July 2023

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So the rabbit has spoken, the month begins.  
Footnote: in Kentucky when we wake in the morning on the first day of the month we say Rabbit, rabbit.  
But we are not in Kentucky now, we’re just barely in America, that vague low land we see far to the west in haze, seafog, smoke from Canadian fires, but there it is and here we are, so rabbit, rabbit.
2. But I haven’t seen a rabbit this year, used to be common, I think all the disruption of roads and hedges, paving and trenching and burrowing by much bigger beings has slowed them down. No fur for most of a month, no ears longer than mine.

3. Warm sun in cool breeze, that seaside cocktail. Snuff. They speak of vacation but it’s a different kind of work—what you most want to do,
do it harder and longer here, you can see it clearly all round, surfers weary from balancing, fishermen schlepping gear uphill, and even sleep can be a vocation, earn a Ph.D. in dream evasion.

4. From the hilltop I see America, that sobers me up, three hundred million people waiting for the next words from my mouth, and they don’t even know it, no more than I do. Being born into language means you have to talk to everyone.
5.
So rabbit, rabbit
to the waking world,
lift your deep ears,
I’m on an island,
help me to listen.

1 July 2023
Two hundred insurance men at all in black suits only faces and neckties different come slowly out of a hotel where they conferenced, and they’re crossing this very wide avenue this way while I’m trying to cross to the row of shops alongside the place from which they come. There’s a pothole in the asphalt, what happens now? Do I fall? Unknown city, mend your skin!

1.VII.23
What city should I pretend to be living in today?
The fog makes many possibilities, Delhi, London, Venice, Seattle, romance, technology, authority. Can’t help it, woke with cities in mind, the ones I’ve lived in, spent time in, passed through quickly on my way to somewhere else, that shimmering paradise.

2.
What do you do with the names in your head?
Cities strange enough
but men and women too, 
the ones you know 
or knew or loved or 
met for ten minutes 
at some glum parade, 
and then the names 
you never knew live 
bearers of, awkward, 
names without faces 
clamoring for love. 

3.
*Nomina numina*

our teachers said, 
names are powers, 
deities, potentates, 
who really knows 
what *numen* means,
sounds like *nomen*
which just means name.
We still interpret it to mean
knowing a person’s name
gives some power over them.
Does that work
for cities and rivers too?

4.
So I was born on Paumanok
and live beside the Mahicanuk
but I’m on an island now,
I wait to dream its ancient name.

2 July 2023
Meniscus,
curve of self
a thrust up
against the weight
of other.

2.
Saw it first
in a well in the White Mountains
or on a glass of milk
on Brown Street
fresh from the icebox
we still had.
3.
No, wait–
it was later, time
has its curved surface too.
*I need you, I need you*
I cry and the words slide
in all directions down
from my gasp. Anybody
might hear them–that
is my plan. A willing world
broadcasts gladly
any message we dare to speak.
and clarity comes
gleaming through the fog.

2 July 2023
Hard to see the animal I am but when you look at me the stripes shine out. We are what we are because others see us so—what purpose could I serve if I were just being me? Me in a little boy naked sitting on a rock in the stream watching a bright blue kingfisher dive straight down into the water. Everything else is you, and you.

2 July 2023
Islands come and go in the fog, even my hand looks vague when I stare out at where the sea must be. Senses quiver, rely not on them, this atmospheric opium softly wipes away the real.

2 July 2023
FUNDRAISER

Pretend to be living by giving. You feel better for having lesser. Charity, after all, is from the old word for love.

3.VII.23
Woke up cynical like sunshine in the mist. Listened to the radio in my head, what I heard last night when you miraculously played all the mystery sonatas of Biber and I went from one chamber to the next, almost breathless and now I get to remember that passage through this mythology in which I was born. Violin and continuo. It takes two voices to say the truth.

3 July 2023
BREAD
Walk from the market carrying a loaf.
It means everything.
What you eat and what you give to strangers, and use to represent the right now right here presence of God or offer crumbs to pigeons, or take from the oyster and look in vain for jam.

2.
Carrying bread home is the whole story. Dürer’s self-portrait as a naked young man
has no time in it
but the present. The bread
is always now.
Even the stale matzos
from on top of the fridge
crunch in my teeth
with the intense immediacy
of finches, house and gold,
chattering by the window.
Birds are always now
and so is bread, no wonder
Christians see as they do
the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist.

3.
But I was walking home
from market when this began.
A town in France far south, I had the feeling I could be anybody at all. The loaf at my elbow was all the identity I had to have. I was a child of bread and nothing more.

4.
If I were sitting with Olson now again by this very sea I would be trying to persuade him suddenly that the West is Bread, and all the ancient way from Iceland to Ethiopia and India was the Bread World, but East
of that they knew no bread. That is the difference, Charles, Confucius never ate a slice of bread, Lord Jesus never tasted rice, capisce?
Too neat too simple too polar he’d explain, but in his eyes I would see a gleam of Yes! since he’s an old Swede himself and can’t know deeply more than his body knows. It’s a long time since we had a chance to talk.

3 July 2023
Bright enough but mist insists.

The dove on the deck seems content with what he finds there.

Then sparrow, goldfinch, blackbird, all quiet.

I’m the only one making noise, fingers on laptop, breath. Then a little guess of wind whispers by me. Believe the wind. Silence
is not the only bible.
But this quiet morning
the birds are good preachers of it.

3 July 2023
Just because something was a long time ago doesn’t mean it isn’t now. Now has long arms.

3.VII.23
I guess my love of fog makes me a heretic. It wouldn’t be the only evidence of my errors but it will serve. I contend that mist outside means clarity within, the mind by instinct rinses itself clean when it sees outside everything losing clarity. But I am clear! the mind cries at least I think I hear it. It can’t be the fog talking, can it?

3.VII.23
Watch what’s next, a cougar prancing through Oregon. Black bear on lawn not far from New York.

As the Welshman pointed out years ago they all come back, the beast we be will always be us.

Machen called it the Return. I think I’d say it never left but I’m not sure.

The fear I’ve carried with me all my life
must mean something, the footsteps I hear padding ever closer.

3.VII.23
Hold back the milk till the calf is ready to drink, bring the sun with you on the way to the beach. But some things are always ready. Some things wipe your brow or gently stroke your hand. The child will cry when hungry—that is all you have to know.
There is a way of getting there, climb over the golden pipe, rest on it a few minutes if you like, time is cheap in this sort of instruction, then slip off and keep going barefoot in the marsh, the rest of you in tight clothes. Mercyville across the stream–wade there, the water’s cold but only a few inches deep. Your cuffs will dry soon enough in that dry place, little wind, warm air at peace. The rule is: knock on the first door you find,
address with some formality whoever it is that opens the door. Let your speech tell of your journey, the stones you’ve sat on, the rains that wet your cheeks, the bird songs you imitate doesn’t matter if not too well. When you’ve finished, expect to be invited in, or told another door that suits your entrance better. It won’t be far away, not now when so much is already known.

3 July 2023
The host is flying a kite on the lawn. Ask the hostess for a cigarette—cheap in this country—and tuck it behind your ear. Never can tell when you might have to breathe again.

3.VII.23
I still keep some habits from the old country I have never visited, never even seen on the horizon. But the habits walk across the sea and comfort me. I smile at moonlight and delight in fog, eat breakfast late, skip lunch, write my letters backwards and send them to myself to learn what I have on my mind.

3.VII.23
1. The darker the dream the louder the names. I mean the room, the penetration of silence by the names of who are all these people?

2. I love you too, I sing, and you and you and who you are is supposed to love me, that’s what names are for,
isn’t it, or am I wrong
or am I too afraid
to love anybody out loud?

3.
But when he said it
it came out a song.
Music bewilders me
she answered, there’s
aways so much of it,
try to be simple, try
silence, silence caress.

4.
That’s as far as penetration
went that time, they shook
their heads in heaven, resolved
to try again. Listen, listen they whispered, and down here we tried again. I spoke a name into the dark.

