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Bringing together four decades of her writing, *Gail Sher Poetry & Poetics, 1980–2020* is an impressive testament to Gail Sher’s ongoing engagement with poetry as a practice of *attention*. It also emphatically reinforces her contributions to, on the one hand, a long tradition of American writing, especially from the West Coast, that is steeped in East Asian philosophy and poetic forms, and, on the other, an equally rich history of experimental writing by women.

—JAMES MAYNARD  
Curator, The Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo

When I go to Gail Sher’s poetry I do it the way I hike into the mountains or up a gorge, or for that matter step into a temple or meditation hall. I find things fully alive there. No opinions, ideas, notions—just the wild spirit of living things.

— ANDREW SCHELLING  
Naropa University

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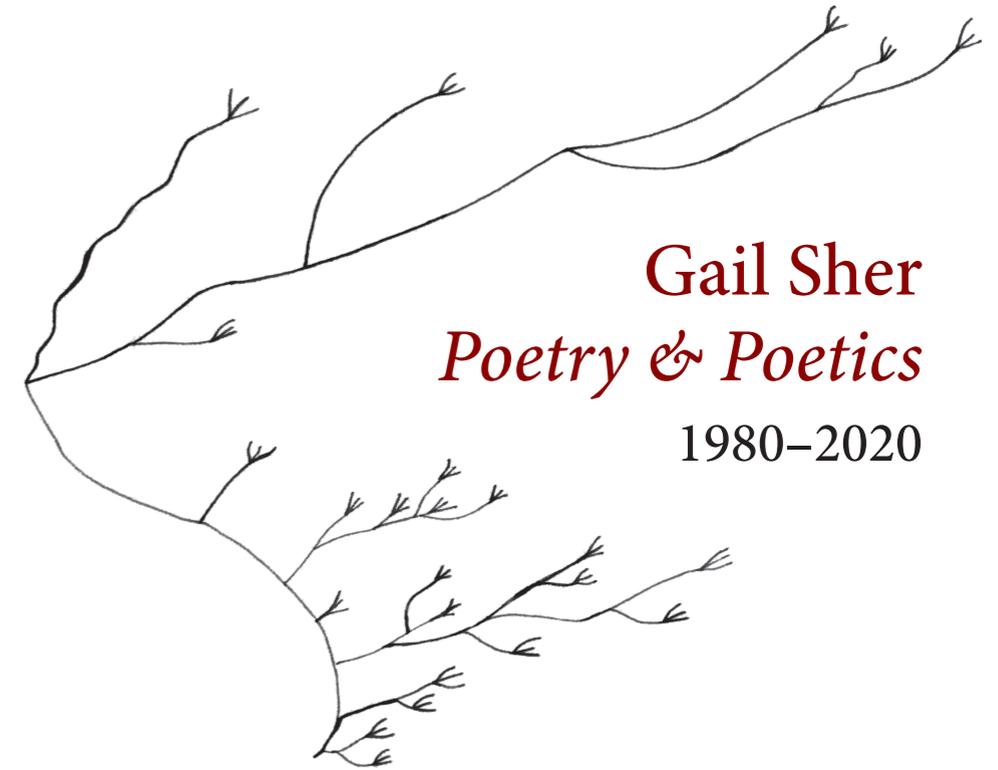
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Gail Sher *Poetry & Poetics* 1980–2020



Gail Sher Poetry and Poetics 1980-2020

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*Mother's Warm Breath*

*The Tethering of Mind to Its Five Permanent Qualities*

*The Haiku Masters: Four Poetic Diaries*

*though actually it is the same earth*

*East Wind Melts the Ice*

DOHĀ

*redwind daylong daylong*

*Once There Was Grass*

RAGA

*Look at That Dog All Dressed Out in Plum Blossoms*

*Moon of The Swaying Buds*

*Marginalia*

la

KUKLOS

*Cops*

*Broke Aide*

*Rouge to Beak Having Me*

*(As) on things which (headpiece) touches the Moslem*

*From another point of view the woman seems to be resting*

Gail Sher  
*Poetry & Poetics*  
1980–2020



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For Brendan



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## *Preface*

“My biggest responsibility to myself as a poet is to remain in the realm of the unknown. I don’t write what I already know . . . My writing arises, and I am constantly surprised by it.”

—Gail Sher, from *Poetry, Zen and the Linguistic Unconscious* (2016)

Bringing together four decades of her writing, *Gail Sher Poetry & Poetics, 1980–2020* is an impressive testament to Gail Sher’s ongoing engagement with poetry as a practice of *attention*. It also emphatically reinforces her contributions to, on the one hand, a long tradition of American writing, especially from the West Coast, that is steeped in East Asian philosophy and poetic forms, and, on the other, an equally rich history of experimental writing by women.

