

GOAT SONG

Goat Song

The old goat sighed, lifting first one hoof then another over the remains of the seasons. He had tried to invoke a world, embody his words.

And yes, spring summer fall winter took form, wheeled in cycles and everywhere the plants and little animals rejoiced, colors and music floated through the leaves, browns and greens became a medley of sound in the half light, became wind and in the midst of all stood a man and a woman, opening themselves like flowers to each other, and his words made mountains and streams, the whirling bark of trees traced vowels and consonants, roots plunged deep into pure sound.

Then a scream shattered the scene.

And what remained?

An old goat and his song.

The leaves of autumn light the ground.

What's left to say

He was watching the parade
The clowns, the words, the trumpeteers
And in his dream he was awake
Or he was awake and dreaming.
He closed his eyes.
No matter, he heard the drums.
He opened his eyes a second time
And saw himself marching
Now to a different tune
A martial cha-cha-cha
And wet his pants.
There is little more to tell.
The daily Tribune records
That during the St. Jude Day Celebration
Saturday passed and a forgotten man
Had died, shouting blessings
Upon one and all.

Out of Time

When they removed the tree they moved the place
Or rather the place became a barren field
Where light through the green, still moving shade
No longer marks the ground like rain.
And yet here I am with you,
Your face bent over mine the air
rippling with laughter the tree
covering us in its bright shadow the earth
yielding as we fall out of time. Out of time?
What is left but song?
Listen! the ringing in the air, this rain
These tears hammering out the tune, time and place.
He, she, and all you love, draw near.

Windflower

Come with me, two
three jumps but
don't look back.

Lately angels
have been falling.

The garden is rank
With anemone.

Fifty Words

We blindly feel our way

Along the wall, then think

To dig, but never deep enough.

On the other side, we homer on,

Some fifty words to hold against

The light. A tiger leaps through us

As if we were not there.

It mauls its prey. We break

For lunch.

Ibidom

Ibidom. Is no thinking thing here but the peepinghouse round it goes is there nothing there from sea to rounda coda no knowing no browbeating to hoedown the adamses and damsdes looking roundaway the wailing goes awagginawaning about the off wall but there shebares all to what is not there the museymusik makes you trot and drop so rainruns and her lastofall. There!

Spartoi

If we were to sow our teeth,
There would come stories
To make us shudder
Like the one about a desperately
Happy old man who gave up
His love of life to become
A gravedigger and lied
To those asking whose grave
He dug, falsely saying
He was looking for treasure
But so far had found only gold.

Spartoi: the 'sown men' of Greek mythology, born from dragon's teeth. Cadmus in founding Thebes had for good reason slaying a dragon, sacred to Ares, and was advised by Athena to sow its teeth. The genealogical line of the Spartoi ends in a great many tragic stories, those of Oedipus and his spawn among them. In death, Cadmus and Harmonia, his wife, became snakes. It does not seem to have been a punishment. It is worth noting that Cadmus is said to have brought the Phoenician alphabet to Greece. The result we all know well. One might ask why are snakes sacred to the gods. To understand that would be a treasure. It may be necessary like Cadmus to become one.

The Fall

He fell (he was always falling)

Or rather, he jumped, missing the water

That would have taken him, leaving his remains

to flow in the rhythms of his speech,

Washed clean like one hoping to please

Instead of what was, a silent heap,

Though there was heard from a nearby street

What some would call a melodious scream.

Hypnos and Thanatos

Though sleep be not death,
it is a gentleness
upon which the head
may fall.

Sleep makes death
bearable, even
possible.

Autumn's Child

I see you now, child, wrapped in vines and visions,
happy to find a place to hide, laughing hoping someone will find you.
Don't call out. No one will come.
Let the wind be your voice, just as you hear mine now.
It's autumn and the leaves rustle alive for one last song before winter.
Someone will hear the wind laughing in the trees.
They will see you in all your glory.