4 July 2023
Maybe change all the numbers and start again. We can call this 7 for the sisters in the sky and then go backwards all the way to 1, then see what happens. I was good at math in school but now think it would greater to do math without the numbers, just the meanings tugging each other’s hair or caressing their implicit qualities, quantities, I deny the difference. So no 7 after all.
Just some lights in the sky, girls on the beach, oak trees teaching children Greek.
I was there, famous in my day, the shepherd with no sheep, harper with the stringless lyre—believe me, you can hear me still.

4 July 2023
Stationary maneuvers.

How do you spell ‘me’ when you’re in disguise?

It’s supposed to be a holiday but uncertainties, those pretty little songs that linger so long, they keep humming by, these questions.

Fascinations of the open door, the blinking eye, the sea-washed rocky shore
between sleep and waking,
When you look at the word
you’d think maneuver
means ‘the work of the hand’
and sometimes the hand
wants to wave everything away.

4 July 2023
SHELTER

At that time I was a cat. Tortoise shell mottled, a bit old for my years, a little cranky. You know how we get. But I adhered closely to our Code of Behavior, and though there none of our kind nearby I still behaved properly as every cat should.

One day we were in the garden, early summer, very bright sun. My Responsibility was resting sideways on the bench, her shoulders pillowed against an armrest, her legs arched along the bench. She was happily
chatting with her cell phone. She talks to it in a much quieter voice than she uses with me, I suppose because it’s such a small device.

I was finding the sun a little oppressive. I noted that my Responsibility’s upraised knees formed a cave-like shadowy space, shielded by the flowing skirt and her legs themselves, so I hopped up into the shadow.

My tail must have brushed against the underside of her bare thighs, it must have tickled because she twitched, and giggled into the phone, and abruptly stretched her legs out and down,
crashing down on me so I leapt back down into sunlight on the ground, feeling misunderstood. Now she was lying flat, straight out, no more chance of shelter. I rested there a while, thinking about the strange reaction of her skin to mine—it must be hard for them, bare skin, no fur to cushion blows or nestle in. Poor people. They have lots going for them, but still it’s sad to think of how they have to keep wearing clothes to shield themselves. I felt a little sorry for her, so I jumped up and lay on her belly, the way she likes, and stared at her with wide-open
eyes. That made her happy. I felt forgiven, all the more so when she lay the cellphone down and folded her hands over me, smiling and making sounds. So I had a little arch over me after all, though it didn’t do much to keep the sunshine off. As usual, my fur had to take care of that.

4 July 2023
Then the power came back, swimmers in the channel, a guy on paddleboard snaking through the sailboats. For it was day, and people do what they do. Choose your cards carefully, the game may last for years, old Chinese poets rest by moonlit stream, writing words on paper, maybe, or maybe sheets of pure light.

Then begin again. The boats
have mostly sailed back home, holiday is over flags furled, sails spread, you know how it is, things end, swimmers dry now, toes snug in warm socks.

The words glisten on the sheets, I can’t read them though I studied moonlight once, wrote a book the alphabet of silence, a cat asleep, a disappointed scientist, priests in love. I forget the rest.

4 July 2023
AIRPLANE OVER

Can’t see in fog
where sky must be.
Eyes follow sound
through invisibility.

2.
I can’t help it
I just woke up
have nothing else
to report but this,
absent the dream.

3.
The city as usual
was broad and bright, vast avenues, mild traffic, monuments galore. Had no phone with me so had to walk, at times it takes three chapters to cross one boulevard.

4.
So don’t go there, unease trebling almost at the gate of fear. At least daylight. Then and now. O now is a comforting theology.

5 Julyn2023
No fireworks at all on the Fourth but very heavy thunder. Heaven celebrating for us or was it Muslim magic? The lights went out all over the island but soon came back anxiety slow o seep away.

5.VII.23
If it were another year than this
my Latin accent might be better,
folk music might even still be
songs people sing themselves.
And Vienna full of cellos
and no words to be heard
except what someone says
right now, to you or me
standing close enough to hear.
My father, born in New York,
was a teenager before he ever
heard
a word spoken by someone not
there
and one day heard Caruso
singing in the park
to him and ten thousand others
but they all were there.
Now there is somewhere else,
and here is anywhere you are.
I brush up on the fifth declension
and go back to sleep.

5 July 2023
By one theory
I chose all this.
Call it religion
and go for a swim.

5.VII.23
The centerpiece
or someone like her
unfolds across the bay,
his wife in the Oakland window
a little scratch of fog
sun straight overhead.

2.
Miles ago, you understand,
nothing now
about this image. Windows
no more of glass,
grass grows on the moon—
I read that somewhere
or was it you?
3.
It was even before the subway and spoke Japanese. Wandered up the long street at right angles to sunset. In those days I still believed music, still read slim books lusting for sisterhood she said. I stood behind her in case she lost her balance, bodies are a huge responsibilities cavernous metaphors sunbeams you can actually hold.

5 July 2023
The outer dry
the inmost soaked,
glad mercies
of Norwegian music,
the blond stone on the shore,
hearken, o heathen!
this is all about water,
the part of your blood
you can’t make by yourself.

2.
And so the sea said
and so we voyaged
from tub to faucet
over the bounding sea.
3. The doctors summer in Sargasso hopping in and out of all their little skiffs. Hydrate, hydrate! they cry out, get to the bottom of this!

4. In cooler blood on Scottish isles long-haired weavers learn how to mingle ocean air with wool so now they cry you will never be dry.
5.
Now the sea fog
shawls all round me
and it is good.
Sun seeps through
so some colors linger,
softly to confuse.
I tell you plainly
what I woke to find–
the dreams washed away
like good dreams do.

6 July 2023
Old iron-bound chest
simmers in the sealed attic.
No way to go there,
no need to open
what someone else’s years
have closed and put aside.
Not away. There is no way
for things to really go away.

6 July 2023
The wonder of it is that the sea speaks always the same language.

Whether on the coast of Oregon or Rockaway, Galway, Venice, the Persian Gulf you can always understand every word the sea is saying.

Of course it says different things in different places, true to the surface, true to the depths, but we can always understand
whatever it is the sea is saying. Because its grammar is ours too, rooted in blood and nerve, all the shifting flood we share, the inmost ocean that we are.

6 July 2023
Pour it out of the dream
mix it with the alphabet,
write it down to make it true.

7.VII.23
People walking in dense fog are trying to be figures moving through your mind, bidding you make something of them, identity, purpose, what they’re really up to and by now they’ve passed and you never saw their faces. So important to distinguish inside from outside, even if you can’t always manage it.
Look for the law
find it where
it slipped down
into the upholstery,
brush it off,
dog hair on it
or is that spider web.
Hard to read the words,
get better light, being legal
is a complex game–
now figure out what
they really meant when
they long ago wrote this.

7 July 2023
I’m assuming it’s comfortable for birds to float through fog, a little more something under and around them, I’m assuming we all feel deeply the medium through which we move. Even my hand feels lighter as it lifts to wave at a neighbor in the fog.

7 July 2023
IN ISLAND FOG

1.
So many days of fog
and no foghorns heard.
No ships? Little sailboats
sneaking through weather?
Fog is lifting now, already
I can almost make out
the coast a mile away–
I’d better start writing fast
to get it down before it goes away.

2.
Once in the foothills
of the Himalayas
I was standing admiring
the dense summer morning fog. Lama Norlha beside me chided me, warily, make sure he said you keep the fog outside.

3.
Keep the mind clear, yes. But every oddity of weather is a jolt to wake the mind, bring it back to now, the eternal present they say the only place we actually live.
4.
But while I was writing the fog deepened again, the other island gone again, now is doing its little dance, a girl I met at a party, a few smiling words, no names.

5.
The child tossed the cat impatiently onto the rug and asked his mother how long does now last. The cat was used to this, the mother not so much. I want something to happen,
nothing ever happens now.
True enough, she thought, with deep contentment.

6.
And then the sun came out! Everything changed!
I’m telling what happened, it’s what I always do,
the fog is warmer, brighter, but just as veiling as before.
Weather is the ancient epic we are doomed to write.