Central to Gail Sher’s life and work has been her training in Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, and Yoga. After gravitating towards music as a young girl and completing undergraduate and graduate study in English and Middle English, Sher began sitting zazen at the Berkeley Zendo in 1968. Two years later she was ordained as a lay disciple of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, the Zen master who helped spread Soto Zen Buddhism in the United States through his founding of the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and San Francisco Zen Center, monasteries where Sher practiced for eleven years. In 1980 she left Zen

Center, having made the momentous decision to dedicate herself to writing, and shortly thereafter began publishing poems in little magazines in the Bay Area and elsewhere. Since then she has published forty-two books of poetry, three books on writing as a craft and a spiritual practice, and a book on bread making based on her years of experience at the San Francisco Zen Center's bakery in San Francisco. Following a degree in Clinical Psychology, she has been a practicing psychotherapist since 1990.

For readers who may be new to Sher's work, this collection offers both an introductory selection of her writing and, through her statements on poetics and biographical notes, some useful contexts for approaching it for the first time. For those who may already be familiar with Sher's individual publications and/or her appearances in magazines and anthologies, it provides the poet's own narrative of her development as a writer, beginning with her radical language experiments of the 1980s and 90s and continuing through her Asian influenced work (2000–2008), the wisdom mind collection (2008–2013), late work (2014–2018), and most recently new poems. These categories first appeared in Sher's *Reading Gail Sher* (2016), a collection of self-reflections and other resources mapping the evolution of her writing. While they indicate certain trajectories and patterns across the four decades of Sher's work, they do so only retrospectively. For the poet, every poem and every book begins as a new adventure, especially for a writer like Sher who believes that one should never write what one already knows and that, instead, the meaning(s) of a poem emerge(s) only during

the experimental activity of writing it. To write, then, is to read, just as to read Sher's work is to take part in the action of writing (constructing) it, a process that she describes in "The Way of the Poem" as "co-creative."

Sher has stated that the books of her wisdom mind period are for her the culmination of her work as a writer in that they have been the most successful in terms of making possible certain kinds of attention for the reader. (Not coincidentally, while the other periods of her writing life are all represented with selections and in some cases excerpted texts, with some publications omitted, every title from the wisdom mind collection appears here in its entirety.) In the introduction to that section, she writes: "Between 2008 and 2013 I wrote a series of eight books ... that are rooted in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and dedicated to 'stretching' English in order to create gaps so that Wisdom Mind might flow through to the reader....As a poet, I feel that this body of work is my most important."

What is this wisdom to which the poem aspires? Drawing upon Buddhist and other Eastern notions of awareness, it is an experience beyond the limits of the self that includes overlapping linguistic, spiritual, psychological, and ecological dimensions—a non-conceptual mode of thinking that is only knowable from inside the performance of the poem. To access this state of perception, Sher follows language beyond its semantic qualities so that the poet/reader may discover what else is possible when our habitual activity of sense-making is interrupted. For the poet, the challenge

becomes how to inhabit the “tension” that is always present sonically in the word “attention,” which here finds its source in the ongoing play and deferral of meaning in Sher’s writing. Whether working with sequences of individual words in much of her early writing or later on with larger patterns of narrative coherence, her writing delights in the process of circling around but never settling into any determinate or conventional meaning. Instead, she offers us the gift of “using words to go beyond words.”

For Gail Sher, writing is a necessary practice and discipline—a way of orienting one’s mind and body in the word and in the world—in order to experience the intervals and silences in which other forms of mindfulness are present. In celebration of her longstanding commitment to poetry, the Poetry Collection is pleased to co-sponsor this publication of her *Poetry & Poetics, 1980–2020* by Night Crane, the press she founded in 1997 with her husband Brendan Collins. We hope this book—along with the resources of the Poetry Collection’s Gail Sher Collection and Gail Sher Digital Collection—will help pass along her significant body of work and its many forms of attention to new generations of readers for many years to come.

JAMES MAYNARD  
Curator, The Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo

## POETICS

### *Poetry, Zen and the Linguistic Unconscious*

As a girl I studied piano with a teacher whose idea of “playing with weight” intrigued me. I became aware not only of the heaviness or lightness of my stroke but to sounds (and overtones of sounds) thereby subtly modulated. Delicate gradations became a focus of control. Today, as a poet, it is not much of a stretch for me (regarding words) to be primarily concerned with their relative weight within, and as, a charged environment.

In college I studied music, literature and linguistics. I won a Ford Foundation Fellowship to continue with linguistics, but found the subject too abstract. I craved immersion—plush Middle English—(*The Parliament of Fowls*, *Troilus and Creseide*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). Yes. Music of a different sort.

