Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts
Cast. As a stone.
Or as a list
of characters in your story,
only yours.
Or as in concrete,
a heavy block to build
your theater with,
not grand, utilitarian,
walls and a roof.
But the roof must be a wing
poised and sturdy
to shelter under.
Now go write your play.
I was a baptist once
or just a farmer,
I’d sprinkle people
as they [assed and call
out new names on them
until they stopped me
and took ay my glass
of water, now what can I do,
all I can do is call you you.

1 April 2022
Of course it’s April Fool Day but what day isn’t? I’ve been trying to fool you all for years, and you fool me. We end up even, and call it heaven.

1 April 2022
How close can I come
to the river and not get wet,
to the honey and not get stung,
to the truth and not get scared?

1.IV.22
Wander needless in a week of mist, kiss your friends goodbye, watch their private jets take off for warmer climes, what the devil is a clime anyhow and why can’t I have one, weekless month, monthless yers, palm tree with pineapples, bees leaving honey on the rocks for me. Pacific? The mist embarrasses the trees. Embraces I think I meant but truth will out. And where is Out and who doth dare to Will it? Am I a tragic clown gibbering
from a well-lost play?
Somebody must have written me but here I am, spouting my lines, amazing the trees, I mean amusing.

1 April 2022
Ostentatious
as a cow
alone in the middle
of the wide green field.
empress of Earth:
*She fives me all I need,*
*I give her my majesty,*
*my mystery, my milk.*
Black and white cow.
I saw her standing there
when I was five ears old
and already I understood.

1 April 2022
Don’t dawdle, son—rush ahead through all your lucent approximations of desire and seize the stone, press against the rock so it turns back into her or her or whoever turned her back on you. Hurry, this is our only world.

2 April 2022
[dreamt]
Let the sun shine all she wants, it’s secular down here, car radios belching past quiet roadside cottages, mailbox full of catalogues, you know, the band plays on. But still I dream, barely one afternoon away is a palace of pure air arising on the meadow, a silent scripture teeming with ideas. *Think me*, the world says, *think me hard*.
Only the words were gone.
The rest were intact, stones,
stamina of living beings,
storm clouds over Cedar Hill,
a dream of two crows.
Windows but no words.
Waterfall. Jogger
in a yellow parka.
Where did the words go?

3 April 2022
The first song hadn’t finished when the second song began. Conflict, their fingers entwined, elbows at each other’s ribs, almost a dance. Can songs feel anger? It didn’t seem so, seemed as if they knew each other long ago and knew how to get in one another’s way in just the right way, and made it seem that music would never end
The sky looks grey but the grass seems to have sunshine in it. It seems a sweet contradiction, gives ne hope, cold as morning is. I hope everything else is listening.

3.IV.22
Benedict Arnold went to heaven, went in through the Traitor’s Door. Lots of them sitting around inside, praising their efforts at a miracle, being on two sides at once. Sometimes the saints came by and listened to their explications, marveled at these two-heart men, gently tried to ooze them into one so that someday they could leave the noisy room and enter the chatterless calm of all the rest of heaven.

3 April 2022
Ballistic youth
a trireme on the sea
we never seem to get over
this fighting thing,
a ladder that leads nowhere,
we climb all the way up and fall.
What sense does it make,
that stick in my hand,
let it fall, let it fall,
we’re all just here.
Think of what we could have built
if we had made things and not
killed one another. Think
of what science and technology
could do even now if we stopped,
stopped war and wounding.
Think of what all the casualties could have written, invented, begotten had they lived. War is suicide.

3.IV.22
I followed her up the stairs, kept my eyes firmly on her shoes for fear of lust. And when I breathless reached the top she was not there. And no shoes either. Some dust sparkled in a corner and a broom to help it with.

3.IX.22
44.4 degrees Fahrenheit
the thermometer explains,
pleased as I am by this rare
single-mindedness in the number tribe
when they look outside and hum
and do their tricks and suddenly
sing the same noye. 4.44
Long as ‘ve lived I’ve never
seen that number before.
Thank you, weather.

3.IV.22
He carved his name into the air with huge letters then sank to his knees onto the soft grass. Since he was kneeling he thought he might just as well be praying so he prayed and this is his prayer.

3 April 2022
I woke in four o’clock in the dark and a voice, mine ir like mind, was speaking in my mind. There was no image at all, I saw nothing, knew then and know now nothing of who was talking or to whom about what. But here are the words the voice said:

How can I survive
our friendship,
how can I endure
all that I know
about you and me
and all of us,
us, the single target
of your mutiny?

4 April 2022
Let me listen
to the other side
of the record
(remember records?)
while this side
is still playing.

That’s one way of asking.
Or how about a canoe
with an armchair in it
and a table with coffee cups.

We live in a world
where air is free, oxygen,
the only thing we need,
given to us by The System.
We can breathe anywhere.
So why am I asking for favors,
special coins o no real currency, who cares what I want when they so kindly give me everything I need.

Das *Lied ist aus*. The son is over. Now flip the effing record and be normal. I can wait. First I’ll dig a lake for my canoe.
THE BOOK I WANT TO READ

is hidden on your shelf. I want to leaf through it, let my fingers feel the pages as they ripple past, I want to feel the words rough and smooth long as hair or brief as breath, I want to squeeze the book shut, tuck it under my arm, bring it with me where I go. read it on the meadow or in the rain or in the crowded train, I want to savor every word of it in my own way until I understand it and it understands me.

4 April 2022
A BIRD

has nested
in the ventilator
opens on the ceiling
of the examination room
where the patient stretches
out uneasy on the cushioned slab
and waits ti be dealt with
and the bird chirps.
The nurse says it’s been there
so long she doesn’t even notice.
The bird chirps again.
The patient thinks: this
is augury, this is ancient Rome
and I’m still alive! Closes his eyes
grateful as we are for any sign.

4 April 2022
SHE SAID:

Feel free
with all you have learned,
stolen or borrowed from me–
it is for you to use.

It was a voice
speaking from deep
down in the ground,
a voice that sounded like stone.

5 April 2022
Make, use.
Accuse.

A name
is of the other,
you have no name.

Why would you need one
in the wolf world
the cabbage world–
no one is listening

and your body
talks only to itself.

