8-2022

Aug 2022

Robert Kelly

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Not exactly knowing people in the street
birds overhead.
Soft sky, hard sun—
you get that at the sea.
What else. Identity.
So much of life
is getting the names
and getting them right.
Ospreys, maybe.
Now name me.

1 August 2022
Cuttyhunk
Lift the wall
I mean the curtain,
let aristocratic sunlight
enter humble house.
Or is it the other way round,
the pilgrim light
anxious for a place to rest
a while among its endless
journeying?

1 August 2022
The argument precludes assent. The rigors of domestic life, heavy table, noisy chair are proof enough but of a different proposition. We welter in the real. Time to try again. Suppose we are filtered from the sky. Which star are you?

2.
Don’t spoil it, it may yet be a flower the way some things
take time. Not me.  
I am always,  
and always mostly wrong.

3.  
But time might come  
for me anyway, speaking  
with exaggerated clarity  
guiding my lessons  
in being a little bit somebody else.

1 August 2022
IN THE DARKHOUSE

I’m writing to you from the Tomb of Lazarus. It is a clean and empty place, empty of everything but us. There are many of us here, waiting for the voice that will call us, one by one, out into that other place, as once it summoned Lazarus, who showed us the way.

It’s not clear to us, or at least to me, what that other place will be like, We call it there. and that seems name enough. We often sit and discuss our visions, versions, of what it will be like. Sometimes our
discussions grow heated, with fierce logicians and lyrical storytellers at odds, and we take great pleasure in these controversies—it serves us or our religion, how we think about there and how that conception leads our everyday behavior.

The house, as I said, is clean. And it is big, its walls are made of some yielding sort of stone, in which a sharp stone, or even sometimes a fingernail, can dig a line, or many lines. images and symbols and words. Some of us spend our time writing into the walls all the words and thoughts that come to mind.
I’m writing to you, whoever you are, because you are out there, and know the place we can only fantasize or predict with dubious accuracy. You know what we will find when the voice calls and then chosen one lays down his chisel, blinks his eyes, and stumbles towards the suddenly opening gateway—no one ever knows where the gate will be, the light floods in, always a surprise—hurries, doesn’t say goodbye, so eager to obey the voice so long yearned for.

So maybe one day you will see me coming towards you, and you will
recognize me, maybe, because you have read these words, and maybe you’ll welcome me, or at least walk about in that new place and find my way.

1 August 2022

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And all that anybody said was desire.

Anybody was Abraham, walked there
through the numbers, 
the woman trying to translate, 
the stars? the years 
of his waiting, or staying, 
or words?

Her sentences 
kept breaking into different parts 
or he kept breaking them, 
uneasy with women, 
no tree nearby to count its leaves. 
Summary: somebody 
said or did but nothing happened. 
Sluggish daylight on Earth island. 
Or was it me?
2 August 2022
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Make it run perfectly, rhyme with the sea. Bruises heal rapidly—gospel of skin. Align your mind with the incoming wave, touch and flush and roll away, let the new thinking think.

2 August 2022
Mist last night less now--
the eye’s mind
still in monochrome.

2.VIII.22 lune
Birding me now, who?
A grackle,
smart, articulate.

2.VIII.22 lune
Before you know it they get married and have a dog. Then where are you? How can someone you love turn into people like that? You’re left bereft, desperate, feigning interest in their dog.

2.VIII.22
Poetry is being nervous in public, stage-fright all life long. Hiding in language. Poor little bunny quivering under the hedge.

2.VIII.22
= = = = = =

Or poetry is coming on to all the [select gender] in the audience, hoping all of them really feel it but none of them linger when your reading is done.

2.VIII.22
HYLONOETIC

A word I use to summarize a sense that has been growing clearer in me for a few years now, a sense that objects have consciousness, that matter has mind, that things think. How they think and what they think—little by little I get some slight inklings if an inkling, and I would not yet presume to say. But what is clearer to me is that things communicate with us, they speak of their origins, sufferings, triumphs, dailiness, destiny, and they speak to us.
We listen by speaking. Anyone who lives near trees knows that trees communicate not just with one another, as science has recently become aware, but with us. They communicate with us by what comes to mind when we’re near them, watch them. No, I don’t mean when we’re talking ‘about’ them. That’s just us communicating with ourselves. I mean when we’re with the tree.

Of course trees are what we call alive, so I don’t get much argument against tree talk. People try to
communicate with their cats and horses, no surprise.

But I say the piece of wood from a tree killed a hundred years ago still possesses consciousness, and not merely residue of the living tree’s awareness.

I stood once in a chapel in Leipzig, leaned against the cool, pale stone walls and felt an enormous sense of experience welling up out of the stone into me. Bach’s church, as it happened. He played the organ here. Sentimental silliness, you think? Put your own cheek against the stone—you won’t hear music, but you will
feel a powerful knowing, *a knowing that is not your own*. That is the gift of the object’s mind, its long sojourn with us.

That was my most dramatic, instantaneous coming to awareness of hylonoesis, the memory embedded in things, the awareness they sustain.

We have to learn to listen. We listen by being quietly in contact with the object, sight or touch or whatever is polite, friendly, noninvasive, respectful, tender. We listen by opening our own awareness, we listen by what comes
to mind, and – specialized animals that we are – we listen by language. The stone or wood or water is always speaking, but we are not always listening. Try to listen by speaking, by *saying what comes to mind*, or writing it down, or whispering it to someone next to us, sharing the message.

3 August 2022
At the cafeteria on West 57th at one table they spoke Welsh. If you wanted to learn what some Welsh word meant or how to say I love you, honey in Cardiff, you made your way into the Automat, and there near the change booth where we got our nickels from the no-nonsense supervisors the P-Celts sat at their tea, happy to help you, but still a little miffed they couldn’t smoke. The Automat was strict about that,
who knows why, some crazy notion from Philadelphia when every other place, from dive to Delmonico’s was full of easy, fragrant blue-grey haze from glowing tips and grateful lungs breathed back into the world. But Welsh was worth it. But what is the memory worth?

3.VIII.22
The boat went out without a sound except the one we all sail on. Puns will be the making of us yet, when we finally come through our senses to our sense—or do we have to take a back road in the hills to reach a bone where we can see the sea?
Like an honest engine
sustain the flow—
use as little essence
as you can manage,
watch out for wildcats
in the quiet counties—
some lynx will nip you sore.

3.VIII.22
Let desire simmer
all summer long
the dream said

but then
flags in sky
dew on table top,

I woke to what I am,
gnomic sentences
running through the earth
like veins of copper—

her metal
who tells me this.

4 August 2022
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Don’t lean back—
the past
knows how to bite.

4.VIII.22
Arabian script
hummingbird’s
flight path through tree leaves.

4.VIII.22 lune
The message renewed:
mourning-dove
cressing the air.

4.VIII.22 lune
Here on the island, here is made of rock, intensity of density in the vast fluidity of sea—

but that water has a density of its own, stars, moon, even the Sun shatters into a myriad brights on its never-still immobility,

o sea that whispers on every shore all day all night o here I am.
4 August 2022

Quiet fog
that means us well,
sun in it,
saying.

5 August 2022
Too many things to think about so he thought about wood. Wet wood on picnic tables after rain or just heavy dew. Hard to tell. His mind’s cautious fingers traveled along the grain of wood, gouged a little after years of what they used to call the elements. And knives And other, bolder, fingers. Beware of splinters. What kind of tree was this
a hundred years ago?
What will I be like a century from now? Don’t think about that, go back to wood. All the snacks and lunches, all the kids sprawled on it, the ants creep up the legs and satisfy. And why can’t I?

5 August 2022
SONG

Sit on a rock
and face southeast
now close your eyes,
now what do you see?

Close your eyes and what do you see?

5.VIII.22
On your way home from the library pick up something for supper—maybe a bilingual Polybius or the autobiography of Sancho Panza—has he published it yet?

5.VIII.22
ISLAND WAKING

It’s as if the air
had gone to sleep.
Sun spread in mist,
nobody moving.
And every house becomes
a hill in heaven.