The High Ridge

The mist on the mountains lifts

ghostly greens glimmer

and a new day darkens the valley

far below—your fingers tracing

a line across the high ridge

that runs just above my eyes:

I hold my breath—a sudden

swoop of wind and wing

Nighttime in the Lyceum

Before the light changed and I forgot
the rules for how to see things as they are,
day was day and night was hidden in my heart.

Wild Iris

for Zoe

There's that garden

that none

need pardon.

There wild Iris grows

beneath the trees

it loves.

They catch the light

and make its song

their own.

How a man becomes the sea

The moment she touched the old man's hand

He lost his sight, yet standing lost upon the sand

He heard the light upon the waves like keys.

She sang and let him go and like the wind he sighed.

None knows what song she sang or how he blindly

Played with light or how a man became the sea.

Surprise

Suddenly
this morning
I knew the rainbow
to be a bird

of my soul
taking flight
and vanishing
into cloud and sky

as I am bound
to do, shimmering
not with color
but surprise

to be at last
not here.

Sewing

Is it possible to love
and be alone? he asks,
but she, worrying at buttons,
just mutters, Some days,
my love, are better
than others.

now east now west

now east now west

the road has a mind of its own
and my feet obey

the rest of me stays behind
treelike

above
the sky grows gentle

MY HEART OPENS

the road goes on
as if not knowing

which way is best

Foraging

Last night the raccoons foraged
in our backyard: there were grapes,
bread, cheese, wine and figs
we'd left out 'til morning.

All the while we slept

and I, dreaming of dreaming,
tasted honey and found you
close, pawing softly, hands
and feet rhythmically climbing.

In the morning there were tracks
on my arms and legs and you,
looking out, cursed the varmints
gently and, like a detective, traced
your fingers through your hair
and could not help but smile.

Man

What goes
like a wolf
in the morning
like the sea
in the afternoon
and the wind
at night?

The wolf is desire.
The sea is the journey.
The wind is what remains.

The answer is always man.

Botanical Terminology

-for so k

So, here you are

only different in form

prima puella

'heart blooming

irises'

even at night.

Each Alone Together

From where I sit
I can hear the rain
And see the desert bloom

It's but a room
Like yours,
On a street like yours

What we've done
To each other
Cannot last forever

Outside a girl plays
In the rain
And gathers flowers

She sees me watching
And laughs,
She could be crying

She's rooted there
As I am here,
Each alone together

The Dead Don't Talk

I know why

the dead don't talk

to the living:

it hurts

to remember

and we stopped

listening

Oranges

He was determined this time not to cut his fingers as he sliced the oranges. He would focus and keep his fingers well away from the blade. He remembered all too well how previously his blood had flowed onto the oranges and pooled on the plate. He knew it wasn't just because he was getting old, fading into memory and the lure of the trees and his first kiss. She had been as nervous as he and had closed her eyes. Now all he could think of was feeding her oranges and the taste on her lips. And suddenly, she had bitten his lip, making it bleed. And then, more softly, she was feeding him. She was delicious and he . . . he was lost in the trees. He put the knife down and wept.

Getting it up with Shakespeare

Love, friends, is deadly. You may wonder,
Am I suffering from a broken heart
Or has love, freely given,
Not been returned? To which I say,
Yes, O Yes, Yes!
Beat the drums and let the bagpipes play
And I will march ripe into that narrow patch
Of mind and sand and play, She loves me
She loves me not, and haply saw
My soul in two.
I shall send her flowers,
Long purples that prickly boys
Call a grosser name,
But she will say as maidens do,
"How could you be so lame?"

One and Done

You sit across the page, spelling

Your name like mine

Except it rhymes

And no one suspects you are lonely

Or looney or so hungry

you could eat this paper,

folding it into a star

popping it in the microwave

where you and I and the universe

will be one and done.

Digging in the garden

Digging in the garden I find
but earthy loot: worms, beetles,
pebbles and ocean shells
and a blackened shard to cast away
for luck and there in the shade
of a supple palm, taking hold
where it should not be, a girl :
I think of Phaiakia and Nausicaa
washing her clothes for some
beggar like me, rough-hewn
in all but speech and she lingers
beside the pool, wondering
if it be a god or beast or bard
that shapes her soul seaward
to be free. She looks and looks,
not believing what she sees
or what she feels. He tells her
of a younger, stranger man
who will come for her
when the spell is broken
and she as wild as the sea.