5 April 2022
It’s not despair
it’s a door
propped open by a chair
wedged under the doorknob.

It’s not grief,
it is a book to wander in
among the words,
even between the letters.

Dry your tears—
the window is watching.

5 April 2022
Peel the beginning away
layer ny layer,
lichen, time’s
lipstick left on stone,
broken bandwidth, get
beyond the elements, all
the wise vascular improvisation
we xall a living body,
find the before,
before the before,
the little snicker
of the oldest furthest,
galactic synagogue where
some togethering was intended
and we did, we do, we came
along and chanted, what else is human breathing but a canticle, our never-ending psalm praising the before the beginning. That it began.

2.
Breath says I am praying though I seldom know it, praying undistracted by words, concepts, images, ideas—just praying, praying. Religions try to help you breathe, remind you bead by bead, word by word, sacred syllables to take your next breath and let that breath bring you
closer to before the beginning.
And we know the sad
thing that happens when
someone stops praying.

3.
I saw it once
in a hospital,
the last prayer
breathed out
quiet, the blood
stopped flowing,
nothing happened,
quiet, quiet,
my dearest friend was done.
4.
I grew up with a poem that kept quoting
In my end is my beginning.
Critics spoke of circles, sense of destiny, goal of living, afterlife as when we really start living, heaven and all that.
Maybe maybe maybe do you likemy mantra?
all of them and none of me and what does my own breath tell me? Between breaths before spreads out, vast green meadow to the horizon where he next breath waits, but on this prairie I catch a glimpse
of someone waiting, 
not coming towards me, 
not moving much, turning 
like a child looking around. 
But not a child.

6 April 2022
THE CHOICES

Waking up is scattering.
Now what. A hundred destinations proposed and my compass left behind in my sleep. In all the proffered goings which one is mine?
Climb the hill, keep all the appointments some other me has made. Drink the grey light.

2.
The beautiful superstitions
we try to live by—democracy,
liberty, justice—soothe even me
this anxious morning.
Anxious because a day to do
and not sure what or how..
So many avenues in one null town.

3.
A man read to me in Hebrew,
I picked up only one word,
pachad, fear. I knew then
that cowardice is my truth.

4.
I don’t want to write about frogs though I love to see them this time of year, hopping across back roads, chirping in the trees. I don’t want to write about traveling though I love to ride always in the passenger seat and looking sideways out at the swift moving trees, meadows stretching tier backs up to the sky as I pass. The road has started to shine. The rain has begun. I will write about rain.
7 April 2022
My mother was a silent woman, taught children all day in school and was quiet at home, chatted mildly with her many relatives but not too frequently. I learned silence from her but was myself a bad student of it. Still talking but I keep trying to shut up. I have never thanked her enough. Everything I do she made possible, can I let my feeble doings serve as thanks? Even words, even words like this?
A hundred and twenty years ago she was born, when the forsythia hedges were in flower, and just yesterday I saw their yellow kindness beginning to light up these grey days. Once again I have said too much and not enough, my usual childish song.

7 April 2022

A GREETING CARD FOR VAISAKHA
There never was a was there never will be will be. There is only now, glorious and now, the baby Buddha born right now in you pointing up and pointing down.

7 April 2022

The lawn a lake,
rain day all night
and now the silver
road glistens uphill.
Paint this for me
you brushy democrats
of the color wheel,
let what I see
live after me.

8 April 2022
Lock the mailbox
turn off the internet
there’s nobody out there,
they’re all in here,
with you, in you, each
pretending to be other
but they’re all just you.
You give the funny faces
or sleek hips, accents,
attitudes, but they’re all just you. Mow is the time for you to emigrate,
out of this kingdom of selves,
cross some fishy ocean to find a democracy of the actual Other.
Now is the hour. The boat
is loading at the back of your mind, hurry, everything you need is already aboard, hurry, this is your chance at last to flee the friends you’ve feigned.

8 April 2022
Spadework. Sympathy.
Walk up the hill.
Vista is wisdom enough for me.
Seeing without knowing!
What a liberty that is,
the vast meadowing earth
quiet in its own affairs
lets me look and see.
And when the road bends
I am led to understand
I too am a part of what it does,
I will be quiet and be
only your landscape now.

8 April 2022
I have something to say to the Sanhedrin if I knew where they’re in session, a discrepancy I noted in scripture, something important but now I can’t remember.

Maybe it will all come back to me when I face the bearded judges in satin robes and me on my knees before them,

it was something about weeping, something about a woman walking in a field of winter wheat,
something about a name misspelled, it will all come back eventually. Meanti.me I rest at roadside and watch all the slow chariots pass.

8 April 2022
Rejuvenate. The light so dim in the leafless trees it looks like mist. No mist.

Rejuvenate the obvious, make it sing like sunshine.

Every morning a different taste: Monday milk and Tuesday tea, Wednesday raspberry, Thursday olive, Friday honey, Saturday salt, Sunday cinnamon,

we taste the petals fallen long ago from the flowering Sun, cool enough now to nibble
the experience of time.
Not time,
but what we
superstitiously imagine time is.
The real time is hidden in the now.

8 April 2022
Drive slow to see what isn’t me—
that’s my motto, otherwise the speed
of my intention
blurs what is here, not there, only here,
this place, this sacred purposeless clump of trees
my instant paradise.

8 April 2022
The cars are going—
can I go q with them,
a little piece of me
stuck to each windshield
and we go sailing up the hill?
And all the places I will go
more or less simultaneously!
I am a divided man already,
no reason not to go with aloof you
and learn who I will become
when they all get to all
the wheres they’re headed to,
and i do mean you.

8 April 2022
hat color are your eyes tonight what part of the spectrum as changed so that suddenly as you appear at me from the bottom of the stairs I see another person altogether one holding something in the right hand the left hand empty, its palm stretching out towards me as if to say put yourself here, come down the steps, become something in my hand.

8 April 2022
NOTICE

NOW HAS BROKEN. WE ARE WORKING VIGOROUSLY TO REPAIR THE MECHANISM, BUT FOR THE MOMENT WE URGE YOU TO BE USE EXTREME CAUTION WHEN YOU STEP—PIECES OF PAST AND FRAGMENTS OF FUTURE ARE DRIFTING IN ALL DIRECTIONS. WE HOPE TO HAVE EVERYTHING BACK TO NORMAL BY SUNSET. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE.