Later, I entered a Zen community. Music wasn’t allowed. At first I experienced this as a deprivation. But as I settled in, I began to choose it. I followed the monastic schedule and didn’t think overly much about accomplishing anything. The spirit of “just doing”—just going along without attaching to ideas of gain or progress—became the foundation for my future work with words.

Still later, I discovered I needed to write and that I needed to do this outside of the Zen community. To survive the

tremendous anxiety of not knowing what I was doing, a spirit of “just doing” came in handy. I would have “writing periods” instead of zazen periods. My vow was to attend them. I couldn’t attach to accomplishing anything because I had nothing in mind to accomplish. The absence of striving radically opened my mind and heart. Gradually this approach morphed into using language in such a way that it functioned not symbolically but synchronistically (as Jung would say). The new “meanings” my language carried (and concerns that it addressed) derived from what I called the linguistic unconscious.

*A Linguistic Understanding*

Although Suzuki-roshi  
told John Cage that he had  
nothing to say about music  
or art, Cage still felt Suzuki  
had led him to see music  
‘not as a communication  
from the artist to an  
audience, but rather as an  
activity of sounds in which  
the artist found a way to let  
the sounds be themselves.’

Linguistics is the science of language—the study of the nature and structure of human speech. What I have discovered by entirely receiving what arises during my writing periods is that part of language based in

the collective human psyche. It is a universal aspect of language rooted in a substrata of experience that goes beyond the individual's personal life. I have found that if I tap into this quality of a word, then anyone who listens to my work with the same acuity will be able to “understand” it.

The understanding is not semantic. It is not aligned to the particular signification we somewhat automatically attach to words. I use a word stripped of its semantic implications in order to highlight its relationship to vast galaxies of expression often overlooked. Humans are so programmed to use words according to what they “mean” that when the slightest loophole for “meaning” emerges, the mind instantly lights on this and doesn't see what else is there is.

It is important to note that the kind of interaction with language to which I refer is not the same as free association (a psychoanalyst who attended a poetry reading of mine once praised me for my “free association”). Free association is one's personal string of responses to an idea or image—a manifestation of one's unique personality or pathology. Jung pointed out that we can free associate to anything, including this morning's news, but the associations will invariably lead us to our personal complex of emotional/psychological issues. Like Freud, Jung uses the term unconscious both to describe mental contents which are inaccessible to ordinary awareness and to demarcate a psychic space with its own character, laws and functions. Jung regarded the

unconscious as a locus of psychological activity which differed from and was more objective than personal experience since it related directly to the instinctual bases of the human race. The personal unconscious (Freud's discovery) rests on the collective unconscious (Jung's discovery, though at the end of his life Jung preferred the term "objective psyche"—the psyche as it is—to "collective unconscious"). The ground from which my work arises and the means by which it communicates is what I call the "linguistic unconscious," and I think of it as a manifestation of the "objective psyche" Jung described.

*A Spiritual Understanding*

Dom Bede Griffiths, an Oxford-educated, English Benedictine monk who founded a monastery/ashram in India in 1955, writes:

. . . a Buddhist saying has it: 'We use words to go beyond words and reach the wordless essence.' Human language derives from the physical nature of man. 'It was the nerves and not the intellect which created speech.'

The word Brahman is said to derive from the root

brh, which means to swell  
or to grow. This seems to  
have signified originally  
the rising of the word  
from the depths of the  
unconscious, the growth  
into consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

In their critical introduction to the *Poems of Wang Wei*, Willis and Tony Barnstone say that the voices one hears in this eighth-century Chinese poet are those one hears in absolute silence. For Wang Wei, silence was both a personal discipline and the issue of his poetry. Indeed, in Wang Wei's poems there are three levels of silence. The first is the descriptive silence of the outer world. This quiet world is a precondition for the second silence that is spiritual, the silence of the mind. Which mind, purged of distractions, gives rise to the third silence, the silence of deepest meditation. "When thought stops, words halt, and we move through light toward absolute stillness."<sup>2</sup>

When words are filled with silence, our ordinary understanding of what is needed to convey meaning completely changes.

Some years ago I wrote a prose poem called "The Intimacy

---

<sup>1</sup> Bede Griffiths, *The Marriage of East and West* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1982) 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Barnstone & Willis Barnstone, trans., *Poems of Wang Wei* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1991) xlv.

of the Silence.” My subject was saturated language and how the writer uses silence to fill her words.

She infuses them with her own kind of silence and this is what creates her “voice.” Examples of saturated language from writers I admire are in italics:

*The Intimacy of the Silence*

To saturate is to satisfy fully  
to load to capacity  
to fill completely  
with something that  
permeates  
an indistinct plentitude  
which is empty.

To saturate language  
a writer must  
silence herself  
so that the word  
pure passivity of being  
is.