Autumn Rain

This autumn rain comes
on me strange
as you and I lie
beneath the ledge
hold hands and kiss
and say goodbye.

When shall I see you again:
in Winter when I am dead
or Spring when you flower
or Summer when you rise
with the waves upon the beach
and make love
to every passing eye?

No, it will be as today:
the rain drop drops
like leaves like tears
that hold our love
and all that's lost.

I shall come
as surely as Winter
and die a thousand deaths.

You too will come
and lie upon these
fallen leaves
and give me up

again.

You shall come
as you always do
dressed in pearls
and make it rain.

Oranges

He was determined this time not to cut his fingers as he sliced the oranges. He would focus and keep his fingers well away from the blade. He remembered all too well how previously his blood had flowed onto the oranges and pooled on the plate. He knew it wasn't just because he was getting old, fading into memory and the lure of the trees and his first kiss. She had been as nervous as he and had closed her eyes. Now all he could think of was feeding her oranges and the taste on her lips. And suddenly, she had bitten his lip, making it bleed. And then, more softly, she was feeding him. She was delicious and he . . . he was lost in the trees. He put the knife down and wept.

If you speak

This silence wants not your word
unless it be like wind to flower
raising its hallelujah to the bloom
of sky, unknowing as morning
kisses are to lovers not knowing
what else to say or do but sigh:
if you speak, I will surely die.

Reading Lesson

(for Peter)

Mom, who is dad talking to? Friends who write.

Where did he meet them? In books.

Is he talking to himself? Yes.

Is he crazy? Yes, a little.

Will I be crazy like dad one day? Just keep reading.

Can I read dad's books some day? Of course, he is talking to you.

Are you crazy too, Mom? A little. I am talking to you, aren't I?

But Dad is so quiet when he writes. Yes, he talks and talks.

Like me? Yes, little one, like you.

For Rita Dove

Not psyche but a nail
that bites hard, holds
true and rusts into
spring ahead of
the flowers, she
outlasts the wood
the pain
me.

Moon Walk

Walking through days
I have walked through
long ago, same
step and stride, same
heart wanting something

more; yet today
is the only day
I can't remember you
Walking through the years
to find me standing

here alone, longing
for the moon,
Its light buried
in my heart of hearts:

Be with you soon.

Summer Rain

If it would only rain my words would pour forth like girls and boys too young to know shame O they are bold as I would be the rain falls I am young again dance touch while the music plays so falls the rain O she is here there are tears of joy tears songs of praise for the beauty of the day earth yields up its flowers to her hand turns to gentle thunder her body lifts and holds her laughter makes the night shudder unbinds her hair and falls to me now here now there like summer rain

Natura naturans

It hit, which is another way of saying 'it happened', whatever the pull of gravity or the water rising over the banks into homes built on the flood plain or the constellations in their peculiar but inevitable configurations countenanced. It hit like a hot iron let stand too long and so became a sort of dark commentary de rerum natura, ironic, steaming with the smell and heat of compost, natura naturans. And so she left him and traveled near and far until she came to where all the trouble had begun, the yearning, pure and simple, without an object or home, without knowing, and there things stood as they had always been except now she was on her own for the first time and became somehow heedlessly clairvoyant, stirring up memories and desire and crosstalk among the young and the old, sounding more like the bleating of goats and howls of wolves, each on edge for what would happen next, though it be but more of the same. It hit, which is another way of saying, everything and nothing changed.

Nothing Shines Like Black

play you play you

Circe's bouncing boy

ol' man bring back

your leaping joy!

play you ol' man

wolfish grin to hide

moly moly

molly in her sty.

playyou playyou

Circe's whip and crack

O O O NO

nothing shines like black.