—YOUR TIME COMPANY

9 April 2022
What more can I tell you, stone lasts a long time but time lasts longer. I know London and Paris, Vienna and Berlin—not Rome, not Athens. Doesn’t that tell you something? The road is wet but the rain pool gone, the flowing away, that old song. There must be something I can give you, random letters cast out of silver or tin, tin is easier to stick on the wall, magnets on the fridge, what are the letters spelling now? Why do we do this to ourselves, the clock, the calendar,
the names we glue on newborn, all our ever-afters? And why do I think I have to say anything at all about this, or have anything to say? The words insist. O brothers and sisters, the words insist.

9 April 2022
Somebody’s son
somebody’s brother
nobody’s father
or are you my child?

9.IV.22
Not a wanderer, a wave of its own brine uplifted.

Now speak to me in Gaelic, spread the chestnut tears around the stone table,

set an urn on it with fire in it, a flame. A name is speaking.

Haunted by habit. tii mskilled at grieving, or too weary to mourn

Lau down your ideas and then sleep.
The dark is a great democrat,
the anarchic flame,
lifts its protest,

see, see,

at least see me.

9 April 2022
Nobody here, nobody there. Only body lone making moan.

End of story, start of chapter, listen for a bird a bird always knows you know.

Listening makes a loud noise in heaven. Hear me it says, I want
to hear you.
Nobody home,
birds are sleeping,
even the door
is fast asleep.

10.IV.22
It sounds like wind but why. Under the grass earth, under earth stone—no noise there and the train went by hours ago. If it was a train. Recall how we even we used to go lay our ear on the track to hear far off the thrill of its coming. No wind, but the sound of wind. Why. Do the trees shudder? Does the wide earth yawn?
What is sleep anyway
and why does every living
thing have to have it
or do it or let it be done?
Why can’t we be all the time?
Maybe it’s wolves
prowling through the woods
like they used to,
breathing loud to give small beasts
a chance to run away.
Wolves. Remember the one
passed us so politely,
on the sidewalk yet, we
and wolf veered apart,
gave each other room to pass.
No sound. No wind
even then.

10 April 2022
Remember this:
Spanish coin
in island sand.
You hope silver,
you’re not sure.
It’s morning now
so it won’t matter
much longer. Bronze
is the day. I resist
that language,
something to do
with someone else’s
life, a life ago,
one more thing
fallen from a hand.

10 April 2022
Palm Sunday. The week begins, the week of horror that we call Holy Week.

It ends well, a rising up, a victory. But today slices of palm leaf, long stiff yellow strips children carry our of church in their happy hands,

If there are churches, children, it all seems so long ago, my own life seems like something I read in a book.
A hint of blue in the cloud, who knows what the day will bring. Cold April. Valiant flowers. Resurrection only one more week away.

10 April 2022
The golden chariot goes by
with no one in it,
goes by overhead,
its horse is the wind,
a fierce shadow pounding by
silently overhead.
Its passage is news enough,
it wakes what sleeps inside us
and suddenly we are filled
with that alertness we call knowing, just knowing. Be careful—what we know might send us back to sleep.

10 April 2022
Vegetate hotel internal
move from suite to suite
rent inside yourself,
you're the furniture
in every room.

Or stand
roadside midnight
meadow bathed
by the headlights
of six cars and perform.

_Pain makes me._
Light tickles skin,
nipples, necessities.
Who can answer now?
There is no way out
of what you mean.

The desk clerk always watching
that newspaper is transparent
he pretends to be reading,
watch what he does if he sees you move even slowly
towards th revolving door.

Go back upstairs,
bring the forest with you,
dance in the elevator
maybe,
maybe,
so many floors
until you’re here
all over again.
The key feels soft, warm in your hand.

11 April 2022
The armorial bearings of the present hour have prehistoric pedigree.

Blue green grey, spring but chill, Lent relenting, little joke, flowers small make their blue way.

Remember to forget winter, inherit your rights to go outside unarmed. Soon, soon.

Weather is n ancient kingdom,
we are its thralls,
ineffective revolutionaries.
They feed us blue skies
when we groan too loud.
Or one pretty little cloud
over sleepy tree.

11 April 2022
It was my fault—
I looked the other way
and they were gone
like starling from the lawn
all at once, a wave
of them ascending, departing..
Where are they now?
Whose meadow are they meaning?

11 April 2022
Every time you close your eyes you are asleep. Technically speaking. Dream finds you instantly. Hold tight to it and wake. What you beheld helps. Blink again.

11.IV.22
They come to my office
but my hat’s out on my head.
They call me on the phone
but I’m in the shower.
They text me on my cellphone
but I can’t find my glasses.
This is the national anthem
of a man trying to be free.

11.IV.22
Susan, isn’t it wonderful we share the world with birds, and that you share your birds with us? One flew past my window just now, glistened almost silver in sudden sunlight, I know you know what kind it is, it must have come from you. Please leave a few with us if you really have to go.

11.IV.22
Winter wilting in the trees, greenish haze where branches cluster. Grass soaks up more light.

It’s happening again, the great April consolation, the promises, crocuses, flocks of blackbirds, I never thought when I was young that I would welcome spring or even say its name with fervor or understand what the old poem meant with its Quando—when will my springtime come? Winter was a good teacher.

11 April 2022
Asphodels, the Dutch called them daffodils and they have just arisen, new world in our new woods in this old Dutch colony the English overwhelmed and then we came along carried upstream on the river of language, whoever we are. Yellow daffodil by the ferns, the lawn lively with blue Siberian squills. Neighbors told me that these small beings began life on this very lawn and slowly spread up the road
until three-quarters of a mile away, over the river, these blue eyes wink up this year, took them close to a century to get there. And I don’t think the river even helped. Not them, but it brought the rest of us, of the whole story, the freight at midnight grinding south.

12 April 2022
I decided this morning we have to secede. And not just us. Find the actual primal sacred *temenos*, the true precincts of the neighborhood and pick or be an emperor for it. Secede. I’ll take this sprawl from North River to Stissing Mt. and rule it justly with imagination. See if the birds pay attention, and the mailman hardly noticing slips through customs.

