers, carriers,
but also priests,
power grid workers,
chicken farmers.
What am I doing
in this company?
Six A.M. Not
a hint of light
except the globes
those power workers
string along the road
from pole to pole,
showing not much
more than themselves,
The lights, I mean,
not the workers.
Six A.M. It’s like
a game that’s busy playing me,
I have to keep talking to justify being awake.
If that’s what it is or I am.

28 November 2021
Sunday morning nobody says. Only in sleep do we reach out to one another. Wake is silencing, reverent enough but where are you when I am incomplete? Nobody answers but asking is comforting.

28 November 2021
phos augei

6:21 A.M.
Almost tell
the sky
from the trees
if you know
where to look.
Up, up, it all
says that.
First Sunday
of Advent,
three more to go
before the light
comes back.

28 November 2021
Charm the daylight down.
Turn gloom into gloaming.
Belong to your ancestors
for an hour, you don’t
know who they are but they
are speaking. Language
is your real DNA.

28.XI.21
The keyboard says it all.
Twenty-six major and minor keys. Every word a prelude, every sentence a fugue. No wonder we all write so much, the music lures us.

28 November 2021
Now I see sky.
It was there
all the time.
The world’s an
old housecat,
ever really asleep.

28.XI.21
= = = = =

Tamper with the evidence
till fully awake.
The animals back in the woods,
and I am empty as a road
at dawn. Now travel me.

28.XI.21
And only now it shows
it snowed in the night.
First of this winter,
the daylight surprise.
Think marble, Michelangelo,
don’t think Moby Dick
or pale cerements.
Think Banksy smiling at a wall.
Think soft white paper under your pen.

28.XI.21

Last poem in NB 434
Was it enough to say good-night, your wrists slow bent as from a keyboard they were rising. Could I believe your hands?

2.
Go back to pressing ivory—Bach heard you before I did and knew precisely what to make of your touch. O body, body, how deeply you have held the world—now let go.

28 November 2021
ADMONITIONS

1.
Catch as catch can, 
she turned the birds off 
went back to 
is it really sleep when we return 
or is there someone else inside, 
suddenly arriving from the day?

2,
The doctor said Hydrate, 
drink lots of water 
but I was a sipper, not a drinker, 
and water is too alkaline for me. 
Juices maybe, sugary, tart?
But the doctor had left the room.
I think my mother was a seal, we love all the water but keep our mouths closed.

3. Who is inside me when I sleep? I asked the rabbi and he roared a blessing on me and told me to be grateful to the One outside, the One who handles all the details.

4. Why do priests and rabbis
typically wear black
but lamas wear red?
Is it as simple as night and day?

5.
when I think of music
I think of keys
but my voice growls
out song before
I know the words.
Sound like Russian to me,
words are just there
to set the music free.

6.
It’s hard to shake a finger
at oneself, but poets try.
Baudelaire, for one, but then the rhyme distracts them and they wind up frowning at their *hypocrite reader*, *just like me*. But his frown is sweet.

7.
Bluish, now greyish. Me-ish, now they-ish. The world stares right back at me, the wind a warning.

8.
Someone in white running up the hill, gone by the time
I write him down.
Fleeing is completion.
Even the smallest
details an offering.

29 November 2021

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Abbreviate the parade.
Alleviate the standers.
So much can be done in one word,
one block, one sign
floated by. But what will it say?
The next thing that happens
is your sign from the sky.

29 November 2021

clove or scarlet,
womb of light that bears the air we breathe
and so it ended
the psalm or ceremony
that had brought me here
the way dreams do,
to leave us, naked
on a strange shore.

30 November 2921
5:30 A.M.

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And then look to the east
to see what is happening,
people live everywhere
glory of cities, bow-windowed
row houses of old Bushwick,
every stoop a sacred hill
hiding the secret airy-way, yes,
people live beneath the ground.

30 November 2021
When the dreams have ended
and the night has no more to tell
they ring a bell, the city wakes,
the river listens, the bridges yearn.
For most of us day
means somewhere else..
The old can stay home,
they have learned
tpo endure the place they are.

30 November 2021
STRATEGY

Don’t do anything for the first time today. Winter is on your trail and watching. Hide in habit. Save the new, your secret weapon.

30 November 2021
Now wait with me
till the road comes back
and tells us where it’s been.
Things know these things,
who walked with you
outside when the music stopped.
You probably don’t remember
and I never knew.
Someone was with you
and the night knew.

30 November 2021
I hd a tennis racket once
lord knows why
snug in its wooden frame,
a parallelogram and why not.
Badminton was not beyond me,
a decent even honorable sport,
but tennis is so angry,
the poor ball, the grunting serve.
Why do we even have words at all?
What color would you call it if you didn’t look?
Us there a feel to the air around it or around you that hints at what light might be up to on the skin of things?
I knew a man once said he can’t imagine colors.
igf I said ‘blue sofa’ he’d see the word blue and some dim shape, no color at all. Maybe words really are enough.

30 November 2021