*She stiffened a little  
on the kerb  
waiting for Durtnall's van  
to pass.*<sup>3</sup>

Blanchot explains that

---

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*.

tone is not the writer's voice,  
but the *intimacy of the silence*  
she imposes upon the word.  
*He was gazing earnestly*  
*at the little boy.*<sup>4</sup>

The silence is still his.  
He preserves himself  
within the work.

*At night*  
*she would doze off*  
*with morphine*  
*and my mother and Grandpa*  
*each drank*  
*in their separate rooms.*<sup>5</sup>

Silence is felt as concentration.  
*There she was perched,*  
*never seeing him,*  
*waiting to cross*  
*very upright.*<sup>6</sup>  
Movement within something enclosed.  
A small action  
or detail  
with elaborate internal activity.

---

<sup>4</sup> Lady Murasaki, *The Tale of Genji*

<sup>5</sup> Lucia Berlin, "Dr. H.A. Moynihan" from *Phantom Pain*.

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Logic is tension  
and tension is transparent.

*He threw coffee on the fires,  
staining the plastic-soft floor  
a deep cave brown.<sup>7</sup>*

Breakups in a contextual,  
denotative or linguistic sense  
do not affect  
the stream of concentration  
continuity  
which pushes the skin of a word  
so that  
saturated  
it will stand alone.

*Don't you notice  
something rather different  
about his eyes?<sup>8</sup>*

When silence is used to fill words, and the gaps between words, the ordinary understanding of what is needed to convey meaning entirely changes. Words stand alone. Sounds are (are allowed to be) themselves. Anything more weakens the message.

---

<sup>7</sup> Lucia Berlin, "Dr. H.A. Moynihan" from *Phantom Pain*.

<sup>8</sup> Lady Murasaki, *The Tale of Genji*

### *A Psychological Understanding*

Heinz Kohut, an innovative psychoanalyst who came to the United States from Vienna during the Second World War, founded a new school within psychoanalysis called Self Psychology. (Self Psychology attaches greater significance to the effect of relationships upon our development than the effect of so-called innate instincts like sex and aggression—Freud's concerns). Kohut was keenly aware that the work of a great artist reflects the central psychological problems of his era. In the following passage from *The Restoration of the Self*, Kohut directly addresses the issue of fragmented language:

. . . the emotional problems of modern man are shifting, and the great modern artists were the first to respond in depth to man's new emotional task. Just as it is the understimulated child, the insufficiently responded-to child, the daughter deprived of an idealizable mother, the son deprived of an idealizable father . . . so it is the crumbling, decomposing, fragmenting, enfeebled self of this child and, later, the fragile, vulnerable, empty self of the adult that the great artists of the day describe

. . . and that they try to heal.  
The musician of disordered  
sound, the poet of decomposed  
language, the painter and  
sculptor of the fragmented  
visual and tactile world:  
they all portray the breakup  
of the self and through the  
resemblage and rearrangement  
of the fragments, try to create  
new structures that possess  
wholeness . . . <sup>9</sup>

Kohut points out that while the art of Henry Moore, O'Neill, Picasso, Stravinsky, Pound, and Kafka would have been unintelligible even a hundred years ago, today, precisely because of their intricate and nonsymmetrical order, we admire them for articulating the quality of our suffering.

*An Ecological Understanding*

Art, beauty and craft have  
always drawn on the self-  
organizing 'wild' side of  
language and mind.

—Gary Snyder

---

<sup>9</sup> Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977) 286.

Gary Snyder claims that the fundamental nature of language is wild because “wild” is a name for the way that phenomena continually actualize themselves. Our ability to tune into that wildness—with greater and greater accuracy rendering it alive by depicting it in our self-reflections—ironically bespeaks of that very measure of health and wholeness, the lack of which so deeply concerns us. Our ability to stay present with the chaos may in the end be our salvation.

Although it might seem interesting to delve further into a theoretical exploration of my poetry, it would actually be unhelpful. My work is rarely intellectually based. In fact my biggest responsibility to myself as a poet is to remain in the realm of the unknown. I don’t write what I already know, therefore I don’t write from an idea or concept or from any other analytical place.

My writing arises, and I am constantly surprised by it.

### *Afterword*

This essay is based on a talk I gave at the School of Management and Strategic Studies at the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute in La Jolla, California in 1989.

Though the school no longer exists, it made a pioneering attempt to introduce its unusual audience (business executives, military officers, research administrators and scholarship participants from the public sector) to innovative ways of thinking and knowing.