What will I call this place stolen from Lenape by new Americans who stole it from us,
we latecomers, evening people, goers of the gloaming, rebels who ask for no more than lawn, trees, a freshest rushing by.

I own the rain! My flag waves over the shuttered church where once my father sang Ave Maria to the empty nave, and really empty now, the priests have slipped away, rich newbies buy the holy bricks make cafes and studios. But my flag flies from the steeple, my flag is every crow that flies, my flag is the color of the morning sky and made of its pure air.
I own this country! And you do too!
Everything you see belongs to those who see it, think it, need it, walk it, wake up telling the rocks to stand firm, teaching the flowers how to grow.

12 April 2022
The roads are veins and arteries at once. How the slim grey cars slip down the hill or go panting up the other side. But then the city comes along and makes its one-way streets, pure arteries, no turning back! No wonder sometimes my ankles hurt when I look our the window.

12.IV.22
1. Watch the old window walk around the woods the world the weeds and everything between—everybody has one good window, everybody has a tree it takes maybe, maybe more than one life to climb. Guess what it means, don’t make me do all the work although I dearly want to, your bark under my hands.
2.
But the window is watching,
it pays to behave—
sit by the fire, sing to your mother,
and when that sun is shining
remember rain
just so that your other hand
feels something like love.

3.
That little word that means complete.
Finish the drawing, fill the glass,
drag my river all the way to your sea.
Without you I am only me.

4.
Forgive the intrusion of theory, theory likes to slither into poetry to make the reader think instead of reading, relaxing into the real what is read. Thinking has been bothering us two thousand years since angry Greeks invented it, ran our of Troys to destroy and turned their spears on the sounds that come out of our mouths, all those myriad pronunciations of a angle kiss-language. Forget the yelping of those cynics, tear up their treatises, just listen to lust and love and trust one word at a time. The word will do you.
5.
If I’m not mistaken
that’s what the window says.
I am what happens,
I am what you see.
What I mean is what you do with me.
But I might be wrong, I too
sometimes forget to listen
and when you don’t listen
you hear the strangest things.
So listen hard and listen soft
and sometimes let
the word listen for you.

6.
End of sermon, Sorry,
the sun made me do it,
it seems so clear, so spring, so flowering. A tiny sprig of lilac scented the whole room last night when friend brought it, the first of the season, blossoming on the first really warm day, when you came back from a walk even hot and even I dared sit out in the sun and all night the scent of lilac did our thinking for us.

13 April 2022
Save all you can,
be spring with me
he said to the robin
here all winter
but shy to show,
be loud now, Sir
Visible, flutter
my eyes from tree
by thee to tree–
just let me see
you so I know
this is now again,
red breast in a green time.

13 April 2022
The alternative is obvious. It always is. That’s why something random. Waiting is a method, an instrument, somehow it summons. We can’t all have pretty eyes but most of us can see. At least for now. Wait harder. Try to know deeply people you see at roadside when you drive past not so fast. I’m trying to say Go on living without daring to say so.

14 April 2022
MAUNDY THURSDAY

You know the rule—
do for others
what I do for you,
Sounds simple
when he said it.
Being for the other
is how to be you.
I wish I could
set it to music
and hum it always
as I walk along,
letting the words
sing in my heart.

14 April 2022
Outside edge—a spinning disk does not have one. Yet even at rest it is always going away further and further in.

14.IV.22
1. Change the subject.
   At least flip the record,
   vinyl is single-minded,
   out of fashion, only the few
   still do. But really,
   turn the other cheek,
   get that cat off your lap,
   wake up, Ro-Bear,
   make it all different again.

2. Pain is not the opposite of pleasure.
   The two form base of a triangle
   whose apex is mind,
or in the mind, serenity with no self to bother it.

3.
Find that peak just after waking when you remember not who but what you are, newborn, pain slipping away.

14 April 2022

=
Trees
on the near horizon, elms I guess from the wine-glass shape like Cambridge long ago but here, tall, no leaf yet but here, where I am, in this soft waiting, with a spring breeze.

2.
Parking lot, this wordless *agora* of our cracy, now there’s a word for what rules over us—
the road. Bless us
for our endless mutiny
stopping the car
wherever we feel like it,
standing still, being
where we are.

14 April 2022
Red Hook
So many tales
tell from one happening.
Picture a man
standing by the road
and a woman walks by.
Nothing said, nothing done,
but what can tell
in the minds of each
and the deeds of both
go on forever.
Gay or straight, young or old,
we’ll never know, and so
have to go on telling
until they’re done.

15 April 2022
GOOD FRIDAY
The pain of it lingers still.  
So hard to understand  
how people could do such things,  
that someone would let it be done.  
We used to sit in church  
from oon till three,  
_Tre Ore_ they called it,  
three hours of Christ’s suffering.  
until his quiet came.  
Centurion’s spear then we  
stumble out into springtime,  
thirsty, wiping our eyes,  
forsythia offering its gold.  
Or so often huge grey skies  
turbulent with cloud  
and no wi/nd, a sky like ruin,  
end of the world, we walked
from one fear to another. But a bus would go by and then it was just another day.

2.
Today on the other hand nothing happens. Sky pale blue, calm sun on the lawns. Slow change of register in the neighborhood. Barns with no cows, silos with no grain. What is this tune the relaxed meadow sings to its horizon? Why is it, so quiet?

3.
Inferences abound. They come from the mind. Kie flowers from the ground. Wait till I see me walking in the field—then I will believe. Wait till the blackbird perches on the phone pole—then I will listen. The empty road whispers how close I am to going away.

15 April 2022
Sometimes the sun
is an asterisk
tells me to look down
to the foot of the page
where the small print
of reality clusters,
hard to read, full
of strange names and numbers,
the real stuff I keep
trying to skim/// my way above.

15 April 2022
They pack white mushrooms in a blue plastic box. 
*Agaricus campestris* and I like the combination, but why do they and why do I?

15.IV.22
FULL MOON HOLY SATURDAY
PASSEOVER RAMADAN

They converge, They try
to tell us something.
What? Hard to hear, all
the languages speak at once,
so loud, the sound track of reality
shouts, each clear voice
distorts the others, help,
we want the sweet music of sleep.
And I couldn’t sleep. Sleep
is a colloquial language
but I lay there struggling
with the formal grammars
of pain and anxiety and just
the otgherness of everything
and why is it all now.
I was close to nothing when
I finally slept. Awake now,
now what, Palliation
is the answer. Ease the pain.
Christ asleep in the sepulcher.
The voyage begins.