5 August 2022
I’ll try to be serious for once but they’ll all get up and flee the room, one of them looks back and explains we’ll come back when you have something more interesting to say.

5.VIII.22
What the river said
before we left
the sea repeats,
quotes it back to us now
to make sure that we,
even we, can understand.
All going is a coming towards—
something like that, just not
as obvious, something
more like going
is not arriving, more like arising
and asking the sky to witness. I’m not as clear as it is—listen to it for yourselves.

6 August 2022

Leaves of my tree—my in the sense we use saying my father or my country, my leaves whisper to make sure I hear what the whole tree wants me to know
this very morning—it is good to be alone sometimes, better to be few. But how can one man, even an egotist like me, manage to be few? That, says the tree, is where love comes in. 6 August 2022

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Child left alone with the alphabet. No bossy aunt or elder sib in sight. The world at her fingertips. Things to remember,
the duck on the sofa,  
things to forget,  
tiger in the living room.  
The fingers  
figure it out.  
That’s what we’re for  
the letters say  
and don’t forget us  
the fingers add.  
One by one her new  
house is being built—  
it will be finished  
before anyone shows up  
to bother her, she’ll stand  
behind a new curtain  
behind a clean glass window
and smile out into the sunshine she has just made.

6 August 2022
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Vacations are such hard work, easy habits left behind. Everything takes conscious skill, where the faucet is, where do we get a loaf of bread. Nothing easy. The body snoozes in pleasant sun and sea, the mind is frantic with what comes next? Over soon, then back to the easy life of mindless toil.

6.VIII.22
This tree
so many years
we slept in its shade
sheltered from the land
open to ocean,
and all those years
it has been talking
and only this morning
shakes its head and smiles
and tells me this.
I bow in gratitude
–its beauty brings tears
so my eyes for a moment shimmer as
the leaves do.
KINDLING

Kindle. Call for the memory. Quick walker up the hill but what have you done for me lately? Shop-Vac suck up ashes maybe, sprinkle of what is that wet that comes before rain? Walk faster. She needs your answer, images will do,
just say who, faster,  
your shadow is at your heels.

2.  
Late twelve-tone music  
strict numbers, lax sounds,  
tuneless, adrift. O better  
the daisy, bend low to retrieve  
the simplest flower,  
tell your telephone  
Isn’t there a tune in it  
somehow could whistle?  
All voices of a fugue in one hum?

3.  
Auden on Cornelia,
Olson on Fort Square
Duncan on Nineteenth.
The triangle affair,
the luscious lisping lips
of all unlikeness
speaks a whole city out
bigger than the nation
it lives in, because
and just because
a city stretches as far
as you can hear or understand,
no frontier, no stupid
border guards like me
smoking smuggled cigarettes.

4.
Well, we had come back from Asia Delhi to Dubai to the Black Sea and then up the river to Vienna. One more novel written in sleep. But still, picture me at dawn looking out at the Persian Gulf, ninety degrees already among all the white buildings. What did I see? I should have asked that Iranian water what makes me me, because it has seen so much, sad birds, drifting rafts of unchronicled despair.
5.
It has to go on,
you can’t stop now
so close to the top
of what you think is a hill.
Boundaries in the sky!
Lazy lovers in their sweaty beds!
Skateboard snarling down asphalt!
Liberty Bell cracked from the start—
how fragile to be free.

6.
Could this then be a cenotaph,
an empty tomb of one
whose bones are somewhere else?
Is that why school is so boring,
Scraps of words
stitched together
stamped in fragile
sheets of paper
stitched together
and call it truth,
biblion, book?
I put it in your hand,
trust me, it is my hand.

7.
In Vienna that basement room
where princes of the blood
are entombed, neatly,
close together, inscribed,
and upstairs a busy street goes by,
ordinary as applesauce,
you know, the way it slips
cool sweet twixt teeth and cheek.

8.
When I was a kid
one of the things I loved to do
shoot arrows at cardboard boxes
yards away in a vacant lot.
Now I call it writing words,
careful, careful, careful, people
moving in the middle distance.
I loved the hollow thrum [? Sound?]
the box made when the arrow hit.

9.
I think the walker won his hill, no sign of him now, or her, whoever that was, o now he’s coming down again, slow, slow, as if regretful to be leaving whatever it was the sky disclosed, or what else is up there you’d run so fast to see?

10.
In London they say mews, the houses behind the horses, they whisper the truth by spelling it awry, the tunes the grace, the meanings
all come from behind us,  
or we are the shadows truth casts  
shadows that mingle  
with one another, each hoping  
to get the story right,  
the one the Muse declared  
and left us to articulate.

11.  
Wait, I’m getting ultimate again.  
It is Sunday after all  
in a couple of hours a bell  
will call a handful of maybes  
to some sort of service,
I don’t know what, I know
the beautiful mosaics on the wall,
the chapel’s over there,
back beyond three houses, yes,
it all comes from behind our back,
the house behind the house
where all of us get born.

12.
Small craft advisory
all day today
they say.
    I love
what people say
not always how they say it but
the words! the words!
each one an encapsulated symphony
if I may be fancy yet again,
a song is in them
to say it simple,
a song is in them,
all you have to do is listen.

13.
Remember *La Bohème*,
first act, Paris garret, winter,
a writer burning his manuscripts
in the little stove to keep warm.
Music. The love story comes later,
Girl needs light, song and sorrow,
stick with the first act,
the opera’s all there, man burning
words that he had put together, words that once were his own.
Stick with the kindling,
listen to the crinkling as it catches page by page, do it slowly, one page at a time, keep the warmth slower but longer,
stick with the kindling.
You never know who’ll come, lured by that warm if feeble glow. The door is ready to be knocked on. Shiver, rub your hands, wait.

14.
Persia seems a long time ago,
I had a beard then, and rings on my fingers, oil in my hair and thought I was a priest of a bodice [???] who had not yet told me her name before I woke, in Vienna. In Munich. In Paris. Or had she whispered it and I forgot? Priesthood done with I strolled along the Seine glancing at the stalls on the embankment, books and more books, old photos, engravings, more books, more books. Watch the river instead, try to look picturesque and Parisian
for tourists in the tour boat passing. Stay with the water, let it do the running for you—
I think my grandmother might have said that but I never knew her in real life, the phrase we use to mean time, earth time, more slippery than Seine.

15.
Man in white shirt passing slowly by white wall. Morning is magnificent.

16.
If I got into a boat
(scary enough)
and motored up the bay
to Woods Hole
I could meet a maven
who would explain
whether or not
the sea has boundaries
of its own built in–
if I were a fish could I swim
anywhere on earth I wanted to?
Or are there zones I know not,
not just sharks and leopard seals
but some immense awareness
of where to be and where not.
Can the ocean tell me that?
I asked that of the Persian Gulf but it was too busy with history to notice my mere speculations.

17. So it always comes back to this hill, this place where earth swells up a little closer to her sky. Beautiful breeze today, grackles on the deck quiet for a change. Cloudy light, green shimmer in the bushes. Enough. You know where I am, now
no need to guess who. Location is identity.

7 August 2022
Brush your teeth with sunshine,
sweep your floor with wind,
I was born in the Depression
and I can’t throw anything way.
Banana’s brown as you know what?
It has to get eaten anyhow.
Save the coffee grounds
to feed the hydrangea—
my motto: Waste nothing but time.

7.VIII.2022
Misty morning,
big island missing,
little one still here.
There. The horizon
coming for breakfast,
closer, closer come
closer, darling,
when you wake.

7 August 2022
When the organ plays
in the empty church
it makes the pigments
in the murals wake.
I try to sneak in those times
to watch the music
but something always senses me,
maybe the stone walls
or those bright windows
full of watchful saints,
so by the time I slip into a pew
the paintings on the wall
calm down again, as if to say,
we are just images, don’t
put too much faith in us
though we are made of colors
and color is made of truth.

2.
But in the dream before that
a man who should have known
better
inveighed against Charles Olson
and all his poetry. I roused
in defense, and more than that,
arguing his voice owned out loud
the words he said and the world
they meant, I heard his voice in my mind as I spoke in mine, full of gratitude and praise.