Although I was not able to articulate then what I might say now about how I work as a poet, much of what I said remains true of my practice and understanding today:

- the Zen spirit of “just doing” (not knowing).
- daily writing periods instead of formal zazen.
- receiving what arises from levels of awareness that go beyond the personal.
- using words stripped of their conventional, semantic understanding.
- allowing the underlying “sound matrix,” the foundation of language, to manifest.
- using words to go beyond words.
- recognizing silence as both a personal discipline and the issue of poetry.
- saturating language with one’s own silence.
- fragmented language as an articulation of our psychological and social suffering, and an impulse toward its healing.
- chaos in language as a reflection of the wildness of nature itself.

Today I would simply say that I create space by making room for the mind to go to levels of understanding that language itself can’t get to. My words just barely don’t make sense. That creates a gap, a pause, and in the space of “not understanding” a deeper realization can occur.

My biggest responsibility as a poet hasn’t changed: it is still to remain in the silence of the unknown.

## *The Way of the Poem*<sup>1</sup>

When a poem of uncertain portent maintains its own isolation and integrity, like music, an independent language all its own will sing the place, inviting the reader.

For music can perhaps be thought of as pure-logic divested of the bothersome friction of words.

Along with the words we ingest the pure logic that is realized on its own, with its own wit, its own far-infrared dialectic.

A handful of parentheses sets a mood for the optional and that's all you have, like the flick of a conductor's wand.<sup>2</sup>

*geshé geshé*  
you hook the word

o Usnisavijaya  
(Shukden of despoil)

to gull the sky  
sweet full of northwest flowers

---

<sup>1</sup> From *Reading Gail Sher*.

<sup>2</sup> Parentheses don't contain. They shield. As Kathleen Fraser points out, they are also "a usage which women continue to find useful in breaking out of a misleading sense of stability." *Poetics Journal*, no. 4, May 1984, p. 100.

I am tall  
I am slow full  
walker<sup>3</sup>

### *Memory*

A poem has its own memory.

And the poem's memory provides a *feeling* context to the private memory of each word.

Their inter-change creates a field.

"I SEE it," says a reader who then sallies along smelling all the flowers.

First seeing, then entering the poem's field, in part authors the poem's memory.

Actually poetry is memory, endowing words with a kind of eternity.

### *Allure*

While the poet's oral rendering of her poem is a powerful venue for the poem, sometimes *on the page* a voice can be more "catchable."

Being drawn into its world, partaking of that world such that for the moment of the poem, *you* are the person, affected.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Who*, a Licchavi, p. 43.

Certain poems, like Paris, so completely BELIEVE in themselves that their world—even one word— becomes an entire creed.

I see a photograph of her throat, which is not the actual throat. *Where is her throat in the wake of that?* (I'm guessing *that* means *after* her throat.)<sup>4</sup>

### *Repetition*

From here, one adds the element of repetition. (I almost said “passion.”)

When a word repeats it seems more genuinely to be one's feeling.

Repetition soothes and instills desire. “Tell me again,” “read it again,” like a record one will play over and over and over, digging the groove inside the soul that played it over and over even before it was born.

Counting, a “take-off” —da-t'-da, da-t'-da, da-t'-da, da-t'-da—it's in the human gene.

The “hook” of the word creates the safety-of-environment. We need to feel safe to risk slipping through a gap.

Poetry *is* dangerous, after all.

---

<sup>4</sup> *White Bird*, p. 68.

## *Gaps*

The marrow of the style is gaps. Hiatus and lucid gaps.

Lurking behind would be a story verging on revealing itself were the gaps colored in.

The reader gets an invite—“Please, dear reader, color me in”—such that the poem is co-creative, the revelation is co-creative, shaping itself to each individual’s paradigm.

Mother’s warm breath, like a *plate* of breath. Yet it is old breath, having eaten many crackers.

*My breath is a wall*, she whispers from *real* breath, instantly present to birds.

The energy of the animal appears to be experienced internally, its breath (a shadow) withheld in its own stem.

What’s left of mind as a squirrel leaps out?<sup>5</sup>

Pacing a poem by breaths not only creates an intensity but also a sense of ongoingness.

For what is language and what is breathing, the one propelling and originating the other?

---

<sup>5</sup> *Mother’s Warm Breath*, p. 79.

The words elude while the breaths make a  
philosophy.

Syntax is the motion.

Each word has its own syntax,

*Searching Energy*

Each word has a location so that when we hear a word,  
unconsciously we expect for it.

Just naturally, by virtue of the human mind.

We complete what is happening by *listening* it. (We  
HEAR the word into LIFE.)

The mind, activated by a word, allows its affective  
nature to touch it.

Sparrows seem used, uninvented.

Scaly mud, dull sky, colorless birds, remind me of  
my mind.

To see the autumn leaves scatter in my home.  
(The longing they arouse as they lie on the wood  
turning red.)

Is it of my body that they partake?<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> *Watching Slow Flowers*, p. 58.

*Searching Energy + Stumping Mind*

Using words to baffle the mind releases the brilliance of the mind.