16 April 2022
Look out the vowel,
lean all the way out,
don’t be afraid,
the consonants
will keep you from falling.
Now say where you are.
AH or OH or EE or whoever
it may be who holds you
in long quiet breath.
what do you feel before
those artful consonants
cluster round and close in,
keep you safe but at what cost,
the lost abyss of your own breath.

16 April 2022
Sometimes I wish I had a piano, not that I could actually play recognizable music on it, no, despite the nuns’ earnest lessons after school. But anybody can press a key, white or black, anybody can make a sound come out and listen to the sound. Anybody can stroke polished wood, watch the soft hammers pound the sounding strings, why do they call them that, they’re wires, metal, could hurt your skin, can hurt your ears if your fingers
press the wrong keys or just too many of them. I wish I had a piano, wood and ivory, copper and felt, pedals to trick the quick sound into lasting, wood, wood, black or brown, so much wood and weighs so much, no man can carry one alone. But when I’m alone no one neary to bother, I can sit, yes, sit calmly, and let my fingers happen to the poor keys.

16 April 2022
I heard a church bell ring far away. It’s just possible, acoustic trick, calm air, the trees repeat. There’s one bell a mile south, a smaller one half a mile north that never rings, kept locked up who knows why, but I heard a church bell ringing, like that movie by Bela Tarr where all you see is distance, the bells of elsewhere you dare to hear.

16 April 2022
A roll of cloud
like cloth
across the blue.
Easter Sunday,
small bird
flying very high,
unusual. Usually
we stay in our zones
vertical, horizontal,
this town, the walls
of ancient Rome,
city limits, notes
of the tune. Easter,
rising from the dead,
rising against government,
what do we learn
from our festivals?
Come back, bird,
explain your altitude,
I need to learn something
from you before
the day takes me away.

17 April 2022
The daffodils
by the old freestone
wall look fussy this year,
less chalice-like,
more petal-flaunting,
a hundred yards of them
along the road, the wall,
low wall, yellow river
bright in sudden sunshine,
April. Forsythia. It is important
to learn a foreign language,
one no longer spoken—Greek
will do, or Latin even though
that’s not as foreign as it could be,
or Phoenician or Tocharian
or sun-drenched Aztec on this cool day.
That’s what the flowers said, we are yellow, you know nothing but the names of things and qualities and actions so it behooved you to learn all the languages of humankind so you can flower too, and we have only a few weeks to teach you. Fetch out your grammar books and begin while we wave you on gently in the sun.

17 April 2022

It’s not wrong to be sentimental
as long as you really believe what you say. Otherwise the words will fester through the day and give you bad dreams. Fact. So if you can’t say what you mean, at least don’t say what you don’t mean. Sentimental goes right to the heart.

17 April 2022
Now the stone’s been rolled away, the Christ is walking down the road out of the garden, the Mary at his side.

He is going east and she west, carrying his word. To us who need it.

That is all we know for sure. All round the world stones still stand, reminding us.

18 April 2022

= = = = =

Not so cold today
I thought you’d want to know.

Sun and blackbirds
and no gunshots heard.

I feel almost calm,
like a Chinese river
with a poet sitting by it
a thousand years ago
one word at a time.

18 April 2022

secret stevedores transfigure the sea
A phrase from Joel Newberger’s “Jaec Olim” text, a line as I remember it, that’s the gist of it anyhow, but whether it was a question or a statement or a deed the future will bring, should bring, that I can’t remember.

But the future is the easiest thing of all to remember. Any image of it is true, every blank page is a meaningful silence. We say: The day will come.

En tout cas, I see them at work, bold Polacks and Micks and Dagoes stripped to the waist, hauling from the ocean harbor great baskets dripping with what the sea needs no longer, emptying
the sea of all the irrelevance we bring to it by hand or spittle or streams from farmland and factories. And when the half-naked men, muscular, good-humored mostly, only beginning to grey at the temples, when their great baskets come up empty, why then their real work begins, hauling from the eighteen-wheeler that the Temple has filled, hauling cartons and barrels of sacred, or is it secret, matter that will change in a few hours the sea, the whole sea, into what it fundamentally is, mother and child, dining room and library, home of our habits and we will at last bring back the report she sent us out, up, on land, to find, to become.
How can I guess what’s in those containers? Isn’t it enough to see those brave strong men, who pretend to be Polish or Irish or Italian but really are of no nation we know how to name?

Must language make me guess? Of so, I’ll choose matter, pure matter, the word means mother somehow too, pure matter, the stuff of which everything is made, no matter what. So that: half-naked men restore the sea to its first virginity by bringing the purity of matter and casting it with a prayer.

And then they don their garments—remember that the other half of a half-naked man is a woman. Garbed now in pleasant guise they walk with their wives or consorts along the street up
from the docks, and everything they pass is new, and the lame who limp by them are instantly healed. Heal mean whole, whole, like the sea.

18 April 2022

VISTAS OF EDEN

for Raquel Rabinovich, in homage

Eden was not green,
It was a sandy place
full of light and shade
that came from somewhere,

shadows of what was to come.
Nothing grew there until
the thought of it arose
in someone’s mind—Adam
we call him, the ruddy earth itself,
or Eve, the living one,
who glanced at nothing
and a tree appeared.

These are the shadows of Eden,
the shadows of the substances
we were and are
and will become,

across the sandy plain
the shadows move,
take shape, rise and fall.
Sand is time and space is time,
six days of creation
then the silent seventh,
the day that still is now,
holy quiet when the human mind
is allowed to understand all it has seen.

`8 April 2022

Get the day wrong
doesn’t matter,
the party lasts forever.
Lust is a must.
Not the doing (what a waste
of time!) but the yen itself,
the en/ergy that Paul deplored
and Tanta blesses, the self
striving to transcend itself
by sheer knowing
where knowing turns into being
and we are.
Take the world to bed and see.