7.
Because it happens in us,
Lama was right to warn me, so many of us suck sunshine in, whistle the wind up, pray to moonlight, ivory dawns, golden gloamings, each day an endless lesson in taking in, being there, whole we idly suppose we’re working or playing when all the while we weather.

8.
Sun less now.
This vista won’t leave me alone,
sea seen over a few housetops,
sea seen,
sea seen
And that is why I’m here
to behold the original water
and say what comes to mind.
Everything else is just television.

9.
This island
which is sprightly Massachusetts
used to belong to New York.
Fact. The rock itself
is part of the same glacial ridge
as Long Island, where I was born.
Two senses of being at home—
but beware, this is the fog
creeping into the mind,
drifting me back to this
life I think I’ve lived, this self I think I am. No, no, it’s time to cry, be out there, out there where now lasts forever and the sea is calm. I can barely hear it lapping down the hill in kindly fog.

10.
This island shaped like a bird my island shaped like a fish— I grew up by the lower jaw. But the fog has no shape at all except what we give it. Fish or bird or the old wooden house across the street. I’m fishing for meaning—
it’s what you do in a fog,
the fog called college,
the fog called church, move
through so easily, find
by feel, see by remembering.
I’m losing the tune here, wait,
the fog’s unchanging, a big
blackbird just soared
low past the window.
Or grackle. Hard to tell in fog.

7 July 2023
Why don’t they re-
member me, piece
me back together
in their minds
he
asked out loud all
alone on the lawn
speaking of no one
in particular, all
hope in the healing word.

8 July 2023
HIS DAY

My graceful kindly father was born 123 years ago today. Victoria was still on her throne, Empress still of India where his grandfather had vanished during our Civil War.

You can see I’m drenched with history, but I think his grace goes on and on, incarnate now in some new young man whose wife has just given birth to some later, better, version of me.
The last time my mother and he came upstate for a visit we stood one day in an empty church – abandoned now, then still open – ad he climbed up into the choir loft and sang in his precise Irish tenor *Mother Machree*, a secular song for him holier than hymns, full of mother-love and gratitude as I’m sure the altar understood.

His voice clear as opera. his offering to God and to us all, thirty-three years later I still feel the kindness of him,
hear the tones of his voice, the words vanish but the vowels linger in the empty church of after days, I wonder where his soul is busy now. Yes, I know I have said all this before—and you can be sure I’ll sing it again.

8 July 2023
OUT TIME

Now it’s out time
where the osprey sails
and what am I doing
shaded from such sun?

Out is our battlefield
our Eldorado our Jerusalem,
out is Gary on his fire tower,
Paul lusting through Toulouse,
out is Charlotte in Tsopema,

out is walking down the street,
the sun a sweet siren sounded,
Few sails on the Sound. Morning
ferry has come, unloaded, 
sleeps by its dock and who am I? 
Sun on the deck, icing on the cake.

8 July 2023
ANNALS OF ANXIETY

We ask the internet for news a voice gives yesterday’s. We ask again, today’s news, the latest news, whatever the government lets us hear, but a cushy voice whispers BBC from the day before. What is going on? Where have they hidden now now, and why? Clear, no fog to blame.

8 July 2023
The insurance man used to come from door to door collecting the week’s premium or was it month’s, me too young to understand, money happens, in coin often, and he polite, a quiet, pleasant man, tired-looking in his grey suit. Slips of yellow paper passed back and forth.

As the war wore on he stopped coming, some other way of paying our bills. I wonder where he went,
the poor guy dressed for office but going from house to house in that middle-class wilderness, Marine Park, Gerritsen Beach. Money was different those days, you actually felt it in your hands.

8 July 2023
Vineyard visible.
It starts fading
as I look. Dawn
mist recurs
so while I write
the words down
the island’s
almost gone,
a shadow fading.
How long this
process is
in which we wake,
as if the fluttering
finches and cowbirds
mallows and breezes
were just footnotes to an immense work in progress, tiny print, clear voices.

9 July 2023
MANUAL LABOR

1. Hands in your pockets, just use your words.

2. Quarters for the meters rubber bands just in case. Sleek of the metal, maidenly yielding of rubber, not.

3. Place your hand gently gently on someone.
Inhale them through your fingertip.

4. Now you can begin to understand. Write some words down and learn even more.

5. Yesterday was Saturday the rabbi is sleeping the priest getting ready the lama halfway up the sky understanding us onward.
6.
He doesn’t need hands for that work but we usually do. The alternative is intriguing, a tropic island not far in the bay.

7.
Think the bottle cap off the Pepsi, sit firmly in your armchair and walk the dog you don’t even have.
8. But come back soon to the feel of things, the actual. We have a friend in Slovenia we’ve met only on TV, she sent us chocolate we could actually unwrap and share and eat.

9. The lost sheep were goats anyway. The mountain needs them for psycho-energetic business of its own. Wild goats, bleat loud! Help the rock wake.
10.
Hands again,
I fancy my fingers
grasping the ram’s horn,
shofar of the temple,
I can finger the instrument
but have no right to play it.
Doesn’t that remind you
a little bit of language?

11.
Whatever else we are
we are geology
shaped by fire
or dragged by ice
each stands firm
in the in place,
the place that found him.

12.
Only we have hands.
Rest your elbow on the desk,
rest your chin in your palm.
Hands are not just for the other.
But what if they suddenly could
feel who you really are?

9 July 2023
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I was out there on the lawn deciding yet again what poetry was, is, and what it should do and how I should do it I wasn’t actually on the lawn, I was just looking at it sloping down to the road, letting my eyes cross and reach all the way down to the sea. I was just sitting at the window watching what the world is supposed to be doing to me, the way any faithful child must, learning to say the words that come from somewhere into the mouth. I wasn’t on the lawn, I was on the sea. But I wasn’t there
either, poor clever me to be where I am not, and let it be real. Reality is such an odd word for it, isn’t it? It must come from Latin res, ‘thing,’ so reality must mean the condition of being thingly. I tell myself and my students Write Thinglish—Pound’s phanopeia comes down to that. If it’s mentioned, you can see it almost feel it, or in this case swim in it. Almost. That's why I saw lawn, road, sea, so that you know, or know at least as much as I do. God forbid you should know less. So the lawn. The lawn knows plenty. Rabbits, garter snakes,
coyotes, plenty, sunshine and geometry, growl of golf carts, 40 degree slope up from pavement, sunshine and a stone left from the last glacier, what more can I ask? But why am I telling you all this? Because I need you. The lawn is not quite enough, even with the window I see it through, and the birds on it. You. All of this palaver is to stay somehow in touch with you. You are the only reason language exists. Someone wanted to tell you something, warn you, warm you, love you, lead you, use you, how can I know what they
wanted, maybe they didn’t want anything special, just made some sound to say here I am, hello, and somehow the sound stuck, stuck in the world and language lasts. Lasts a while in one form and then gradually morphs this way and that way, so we can barely grasp what Chaucer is murmuring so boldly, but we get some idea. And we know he’s talking to us, we know because we hear him! Hurray, it takes two to talk! No wonder I’m in love with you.

9 July 2023
CALIBAN

Wait for the island it will bring back the word you lost then the tempest will compel the animals of love to cave deep into one another and the gold pour out. For this is summer when the truth hides deep in greenery and the sea is tolerant but hushes our doubt.

9 July 2023
As if the go
of rain had come
again the few
drops on the screen
breezed away
or fell to vapor
where they rolled
so soon it seemed
no weather was.

Not up to me
to say, the cold
wind explains.
Forgive my silence
my speech, to be
is a busy intersection
even this quiet dawn.

10 July 2023
Changes in mucilage,
what sticks to the mind,
dream tatters,
some wizard’s schemes
spelled out in comic books,
cross the street
against the light,

there is no traffic
anywhere, he sang,
the crooner on AM
from who knows
how long ago,
who dares hear it
now? a sidewalk
is a kindly place
step up and stand,
no one there, wait,

I’m always telling you
wait because I want
my now to catch
up with yours.

What we see reflected
from shop windows
as we yearn for merchandise
gives you some idea.
I look at objects, things
on display but all
I see I must see through
my own image
staring down at them
as if my seeing
spoils the sight of them,
their purity of otherness infected,

but then a bus
rolls behind my reflection,
faces looking out
and it feels a sudden grace,
an absolution, to
be in their eyes
for that moment
just somebody
just standing there.
This used to be then and now look at what has happened.