Dry Grass

It was not you I was looking for or needed nor was I the Ramon or Ramona you hoped for. We made do, as they say, and built a house and a life several miles from the Itacah River to be safe when the spring rains came. There were no children, of course, but there was a garden of stone, sand, and stalks of jibati that kept the land and constellations in place. When you died, we went right on living together in the house built when you were as young and old as you would ever be. The folks on the other side of the Itacah never come this far west. They say these are the badlands, but we call it home. There's no need for talking. There's nothing to say. Don't mistake these words for speech. It's just wind sweeping through tall dry grass.

Gaius Valerius

A previous engagement has kept me occupied for seventy-four years
and so I missed a chance to dine with Gaius Valerius.

His invitation read simply: *Mortui mortuis solum loquuntur.*

There was no mention of time or place. I thought it strange.

Either I am half-crazy or I am a non-sequitur

*(Disclaimer: This 'poem' refers
to no one living or dead
or otherwise not breathing
)*

Not sure what this is,
antipoetry or just
bad poetry, if
even that.

That's what friends are for –
to bang the pot
and make it sound
like all is lost
or time for bed.

Surely, you will like this not!
Or else, I'm doomed,
though Daisy knows
there's room enough
to brood for two.
(You know the tune.)

A rose is a rose
and nothing else
will do, she says.
A worm would settle
for nothing less. You,

you bitch and moan, then dance,
hand to hoof and hoof to hand,
dressed in nothing more
than you. You beg,
Bring down the moon!

But all I do is cough
and pee in bed
and call stray cats like you
a friend.

.....

Be well! Or if it is too
late, make the best
of a sorry fate,

Or slam the door
on what is a face
so much like yours

It must be fake.

(Myself? I can't stop lying.
It means the world to me.)

(What is the sound of a door
already shut? A blue, blue sky
or a wish to die. Or not.)

(What do you know for sure?
Cogito,
ergo cogito.) No more.

Actually, I could go on
but Daisy says it's time for bed,
time for love is what she means.
You know, hand in hoof or hoof in hand.
Whatever. Love or hate.
We'll not go quiet in the night.
That's for sure!
In the name of father
mother orphan child,
let it be so.

A Word-Song

Orfeuteute taloon playe usinedie crye u u tinnibus cum tenebrum u fwoeman lessly hoedown the river a he ad full stop.

The story of Orpheus after he comes back to the world of the living without his beloved Eurydice. His music now makes all things echo with his sadness. The Maenads tear him limb from limb. His disembodied head is thrown into the Hebrus River where it floats out into the Aegean Sea to the island of Lesbos, the island of poets. Note the sound of a woeful flute playing up to “ufpf”.

Dog Days

When they say they love you
Your words your laugh
Your thin gray beard
Your sad brown eyes
Your cough your bark
The gap in your grammar
Your mumbling and grumbling
Your broken line, the loss
Of your soul, the stake
In your heart et cetera sera,
You know you are finished
And it's time to go.

Below the Pond

On a walk through the field we come out below the pond
and see a bird floating as if on its own reflection.

It is still early, though the light seems of an evening
when first I found rest in the quiet of your eyes.

Melville's Dog

A sudden siren
And Melville leaps up
Still chasing Hawthorne
And his blessing.

It was only an ambulance
Going door to door
In the same way a dog
Looks to do its business.

The Stars Below

Mind runs like water

over rock and root

and seeks to fall

to the stars below.

A Lullaby

I hear my name
And know it lies.
I hear the wind --
A lullaby.

There is no kiss
Like that of rain:
There are no lips
to part and die.

There is no truth
Not even pain
to hold you here
Inside my mind.

Screethes and Sciffs

The big wind,

press of leaf,

earth-edge,

who creeps there?

pleynly arcing wur

screethes and sciffs

erth chilly clumfs lern

Barnabe and the Contessa

Sausage and sacrifice,
Sauerkraut and bad dreams,
Vaseline and you.

Did you know they dropped Walt Whitman's Brain?

The gods attach themselves
to us like scars.

Next time the Father
will send his Son
as a dog.

Oscar's Wag: Domini canis.

The minotaur is guilt:

The bull's song
as dissonant
as syntax.

A lie is a lie is a lie is like
I love you love you love you love me.