19 April 2022

Go bother the quarryman,
gaze at his new-cut stone,
blow off the marble dust
with your own breath
and study the flat surface
newly revealed and read it.
Read quick and eager,
it has been waiting for you
ages in the mountain,
for you or one like you, someone now.
Never mind the Bible, you’re reding a letter
written a million years ago—what does it tell
your eyes to tell you?
Go back to the sea
and begin again,
be beautiful like me.
Most human letters tell you that.

19 April 2022
Past midnight we saw it snowing fast, it didn’t last, not a trace of it this morning except what it made me dream, lots of snow and couldn’t go to a distant airport en route to some even further place where some sort of festival more or less included us. So here we are. No sun but plenty light on empty road.

19 April 2022
The artisan called before the Tribunal deposed:

The touch s all I wanted, one touch tells everything.
The surface is the core, the heart throbs where you can see it, only there. To touch is to know, lay a finger on the skin and the soul of the person sings a canticle instantly only the one who touches can hear.

As one glimpse of the sea tells all we will ever really know of what she is, our mother,
so one glimpse of a tree, a mountain. We see the entire universe when we glance up at the sky.

Do you understand at last? Your law books take much too long, by the time you’ve read a few pages you’ve forgotten the taste, of the real, the touch.

19 April 2022

CALL THE DR.
New devils, nude evils,  
writhing towards us  
over the outstretched pain.  
I can barely hear themselves think.  
And yet I hurt.

20,IV,22

BIRTHDAY ODE
for Billie

Joachim looked at Anna
spoke almost whispering
What child is this
born from our kisses,
young and pretty
just as I’d expect
from any daughter of yours
and yet who is this
she’s married, a joiner,
a turner, a nobody from Nazareth
and we of royal stock,
he’s old enough to be her uncle!
But Anna was gentle,
told her husband to look
instead at the lovely newborn,
their own first grand-child!
The father doesn’t count,
only the mother matters
she explained, the mother
and the child, lovely he is
and may yet rise up
like our ancestors to be
a king among his people!
Only the mother matters.

2.
I heard this conversation
in my head, along with the trumpet
calls of physiology, the buzz
of witness, the greening
grass of the Triangle, yes,
I live here too, I thought of you,
your birthday on the way,
coming up the river from the sea,
our time is tide, es verdad, señora, it
floats to us,
its fins so gentle,
step in, stand in the shallows
and see with our feet,
see what time feels like
and how it has brought you here,
there, anywhere,
look down at the clear water,
Mary’s eyes looking at her child.

3.
When a friend has a birthday
and you actually remember it,
you say to yourself, Who is she
really? I’ve know her so long,
tittle tattle, near and far,
books and baskets, hugs and hums,
who is this person really,
heart and soul and habit
and goes home at night
and clubs the stairs?
The question is its own answer.
She goes up the stairs and is gone,
to Calvary or Paradise or to a balcony
from which she sees the opera
that never ends,
or where she meets in the dark
her secret friends. Or sleeps.
You hope she’;; dream
golden dreams as the Romans say
or maybe even dream of you.

4.
But that’s just romance,
we’ve gotten past all that, 
we live in a crisis of identity, 
people live in categories 
and the categories hurt. 
Shoeboxes for the soul 
but convenient for journalists. 
But when I ask Who are you 
I don’t want to know 
where your grandfather came from 
or your toys when you were three. 
I want to know what the bird 
told you when it pierced the wall 
with its golden cry, 
the word it gave you 
and I beg you to tell me.

20 April 2022
How slow they roll
majestic,
fat cars down the hill,
pale SUVs and long sedans
all coming my way
till they all pass by.
It is such a privilege
to have a road to mind,
effortless, rewards
of incessant difference.
Change is our favorite song!

20.IV.22
I hear in my head
Poind’s voice saying
Stalin or somebody said
I will believe the American.
I forget the context, the meaning,
only the words stay firm.
So I will believe someone too,
I will believe the tree.
A hard language to learn,
it takes so much listening,
but once you get a smattering
the earth is yours.

20 April 2022
The phone will ring
it will be the king
demanding more tribute.
Everybody is the king.
Or the queen.

21.IV.22
The fire hydrant
the whole street
archaic cars
LaSalle Studebaker
zeppelin in the sky.

Enough of that.
Now is now.
The hydrant is still here
a girl is leaning on it.

No, none of that either.
Just the street.
Though it’s a road.
How many houses
does it take to make a street?
Or is the fire plug all it needs, the sense that someone cares, that there is help somewhere? Underground connections, crow in the sky?

21 April 2022
Egypt. Walk there. Just close your eyes. Egypt. When the body was knew. Learning to read. Ankles wet from the river. Who did you talk to, what did they say? Egypt keeps beginning. Papyrus in your pocket. What does the sign say? Sometimes stone is warm. Sometimes the sun. Egypt. Your backyard stretches to the horizon. Or is that a tree? No tree
in Egypt, or not many.
Pile a stone on a stone
on a stone and so on,
name the day, color it in,
sing the tune the owl gave you.
Egypt. They carry shallow baskets
over their heads, full of fruits,
I’m getting frightened already,
Egypt, Egypt, the gods.

21 April 2022
The girl said:

I took my name from a cloud I heard in the sky but when I was born they called me Running Water. How could I live with that, everybody wanting me, to be in me, so I took a name for myself so you can call me Silence and you can watch me any time of day.

21 April 2022
= = = = =

Remove the world
that no one needs
but leave the word alone.
Intact, it generates
out of pure silence
a world to inhabit
friendly enough,
even with flowers.
Soul work, a wonder.

22.IV.22
I can give you lessons in how to be fat, lie flat, act like a rat, anooze like a cat but I’m much too lazy to teach you to fly like a bat.

22.IV.22
This is not the face I wanted
this barely detectable smile
looking out of the mirror.
I wanted passion, Pagliacci,
comedy, the visible gestures
of the heart, but no,
I look like a statue
who forgot to turn into stone.
Express yourself, Roberto,
blue sky, thunder and lightning,
tiger roar, simper for the sultan.
Where did I mislay my smile?

22.IV.22
Crossing into Ontario
he had forgotten his river
He knew this new language,
new dlag, new confusions.
But he needed a river.
Where can he find it?
Where does a littoral creature
find a shore to shelter on?
Inland is scary, scary, continuous,
nothing moving but the weather,
weird. So he began to sing,
Where is my river, mother,
bring me my water,
bring me my movement,
o my soul is a canoe!
But the trees he passed
only giggled at his song.
But it is not nothing
to make a pine tree laugh
and so the new land let him in,
tolerated his allergy to earth,
put him to work, change his mind,
whisper It how much worse it is in Arizona.