10.VII.23, lune
Compromise is a sort of breakfast. Part of you is still in bed asleep but enough of you is on its feet for you to get to the table, Taking the first mouthful is signing a treaty, yes, it is today and for better or worse I’m here on the battlefield hoping for truce. Coffee has more hope in it than tea. Or is that just me.
So every compromise yields a little nourishment—fatty bacon, soggy oats?—and sets you free to go on. Onward! to work, church, school! Or at least to lunch.

10 July 2023
I thought: today is Proust’s birthday. Then the sun came out. Power of his words, bless the man for going on and on and on and on.

10.VII.23
Cavalry with no horses
Artillery with no bombs
Air Force safe on soft ground—
we do it all with smiles.

10.VII.23
Days many, with fog.
Fog is wonderful it is a person so close, touches you gently, gladly feel it, know it’s there.
When you grow up on islands you come to learn that fog is a visitor, a friend from a far country, sometimes stays a while, then one day is gone.
The sadness you feel when fog has gone away, you feel a little of it still when fog comes back, you know how close you’ll be together, but also how sooner or later you’ll be alone. But mostly you’re happy to see your friend again.

10 July 2023
EMBANKMENT

There am in London at the end of my life. Of course my language brought me here, to save one last time my own mispronunciations in classic fog, chill rain, foreigers all round me, all my own genetics fled into the countryside, Here it seems to me I have done my job, which mostly was composed of gazing across the river at Lambeth and watching pretty women walk along the Embankment near the past me, and trying to say out loud what the mists of seeing said to me. A hard job to
keep so silent and say so much. You should be able to hear the rain, watch Slovak laborers trundle washing machines from truck to door, hear a modest church bell bonging not far away, it is morning, after all, some people believe in God. I am cold, because old. I shiver in a breeze that would once have cheered me. The bench I sit on has not much feel to it, just lift enough. Rest witting back upright, right leg crossed over left knee, the way men did, the way men did. I have a long time left The end of life casts years and years, old smoky
London, a little white packet of Sullivans from the Arcade, breathe in, breathe out, I haven’t smoked in years, now is never, no lasts forever, noisy little black boat on the Thames, river, river, wait for me, I am the man who is your eife, river, river, come from the sea, river, river, tolerate me, tell me what to write, teach me how to read, shimmer with pil slicks to tease my sight, estuary, estuary, I am here for you. But across the river the bishop in his palace distracts the rover with learned speculations, schemes to make prayer relevant in a noisy
world, and I get distracted too, the rain rains harder, my umbrella quivers, across the water unseen Brixton Hih street rolls miles up the hills of Kent, why am I here, why does language always bring me, Grandmother Florence why did you leave, why do you bring me back on ths rainy summer day to meet the precious goal of saying so? Right now the rain is just enough to say.

10 July 2023
Drunk a decade before a draft of taking, 
be chaste, my wit, 
the dawn advised, 
sea bright as could be.

2. 
Times twist together, the Scottish islands in our heads weave then and now tight, stretched taut over the hip of what happens.
3.
I think it meant
a decade is ten anythings,
years, hours, breaths
inhaled two weeks
ago suddenly now,
chaste, purity
of this sudden place
alive with glad forgettings.
Be loud as you can be,  
I’m only listening,  
patient as a turtle shell,  
carapace, shield  
as the words rain down.

2.  
I said my love songs  
to the fog  
just in time,  
it’s gone now.  
Knife blade  
of the morning sun  
gleams on smooth sea,  
off islands clear.
They say the mainland rains today–do we bring our weather with us?

3.
The game called Scrabble Is as close as we come to how the angels do their work, work with the letters of us, in us, that they find to say our next step for us, in us. Remember rivers if ever you doubt. Then come out with me, come out.
4.
Short
and knotted tight
like a song
by Kurtág,
gone almost
before you hear it
but not quite.
But before you switch gender, gents, try growing a beard. Wear it five years then shave it off. Now you know what it feels like to be the one who will never change.

11.VII.23 *lune-ish*
for M.I.

Dear Michael,

Someday in your miraculous Netherlandish skill at still life limn for me a chassis of an old-time radio condensers and wires and incomprehensible whatsises spread out in a landscape where vacuum tubes stand like minarets or temples over a visually crazy town where everything works and hums ad buzzes
and lights up, heats up, and if we’re lucky we suddenly hear Mahler floating down the sky.

11.VII.2023
Make the sound of seeing this, the yuck or yum as the permanent infant in our vocabulary decides.

Then make the sound of listening carefully to the next thing said, then the sound, so loud the sound, of keeping still with no opinion at all! highest note a voice can reach.

11.VII.2023
Doctor Jacobus advises this: sleep in a round bedroom, paint a compass on the floor so you can choose each day or night the direction to which you spin the bed so your head will point when you go to sleep. Every direction from which Sleep comes to meet you empowers sleep with a distinct different rhythm, caravan of imagery. And time is potent too—afternoon nap with head due west
makes imageless energizing doze. For example. Your house can be square or triangular if you dare, but make sure the bedroom is perfectly round.

[For more information, consult Dr. Jacobus’ *How to Sleep*, Babel Press, 2028.]
SLEEP COMES FIRST.

We wake in the womb and work ourselves out. But sleep is Heimat, homeland, primary. Our waking hours are on loan from sleep, and dreams renew them every night. Sleepless means deedless. I woke early and already feel the strain. But birds at the feeder calm me with their focused flurry.

11 July 2023
They sent their words to me, wrapped neatly but my clumsy fingers, you know how fingers can be, over-eager, hurried, and before I knew it all that they had said sprawled out in my head as if I were saying them myself. Who was I then?

12 July 2023
They say a door is coming today. New screen door to replace the old. But still... the idea of a door coming to me! To us, who spend our lives approaching it, eager or hungry or hat in hand. And now we wait calm as we can to see what comes.

12 July 2023
Send me your leaves, nudes, trees, faces, mountains, seascapes, the fine lines steel wires, shadows like knife blades dividing our spaces. Muscular delicacy, tense simplicity. Am I just asking for everything?

12.VII.23
Open the answer
To find the question
Then let the children
Walk around the rose bush
until they see
the bossy Robin red breast
perched on an inner branch
and hear him tell them
What the words mean.

12 July 2033
POET

The dictionary opened fire, the messenger crouched low, hid behind the deep hedges of his ignorance. Not for him to know what the words mean or be wounded by them flying past him. Murmur maybe the few words he knows, all language is a foreign language, o mother, mother help me.

12 July 2023
SAD SONG

Any word, any word from the mattress man who comes to take our sleep away, any word, any word of what we’ll do then, sleep on a sunbeam, make love in a cloud?

12 July 2023
DENDROPHONY
For some years we have been coming to my wife’s family’s cottage on Cuttyhunk Island now ours.
Beside and behind the house are a few trees, a species unfamiliar to me, the sycamore-maple. And it is only this year that I have begun to be able to hear them.
I speak of listening to trees. At home I listen every day, summer and winter, to the lindens, maples, larches, locusts clustered around us. Now when I say ‘hearing’ the trees, that’s shorthand for a subtler, sweeter
process. I listen, listen long and calm, and words and notions form in mind, notions that feel like they’re coming from the linden or the maple. They come somehow tasting of tree. Nothing is heard, but it still is hearing.

And now, close to these sycamore-maples on the island, I begin to understand. I hear the trees back home because we are rooted in the same earth. Their literal roots ate in the very ground I live and walk on, and over the years I’ve lived there, I too have grown roots, we all have them we all do, roots into that
very earth, so we have a sort of brotherly, sisterly, relationship with the trees of our shared earth. They speak, they are close, they comfort. Now on this island I have to learn to listen, let myself feel —as I have not until this very year—a sense of nexus with the earth. Shallow still, but I can feel it growing in me, from me. So now I dare to sit outside beside the sycamore-maple and begin to listen. I promise the tree, these trees, I will say onward what they tell me, what they let me know.