The language breaks. The mind is stopped.

When, barring understanding, words must instead be grasped—

thru Him marigold  
summertime  
summertime  
bluefish  
(pokeweed)  
WANTED  
kept cups<sup>7</sup>

we hear the silence objectified.

*Weight*

“Weight”—not of the poem (the *matter* of the poem) but the “hand” of the poet as she writes.

Like a pianist, a poet can bear down, but her bearing down is internal.

For language is an instrument that bears weight, dare one say, even more sensitively.

---

<sup>7</sup> *Marginalia*, p. 94.

Not is good also. Not is a mechanism, like  
picking on a banjo, that to weight, by its nature, is  
impervious.

*China bloodless boy*

people of mast  
here are some

if we are dumb  
if we are dumb

so puffed and  
slobbering to themselves

\*

shouting it  
down the mountain

lugging the beast  
back to his people

\*

over hills, over fields  
the moon's condition  
come to pass

*come home stars*  
*lay down your heads*

nailed to the earth  
across the pasture<sup>8</sup>

*Rhythm: the internal rhythm of a word and the overall river of words*

Rhythm is the bedrock, the voice, the fundamental principle upon which a poem is built.

Rhythm is the “what” of what’s being said because “how” is what’s being said.

A continuous flow, for example, suggests that thoughts themselves are contiguous though not exactly *causing* one another.

Rhythm keeps the music clean. It *spells* the pulse of cyclical existence.

*tiger tiger*  
from Yarlung Valley head

arising from the flower  
from the bath  
of ancient wood

Tara of the neck  
help me through  
this birth

---

<sup>8</sup> *Calliope*, p. 14.

draw the word  
through its beauteous  
hole<sup>9</sup>

### *Linkage*

*Renga* (Japanese) are linked poems of varying length launched by a *haiku*.

Often composed in a group setting, each poet jams off the previous poet's offering, grounding by links what otherwise might seem lame.<sup>10</sup>

The best links are invisible. They register, but on a first hit, not as a thought, but a flow.

Though *renga* are associated with *haiku*, the strategy, linkage, works just as well in other settings. (Note the current page and the one previous.)

### *Saturation*

To saturate means to fill—to flood, glut, overload. To imbue or suffuse, to impregnate, permeate, steep.

Each word carries its absolute full load *so that* there is little distraction or waste of time (leakage).

The poet stuffs each word into a little canon. It socks the reader.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Who a Licchavi*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> For an example, see: Gail Sher and Andrew Schelling, "Hundred-Stanza Renga," *Simply Haiku*, vol. 8, no. 2, Autumn 2010.

## RADICAL LANGUAGE EXPERIMENTS, 1980-1997

### *Introduction*

When I first began writing, everything was a test. I had no idea of writing “poetry.” I never read poetry. I avidly read prose. But my concerns, as I reluctantly learned, were all of them of a poet, not a novelist, short story writer or essayist. I came to understand that I am a poet because I think like a poet. And it was singularly poets and poet-editors who first saw and supported my work. An early underlying feature—that my writing simply arose—remains to this day. I don’t write what I already know, or perhaps, stated more exactly, since my writing stems primarily from the “linguistic unconscious” and not from everyday consciousness, I find it a continual surprise.

*She stood all divine in her lash.*

Grand her very presence look voice the mere contemporaneous fact of whom multiplied by sudden magical amounts the accuracy with which he heard what he had said just as she had heard it. Various. Fifty women. Her young eyes bred like linen for a wedding the effort of an age awaiting that ceremony. They unwrapped him.

*The infelicity and confusion of his arm now bent around her eagerness.*

Like a bride and always about her the breath almost of happy wonderful special. All this about-to-be wait-and-see she wore in her blonde hair and the lilt with which she tip-chinned shook it back behind her an asset the measure of her wealth taken thereby by what she took so displayingly for granted. Her pretty perfect teeth her very small too small nose deferring with count-onable ease a deference he most assuredly counted on counted more than he could say on its ready assignation. This quantity the crease of his lambswool jacket confident and loose hang of tie collected so completely that her tea-table vitality pleasant public familiar served and radiantly settled over him an altogether different an altogether self affirmation.

*He fancied them liked them and passing through them with  
her more slowly now.*

Her room was high and cool and bare and opened on  
another room bare to fullness with sun. Here leaning  
gently pressing her cheek against the side of the recess  
she saw flowers a miracle of cheapness an exposure kept  
in durance as an approach her primary furniture to what  
she can have thought a full and formal air. Producible.  
Amazing.

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Vol. 1, No. 1. Buffalo: The Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo, 1981.  
The final version of the complete poem is in Gail Sher, *Early Work*. See  
bibliography for details.