Don't cry.
There is no sacred order.

Personae

I play the round

'til at last alone adrift

almost a ghost I

lose myself

and take to bed

and play the part

of one who's dead.

Memory

He mistook her
in her great age and beauty
For a tree
And sat with her
And spoke to her
Silently as trees do.

He asked her for a song.
The wind crept up
And played with her hair.
The birds came and sang for him.

He asked for truth.
She closed her eyes
And said wind is water
And water life.

He asked for love.
She sighed
And remembered when she was a girl
And had asked him
To hold her.

He remembered too.

Only then did it begin to rain.
The wind turned cold
And she was gone.

For the life of me

Yesterday before school I watched the sun rise over the trees but for the life of me I couldn't remember what I was supposed to do next.

The trees

I can't remember

Yes! It was

The sun

Life

Above . . .

Turn the page

Turn the page and you will find
The emptiness you have been searching for:
A blank page is waiting for you,
Alone now for the last time,
Yearning for all that is not there,
Each word you write so full of life
You'll never want to turn the page again.
The sun will spin and the moon will weave
Itself into the mystery of the night
Where now you find yourself
As you truly are: not really there at all.
Let the land flourish and be whole,
Let the thunder bring you home.

Call Parra Neruda

Call Parra Neruda and see how he likes it

He has a fine wife who does what she pleases

I see

Call Parra Neruda and see how he likes it

Love's cornered the market on health and disease

I see

Call Parra Neruda and see how he likes it

Piss off at three, we're shooting the breeze

I see

Call Parra Neruda and see how he likes it

We die so often we forget how to breathe

Memorial

This tree grows to the stars
in remembrance of the dead
lost to all memory, its root
the earth upon which I stand
searching through the night,
its leaves leaping into fire
giving to each lost soul
a home in the deathless dark.

Ήιδης

Persephone

demands you

Love all

Suffer all

and fall away

See yourself

in a flower

she tells you

you are beautiful

and you too

will die

over and over

and over

until you know

what she knows:

She is your bride.

Not a Myth

Out of blood comes anemone
Comes the flower the maiden holds
And falls in love with death, the truth
Of spring, not the myth,
a bird that sings at night
and sings alone,
the love herself denied, a sacrifice
that makes of art a vow
be true to death in life, no signs
but discarded treasure found,
a comb for her golden hair,
a paper knife, a silver coin,
a button missing from her blouse,
the relics of an empty house.

The Man Who Cried When It Rained

Why are you crying?

Am I crying?

Yes, you are. Is there something the matter?

No. I've had a good day except, of course, for the rain.

Maybe you should get some help.

What kind of help?

Like from a friend.

You're my friend.

But I can't help you.

Why do you think I need help?

Because you are crying for no reason.

But I told you.

What?

About the rain.

The Myth of Narcissus

de quo consultus, an esset / tempora maturae visurus longa senectae, / fatidicus vates 'si se non noverit' inquit. . . . Everywhere there are mirrors if we but knew how to look . . . in the trees and in the wind that they catch but cannot hold, in the mountains and in the clouds that rest upon them before the wind comes, and in all the varieties of water: rivers, pools, oceans and, yes, in your tears that are more like rain than you will ever know, and most especially in every dream, fantasy, delusion, and lie . . . in every act of the imagination and in every sight, smell, and touch . . . your skin, this kiss. . . in such images we find ourselves . . . not something, but not nothing either . . . we see as if in a mirror the essential movement of mind through which there is anything at all, through which there is meaning . . . and, like the wind in the trees, that meaning is elusive. . . we are like Narcissus who at first did not recognize the image in the clear pool as his own; we too experience the world and its meaning as if they were there to be discovered and precisely not as something for which we are responsible . . . all that there is is the reflection of our own minds at large . . . should we come to know ourselves as Narcissus did, we would know that we are responsible for everything, that without us there would be no joy and no death, no love and no suffering . . . according to the ancient story, Narcissus remains eternally enchanted by his own reflection in the River Styx . . . If we too come to know ourselves would not we also remain frozen in time as if we had encountered some Medusa . . . to know oneself guilty of every act of cruelty would surely turn us to stone . . . or would we like Narcissus in Melville's account plunge into the pool and drown . . . Melville tells us that the image Narcissus beholds in the water is the ungraspable phantom of life and *that* somehow is the key to it all . . . **CONSIDER YOURSELVES WARNED** . . . as was Narcissus: that he would live a long life if only he did not come to know himself . . . this way lies madness . . . as there is in the very capitalization of that warning . . . shall we like Ishmael remain on the bank of that pool, frozen by cowardice and fade into a living death . . . or like Ahab seek to embrace the image of ourselves and drown . . . **BE WARNED** . . . just so this early morning warns me as the coming light fades into night . . .