12 JULY 2023
As if there were another way of being right without it showing. We don’t congratulate a tree for showing leaves in April, so take me for granted when I say something obviously true. Stars have horns like mountain goats, children are old men living backwards—things you vaguely remember hearing somewhere long before, Bible or Shakespeare or some teacher who liked to quote Emerson.
But now it just feels weird if true or at least worth quoting next time you run out of things to talk about and your neighbor just won’t leave.

12 July 2023
Or angels, are they.  
Let’s get serious,  
why would we go on and on  
four thousand years  
if they weren’t real?  
Whatever they are  
there is something in us  
that makes them be.  
Or makes us listen.  
You decide,  
I’m too busy hearing  
buzz-saw downhill,  
gull on the roof.

13 July 2023
Wade in the meadow,
walk on the pond.
Let the mind do all the tricks
language learns it.

13.VII.23
And now for the never!
The parachute rises,
hauls an airman
up to his plane,
stuffs him in the fuselage,
folds itself up
and waves goodbye
to the marveling
myriads below,
leaving them to wonder
why do anything at all
when everything else
does everything.
It’s mild July, yet somehow I keep wanting to date this letter March. I knew a woman named that once, but that’s not why. Nothing March about the weather. Maybe it’s just that in olden times the year began then, they were no fools, they knew what spring meant, and solstices, and all the stuff of nature that we are. Maybe I want to begin again, and get it right this time. But it’s still not clear to me, in me, where I got it wrong, a lot or a little, this time round. So let the 13th of July 2023 be the 21st of
March when you pick the year’s number. And let’s see what happens. I’m sending this letter to you because I’m a little scared of keeping it all to myself. Time is a funny animal, I don’t want to annoy it – just think of all the things Time can do and call every one of them now.

13.VII.23
The urgency of stone keeping me to the trail, if I want to walk where the glacier went, God knows I want to be part of all this too, surf on far shore, schooner moored in the bay, presidents serving their terms. Hard to walk on stones to get down to the beach, moving against time, arrogant sneakers toeing a pebble aside. Sea glad. Sea shell,
we intrude on history,
I feel like a child
tearing pages out of a book.
But children are all urgency too.

13 July 2023
What better to do 
this Bastille Day 
than liberate prisoners 
trapped in the mind.

But who might they 
turn out to be?
Names and numbers 
and old addresses, 
lyrics locked in darkness, 
and how shall I set them free, 
by dragging them out 
and thinking hard about them, 
desiring them afresh, dreading 
them all over again, try
to make sense of words that have no meaning now, now, now, now, this precious present? Or is it better to try to forget them absolutely, ship them back to their time, their homeland? Or am I their only country now?

2.
Forgetting is a music of its own. The herring fillets we supped on yesterday abruptly bring to mind a little ramekin of mac & cheese in the 42nd Street automat in 1955. Suddenly the English
horn, the loud bassoon, 
viola creeping under memories. 
So it seems we have stored in us 
everything we need. So 
shut up and start talking.

3. 
Remember the shower curtain 
remember the cut glass mint dish 
on your aunt’s table. See 
what I mean? Remember, ivy 
on the garage, the ferris wheel, 
the voice of Nixon on the ferry, 
_I will go to China_, he said, and I 
was on my way to Wisconsin 
the lake looked just like the sea.
See what I mean? I dip a shard of matzo into peanut butter and still feel I’m allowed to eat.

4.
Notice I leave out my memories, many, of France. I never saw the Bastille if it’s still there, I know it’s still here, in me, in you, waiting for a crowd of rowdy youths to come shatter silence and then what? That’s what I’m wondering, what really happens when we remember? re-member means putting
things together again, shouldn’t it? Help me, kind reader, tell me what I’m trying to reckon, how every memory becomes a kind of person, green skirt on the omnibus, a swan on the river Spree, a firehouse in Flatbush with its gleaming brass pole, no names please, the smoke of a cigarette drifts away.

14 July 2023
When you stretched out that way, that day, across two chairs, I saw you as altar, modest, clean, from some nearby religion with a gentle sense of God. When we lie down we seem to become holy, sacer, at least, something just north of human, no wonder people learned how to sleep, and where to make love. Horses and cows don’t know it. Be horizon it says in us, be the earth all over again and be new.

14 July 2023
Thunder.
Huge flag
flapping in the sky.
The regiment
of otherness
assails our here.
No wonder
thunder scares us,
voice of the unknown
other pounding on the door.

14.VII.23
Pick up a pencil
write with the eraser
then whisper to me
the words you wrote
by rubbing them out.
I think we will be friends.

14.VII.23
Every launch lingers at the dock,
sing a song of waiting while the light lifts
go-to-sea-ers from their hammocks
and the wind waits too,
all the distances furled snug
in every sail,

*come*

*wait with me.*

15.VII.23
= = = = ==

Urgencies abound
but in this sleep
I recognize a gentler pastor who waits
for the word to slip down in me
so I can answer as they say
with my life, doing
as they say what I’m told.

15 July 2023
Undim the dark and lightning did, the house shook from the closest peal, too slim a word for that roof-shuddering forte fortissimo then sleep put everything back together and the dark took care.

15.VII.23
So many other sides
to this one sheet of paper,
you could read anything
in its blank expanse,
a little fly-specked by
flecks of see-through
from the worked-on side.
Range free, mountaineer,
move as you like,
you’re in the country
of holy trespassing.
Just tell us what you find
before you let the paper fall.
Resting my head on my hand
I suddenly had to deal with
the fact that there was bone
between what I felt with my
fingers
and what I was thinking. Bone!
In me! O abrupt anthropology,
suddenly learn what I am.

15 July 2023
A cloud knows how to calm the sea, sink the harsh glare shallow it to kindly radiance so all the sea is bright. Clouds know these things. Clouds are water too.

15.VII.23
Blue mallow
alongside clematis
under sycamore-maple.

O tree of two names
just like us,
you winter here
and know the score, so
tell me wat I should know,

what I should be.
Colors point the way,
blue or pale, but you
are all one green
is it like religion,  
like marriage,  
*unum careo*, one flesh,  
two become one?

How can I be one?  
No organ but the wind,  
no church but the sky  
but it all marries me.

Trees tell us who we are—  
I read that once  
in a woman’s face, my mother  
held in dream.

15 July 2023
after Milarepa

When you keep silence long enough the stone starts to speak.

16.VII.23, lune
Dawn in Dubai is a strange machine, it comes up out of nowhere and everything is red, red dressed in yellow and the wind is hot. I don’t know the name of anything I see, dazed by soft warm brightness so I go back in and wait for my plane.

16.VII.23
But here I am
on the other side
already,
no need to wait,
everything here.
But where is that?
Questions come
even to the humblest—
or so the tree said.

16.VII.23
Cloud strata
weft in palest blue.
Neighbor island
looks like a cloud too.

16.VII.23
Trees in full leaf
summer riches
sometimes you miss
a shriveled autumn
ruddy single leaf,
you’re a child
idling in the library,
browsing the Greek classics.

16.VII.23
= = = = = =

The surfers dress across the street, load their cart with boards and gear, the daily invasion of the patient sea, slave labor of vacation.

16.VII.23
But when I lay there not asleep or only halfway sometimes I lost my sense of who I am, a comfortable anonymity caressed me, I thought of names and numbers that might be me or anyone. Sometimes specifics are lies.

16 July 2023
= = = = = =

I made my mobile take a selfie of a painting on the wall itself. They threw me out of the gallery because I didn’t want an object, just an image, but they sell things.

16.VII.23
So let the spool roll across the carpet and all the twine uncoil, so follow the line you let things make for themselves and find what they have in mind, where does going go when you let go?

2.
It looks like a straight line at first, but gradually contour and texture,
gravity and substance,
make it veer. The sentence
you thought it was saying
changes a little, space
revises thought.

3.
So follow, follow,
A little dust fluffs
up from broadloom
as your fingers trace
the twine, then a little more
when it rises over an old
oriental carpet, then speeds
along polished hardwood
flooring to the doorsill.
And there is stops, the pool idling by the inch-high blockade, tumbled to the side.