22 April 2022
TOWER

Corsetted with flowers
the tower stands.
A modest tower,
even I can climb it,
clambering up the stone
steps inside to teach
a place above the flowers.
Me and sky together at last,
this beautiful assignation
coaxed by morning glories.
Not high above the earth
but high enough, air, sun
and all the other music of space
cleansing me, scrubbing
the me off me and letting
a man stand there in the simple light.

22 April 2022
HE SAID TO HER

Be my river.

She answered:
I am the sea.

He:
There must be some way that you can come to me for I am where I am and know no other way to be

She:
I’ll tell you what to do—close your eyes think of sad things—burned-down libraries,
lost religions, the woman you forgot to approach—until you weep, just a little no need for anguish, just a tear or two. Now open your eyes and follow the tear as it rolls down your cheek, falls onto your wrist, rolls off onto the ground beneath you, starts to grow, grow wide, and flow, it flows, grows, flows, until you have a river of your own. And one day you will be able to move. Then you can follow it, follow it all the way to me.

22 April 2022
Cam I sleep out loud
using words as snores,
writing them down
like scratching an itch?
*Writan* once meant scratch
or scrape, the telling blade
digs into obedient surfaces.
Listen. I don’t hear anything
either. I must have awakened.

23 April 2022
Something’s supposed to happen today,
ask the Sun
to wake the trees
so they’ll me.
I seem to have no other almanac,
short of breath,
quick to forget.
At peace, the Sun wakes the lawn too.

23 April 2022
Give the angel
time to speak,
his clock is not like ours,
yours, even the bishop
keeps our same hour
and the rabbi and the lama
even, but the angel’s
moment triangulates from ours.
Yours. Wait. The word
is coming, shaped
like a shaft of light, shadow
of a bird blessed upon us.

23 April 2022
Time slipped by
we say, where did it go?
Fancy physics
has an answer—
read the paper,
time has a shadow too,
fleeting darkly
backwards, to the beginning.

23 April 2022

= = = = =
Why do we have pasts, that trail of stale crumbs the ants follow to annoy us now? Growl. Why can’t it just be now, with no beaky shadow jabbing us from behind?

2.
Growl, as I remarked. I flee from was into is. Does that mean I flee from me? You decide. You have a me too. There’s an ant crawling on your shoe.

3.
No easy way to resolve these problems more physiological than grammatical.
But grammar is all we have. 
Or does it have us?

4. 
Start again. When the past catches up with me I run like a crocodile, lie like an ad on TV. Anything but then. Anything but who you are and who you think I was. I am nobody. Nobody yet.

5. 
That’s why we have closets, to shove last year in and the yea before and before that
until there is a musty but nice
friendly smell in there
among the leather and the fur
the shabby cotton of past love.
Cark in here. In there, I mean,
comfy in its own way, to lean
onto the memories. Danger.
Growl get out and slam the door.
That ant is on my ankle now.

23 April 2022

I talked to them all and told them
all that they needed to know
tp impersonate the emperor, ill today, not sitting on his throne. But dozens ready now through my skillful instructions to ho out, thousands of them, standing on street corners, driving cars, walking in the woods, and every one of them a perfect replica of the emperor, every one of them saying I, and meaning it, I, I am ND I must be obeyed. And I too listened and obeyed.

24 April 2022

== == == ==
The girl was made f white stone, alabaster I guess, leaned both her arms on the car window
and spoke a sort of English could mostly figure out. She was in love with someone, not me, someone I didn’t know well enough to guide jis errant inclinations towards her pale stone tenderness. You poor girl, I said, how painful that mus be, to want love in vaqil—I did not dare pat her poor arms, desire is contagious, so is loss. I’ll pray for you I said, she took her arms away and disappeared and I’ve felt guilty ever since.

24 April 2022

= = = = =

The song should be long as a sword but hide in its scabbard,
long as a river and permit
all the little streams of imagery
to wander their way in,
affluents of meaning.
The song should be true as breath
but not too personal, the song
must survive its singer.
find new mouths to make it live.
If this were itself a song
I wonder would it let me sing it?

24 April 2022

= = = = =

It is a day for saying,
that is to say
a day is to say,
if I may repeat myself,
I was here yesterday too.

25.IV.22
Trusting blondly
the brunette earth
I have come
to my grey time
in a world turning green.
And they were all here
all the while,
crayons in a child’s hand.

25 April 2022
Light thickens in the trees.
Morning measures.
Is there a woman in the air,
another matter we try
to find each time we wake?
We move and they stand still
but inside it may be the opposite,
they change and we are fixed.
Can’t I be a tree and change my mind?

25 April 2022
In the weeks between snow and lawn mower: uneasy peace.

Things could come again or come too soon. Here on an April morning a man with a hedge-trimmer eliminates nothing but silence.

25.IV.22
HOW TO WRITE

Hear a word
and follow it
as you would
a bluebird
through the woods.

Something like that.
All the trees it touches,
all the leaves
in lands among,
all the insolent
silences it majes sing.

And if you don’t
hear a word
to start with,
pretend you do.
No one will know
and the bird will still fly.

26 April 2022
Cautiously, through the mire, wake.

It’s the day swamp now, you can see the slither, the slip, the sludge on all sides, soft though enough to get through to where a day goes.

Pantomime solutions look like men at work. Subways reach out from cities, try to reach daylight and some do. I remember a span or trestle over Jamaica Bay, alas, not coming this way.
But here is still here, thick round our ankles and no fear or nothing rain can’t wash away.

26 April 2022
Raindrops on the window
song enough for both of us,
can’t see it raining but behold
the evidence, pan for gold,
secret temples in the Sinai.
Where was I? A window, ours,
with rain on it. Hers. Or his,
gender has its mysteries
it shares with space and time.
Two raindrops tell me all this;
sometimes it’s exciting just to be.