The Idiot

He went about tapping and rapping. The little hammer became part of his hand, the one that wasn't there, amputated to save his life. He could stretch his missing hand and phantom fingers, but they weren't there. Now he was wondering what else wasn't there. He wondered about the wind, how it seemed to caress his skin, and he knew it too wasn't there. He wondered about his other hand, but decided not to take the chance. He tapped on doors and trees and tables and chairs and, sure enough, they weren't there at all, for they all seemed the same. He wondered about colors, especially the orange of oranges and the blue of the sky and rainbows. None of them were there at all. One day he broke a window with his tapping but nothing changed, so he put down his hammer and decided to live sensibly like everyone else and prepare to die.

Is it Poetry?

Poetry is inspired song. The breath is the soul of the poem. The poet gathers the air around, the blue from the sky and her curling eyes, the warmth from the sun and his lover's body . . . and sings. The air is measured, the lover's body rolls with the waves and her eyes become one with the night. In the morning, the poet crawls out of the sky like a bear, stretching full out, searching again for the sweetness, searching for the sun in the movement of cloud and leaf and desire. He sings. If his words resound in skin and bone, in the stone-cold night, if he enchants the air with his song -- it is poetry. If you have to ask if it is poetry, it is not.

Theseus sails again for Crete

Daedalus builds his labyrinth by following the blueprint of the Minotaur's own step and thereby deceives the beast into believing it is really free. He understands that this creature, like its human cousins, does not realize how its path loops back upon itself and how iron necessity rules its movements. Theseus sails again for Crete to set us free. Again he raises the black sail, signaling to the Father his defeat.

The Greatest Hypocrisy

Nietzsche is dead. Who killed him? We did. We heard him, we loved him, we spoke his words so passionately we almost thought we were overcoming, with a nay and a yea and heigh nobby ho, but we weren't and we didn't and we won't and he died.

Where is that?

During a thunderstorm when everyone else was running for cover, one woman remained outside and seemed not to be bothered in the least. They all looked out from their hiding places and wondered at her. It didn't hurt that she was strikingly beautiful. Well, soon enough they all came out into the storm, feeling a bit ashamed, I suppose. At first, they couldn't keep their eyes off her, glistening as she was in the rain and flash of light. Eventually, however, their eyes followed hers to the sky and what they saw was only a roiling grayness that seemed to envelop the earth. They asked her what she saw.. Home, she said. And they, like the dumb little fish of another story, asked, "Where is that?"

Staying Awake

In the resonant silence was the multiform totem of all his past lives as a boy who yelped and snarled and scampered like so many wild animals and then as a youth who learned to shape his words to fit the hearing of others as fearful of him as they were of themselves and then as a father of three children, toothless furies, all of whom would run away to some neverland, though he could still see the conscientious discontent in the downward slant of their eyes that would suddenly look up and straight through you like glass, and now there was no one but himself and his memories, no wife rooted to this earth, no kin to whom to be kind or kind to him, lying awake in the darkness perhaps for the last time or maybe not, but still good practice for staying awake when his whole world would go away, a ritual he had begun as a child when he first felt the wind outside his window cutting through him like grass and the leaves just out of reach fluttering in the early light, he listening now also to the hum and roll of his breathing, feeling blindly for the iron thread that sews together all beginnings and endings, his chest heaving like the hills and mountains that roll and swell and fall as surely as any ocean, though it was also true his body had always been alien to him and, if possible, more so now that it was but a shelter that was collapsing about a stranger who would soon enough depart, leaving no one nowhere and nothing to hand on to another except that which, being all in all, is nothing but a hope and a prayer to the living.