3.
And then there was the woman with a suddenly new man friend, not my friend her life companion, they sat close at a table in a bare room when I came in. Surprised to see her with someone else, a man at that. She was tall, dark-haired, nervous, slim, casually stylish, thirtyish, her hands uneasy on the table top. I sat down
and praised her for acting on her instinct not on a rule, rules are just habits. Not sure she understood just what I meant but she did not [know??] I was praising her, easing her mind as best I could. Guilt is such a gaudy mess, I wanted to wash her hands for her, or at least tell her they were clean.

8 August 2022

As if the rhythm understood all by itself
what the cloud meant to the finches chattering bellow, busy as a gamelan and who, really who is that who is listening?

2. The rhythm knows. Out there are rocks, in here are dreams— I stubbed my toe on one and woke annoyed at how it made me think of what I wanted not to,
clumsy as a stub=mbles
by the bedroom door.

3.
Then I really woke and wrote
a book called The Triangle:
Find the Point Where Dreams Live.

Stupid title unless I make it true.
Outside, the working men
are making all the noise they can,
the finches fled.

Can’t I talk about the morning too?
Is it only the government
that owns the hours of the day?
Go back to rhythm,
little heart, count the beats
and swim along between,
hasten to the silences,
little brain, make yourself
at home in all of them

9 August 2022
He carried his shadow with him folded neatly over his arm, she wore hers over her shoulders since the day was chilly. A shadow comes in handy, you never know when you’ll really need it, say after you walk fast uphill and lean on a lamp post to catch your breath—the shadow gives you good advice, find a bench where the four of you can sit and think the night through. Doze a little. Wake
to hear seagulls calling dawn.

9 August 2022

BY THE TALL CHOKEBERRY BUSH

When the wind blows
then the birds
those visitors to our land
from another universe
where gravity is made of light
and light is made of breath
they come down to us
and swoon through the bushes
they are what we know
when what we think we know is still mostly pretending, attempting to be awake

wind comes down and scares us but it’s just a breeze, a little girl with a flower in her hand, sunshine comments with another flower that grows somewhere near the end of the mind, color of what you most desire.

9 August 2022 v.v.
Be my body
stretching up to the tree

be the ripe peach
my hand reaches, seizes, takes

be the sweet juice of it
that trickles down my chin

be the little running stream
I wash my sticky fingers in

love is how the world begins.
Your soft breath seems far away though you are here beside me. Where are you gliding in the half-light of almost dawn? Or is it my lonely hearing, muffled by the rags of sleep? Cool mist over the islands, almost chilly, workday, still quiet somehow, the wind breathes louder than you do, yet it is only a breeze from the sea.

2.
I can feel some fear

3.
Is that what sunshine does on sunny mornings, allay the resident anxieties, distract the mind with light and all the colors that come with it?
Am I one more thrall of weather or is that just a pompous way to say, Wait, I’m a citizen of earth.

4.
Yet how happy it makes me, your quiet sleep beside me, even though I have to get up and rustle around the place to appreciate properly where I have just been and where you are. There really is an answer flowing through all our breaths.

10 August 2022
IN THE MIST

Gull on the railing

girl next door—

how tell them apart?

10 August 2022 lune
Your soft breath seems far away though you are here beside me. Where are you gliding in the half-light of almost dawn? Or is it me, muffled by rags of sleep? Cool mist over the islands, almost chilly, workday, still quiet somehow, the wind breathes louder than you do, yet it is only a breeze.

2.
I can feel some fear in what I’m trying to say.
But why, not clear. Separation anxiety, bad weather, travel angst, impending noisy triumph of Wednesday in America? Illness? Mind-gap? So many things I have to fear and only one mind to do it.

3. Is that what sunshine does on sunny mornings, allay the resident anxieties, distract the mind with light and all the colors that come with it? Am I one more thrall of weather
or is that just a pompous way to say, Wait, I’m a citizen of earth.

4.
Yet how happy it makes me, your quiet sleep beside me, even though I have to get up and rustle around the place to appreciate properly where I have just been and where you are. There really is an answer flowing through all our breaths.

10 August 2022
Gull on the railing
girl next door—
how tell them apart?

10 August 2022 lune
THE SYCAMORE MAPLE

I try to listen
while I’m speaking,
not so easy, my words
sometimes drown out
my hearing. The tree
just north of the back door
reminds me to keep trying.
They never stop,
where trying is the same
as bdjnv. Softly, softly
language listening is your mother.
SAMALL CRAFT MOORED

There should be a kinder word han glare for all the gold rising sun casts on the sea.

= 

Leaving the island, back into the other animal. We are inhabitants, I thought, and then the shade rolled up by itself and the sun came in.--
which cane first,  
the ocean or the egg?

=

Tried again to wait  
but the sense went by  
like a man in uniform—  
what country are you from?  
I allied but he was gone.

=

Agilenas ampersands  
linking friends together  
birds introduce us
to the changing light.
Read the poem and find out.

=

Fluttering continuity
life on a barge
old movie on the Seine,
you always know the one I nean.
But why do mean wear white shirts?
I watch from the river bank
you tell me what I see.

=

Eyes closed, in bright sunlight you can feel a cloud when it comes. We too live in the sky.

=  

Words to puzzle and sustain you, pemmican for your journey through the arctic of everyday.

=  


I am too nervous to stop talking or to say more.

=Gnomika, Greeks would have said, wise remarks smarter than the one who says them.

= Things tell me what to do.
What about you?

11 August 2022
The emphasis is on the vowel—that tells you all by itself how big the thing is that’s on your mind. Love is bigger than lust, lust is bigger than sex, sex is more that sticking it in. For instance. Say no more as the comedian kept repeating.

11 August 2022
Brighter an hour ago
and now the mist creeps in.
Leaving the house,
island, sea. Grief in going,
joy in joining the ordinary.
Christians have a sense of this
or should have. Christ
comes once a year
but stays here every single day.
Where are the boundary lines that hem my meaning in? A word can be a prison or a great escape, a house in the country or a lion giving you the eye from the brush. Maube it is time to take a nap— but where will I take it? Where can such things licitly go?

11 August 2022
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Catch my breath and start again. Rough skin on left elbow, hmm. Lila walked by the Mississippi wanting to be in. Or over. Under. Coming up for air. There! That’s where I wanted to go.

11 August 2022
Give each child a gnomic book words turned into pictures, pictures that suck colors from the world around, colors set free in the child’s mind. A mind that never leaves us.

11 August 2022
Cuttyhunk
I am lying in the vicinity of down. Not quite there yet, my shoulders still tense, bracing for the half inch fall to the mattress.

Change of position is perilous. Who knows what may happen in between?
2.
And now, an hour later
(an hour lower)
we’re on the boat,
a dozen ketches
moored in the harbor,
a big tug
waiting to haul metal away,
long pipes, water mains,
who knows iron’s true name,
we all are mixtures,
British and copper,
Africa means energy,
slows down in Egypt,
flesh, flesh wise flesh.
And here we have
a Yankee youth, standing on a surf board paddling across the harbor, trying to recapture continuity.

3/
Puffs of breath, poem like a kid learning to smoke cigarettes. I yearn for the languor of a cigar, the kind I never smoked.

11 August 2022
New Bedford, 3 PM
ANNANDALE

Mow here to home. Coming home is a magnifying glass to study the design, small lines, craquelure on the vessel of your life. The lies show up clearly, the truths a little harder to see.

2. We’ve been away a month and three days, from Buck Miin to Sturgeon, years since I’ve been away
so long from the family business of carrying on.
A month by the sea!
That’s the story I can tell my friends if I have ny left after my neglect, seems pretty quiet round here.
But real story is I spent a whole month inside the sea and the sea inside me.