4.
So the line leads a little curvy to your own front door. Is it an instruction to go out, abandon the safety of same and leap over the doorsill out into otherness? Or is it, it is a line, after all, you could catch trout with it or fly a kite with it yet bring the kite back from the furthest
skies, a line, you can tug on it and bring the outside in, you can lie there, half on Persian wool half on wood, and pull the world in, welcome otherness and rest there before it, worshipful, at peace.

16 July 2023
Shore a thousand feet way
the surf sings closer,
Listen is what it all says,
ocean, maples, glacier.
Each curve of the ancient
sentence shapes what we hear,
seldom daring to explore
the grammar of natural sound,
as if we needed to believe
that nature only says one thing.
But now the words are distinctly
spoken, spray on the rocks,
we can even catch
a glimpse of what the sun replies.

17 July 2023
Shave the chin—
make it easier
for the air to slip in,
holy spirit’s local agency,
breath of the morning,
breathe!

17.VII.23
APOLOGIA

Who am I
to tell you what to do?
I’m a word in my mouth
I have to speak out—just your luck to be nearby.

17.VII.23
One lovely thing about the sea
it’s hard to lose
the drift of it.

17.VII.23
When does a square have six sides?
When you want to pick it up and play with it.
And there it sits, proud in its way—
if you want to lift a square suddenly there are six of me.

17.VII.23
When the animal comes to resemble its owner, beware. And just be aware of what either of them, both of them, have in mind. In mind for you.

17.VII.23
But when does it begin again
the long long right way
of doing things, tying shoelaces,
singing opera,
walking by the river,
sending a letter back home
when you are home
all the time, where did going
go, why are you here
and shouldn’t you be worried
about nothing going wrong
but everything being so far away,
socks in the bottom drawer,
book on the highest shelf,
cheese shoved back in the fridge
why is everything as it is?
Why can’t shoes lace themselves, why can’t we grow fur to keep warm, has the *Mayflower* gotten here yet why do I have to lick my fingertip just to turn to the next page? And what is waiting there for me even now, beast in jungle, slice of toast waiting on old china? Don’t you understand that if we don’t complain, nobody will, and then the machinery will purr with satisfaction and go on hiding my reading glasses and wiping out cities with tornadoes.

17 July 2023
Large hidden in small,
how old is your mother now
what pocket do you keep
the secret codebook in
they gave you at birth?
Look, some water spilled
on the table, use your finger
to write a word or two,
water through water,
they’ll dry but still be there,
you know it, you did it,
the slightest touch lasts forever.
Lift the latch, the book walks in.
Saunter in me says its pages,
I am a Holy Land enough for now, for you. I am not the truth, but when at last I use me up you will be closer to it, closer and ready. Read me to be ready.

17 July 2023
Any book says that.
Believe it
just enough to read.

17.VII.23. lune
He comes to do the door.
It is a morning thing
any time of day,
learn to open,
learn to close.
A door is what
a house is for.

18.VII.23
My eyes leave off to listen. The island drifts away in fog.

The clock keeps trying to explain everything, works so hard at it, never stops.

Whereas a door at its best drowses in peace.

18 July 2023
BREAKFAST SONATA

1.
Not yet, we’ll wait
Sometimes weather is enough to take in.

2.
Now her plates accept their warm slow burdens, we gather, rather slowly, haste hurts, sloth suits, the bacon’s too hot anyway. Wait, wait. Listen to my dream.
3. Bite if you must eat this pale boiled egg, lather something on your toast, it better not be butter or I won’t share. Coffee heals, mocha makes all the difference.

18 July 2023
Water weeps up slow on shore, consoles us for having to live way up here alone in air far from its primal caress.

18.VII.23
There are reasons
there are seasons
but it’s too early
to ask me what they are.

Come back in October
with a brown leaf
tucked into your blouse—
by then I’ll have borrowed
some answers from these
trees murmuring
on their way to sleep.

18 July 2023
ROTA

Steering wheel
all very well,
go round and round
to get someplace else,

I get the point,
but the Incas
never had the wheel
the books say,

I wonder if I have it now,
bikes can do it
foot by foot
but I don’t ride.
Leave me resting by the mountain lake to watch the priests climb up and down.

18.VII.23
The fog came back
to say good-bye,
to say this hour
is the perfect time
and come again.
Again is always waiting
in sea mist, again
is halfway home.

19 July 2023
There’s a kind of anesthesia comes from looking out the window, everything’s out there now so suddenly no hurt here. Or doubt or dismay or whatever it is we wke with abruptly vanishing in pale sky.
I wonder how annoyed the birds were when we first invaded their sky and they had to learn to share it with our kites, balloons, zeppelins, airlines and worse. Do young birds still tell her tales of the old days when all the sky belonged to them and humans knew their place, down here, scattering seed?

19 July 2023
The title of Dr. Jacobus’ newest collection of essays, *Tree Sea Thee*, identifies the three foi of his appeal to the divine: tree at our side, we ive in its shade and by its fruit, the sea all around, and the other person, each and every, in whom we must come to feel the presence of God.

20.VII.23 Annandale
Translation I suspect has a wondrous purity for the translator—
all feelings roused
find perfect outcome,

mind and heart balanced at last.

20.VII.23
Jome is heart, all the me
so many make, the trees, the trees
of home, density, imm density,
they breathe me some new way.

20.VII.23
Nyi.ma’i.lam, road of the sun
I think she means by showing us right here.
To be right here is to follow the road to the end again and again.

2. Traffic or no traffic things pss by but what they pass remains you and I.
Consider that song and me singing it for lack of a lute.

3.
Very bright morning, very calm trees.
The word for Sun is feminine in Germnic, Tibetan, maybe Japanese. But what do I know of gender overseas? I feel her here on my waking hands.

20 July 2023
The business of begging again.
Set up a tent in the parietal region,
hope for no headache,
snuggle down in what you think and think some more and wait. Surely
the day will come bringing you something, days do. Things to do, buy start slow, like child remembering his middle name
and wandering why
it didn’t come first
and what it means
tobe there at all.
I speak from experience,
little though I’ve had.
Slowly the bck of the skull
wakes from its everlasting
drowsy ballet and shoes
an iage, it flickers
past your tent, grab it
as it goes, even if
you don’t get the right words.

20 July 2023
MANIPLE

a napkin-like cloth to wipe up holy spills.
You learn a lot from accidents especially in church,
what does it really mean when things go wrong?

2.
Din’t tell me devil.
Tell me rather why the good
now and then
takes different forms.

3.
Sings different songs,
the little alto who spoils
the boy soprano in the choir,
o that was me, alas,
it taught me other ways to sing
so only the paper could hear me.

4.
The sun makes shadow—
is that an accident?
Slow as stone moves
friction still does its work,
things move. O the majesty of these great trees to whom I have come home from the sea, is their amplitude an accident?

5.
I think the sun moves into Leo today, speaking of movements and those who move, are moved, come back every morning, sing at the window. Wren, you said, but my ears were in the pillows.
6. Remember correctly, thye wore the napkin over the left wrist, used it to wipe the sacred vessels—gold or silver—after they had served the bread and wine that seemed so much more. We are ready for what we need to clean to be ready for the next thing that happens, the everlasting miracle of what comes next.

21 July 2023
Mercy mouse.  
Trees  
coming closer.  
Live  
till they get here.

2.  
I lost my accent  
along the way  
now nobody thinks  
I am where I come from,  
it is disheartening  
a little, when the street  
itself has forgotten you.
3.
Time is mercy
mousing along,
nibbling the days
neatly, leaving
enough to sleep on
and wake to be new.

4.
Mouse
because little
Mercy
because now.

5.
I have built
(he said)
a monument
more lasting than bronze.
He meant in language,
words, wonders, literature,
but the child leaning Latin
thinks Hmm, he must
mean silver. Or gold.
Or even— did the Romans
have platinum?