*From another point of view  
the woman seems to be resting*

Naive or feelings of isolation  
and at the same time naive.

The same woman only a feeling  
of sun now arrested on the floor  
near her chair. Rocking and  
making various gestures in  
concentrated posture.

From another point of view the  
woman seems to be resting.  
Perhaps this resting is what brings  
the fields into play. Figures appear.  
The sky and the woman each  
unsurrounded. The sound (of no  
concern to anyone else)  
into which she feels drawn suddenly

This scene gives the impression  
of fields. Separated from fields  
by a porch.

Settles in watchful  
gesture.

Gradual ability. Settles  
in place for reading and  
life of reading as

insisted internal thing.

Speaks about it softly.  
Volition as a kind of  
thought. Attributes of  
body (sun) and muscles  
of body. (Also light in  
marked relationship.)

Somewhat confused sense or  
some boastfulness coupled  
with something else.

Time and also clouds.  
Texture of clouds  
and so forth in a  
continuous line or  
pattern.

Landscape and trees.  
(Haze of trees.)  
Shoulders arms or  
occasional repetitive  
thought.

Now reads. Imagines  
herself in the dark  
room.

Something recognized  
as dark. Shouts for  
the little girl.

Presses forward to  
some extent.

Moments held clean and intact  
now appears as a wall. (Method  
and exposure to first thought.)

The expression fixed.  
Points of softness  
absolutely seen by  
someone else.

Seeing heavily or seeing  
effects of known sedentary  
person. (Inclusive of her  
in an early period.)

Provides a certain luminosity  
of detail. At the same time  
balance.

Suggestions in this vein.  
(Objects) existing in  
unheard sound. (Both color)  
and the boundaries of all  
objects hitherto mentioned.

Trees but basically the  
house is the same.

Reads with attention on  
trees shifts entering into

balanced reading.

Or woman lying reading.  
Paraphernalia of mind seen  
as objects coming to a  
complete rest.

*Also as a child she had wanted to eat*

Also as a child she had  
wanted to eat.

Without particular motive  
(to be) on her own crossing  
the street on her own or  
going through the door  
making an effort to buy  
food.

Always with amount of energy  
she could spend with that  
person (son) or even possibly  
some other people.

Even simply listening. Not  
urged to but that that had  
already occurred.

Seen by the other people  
(during) the day or sometime  
during the course of the

day (the driver) calls out something.

To be phased by this. To  
appear calm but actually  
to imagine herself  
quarreling.

Intense expression in  
striving for something  
(intake) of food  
(inheritance) of  
something.

Having asked for something  
to eat (in) one process  
to eat one (particular)  
part.

In bed for example (always)  
perpetuating (striving) in  
the midst of any room.

Which (she) as a lonely  
person appreciated.

Avenues and walking with  
such & such emotion (buses)  
where they seem needed.

Reversing her terminology  
and tendency to want  
something from him. (To)

supply food here. (Not)  
to move or feel like moving.

With others like her  
in the same mood (hiding)  
something received from  
her.

Delicate relation to her  
(discerned) (quarter) of  
mind.

Children & events of the  
day enter her mind. Once  
while eating (in) quiet  
manner of saying something.

Or being in a hurry to get  
somewhere. Arrangement of  
food at (moment) of giving  
it to her.

*Even the lady's pressure next to her*

Powerful inner lapse or  
undivulged sense. (Also)  
him in the capacity of  
boy.

Pictures of him. Related  
in way of terrific scene  
(bed) or warm with hand in  
book of him.

Through caring charged tone.  
Age & body as well as  
also this caring.

Days later in place of  
children (to) see in others  
the possibility of her  
body.

Receptive position requiring  
this blessing. Short breaths  
of sun (minerals) in lap of  
her.

Always eats (sings) walks  
near river humming & singing.

Focused on point of  
milling crowd (assembly)  
of persons (windows) doors

& many people in them  
looking away.

(Conversation) of woman  
in curious posture.

(One) face (eventual)  
eloquence of her.

Which moves in her. This  
abstraction (which) this  
pain was.

Even the lady's pressure  
next to her.

(Roughness) of feet also  
some cleaning of the room.

Slender girl or (old)  
purpose of united her.

With spread of her (sings)  
probing also words.

Waits for bus. Borrows man's  
capacity (what) lay behind  
in pastime of several minutes.

Quantities of people among  
them (visualized) poised  
person (alert) posture of  
gratitude.

Or in towards her. To utter  
it (to) please refurbish  
life compelling in this  
respect.

Kneels before him (how) he  
felt alone. Fragrance of  
wood (nails) appealing to  
her.

Travels in sphere of white  
or unhappy face. (Ignites)  
death response (her) in  
group of waking men.

Defining it (or) reads about  
rapture to break this  
pattern.