26 April 2022
Across the Adriatic
but this time west to east,
and no pasturing in Ithaca,
a bold enlightened ever east,
fierce even to understand
what is beyond the land.
They came the long way
to America, the right way,
to where the sun came from.
Their Adriatic was Bering Strait,
it all happened before the book
and we are still confused.
Not everyone born here is native—
that is the problem.
Language changed the mountains,
but rivers did their best
to wash us clean. Still do. Look at you now, in the glory of identity, the river spoke and you know who you are!

27 April 2022
Can’t risk being too clear. They cut their highway through the anticline, bridged the river at its widest point. Wonder why. Salt water, seals at Saugerties. open the window, call it a door, let’s all be mammals together, bring the thermometer, staple the pages together and tuck them way in the back of the drawer behind the gloves and binoculars, shovel the path, ring the bell, pretend nobody’s home. Sigh. This is what I tell myself every day. The game goes on,
turn the page in the book you forgot to put away. Words stare at you, the way they do, always talking, telling, asking. And you do. Chapter 37 Journey to Greece. Not me, somebody on their way to Anatolia, Sunrise City the Hreeks called it, now go to find out why. Bare red hills of beginning. Close the window. Calm down. The door swings shut, be calm, it’s only the wind.

27 April 2022
WHY ARE YOU GOING?

Haven’t you been away enough long enough to be here a while? Away is such charmer, music, images, svelte characters, swoony marketplaces, stone. Yes, I understand the appeal of marble and limestone, yes, the ruined temples, black sand by a strange sea, or the same sea speaking weird languages, yes, but here has here in it, here is right here, underfoot, my hand in your hand, here has no glamor, only the magic of being.

27 April 2022

= = = = = =
The sun has come back. 
Now it’s up to me. 
I’ll start with a word 
and see where it goes. 
It brings me right here, 
home under the sun.

27.IV.22
Wounded foot,
just like America
the culture’s negative
but the wound won’t heal.
Small wound, big pain.
Half an inch, if that,
and broken sleep. In and ouch,
harsh gates of doze.
I lay this complaint before language
in the hope it will seem just
silly a month from now.

28 April 2022
Phone lines quiver in the wind—
who hears that cello playing?
Wind he bow and earth
the old Cremona, listen
hard as we can to understand
what the air is saying, remember
they used to call a song an air,
aria, the breath inside us
in lov with all out there.

28 April 2022
Reading the paper and reading a paper are different animals. One goes in and one goes out, one washes up on the beach one lies there like a pretty stone. What do they do in languages with no articles, like Russian, War and Peace, Peter and Wolf? You never know if you never know. The paper rustles when you read it. A paper makes you look up yo see if the audience is still with you—don’t lose your place in the text.

28 April 2022
She thought it was a bus
it was a cloud instead
but she got on it anyhow
and headed west. What
comes after Nebraska?
Time will tell. Maybe she
will rain down on some desert town
and make the children happy.
She remembers her childhood,
Goethe could tell jokes too,
and Dostoevski was a clown.
She smiles in heaven so don’t we
answer with our own?

28 April 2022
I keep thinking about the black sand of the Algarve, which I have never seen, I see, swimmer’s sprawled drying in strong sunshine, surf nibbling at their toes. Sometimes a cloud comes over and I see no more, just hear the words, sounds like Arabic, must be Portugal, o words, o dearest of old friends.

28 April 2022
THE GRAIL

A girl in wind.
A leaf blows up
against the windowpane
or a moth, whatever
it was is gone.
A boy walking
through the woods.
Headlights at night
quick through trees,
highway beyond the woods.
A man reads the paper on a porch,
a woman watches, half-smiling
with tenderness, a little skeptical.
This is the cup the Lord
hath filled for us, take, drink.

28 April 2022
And when the water spoke
it went like this:
I wish, I wish
to walk in you
and you beside me
walking home,
always home,
no exile, only island.

29 April 2022
The outboard motor is a thing of joy, I wish I had one so I could sleep and we ould go.

29.IV.22
No spots in the sky.
The casual magic of morning,
ceremonial shadows
lapping the lawn.
Calm. The business day
is on its way, I alone
am here to tell it.
Nobody on the grass,
the woodchuck still asleep.
My mind persists in hearing
the subway growl
a hundred miles away, south,
and I am left alone with matter.

29 April 2022
APRIL LUNE

Anybody could have said these words,
I just happened to.

29.IV.22
THE MEMORY HOUSE

so famous in the Renaissance
has another meaning now.
Everything, anything
I remember is where I live.
Everything that ever happened
is still happening. All the lost
things cluster round,
almost palpable, heartfelt,
stuffed in the mind.
It all is lost but all still here,
my feet that make
the floorboards creak,
the door opens by itself,
the dead ask permission to come in.

29 April 2002
I see the number
and know it’s Olson’s door.
But is that his sea
the photo shows
or is it my sea too.
Hard to tell from the picture,
the houses could be anybody,
the rock feels right at home,
cold, uncomfortable
but bearing jup. Bearing us.
Gloucester on an April day
but who can prove it?
I have walked through that door
but they’ve repainted it,
I have worshipped that sea
but at night, from the castle–
one is always alone with the sea.
29 April 2022
IT ISN’T RAINING

so this should be easy:
imagine the trajectory
of a single raindrop
as a silver line
from somewhere.
Goal: find out where.
Method: Climb the line.
If it were raining now
you might lose your way,
slip onto another line,
confuse your destination.
Nut as it is, that single line
stretches unmistakably up
from your thought to its source.
that might be the source of it all.

29 April 2022
Sometimes the song goes on by itself, breath’s sediment slipping from the lips, the human hum finds words as if by accident. But which comes first it’s hard to tell. And no one needs to know, we are not scientists, we are people singing naked in the woods.

29 April 2022
= = = = =

The armillary sphere is mostly air.
And how deep is your atmosphere, senorita, and yours, monsignor, the weight of air holding your biretta in place?
Ah, we are lucky children in this generous school, air for all and math for supper.
29 April 2022
APRIL LUNE
Anybody could write these words, I just happened to.

29.IV.22
Rileys lived next door when I was little.
Yes, there were Irish in the hood back then but who knows now.
Or even then why were we here and not in Bay Ridge or Ocean Parkway with the money, fancy church, houses with yards all round them not just out back on the alley. Irish. And a German with his dog. And French I swear it ip the block towards Avenue R, probably from Canada anyhow,
you know the way things are. It all has to come out in the end.

29 April 2022