Blue Hair and All That

For -Bel

In the beginning your hair was blue like fire and you had webbed feet and no knees. You were different and beautiful and strange and somehow despite all the daily crushing normalization, all those pretty pictures of what we are not, despite all the soulless practicalities of life and more and there is so damn much more, especially the cool hypocrisy required just to get along, you are still strange and different and beautiful, blue hair and all.

She: What? Where did you get all that? Was it something I said?

He: You tell me. Where does 'all that' come from?

She: That's not an answer and you know it.

He: Sometimes I don't seem to know the difference between a question and an answer.

She: That seems pretty basic to me.

He: The "not knowing"?

She: No, "the difference". It's the simplest thing. You can't keep answering a question with a question. It's annoying.

He: Well, then, let me try again: a question is when you hear the wind calling and an answer is when you stop listening.

She: You're so strange!

He: I suppose so. Hey, is that blue hair natural?

She: You tell me. What do you think?

He: And your feet, they're webbed? And you have --

She: I know, I know, I have no knees and all that.

She had had quite enough and told him so, though the air was moving. When she spoke again, she asked almost in a whisper, "Is my hair really blue?" But this time, all she heard was wind.

Hovering

That I hover two inches above the ground seems not to have been noticed by anyone, least of all by family or my closest friends, except for once when a child tugged on my sleeve as if to pull me back to earth. No matter, for the birds call to me and, how it is I cannot say, I understand. It is a comfort. They too, however, find me strange and wonder why I cannot fly with them and catch the morning light. I tell them, the night still holds me back.

The Man Who Couldn't Love Someone Like You

He had once been a happy man. He had loved everybody, boys, girls, old women who thought themselves still vibrant and sexy, and old men with dangerously foul breath. He found lovable what others considered obscene, like protruding teeth or flapping ears or a nasty looking scar across the forehead. He even found drooling as naturally becoming as sweat. He couldn't help himself. Others thought he was delusional or simply a dirty old man, until one day, he suffered a head injury, having slipped off a ledge while ogling sagging sunbathers. After he recovered, he now found crippling fault with everyone. His constant refrain was, "Who could love someone like you?" He said this whether the person was overweight, stuttered or blinked too much or had dull brown hair or had one too many eyes. He reserved a special place in hell for redheads, whom he previously had loved to distraction. Some remembered the "dirty old man," but now putting their full faith in what had before been but a naive myth, that he had once been a lovely human being. They asked him what had changed and he said, "I woke up." One day he took a good look at himself in the mirror and saw the faults he found in others in himself: unruly hair, yellowing and missing teeth, wrinkles that made his flaccid face look like a prune -- he even thought his skin had turned dark purple. So be it, he concluded, and banged his head as hard as he could against the glass. This time he didn't wake up.

Fragment

```
]
]
]
]
]
] remember]
```

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

Porridge, she said,

Doesn't rhyme with orange,

And then, as if upon a stage,

Danced a golden tango

Upon my bed. O, I said,

That's how it's done,

A golden orange on my head.

Kiss and Tell

Who but a god
Could look at you
Sweetly laughing
And not die

For a kiss, dying
Again and again
Like gods of spring
that never truly

Die. Your lips
Like night
hold back the day
And close my eyes . . .

Awake! Awake!
You are no god
To kiss and tell
Of life and death.

The Woman Whose Lovers All Had Green Eyes

The Woman Whose Lovers All Had Green Eyes -- or so she told me, though when I looked, my eyes were as blue as the sky, just like hers. She said that's because I'd had other lovers too. That was hard to figure, but then I remembered my first love and her eyes were as blue as the moon, though she said I'd mistaken her for someone else. Maybe so. Maybe I was thinking of you. It's hard to know. There've been so many.