3.
And the trees are back with me, the trees of us so dense this year of leaf.
Last night in darkness we drove down Route 22
through a jungle, the trees have conquered, Ave Arbor! the dense dark woodland that in a hundred miles becomes Park Avenue, not a light, not a sign, just the dark tempestuous life. And now my trees, teaching me the prose of listening, the poetics of paying attention. Beech tree before me, linden on the lawn, and now the rose of Sharon has blossomed, we saw its flowers as we came home, heaven in headlights.
4.
Cool morning at the window sill
the air so clear.
I need a shave, ergo
I must still be alive,
the Process waltzed on.
All this speaking
feels like clearing my throat
before trying to pronounce
this brand-new language
of still being here. Again.
The five million pages
I see from this window
(I’m guessing the number,
haven’t counted, trusting
the guesstimators of botany) are kind enough to read themselves to me, the breeze slight as it is, s kind enough to translate their words for me. There. That's how it feels. A system, a conformity that says itself in me. To saunter (the word once meant to go on pilgrimage) through the the flowering of the day with my ego on a leash. There, that’s what I mean, to mean what it means.
12 August 2022
for Charlotte, in praise

Be intimate with me,  
sing the other song  
the angels taught you  
when land only when)  
you are so hard at work,  
the fierce animal of yur will  
ruling the range.  
Be intimate with me  
enough so that from  
the quiet light in your eyes  
busy as you are  
I catch a glimpse
of what it means to be you, 
be intimate with me 
until I can do it too, 
invest everything in one small 
thing or one great work, 
doesn’t matter, to let 
your will to make things right 
goads me to know 
and by knowing do, 
and by doing be really be.

12 August 2022
A CELEBRATION

In the parking lot in Kingston, looking out on the town, the hills, an amazing discovery:

*I live here*

This is my place, city of my town of my house in the country, this is where I live.

Suddenly, here, for the first time in sixty years, I feel at home.

(21 June 2022)

12 August 2022
Not conscious
of Citizen Desire
they wander
as if their skin
owned sunshine.

Then we went five miles
where children laughed,
not all that young
in the glad sad fervid
days before school
starts again, that horror
puberty will at least
make interesting.
Swimming pool,
loudspeaker commentary,
smell of water, chlorine,
suntan lotion, skin.

And every laugh says
I fear but I am here.

12.VIII.22 Red Hook
CONTRA PORN

Rather imagine
than settle
for what I can see

12 August 2022 lune
In town
late afternoon
what it is
is steel,
    steel
hauling steel,
roar of combustion,
human voices
pretending to be in charge,
of all that’s happening.

12.VIII.22 Red Hook
We left the cloud
to take care of the sky
and ran inside.
We are revolutionaries
trying to turn everything
upside down, but quietly,
and only because
we like the underside of things,
the road behind us, the unseen.

2.
Yes, you’re right,
I am speaking of religion.
But it is not me speaking,
is it? It’s really you understanding, *n’est-ce pas*? That sounds too easy. It’s neither you nor me. It’s the thing itself stalking, cloud language, bone language, the old saint said Faith is to believe in what we have not seen. I’d call it love instead,—the future is always behind us, waiting, walking along with us, But our necks don’t swivel far—only the owl can spin its glance all the way back— that’s why they call it the bird of Athena, goddess of wisdom.
3.
We’re walking behind someone or following them up the stairs we suddenly know them, something about them, vividly felt, utterly convincing, but impossible to put in words. We know at that moment a thing they don’t know themselves, we’ve seen their fact or future scribbled down their backs. Luck for them and for us we’ve run out of words.

13 August 2022
NORTH BAY

It’s near the river
but it isn’t the river,
it’s all the same water
but it doesn’t go.
It lingers with us, idle
kayak, a raft will just
shimmer a little
and not depart,
a piece of paper will
float, words up,
still readable.
2.
Along the shore mallows grow, color a vibrant mauve (their name in French, Latin *malva*, color of a blush).

3.
So many things I want to tell you about this bay, riverine lagoon, placid pool, the train tracks beyond seem to keep it safe from the tidal river washing it away. A bay. A bight. A tender cloud in the sky of earth.
4. 
I want to be there now, snug on shore, cool morning, water clean enough to swim the mavens say, but I don’t, water is a church I pray outside.

5. 
We walked there more than once but all the visits blend into one, we’re looking for something, bird? tree? flower? mushroom? who knows what, we walked through the two meadows then down the wooded headland to stand there, just looking,
and a train went by. We always seem to see them heading south, *eis ten polin*, to the city, not Is-tan-bul now, New York.

6.
But you can never tell. Sometimes the City is right here, is every place that summons our senses and teaches us to know this landscape pr this lover and what that knowing means. This little marshy pond by the Hudson our metropolis.

14 August 2022
I’d like this county more if there were zebras in it. Not lions and elephants and such, just zebras, not even a whole lot of them, just enough that sometimes at evening we’d see their stripes dancing in and out of the bright slices of the setting sun at roadside, shy, cautious, strong. And sometimes we’d hear them mating in broad daylight in a clearing, loud, loud, the roar of their desire
no horse I know can equal.

Zebras. A little dangerous. By next year the village boys and teenage girls will find a way to ride them, and then, and then! You’ll see a whole sacred procession of them stomping noisily down Market and all the timid cars scurrying away in fear.

14 August 2022
Forget the knife, go back to chalk and listen so what you write on the rock the rain will forgive, words running down the stone back to where they came from and you will have done your duty and the words will have been heard 14 August 2022
Get the date wrong, it may be a sign, misspell the name and claim a new identity. You never know what you never know. Do the math wrong and coins fall out of the air, futures you can hold in your hand.

14 August 2022
O the lengths and widths
we gave to Gaia,
walked on evening,
slept on dawn.

Yet we do bow down
sometimes before Her,
shrine when we found one
or thought we did,
cave full of dark water,
hilltop, lone
tree on a lawn.
Mother make the winter mild
asummerfullof seed
simple selfish children we pray.
Maybe she even loves us that way, greedy infants playing with her toys.

15 August 2022
Mary Day.

The Church a century or so ago got around to declaring she went bodily to heaven.

But I have seen her around here and you have too, the virgin mother ever young still mourning what people did to her son but trying to forgive us one by one. Always that way. You are alone when you meet her.
At first you think a trick of the light
or a girl from out of town
or just the other say I saw
what I thought at first sight
was one slender tree
leaning against an older,
hplding it upright
high on a hill.

And today
is her feast day,
Catholics have to go to church,
Protestants think their blessed
thoughts
at home, where she too perhaps
is more comfortable. Though she loves the music, the lean Gregorian mingling with passionate Romantic hymns. it makes her feel closer to him.

15 August 2022
No cloud. Trees everywhere.
Not a leaf moves.
I am a human,
I let myself think
they are waiting
for my breath
to set the air in motion.
Or maybe they
make me think that.
Here, I breathe out
all the words you
let me find.
(And no sooner had I written that when a breeze came cool through the window from the direction of the trees, straight ahead, a breeze and then a quiet and the morning seemed full of grace and and gratitude,)

15 August 2022
Green and blue
that's all can be seen
from this window.
Some of the blue
leaches out of the green
and floats up to be the sky.

Or else the yellow sunshine
shivers the sky into five million
green leaves who float down,
immigrants to earth’s surface,
trees. How else can I explain it?
But now a tiny white cloud
shrugs in over the tree tops,
tells me there is more to thins
than even all the lovely colors say.

15 August 2022
Maybe I don’t really need
to learn the name
of very blessed tree I see.
I don’t have to know the name
of a woman walking by
to admire her silken dress,
a name is just a distraction,
dragging the perceived
person or object into a dreary
world of yes and no, permissions,
refusals, revenge, remorse,

forgetfulness.
This tree is this tree.
This man is a man. Let’s just see what he does.
We can name him from his deed.

15 August 2022
SINFONIA DOMESTICA

I hear the ice-box roaring in the other room.
–We call them fridges now, dear, short for refrigerator.
Or frigo if you want to sound French.
Fresh? I didn’t mean to be impolite.
–No, FrENch. Ice-box is eighty years ago.
And so am I.

15.VIII.22

TAP TAP TAP
1. Woodpecker woke me. I have friends in high places, they know the time, the deeds you lay down in dream, the ones you pick up in waking. Almost seven, cool morning, 59, nice for August, numbers help us too, but I try not to take them too seriously.