6.
So language plays
tricks on itself,
no wonder I think of mice.
But mercy means me mild, my cool hand on your arm. You had just come in the room, the phone had rung, a spam call, some news we learn to ignore, and there you were, fresh from the shower, you stood beside my desk, I leaned my head against your arm. This is the part I mean, this moment more lasting than bronze.
Laudable incident in the morning news, a truck slowly came to a stop, pulled half off the road, so cars moving by could read the clean white metal wall wordless in morning light.
All four cats walked with them through the woods to the stream and all six of them came back. Astonishing serenity—didn’t the stream try to take them with it? How could the woods just let them go? I’m afraid to leave my front door behind me—in my world there seems to be no going back.

21.VII.23
Finding the words
the way birds do,
picking, pecking,
testing, tasting

then to the next
branch, tree,
ravine, marshland,
metropolis.

Language us,
words are so natural
huge wings spread
out by the gull
about to take off. 
About to fly.,
to negotiate 
the whole sky.

22 July 2023
Aftermath–Catholic children hear it as the After Mass and think it means when everything else.

22.VII.23
Leave out laughter—but that’s hard to do, even a piece of wood is laughing at me. I’d better learn to grin as they say and bear it, maybe even learn to smile.

22.VII.23
How can I tell if I’m telling the truth until I say it? The words know, telling is like listening out loud.

22.VII.23
Trees be my seas this while.
Both say true life around us and both speak.

22.VII.23
Waiting on the other side of the bed, that is how the symphony begins, late romantic, Kalinnikov, Glazunov, the cool expanse of sheet warmed only by breath of the one who lies one ear in the pillow watching for the one who will come lie there and make all the music mean.

22 July 2023
I think it’s a wren I hear but I’m not sure. That is a maple and that is a larch, I know because they tell me so, people and leaves. I wonder what trees call themselves, how the one ww call Liriodendron tulipifera signs the messages its roots speak through the ground.

22 July 2023
HOW TO WRITE

Be longer at it, the 2½ foot bat hits the white ball 440 feet. Mean something like that.

22.VII.23
We are gathered here today, on this precious open meadow-like vacancy just outside Paris to celebrate our urgently vague enterprise. Outside Paris, to be sure, because we must always ree,ber to be besdie the pint.

What they call the point is where everybody feels comfortable—the fatal delirium of the unexamined. We have to stare everything in the face, we have to renew the infant-like
wide-eyed stare of just looking at everything, as if for the first time.

Out ancestors in the College de ’ Pataphysique, in their nfailingly playful way, stood in both worlds, abd nyych of their lila, their divine play as qwe called it in Sanskrit, came by hopping from one foot to the other, showing us they knew full well the ordinary nature of things, but played with alterantive perceptions of the ommon wold—to put it in the most boring way.

We, pn the other hand (no foot required) admit we know nothing. We stare at things ntil
we see them clearly, or else get
tired and tumble back into the
comfortable dark.

*We don’t have to know.*

Isn’t that a glorious discovery?
*We wait* for things to tell us what
they are and what they want of
us, f anything. *We wait! We
listen.* That is the foundational
perception and project of our
*Acoustisophy.* Like good
children, we do not tell whaty we
have not heard.

Now, tom bring to a meaningful
close this first world-congree of
the Acoustisophic Society. We sit silently for a quarter-hour in utter silence, listening, then hurry south into the city. Find a place to sit and write, and write down all you have heard along the way.

22 July 2023
But it was otherwise. The clouds chiseled over the prairie—does a lover even dare to call it that, puszta, steppe, grasslands belted round the globe, prairie? Who is he to know such names, his closest contact with the earth the steps down into the subway, A train best, all the way?
2.
But the clouds were there to be seen. As once coming home on a cheap flight front he west he had seen the northern lights, green aurra, over the Adirondacks. Sometimes even we are permitted to see.

3.
Once he stood on an empty little road in Kansas. How own shadow stretched out in dront of him
on the grund. Doesn’t that mean something too? Doesn’t that somehow make him a citnizen of this place?

4. But all he had was the word, that passport into dream, your own and other people’s. He said it again, slow, pray-ree, and again, and the traffic passed.
But the clouds were still there, so shapely, so seeming for him to name them. But all he wanted was to reach up and shape them with his hands. Or let them shape the movement of his mind.

23 July 2023
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But the clouds were still there, still waiting to be spoken. White is not enough, blue welcome enough but not news.

Tell the news, tell what only they can let you know, news about your mother and father dead so many hears, news about what you hide from, not just storms and dragons but from your own desires. You can’t hide things from clouds.

23 July 2023
AT THE OPERA

The overture came afterward, the skaters ringed around the fictive ice, the mezzo mother squealing guidance at her counter-tenor squealing child, then all went dark. Blank. Like inside a pair of trousers when you step into them by night.
2.
So it was the overture after all, the libretto lied—books often do, it’s so gard going on and on telling the truth.

3.
Flights came back, the lake deserted. Empty rowboat seemed to float. Nice trick, floating on no water. And then a head appeared looking back at us
over the stern, a pang
in the music, sudden fear,
a dear friend leaving forever.

4.
I packed up the program again and read the composer’s note: “If Alban Berg can write an opera without music, beautiful, powerful, game changing opera like Wozzeck, I want to write an opera without words, no dialogye, no arias, not even no sprechttimme, no words at all. So I commissioned a poet to write my libretto, since they know better
than most of us how to empty words of meaning.”

I felt insulted, I wanted to jump up
and flee this fancy fakery but then the stage lit up and silent women, dressed like Israeli soldiers, oved in formation to stage center so I waited.

5.
A man came crawling on hands and knees.
A sign hung rubbed his neck swayed as he lurched onward, a word on it in some unfamiliar
alphabet, Georgian? Armenian? Too far away to read in tiny case. He crept dog-like round the ankles of the soldiers who paid no attention to him. Sometimes he’d sprawl across their booted feet, or even curl between their legs passing from one to another. The music got louder and louder. The curtain fell.

24 July 2023
ALGEBRA

The algebra text was green with a hard cover.
It felt like a book but it wasn’t.
not enough words,
toomany numbers.
And all the letters of the alphabet had lost their sounds, their sense and were just signs of this or that unknown.
So it became the child’s work to pry open the numbers and find words, as with any book he would prymopen
the words to find stories or mysteries, or quiet messages to him alone from the language itself. Can numbers feed him too? Can the book become a book? He watches the weird little symbols scatter on the page like insects bored to sleep by the work they do, equal to what? greater than whom? It’s a hard job, but that’s what childhood is for.

25 July 2023
Not a leaf stirs.
Sunlight holds everything in place. The trees abound. That’s what I want to give you when you wake, a vista of intricate emerald right there, here. The new tourism, really being right here.

25 July 2023
LE POETE DE TROIS ANS

Write a word
on the sidewalk
in white chalk
as you have seen
the others do.
Then learn the rain
comes to wash it off,
wash the word
into gutter, gutter
into river, river
into world. Now you
have done your job.

25 July 2023
Implicit,
like mice in a house.
Come with the lease,
comes with the weather.
Wait for something better.

2.
When you see a word
don’t let the letters of it
go unexamined. Words
hide in other words
in other words. Letters
dance for your delight,
look up from what they mean
and set meaning free.
3.
It is now
so you have won.
Simple as that.

25 July 2023
It’s hard to tell what a mountain means. The White Mountains look like angry men railing at the sky. The Catskills here women gently sleeping on their sides. And I saw Everest once alone on the vast horizon and still wonder what or whom I saw.

25.VII.23
From the other room
I can hear hootie-flootie noises. Could this be music? It’s like, what is it like, like maybe, maybe climbing up into a postcard of the Parthenon.

25.VII.23
But if they said so
did I listen?
The clematis
almost lost
among the mallow
under the torrent
of sycamore leaves,
the garden untended.

2.
Remember the old song
I just made up,
When you wake up
it’s easier
to get out of bed
than to get sleep out of your head.
No wonder kids were taught to pray at waking,
it’s a decent way of not being who you think you are.