Two Fingers or Three

(boy girl, sitting on a bench in lamplight)

There's something else bothering you, isn't there?

No, I'm fine.

No you're not.

I tell you I am fine.

I'll believe that when you can tell me how many fingers I am holding up.

Two.

No, I was holding up three.

No you weren't.

Yes I was. Try again. How many fingers?

Two!

No, three again. Something's not right.

Well, there's nothing wrong with my eyes.

Maybe not, but I know there's something bothering you.

You're right! YOU are bothering me.

I knew there was something.

I hate how you always think you know.

Like now?

Exactly! I'm leaving.

Then leave.

I can't.

Why not?

Because I don't know where to go.

Home?

No.

Why not?

I can't tell you.

Well, you can come home with me.

Thank you.

Two fingers or three?

Just drop it.

What?

You got what you wanted, right?

What's that?

Me.

Presence

I walk along the spinning
shore, the moon, a wheel
of a thousand nights.
We shared a dream
of another life,
you here with me
in the dying light.

Song Birds

This hand, cracked and crazed
When lifted up to shield the eyes
That upon a massacre of birds
would not close or look away,

Became a claw, and then a voice,
Not of any earth-bound thing,
Cried out to the falling sky to stay
Until the darkness covered all,

Then flew away on wings of fire
And turned all song into a prayer,
Winged words that none would hear,
the silent tally of our despair.

A Way of Dying

He held her feathers in his hand

But the wind took them for itself.

There was nothing but these words

To write on this dry coarse paper,

Her skin, the red ink she died of

Running off like a mountain stream.

Adieu

A day of solitude
That is itself a tale
Of haunting thoughts
That give the house
Its living space,
The very edge
Of what is not.

Ghosts gab and gimble
In every slant of light,
Strut about and claim
The crowded house;
You a guest,
they bid adieu,
Rid of you at last.

Out here beyond
the riot of the self
a boundless bell,
a silent joy,
You alone can hear.

Is that all, no Word?
It is enough. If more,
There's none to tell.

Blossoming

What you see is not the flower --

Lo, the flower unfolds itself

Within you and behold! You

Are there as though one apart

from the blossoming of your soul.

Lonely Doesn't Tell You

Lonely doesn't tell you
how a bird sings through the night

how the wind rises and falls
like your body to my touch

Lonely doesn't tell you
What the lone wolf knows

How the moon yields
to the night and burns.

Where the Sound Goes . . .

for my students

Where does the sound go?

The distant bell
the laughter of children

the echo of these words
these tears
that to paper fall
like every drop
of rain

the thunder and crack
of lightning
on a cloudless day

the silent cry of love:
O love, love.

Follow the sound.

Follow the sound
of wind & trees
of every leaf
that falls.

There I will be --
in your heart
and you in mine,
and you in mine.

Song for Richard

You spoke the only true word I know
And that word became an open wound
They cleaned with lye, not knowing
Your pain, your tears were like wine
That would save their shining souls.

Pick up the rifle, son
No you said
That's no SIR, son
Pick up the damn gun!
No you said.

They called the captain
They called the priest
They called the doctor
Are you crazy, son?

No no no

Come with us!
You walked away.

I see you now forty years later
alone on that far thundering shore
 "I will not fight your fucking war!"
You are carving a face out of driftwood
the face behind the face of everyone I meet
I have it still and think of you.

You came back. True to your word.
And they sent you to Leavenworth
Where your bruises became sores
Your sores gaping wounds
Your screams the blessing
That saves our sorry souls.

Of what is to come

The body's carnival gives pleasure
to both barkers and buyers,
to the young who swing from limb
to mouth to foot to its very root
and find in that dark common ground
a readiness for whatever will come:
bruises, the scent of lilacs
or words that go wrong.

And sometimes there comes such
sweet longing for what the body
alone can give up, life for life,
like the moon and the sun.

It's the song of the sea,
of what is to come.

As you once were

Set out beneath the stars
on a solitary raft
that drifts along the shore
on a current
that will bring you
out to sea and sky
beyond all imagining

as you once were
as you will be again.