2. Of course sleep is the temple of the first religion,
all the rest are trying to make sense of, usually by that kind of subtraction from the whole called focus. Sleep then,

3.
sleep now.
Open the great doors by closing your eyes.
That’s what the bird said,
Wake up
so you can really go to sleep.

4.
Now Sun is
saying something too,
Sleep in daylight
is an utterly different animal,
frisky, full of tricks.
Sometimes the temple
bucks and quivers beneath you. Be
liminal, animal,
stand on the threshold
one hand in the dark.

16 August 2022

Who are you today
seemed a simple question
but was I asking them
or they asking me?
Words need a fletcher
roset arrowhead at one end
feathers at the other
so we know, even the wisest
of us, which way they’re going.

2.
Who are ou today
I think it’s me asking,
the words came to mind,
my mind00but who
put them there. The arrow
problem all over again.
3.
Or are they, words,
like those old Chinese poems
scribbled in moonlight,
set afloat on a neighbor stream,
words all by themselves
out all night, never mind
who finds them, reads them—
they are written.

4.
But I, or someone like me,
 wants to know, really know,
who you are today, call out your name, or send me a picture so I can study the distance between your eyes, curve of forehead, arc of lips. No, don’t bother with photo, I’d get it all wrong, mythology would get in the way. Just say your name, your place and date of birth, and the last time you had to shed tears.

17 August 2022

Sometimes we find
things in what we’ve written that tell us what we did not know before. It’s not all about publishing and royalties, it’s the shock of learning something in your words that no one said.

17.VIII.22

= = = = =

Sometimes we find things in what we’ve written
that tell us what we did not know before. It’s not all about publishing and royalties it’s the shock of learning something in your words that no one said.

17.VIII.22
Let gravity do the work for you. Then write the date down on stone if you have one and know how, and there is your church to begin with, knowing when it is you are.

2.
Of course all calendars are imaginary but there are shreds of truth in some, like no surgery
on Tuesday, no legal hassles on Knife Day in Yucatan.
Dust of charcoal scattered on the marble pavement, a word’s enough to tell you when.

3.
That’s what I mean by gravity, Mongolfier in his dictionary floating over the Louvre, the Seine hurrying his shadow to the coast so we can see it too every time we look at the sea. What we do becomes our lexicon. Or am I thinking of two
brothers at Kitty Hawk or last night your hand on my arm?

18 August 2022
K was worried about apocalypse, collapse of the environment, disaster. I like worrying too but couldn’t go along with her. My guess is we’re here forever, apocalypse is too easy, humans are barely at reaching puberty, boys fighting in the schoolyard, Ukraine. We don’t understand death yet, which is why we let ourselves kill one another, murderers and electric chairs the same, governments ake murder legal when they do it,
when old men in a chamber
decide what kind of people
to kill next and where
to send the soldiers out to play.
Thou shalt not kill. There are
no exceptions to the fifth
commandment
But K wasn’t satisfied,
heard me out but I could tell
her thoughts were climate
change, drought, disaster.
I whistled the national anthem
of the sea, Desalinate Me
and Live Forever. When all
the traces merge into one
is when the fun begins I cried.
humanity means migration, not just Celts Slavs and Magyars, we all have to be 
by being on the rod, each civilization a long 
nights resting place. By then it was time for K 
to go, we left our words 
hanging in the air. Some of them may still be there.

18 August 2022
In Ancient Crete
girls jumped over bulls
front to back
levering themselves up
and over by grabbing horns.
Brave and beautiful
and incomprehensible.
In Ancient Athens they show
a big owl on their silver coins,
plus part of the goddess’s name.
I think the trees are talking to me.

18 August 2022
You help me do my job by doing yours. You use up lots of words so I know the ones left for me to use. We keep saying things to each other and call it breakfast, culture, marriage, religion, th sneaky politics between mattress and sheet. But any moment we could drain all the vowels out and leave the husks of sound to entertain ourselves \while we drive to Fresno or learn French which has all kinds of
vowels of its own. Thank you for the blessing of your actual words! I’ll take communion from their ancient hands.

18 August 2022
When there’s nothing else to do, that’s the wrong time for it.

18.VIII.22 lune
OK, so words are children running in the rain,

OK, words come from every part of the body, flee out into the air where other bodies live, strangers glad to touch hands.

OK, every part of the body has its own words, and they’re always specific—even a word like ‘good’
comes from one place only
but a different one
in each one of us so
language is always saying
Find it in you
then give it to me.

18 August 2022
Rhinebeck
ORNITHOSOPHY

A wren at evening
who am I fooling
wake to cars slishing
up wet morning road
but it isn’t raining
we live together
radiant in Terra
chips we all are
of the Sun’s hard light
enough to stand the dark
and come again
I think it was a wren
or someone looked like her
and why not, the day
is very large, evening sigh
chittering finches at dawn
wave the window
at the trees

2.
and these others
who grow behind my back
heart-shaped habit
of profusion, shadow cool,
captured between things
the teeth of words

3.
so we hear the poultry
in nobody’s yard
grace grace the accent
changes with the time of life
the empty rowboat
drifts back to shore
stare at the park bench
till it tells you all
lovers losers kindly folk
absent-minded feeding
pigeons at their toes
these weathered wooden
slats your history book

4.

or any bird at all
history is just ornithology
of a flightless species
how we got there anyhow
over Bosporus or broad
sacred Atlantic to be
anywhere at all
man is a migrant
she gets up and goes

5.
flightless words?
let the queen decide
she has been here
longer than stone
yesterday’s tempest
in the river of our trees
but the road is dry today
quiet as can be
apart from the liturgy of leaves

6.
remember that
when we shake hands
we bring to each other’s skin
all the places we have been
no wonder we bump elbows
now in plague time
but bones have been somewhere
too, the body knows
all too well the world it’s in
maybe all that hair and skin
is just a message from the bone
but meaning what?
always looking for meaning
like a kid for a candy
meanings don’t nourish us
only the searching does
migrations forever
raindove on the railing
we’re there already
but never know it

7.
Amplitude of evidence
bulge in the pocket
cloud in the north
it costs so much to remember
even without a therapist
lines of the face
tribunal of her angry eyes
he wanted to speak
without using words
wound up using
words without speaking
stories like that
whispered in bathroom stalls
scratch your name
on metal door and wonder why

8.
remember mucilage?
used to stick things together
weaker than glue
but it worked, but it’s
up to the things to agree
to be cobbled together
marrying papers together
the hidden dark
crinkling in between them
o marriage marriage
high priest of the temple
your wife is your pontiff
and you’d better know it

9.
what did they tell you
about me when they sent
you out to lead me home?
did they warn you
to bring some silence with you?
you were a wren at the window
that didn’t do it so
a woodpecker next time
so now we’re even
we have awakened each other
and it’s still only Friday
late for breakfast again
can’t remember what I ate
only the news of the day
they dared to call it
slopped down beside my plate

10.
but I grew up with sidewalks
fire hydrants the only
wildlife the dog down the block
but the sea was near enough to walk down and see and that is my whole story the mafia of the public library enlisted me half against my will but my want was so strong it chained me to the next book and the next and then I went to France and who knows what happened then but enough about me I was only here to reassure you someone can speak a word or two and still survive, the ninety-nine inning ballgame nowhere near its end
11.
or was it poltergeists
   I meant I heard
rustling the cellophane
drives you up the wall
in my nightmare
I hear a blasted basketball
bouncing slow and regular
on asphalt, young men
are demons, I was one
but hated a ball I couldn’t
hold, squeeze in one hand
the subway roared
beneath the corner
you could hear it sometimes
when wise folk came to visit
to lecture from my leather chair
who needs to know any more?
sufficient to the day
is the evil thereof
I asked the priest
and he explained
what Jesus meant
and all I carried away
was a word of the day
is enough to say
or one word says it all
12.
but enough about birds
my wife knows them so well
can whistle in a dozen languages
from Towhee to Oriole
she can sing them down to feed
takes gorgeous pictures of them
I study the images
until the color sinks in
from what I see
but enough about me
you read poetry to learn
a wider world than the one
that only seems to be here
sink into the word
the empty boat will float you
all the way to the shores of
the land of Goshen
what is that? a racetrack
in the country, a childhood
forever coming back?
settle down softly
in the empty boat
a word is waiting for you.