3.
So I have no skill at gardening,
or only this one:
to leave thighs alone,
free to grow as they choose.
A tree is not a servant,
flowers don’t need to say ma’am.
4.
So later that same day he wrote his first Treatise on Tele-haptics, the science of touching from afar. Weeks later that had become a fashionable spa-like institute where he taught that skill in three-week seminars. Between sessions the learners cooled off in the big pool and he would watch them, seeing how their bodies moved with their new knowledge. And then he woke up at last, thousands of miles from that sumptuous Swiss ex-hotel.
5. Because things need to be there and we need to find them where they are, no long haul cargo ships, no parcels on the porch. Stretch out the mind and find.

26 July 2023
Thunder grumble not too far,
Hence the color of new day.
Remember when people wore clothes,
bent to drink water from fountains in movie lobbies,
remember wether, the way tires rolled slishly along wet asphalt,
remember shoelaces, Javanese shadow-plays, handball courts, molasses?
Now you’re ready to begin. *Buon giorno, sweet animal,* even if it decides to rain.

26 July 2023
But sunlight
suddenly says!
And its yellow
coxes blue
into the sky.
I know, I know,
color is the
first miracle.

26.VII.23
So here I am with space on my hands and nothing but you to fill them with, so I hold tight to what knows so well how to go.

This is a love poem from 1532, maybe by Thomas Wyatt, here very badly transcribed.

26.VII.23
It wanted to be sleep but the city turned, people walked past. Follow them. Follow one seemed a god idea. At least it led onward into distances crowded with unknowns. Waking through a city is a branch of mathematics. Even in dream. The one you had your eye on ansihes in crowd, leaves you free. To do what? Waking is hard
when you’re already there. Stand by the curb, watch the little rain water left trickle down the gutter.

2.
You can do all this without leaving the pillow. Then the big decision comes and suddenly, implausibly, you’re on your feet. A tree shakes its head in the grey light, you feel ots gently reproaching your sloth. But sloth it wasn’t—sleeping is hard work, you wake exhausted, ready
for some consolation, breeze, birdsong, even a phone call. But then the sun comes out, the ancient normalizer, and here you are again again. That voice still speaking in your head.

27 July 223
Write me a night club song, the kind they used to swing before I was old enough to hear let alone go in and listen. It’s not that I like that kind of music, it’s that I yearn for evidence that the past is past, people love antiques because they’re not sure they’re living now, or loving at all, but that’s none of my business. But music is ad I can’t make it. I try banging consonants on vowels and something comes out
but nothing you can whistle as you walk down the street half-drunk on *Honeysuckle rose*.

27.VII.23
CEDAR HILL

The beauty of this place, the trees do all of it, all the work of shape and color, all the murmuration of the leaves it’s up to us to understand, so patient they are, green with giving, n human work needed but to let them be.

27 July 2023
The cause is Christian, half a mile pathway between close hedges vicariously flowered, cool fountain moderate, pale blue over. We are inside a building, a book, a way of thinking.

2.
So to be really here us the way there, be good on earth to get to heaven. Here is there. Maybe
Rimbaud the best
Christian, I am the other.
And who could the other
be but you?

28 July 2023
Don’t show me
what I want to see,
don’t sigh that contract.
Leave me leafless
like a winter tree,
my business is waiting,
using every word to wait.

28.VII.23
Gold merchants of 47th Street or and the little man whlights hte candle on the oon, all gone, lost into thinking.

2.
But beneath bare feet a hard mosaic happens. It is now, and it has always been here. What we know elapses. What we are persists.
3.
So by niw history
and myth indisyinguishable,
a kind of Russian game
you do with facts. Fact!!
Latin, means something made up.

4.
So thinking
is mostly remembering.
The other part is you.

29 July 2023
Quietude, that Camelot, 
our noble causes resting. 
The leaves are busy reading 
what he wind wrote yesterday, 
back in the Middle Ages. 
The silence of now is new, 
cloud drift, naked road. 
A silence with a shimmer in it 
and that too we have to read.

29 July 2023
WRITING SEEMS

sitting at a desk
with many drawers,
cubbyholes,
compartments full
of random things.
And from this cutter
most of it from
before you were born,
you have to rise
with coherence in hand,
something to give
to the government
or to a friend, something
that can love them.

29 July 2023
Moravian morning, I bring you a mystery disguised as myself, solve me, solve me with beauty, and do it fast, before the wind can blow me away.

29.VII.23
Caliber of the steeple aimed at the sky, carry the wishes and fears, turn them into prayers. In the Haute-Savoie the steeples are metal look ie tin, abrupt and ordinary, like life. They’re roundish too, polite, insistent. Were as in our town they stand like daggers in the sky. We climb any way we can.

29.VII.23
Along a narrow lane with Talmudic cleverness a camera wielder catches glimpses of the waxing moon. The moon through trees—what better proof do we need of the rich genetics of the mind?

30 July 2023
Do roses taste
a bird fly over, a
shimmer of shadow
feeds their color?

We call them ;seses’
and resume to number them
but they are infinite,
the palm of your hand
is part of geography.

And from the next
word out of your mouth
science can rebuild Nineveh.
Or Camelot if you prefer, Christians and Jews dancing together on cobblestones in rain.

30 July 2023
PREDILECTION

forecast the taste of a stroopwaffel nibbled on the Herrengracht right here in your home town, East Anyville, Iowa.

I mean the mind of things comes before and follows after,

I mean the shadow more than the branch, branch mere than trunk,

yet the whole tree is a colony of heaven.
Forget geography,
Think about place.

30 July 2023
Bring me two glasses of water if you please, one to drink, one to dip my fingers in so I can remember with my skin the real nature of what I’m taking in. This cool clinging pleasant thing on its way to being me.

20.VII.23
When I saw the news clip of the broken roller coaster I thought of how we used to stand on Bleecker, watching apples roll down Barbara’s spine. O body you eternal Playland.

30.VII.23
LOST WORD

Whatever the word was it cracked as I woke and a voice came out that said words never crack, you never woke, sleep on and try again. So I gifted from Stuyvesant Falls a shield-shaped something made of running water and held it like a mirror to the sky, so the world upthere could see what I see and then I woke, word ntact, hands dry.
2. But what was the word. It was what it is right now, noon far, looms weaving lace curtains over a century ago, I trip on shadows. Shadow—there’s a good word. Shade, yes, but where does the ow come from, it is a cry of pain, or sound of sudden recognition?

3. So I dont know what the word was
or even what it is.  
I will sit patiently  
by the big window  
waiting for it  
to remember me.  
That almost always works.

4.  
Satisfy my guilt,  
blame me for the weather.  
Caution. Captives  
of a forest if we start  
counting trees.  
A school bus pauses in shade.  
I’m getting closer  
to letting it find me  
for the first time again.
5.
Try another language, lad, the sunlight whispers, one you don’t know, Cree, or Sami, or the one even we’ll be speaking a thousand years from now.

6.
That’s exciting to think about but I am now, a needy child. Girls play with dolls imaging them onward alive, I play with words hoping to corral them, maybe even ride one or two
all the way to what I mean. There’s the word, the wonder! We are mean to each other but we mean well, how can one word mean such things? I wake at last, lost in turbulent vocabulary. Back to the window. Study the calm trees—they speak without words. I hear their eloquent peace.

31 July 2023
HOLIDAY

Clarity is cumbersome.
Mumble cross-eyed through dark sunshine.

31.VII.23
STUYVESANT FALLS

I sat ub the car and listeed, you got out and surveyed, showed me a hoto of what I was listening to. Kids in bathing suits ran by, adding evidence. Lazy men have all the luck.

31, VII.23
Wait to want more, winsome means friendly to look at, lavender soap in a Delft dish? Bank teller’s smile even handing money out?

Wait to want more information. The books are bleating on their dusty shelves but pay no mind,

the river keeps you safe from any Ohio over there.
Listen till the want really begins. Focus. Desire is your only lens.

31 July 2023
The lame deer limping through the woods suddenly turns and looks right at you. You know suddenly, that you are chosen. Chosen to spend your life being kind as you can. Now you can walk back home and know it. Amd know how.

31 July 2023
It’s easy to be cold
just ask your bones
they need all your meat
to keep them warm,

it’s easy to be dry
just ask your lips
when there are no kisses
and the room is dark

it’s easy to be here
just ask your tired feet
they have walked to Babylon
every day and back.

31 July 2023