19 August 2022
As if another answer
were waiting for its question,
cool dim of the church interior,
dome vague, s, stained glass
opaqued by evening. Wait.
That’s what churches always
tell you, old ones especially,
stone and mosaics and bronze,
wait. Wait means just be here.
You are in the interval between
movements in the symphony
of your life. Concerto, I mean,
word meant conflict once,
struggle of one against all,
slim flute versus fifty strings, drums, howling brass.
That’s you in the middle. Wait. It’s not a game, it’s music, the only thing that helps you when you stand up and go.

19 August 2022
In the shade of an apple tree, in hope of the best.
I thought there was a wren at the window
but it turned out to be a bird of another color altogether, a bird
I had never seen before, a bird with four wings and a little Golden crown on the top of its head.
What kind of bird are you? I asked. and it answered but not in English,
birds don't use human language very often, parrots of course an exception, but it did answer. And what it said rang clearly in my mind. I am the bird of tomorrow I will always be here just past your reach come towards me I'm waiting for you one set of wings is for me and the other wings are for you—now come to me. The real business of humans is to reach tomorrow.

Law of the lawn: lie flat
let them play on you
make love on you,
lie in sun, or autumn nights
let them lie quiet
and watch the moon.
The moon has so many names,
the sun has one.
The lawn knows all of them,
worms and rabbits and voles
helo the lawn remember.
Live the lawn law in you too!

20 August 2022
Waiting for the discus
to scuttle down out of the sky
two thousand years pass.
Gibraltar endures
half a dozen languages,
the sea is a strict grammarian,
don’t you forget it, Julie,
next time you ‘borrow’
somebody’s canoe. Kayak
weather yet to come. Waiting
for the lute strings to snap
at last and the interminable
improvisations meet their term.
But music never ends,
just goes inside, rat
in the floorboards of the mind.
You can almost see the discus
or whatever it is on its way,
a shimmer whirling
low ver the meadow,. Tthe grass
has been waiting too, sheep
after goat after aurochs,
we’re getting there,
on the Pacific Palisades,
speaking German, remember?
His vocabulary did this to him
Spicer said, in the wheelchair,
in the elevator, a boy from Idaho
always ready to pick up the song.
I remember getting off the train
in Pocatello, finding my old friend now a young mother,
Mormons everywhere, the ghost of Ed Dorn still living in the air.
The lute string snapped then, chronology falls apart when you look too close, don’t kiss the calendar, you never can tell where or when it’s been. Throwing means thinking, catching the ball means knowing. The discus is on its way but no one dares to catch it, keen-edged, whirling knife, let it finally come to earth and show you where, if
my luck or chance you’re there. Sometimes you wake at night and hear ancient Sparta slipping fast through the sky.

20 August 2022
e careful what you ask of me,
I’ve too much to give.

20.VIII.22 lune
Warm. Sky
impalpable landmark
in this city of trees.
Helps find my way
through the leaves
whether I’m walking
on legs or eyes alone
it shows. It knows.

20 August 2022
Suddenly everything seemed smaller. Had I grown or had I gone further away from what I saw, see, need, try to touch? I am, like any human, just a decimal point moving left or right in the result of an equation we try to guess from the stars, lines in our pa, scratches on a rock, the look in someone’s eyes.

20 August 2022

SUNDAY
To be in church
every day
and nowhere but
church to be in
until church
is everywhere
the tree and the maiden,
river and wolf,
the firnd’s face
smiling at you
not too far away.

21 August 2022
Maple syrup
still in the tree
acorn still halfway
up the sky
how sweet
the future is
spring only
a winter away.

21 August 2022
Sentimental circumstances
your new black dress
you tell me is dark blue,
I don’t argue with beauty,
I have enough work to do
coping with ordinariness.

21 August 2022
Usually breakfast is an ordeal but two mornings in a row now I woke up hungry. And why am I telling you this, Oscar?

Never forget we are who we are mostly in little things, salt on egg India or China, cream or black.

The marble [postures we assume later in the Pantheon are sp] easily forgotten, easily
confused with one another, 
William III or William IV

who can remember, but the ink stain on my finger lasts forever.

21 August 2022
Let’s see who talks to me today– I open the mailbox of the mind, see it’s empty, I love the clang of the door dropping or shoved back into place. Nobody there. Not even a bill from my mother or wa warning fro the priest. Dark hollow naive no one there. Maybe I should make it stand beside a busier road, maybe I should think of them some more instead of just smiling vaguely out the window at the gorgeous trees.
Maybe somebody will call me up instead—do people still talk in real time? These days, only spammers use the telephone.

21 August 2022
It doesn’t do
to be too brief,
remember they call
underwear briefs,
revealing, embarrassing.
The kess you say
the ore ou stand revealed.
Pour on the stazas,
slokas, cantos, snuggle
down in profusion,
hide in the underbrush of words.
THEY CALLED HIM ROBERTUS

because he was slow as me, miniature turtle, painted shell size of a silver dollar, my first and only pet. I see him even now floundering deliberately the way they do, under the big hydrangeas sky blue, he’s finding a place of his own, I guess. And one day he was gone. And where I live now those flowers come up pink or white, no more blue But I do have a dollar or two still.

21 August 2022
Then there was a snail I loved who knows where he came from. I knew him for a day or two then he went missing. Days later we found him again, he’d started to swallow a thread in a curtain and it led him up the window to the top, where we found him, the thread all coiled inside him. Destiny scares me ever since.

21 August 2022
Now back to the trees
away from
all the noisy me’s.

21.viii.22, lune
They slept together only one night but a night can last a very long time, a life sometimes, not just the remembering of it but the knowing it knew in them—and knowing lasts forever.

21 August 2022
= = = = =

Shake the pronouns
till their all mixed together
and call it a city.
Fling all the verbs
out all the windows
and call it living.
Them nouns come later,
staid and solemn
standing here and there
firm in th dark
Then when morning comes
watch the adjectives
all the pretty clothes.

21 August 2022
Quick, I have to write everything I don’t know. It will take forever— at least that’s my plan.

21.VIII.22
Just for a moment suppose the sea
Or not just now, let it last, vast,
covering most of the globe, sea
always leaving some room for us.
For you and men.
Now suppose me, insignificant indeed but at your side.
Where things are
sometimes means 
more than what they are. 
Suppose the sea again 
now and be at peace.

21 August 2022
But even in the trees
some light was left,
enough to tell
branch from bole
As we Irish say. At least I thought I
was Irish,
green, green,
but who knows,
who really knows?

21 August 2022
Red Hook, by the pool
INTO THE TREES

I was lying prone on our lawn, reading a book a few inches below my face. You were standing a few feet in front of me, your legs wide-spread as if you had paused in the middle of a gymnastic exercise to watch something over my head, a bird most likely, you like birds.

In the deltoid vista formed by your spread legs I saw a figure coming our way out of the trees. As he came closer, I could see from his ragged once white garments and the bundle of papers he was carrying
that this was Orpheus, hurrying (not very fast, though) towards us.

Right behind him, almost up against his back, a woman. I saw it was golden-haired Eurydice herself, with her wide cheek bones and full lips.

Every now and then Orpheus would spin around to see if anyone was following him; whenever he did this, Eurydice would swing down out of sight so he saw no one, and trudged on sadly.

As they came by, Orpheus didn’t even glance at us but I could see that Eurydice’s right arm was pressing
ever so gently at the top of his spine, pushing him along. She saw me looking at her, smiled at us, raised her left arm and set a finger on her lips, shushing me, as if to say Don’t wake him, don’t let him know that I’m still here, guiding him. She flashed a be-a-good-boy loving glare at me and they passed on.

But I needed to know, and cried out silently in mind, “But can I tell what I have seen?”

Her answer came just as clear within: “Tell all, tell all you think you’ve seen, tell whatever comes to
mind. Not many will believe you anyhow.”

The couple kept walking on, his rags and pages flapping in the wind, her nakedness gleaming as they passed into the trees.

22 August 2022
CHAT WITH HORACE

...aere perennius

“I have built a monument more lasting than bronze,” he declared. And I said “But where it is?” Then he: I just pronounced it—weren’t you listening?”

22.viii.22
I have a stiff Cro-Magnon face, no one can tell when I’m smiling. This leads to Stone Age quarrels, put down that rock ax, I actually love you. Or do I mean Be calm, I’m your loyal friend. At times it confuses me too.
Here I am
I can say anything
I like but only if
you like it when I do,
any of you,
ears if a lover,
ears of a child,
language into which
I pour or whisper
whatever seems to think in me.

22.VIII.22 Rhinebeck
Why does a workman in yellow vest shoving ahead of him a dozen shopping carts nested, entrained together, resemble a house painter carrying an aluminum ladder to get him up to the attic? He doesn’t.

All long things are not the same. A road is not your arm though both can reach what your desire.

22 August 2022, Rhinebeck
So white so sky
the trees
those lords my ladies
have to call to mind,
to leaf, the sun’s
gold, Sunday’s blue
to pledge their green.
By such guesswork
we all joy to live!

23 August 2022
You put the top of the salt shaker backs together, you fed a hundred birds, crows come to your call, you turned thousands of pages of Foreignese into luminous American prose, so many times you’ve done, saved my life or kept me living. And I love salt.

23.VIII.22
Last week before school starts and how quiet the roads are, the fenced-in green where rods divide is calm now as a meadow in the hills. Super-quiet, you would say, super-green, the sky a big white smile. You can tell we’re all getting ready for something— and now the sun comes out to oave the way.

23.VIII.22
If I were who I remember
walking by the West Side
midtown piers, in blue,
watching the foreigners
smile their way off steamers,
if the friendly asphalt
shimmered still from
that morning’s light rain,
and if I were looking then
as I ight be gazing now,
o lord how the word look
works both ways, nobody
saw me, I wasn’t there,
it was a stranger
pretending to be me
and I still believe him,
the people he looked at,
men grey women blue
and never now,
where I wait eager
to understand all that
I think I’ve never seen.

23.VIII.22
for Michael Avedon

If you want to take a picture of me in my studio set me down at an open window looking out at trees, say. I am the canvas they write leaf by letter their words I write down as fast as I can, mere agent of what I see.

23.VIII.22
ThT cat who kills
our Chipmunks
was a kitten once

important to remember this
the face that faces us
has been many places
shown many faces before
this one we look at now.

(22.VIII.22)
23 August 2022
As if the tree said it to me
you think I meant but I didn’t,
I meant the tree said it to me.

2.
So I had come to my last religion,
listening at the food the way a child does
to half-hear half-guess the world,
listening. And it turns out to be the first, when first we heard a vice say Come listen to me.

24 August 2022
Remember when everyone you saw was an angel, messenger of the other.
Walking a home from school left you dazed with identities, each one a character in that endless opera you script-less struggled forward through, guessing the way, singing loud as you can?

24 August 2022
Words get simple to confuse me. I’m trying to rebuild a whole culture starting with stones I find all over the ground, pluck without much effort, chips that happen to resemble ruins of Athens, pavements of Jerusalem, whatever I need, shadows of Glastonbury, your pearl earring on the carpet, come out of Eden, begin again. I’m drowning in simplicity.

2.
But what else could words be for
but to create a lasting nation
urgent with kindness
and luminous permissions?
Land of no lying, country of no kill.
It’s worth a try. Now start
forever again.

24 August 2022
The only law is listening.
Obey with your soul.

24.VIII.22, lune
Smack on the pale green lawn a shadow. No one standing there. Go on, sounds interesting. Shadow dissolves a little in the middle. Acknowledge the tree, night’s proxy, easing the grass. Hiding is a big part of being seem.
Love is a ladder that creaks sometimes as you climb.
Worry, but keep going.
Try not to fall there’s no one to catch you.
Once you’re on that ladder the only way is up.

24.VIII.22
ROVINE

So much contemporary classical music feels like walking all alone through the ruins of Rome. Once there was a mighty nation there. no weird echoes I shiver in shadows.

24 August 2022
Is it my fault I tell the truth?
Nobody needs to.

The truth is always facing you,
I hum at your side.

24.VIII.22, lune
Cliffs of unknown rock
stab up into my sky,
yoys too, wherever you are.
Dreams reveal what clouds hide.

24.VIII.22
(from an older scrap)
Scratch in the upholstery
cat claw or tome?

Not much difference—
the soul peeks out.

24 August 2022
From the bridge today
the wisest whitest clouds I’ve ever
listened to.

24 August 2022
ONFESSION

So the street I lived on ended at the sea, paved as far as the marshes then the catwalks began, seagulls and herbs stray migrant birds, , even a bittern once so I sensed I lived in the house of the sea. Never learned to swim – why bother when I was always in?

25 August 2022
So often when I look early morning out at the trees, beeches and lindens and maples they make me think of ancient cities, youg men and women lively, joyfully alive among the ruins. Why do I thik of Rome where I have never been? Maybe they stir the Latin in my schoolboy mind, but I think they know
about what goes away
and what lasts, they have
a marble of their own/
Time is the other side
of what they are.

25 August 2022
IMAGINARY ALIMONY
we pay to the sun
whenever we go indoors,
build houses for her
to look at, rooftops
she can admire her
radiance upon,
look at Manhattan
from the air, or London,
Paris, Shanghai and
you’ll see that they all
are tables full of toys
for her to play with,
shadows and shimmers
and then good night.

25 August 2022
Every conversation is imaginary.
In this sense:
  you remember it like some dialogue in a book you read.
It lingers, shapes all kinds of earnings, hopes, anxieties, within the words and gestures you recall.
And then the words themselves slip and slide, forget, remember,
smile and fret, now
you are part of history,
that endless comic book.

25 August 2022
Save my words
for a better basket?
I suppose you’re right...
this old wickerware
creaks and lets too much
meaning slip in or out.
But I like that really,
all talk in playing
with another, they catch
or drop or toss it back.
Who am I to mean what I mean?

25 August 2022
Glanum, outside Arles,
I keep coming back
to that Roman street
I walked on a few minutes
marvelling, as if the earth
beneath us always
was some newfangled thing
but this was really old.
Silly, but it was stone,
silly, but it was made by
people long gone. Later
I sat for a while in sun
in the ancient bullring
watching the bare field
men fight irritated bulls, but this is France now so they do not kill. Not farb away a Roman road goes all the way to Spain, just a dirt trail now but what lingers for me is that little nowhere Roman street, the nard hard pavement below my feet.

25 August 2022
One nice thing about hot summer days: you don’t have to do anything about them. Dawn to dusk a day takes care of itself. Free at last, we linger by a real or fancied shore.

25.VIII.22
When you tell the truth speak louder—someone might hear you.

25.VIII.22 lune
= = = = =

I need a cloud.
That’s not allowed.
I need a tree.
strictly *interdit*.
At least a leaf.
Naughty little thief.
Give me a bone.
Not even a stone.
Why are you so mean?
I voice what you mean.

25 August 2022
AFTER A TALK BY RUDOLF STEINER

The prayer can come later, park the car where it never was, a wooden platform, strange,

but notice the divorce: word and its meaning quarreling at the bar, half-drunk on ordinariness.

The color seems different today, more orange than tan. Air all around, I know how to breathe, You heard what the man sad: the outside needs to come in
and conversely, hence language or verse, the hum of happening back into the world. Why would I have bought an orange car?

Don’t make the prayer wait too long, the words too are good for you, I guess, because all words are. I’ve wanted to park there for years.

26 august 2022
Glint of sun off windshield flashing by, dreams of parking, woke to truckish noises passing. A car-ish morning, the soviet of dream controlling the day.

26 August 2022
ZOOLEGY 301

We share our space with animals, not all of them real. The ones who haunt us—hedgehog on her lap, tiger in the dining room—don’t bite, or not exactly. They lurk in the mind and feed on our anxiety. Haven’t you often been nuzzled by a hairy dog that isn’t even there?

26 August 2022
A wind word!
A celebration
somewhere out there
unseen but green,
I hear what I see,
window comes from
‘wind eye’ and
that’s what it means.

27 August 2022
Yesterday I got the dte wrong, doctor, right number but wrong month, what does it mean? And today doesn’t feel exactly like Saturday. Do I need help? Is there any help to be found? Have I sinned against Time, Father, or just done a civil crime? Can I go back to sleep, darling, to start the while business again?

27 August 2022
And sometimes the answer comes like a slip of paper fluttering on the breeze. Pick it up. It says: “wrote this street. I breathed this town.”

28.VIII.22

[The other day in Taco Bell I asked Charlotte for a piece of paper, I meant to write while her chalupa and my burrito were on the way. Then I discovered I had no pen. So I put the little square she gave me from her notepad into my pocket. That night it wound up on my window desk. This morning I found it. And this time I had a pen. A little poem with a history that moves me, thank you, dear Love.]
Progress. The Greeks were blond, the trees are still green. A door is still a mystery—pull or push, coax or shove? And when it opens what will be there for you? I think of glass doors in shops and offices, keep the body out but let the vision in—and what does that remind me of? Slowly we are turning into
chemicals. Colors began the process, north green, red west, south yellow, the east is blue. Glass reminds. Chemistry of the soul.

28 August 2022
LAVABO

Now you’ve washed your face and hands you watch the water swirl down the drain.

From this observation if you think hard most of life on earth can be deduced–gravity density, the magnetic mysteries, and where water comes from and what it is that makes up
so much of us, it’s all here, in the sink, soft gurgle that taught us to sing.

No wonder a few tears fall.

28 August 2022
Photos of clouds are so beautiful to see—
I think their beauty keeps us from reading them sometimes. Clouds inscribe the sky, they mean something when they come, not just rain or shade. In the photo of the clouds you can read the actual word of the moment, what the world is saying in this very place and not anywhere else. Each vista
a separate declaration. Hence the photo. Read me if you dare, pretty earthling down there, I’m writing go you.

28 August 2022
Fish glue, rabbit skin glue, scraps of old leather. You think when you grow up you get away from all that, a sleeker world, digital, not animal, and digital is closer to the spiritual isn’t it, more mind and less matter.? But the words are still there, heavy with meaning and past lives, held tight by pur sticky breath.

28 August 2022
In the country people drive to church on Sunday, fewer now than years ago but still some still come. Churches have parking lots— for that hymn-soaked hour or so the lot is full of cars. I wonder if the cars are praying too— each vehicle has its intimate history, lovers, emergencies, traffic stops, all those miles that summer makes them drive, and all the mute or show-off incense plates, the rubber
lobster dangling from a bumper, bike racks, kayak on the roof, dirty windows, gleaming glass, So much to discuss, so much they have to tell us too if we stay outside and listen hard to them and never mind the preacher barking inside.

28 August 2022
How do I know what I know?

You old me—
but who are you,
voice I hear so clear, so near
inside my otherwise drowsy head?

Or not so much drowsy as busy,
busy with what you told me yesterday,
I’m trying to work it out and still leave room for what you’ll tell me today. What did you just say?

28 August 2022
I don’t want to have to write everything out, I want to talk it, *tawk* it with somebody listening who can talk right back or at least frown, or even smile. Deipnosophists, symposiums, dinner parties, anything, just sit down and hear me out or walk beside me, while I listen.

28.VIII.22
If I were writing
a story
it would go on and on.
But as it is,
it is.

28.VIII. 22
The small things again, and nothing easy. The geology of everyday, who made my mountain? This syncline in the mind, all those experiences pressing down together, graceful thunder weight of rock bending the moment, the old Who-am-I-today spring trickling down the shale. Too much to remember with such weak fingers, too far ahead to think with such bones.
2. The dream made simple sense: a tall slim outfielder not only hits the long ball but steals bases too. Strength I guess and speed and knowing where to be and when to go. Roma, rope a jenny to your caravan, it’s actually always time to go.

3. A mule, a mile, a breakfast on the move, spit out the cherry pits, the field
is interested in new trees, roadside manners, life is the silent wolf slouching greedily behind.

4. But am I there yet is a more plausible question. Location outweighs identity. Timing is trickier—is now truly when you think it is? Each being has its own now.
we failed geology
but want the earth
to be soft as shoes
and easy as a spoon.
A cup. A bowl. A lake
in the oasis, shade
of a handy tree.
Presumptuous to the last,
when I say we I mean me.
What do you mean?

6.
I asked the stone that once
in New Hampshire,
it glistered in the sparkles
reflected off the rushing stream
beside us both, and then
it ummed back at me
soft as a guitar, O little boy,
meaning is just a human thing.

29 August 2022
School starts today
but I’m on sabbatical.
Feels like floating on a raft
on a pond in Central Park.

29.VIII.22
Color of momentum.
Agency of wealth.
Youth mixed on Harley, loud. Leaves sustain the tree in subtle dexterity.
Evening breezing, laughter. Raven over the parking lot, his cry true pharmacy.

29 August 2022
Red Hook
The rose opens the door
the wind decodes to come in
just a little bit, just enough
for the star of the petals
to set free that fragrance
that comes and grows at last
into a single knowing,
a flower of our own now
grows safe inside us.

29 August 2022, v.v.
Hide the text inside itself and then she said
Sit on the rock till you remember

*  
Wash the basin, erase the stains along the rim. Who bled here? Whose wine did we drink and it was no accident?
The wax the fingers mesh together on the chest of someone asleep in sunshine—no worse than that, the words lock, sometimes it’s hard to spread them apart.

To the graduate student I recommended she study the way Welsh and English poetic traditions influenced
each other even well before
the Nineteenth Century.
But she said: But I’m
working in organic chemistry!
so I said Precisely.

*

Wrap thing in thing
until it’s there,
smear gobs of ointment
on to find the skin.
The target summons the arrow.
But the fountain forever
misses the naiad they took away.
No way we can have one without the other. A word means what happens when you read it. Hear it. Trust me, you are the dictionary.

That’s where we went wrong, made the poor English teacher sit on a stool in the corner facing the wall. But angles are always interesting, wrong turned out to be just a more detour on the road to Jerusalem and here we are.

30 August 2022
They trimmed the weeds then went away. Victims and perpetrators fled from the scene.

And the lawn was still here, a little paler green with not much rain. Northeast drought, the center floods.

Blame the machinery. Out of nowhere a tsunami rose and swallowed me–
The dream told me: Pray to ocean for help, mother, mercy, salt and sympathy, desalination plants, kids with chemistry sets, rain rain come again. And tell the boy put the weed-whacker down.

30.VIII.22
I tried to brush
a shadow of my knee
it would not move
but a breeze came
gently in the door
and I breathed
my breath back out
into it, glad to have
a friend to share with.

30 August 2022, v.v.
Changing clothes
with the statue
means running naked,
they do it all the time
in the republic of childhood
before time exiles them
into wool and nylon,
sometimes cotton reminds us
of the feel of feeling.

31 August 2022
Not much to say today
so the words are free to come
streaming their sounds out
so we can share. Dare to.
Listen to them, not to me,
Opening a notebook
is opening the birdcage door
and all the sounds fly out—
and once a sound is on the wing
it never stops till you stop hearing
and even then something’s left,
a rhyme, a name you remember
from childhood, sounds like
you know better than I do.
2. Axe handle but the blade is gone. Curious shapely wood, a little like the leg of an antelope, say, but with no jut of bone. A curve in the world, smooth pale wood. I can almost feel it in my fingers but wonder what I’m thinking it. Wood has its way with us, dreams its way into our hands.

3. Axe handle came from X, I was just looking at the letter X, stands for Christ, for ten, for multiply, like 2 times 5, stands
for Time’s History on Russian magazine, crossed arms, legs, crossed fingers, the spot marked to which all yearning hastens, an old peasant’s signature. And then I heard a raven calling, sunny morning, delivery truck paused at the door, no x in sight.

4.
See what U nean when I say have ntig to say? Means you have all thus to hear, matter of the mind, sounds spilled on the sidewalk,
harbor full of ships from nowhere laden with goods and grain. And all of them for you, for the city you are.

31 August 2022