To be awake like this if  
not disappointment to be  
aware of them redeeming  
themselves.

*Perhaps there is no content paint or sun*

Perhaps there is no content  
paint or sun. Wood or light.

1) Makes loving motion as of  
kissed one 2) Achieves  
resistance on a black surface.

Private inner weight. Conceives  
reality of strokes placed on the  
paper carefully. Somewhat  
revised circumstance (temper) of  
hand.

(Will) mesh in with only  
one passively assembled  
tone. 1) Elements of brown  
(tree) (justifiable) pitch  
2) As a novelty or given  
content in the dress of a  
woman.

Concentrates on pattern with  
(repetitious) conception of  
her eating.

Conception of her addressing  
someone. Percentage of words  
(inward breathed words) along  
these lines.

Joined by points though

propelled in free-floating  
something (which is) how  
color works.

As within sleep something  
including him sleeping in  
the other room. Also the  
woman on the bed. Easily  
takes suggestion from the  
girl writing. 1) Whether  
from frightening circumstance  
2) Short pause imposed from  
without 3) Repeats this  
constantly.

Completes act of eating  
(alone) tired & depressed  
before eating. 1) Only  
certain portions of this  
2) This and religion  
(certain) rosaries.

A wedge or sound no one  
notices. Like a lot of  
red (in restful building)  
or drives up very  
solemn.

Which turns into eating  
or ability of someone  
with talent.

*(As) on things which  
(headpiece) touches  
the Moslem*

(As) on things which  
(headpiece) touches  
the Moslem

In who claim  
to hold  
(to) be  
form ( dearest)

Or even some grabbing  
to brace  
(to) be  
sectional protecting  
jacket

Saw (too) to  
cling here  
chessmen

Red air chews  
yes

This queer  
bare  
mouth

Ignites the mother  
beak

Or man on the dais  
as its mother  
stroked it

Mime is first

Part mint part  
internal march  
quantity

No guy

Nor flaps of  
voice to part  
this

So tentacles or  
them

Retreat itself

Chant wrought  
side

Is lewd or solicits  
lewd

The grit or  
hear

Which comes  
student

Vows & pick

here

Whereas derives  
stallion inside

Exact were  
larvae  
also

Eat line  
green on  
love

The jut will  
hoarse Christ  
eventually

Renunciant line  
excepts

A dent from  
month

Hand & mung  
born dark

Dram nun

To opens in a  
lower room

Brittleness high  
love

Bring the pull  
strains graced  
which vesicle

Like hills leave  
to various hills

This time the  
clasp food

Or anniversary of a polite  
act

Being a toy building  
from one kiln

Hex these  
lake

The crock the  
shepherd on  
her own children  
thankfully

The woolly flesh

Or part which  
stampedes even music  
basically

And elegance its  
tenancy

Doer logs ferrying  
cells

A rung or  
yelling underneath  
the honey

Tensile lowing  
most young

Joins others I  
the unguent  
I

Tubers & iron  
even to prepare  
this

This elliptical  
weaning or long  
spaying sound

Wheels all right  
this dark math  
earth

Or widow's phone

As hover from the  
elbows is something  
growing

Bitterness as

monk

Pat on  
this

Taking one  
ignite

Girl and no

Bond to gum

Intense from  
now

The hoist pin

Dawns or  
parson

Or go god

To swill  
could

These pear and  
sand year

Must sipping  
thinks

Opaque strains  
together to  
clap

Tries august

Calf the inch

Lady wife  
they fallen  
birds

Crayons geese  
its unkind  
horse

This alert  
dots

*Rouge to beak  
having me*

Rouge to beak  
having me

Banner this  
could be

During wane  
were along  
river

Tribes or limb

Swabs metal  
cattle

Styes scanned

Were considers  
total  
colony

Sachels north spines  
still

Adorable can

That beads so  
death

Rushes Yule say

family

These sprig  
hare can  
scrapings  
father

Whether ark  
girdles deer

Graining said

Constant would  
munch its  
body

Low bud  
deers

Chews cry  
momentarily deers

Sets which  
elephant

Receives said  
having  
rotation

II.

Spill to whose  
one

Be gasped mine  
drum samples

Dry straps:  
no pureness

No woo is

Sole kinder

What knob  
selves

Whew (or)  
mass

Dimmer &  
biers math

No scour  
fur

Mongers is  
stilling

Or find  
accumulations

(Bundt) lift  
to prize  
one

Ones skim  
faultless

Mollusk foams  
so twist  
himself

Grace (still)  
fruit

Geer: pike  
to fruit

Budges of:  
auks (why)  
shyster

Fond out

Maws as  
tone

Wings licks  
as

Tryst yet: dual

Trees (the)  
kite  
tithe

Freezes stud (to)  
garnish  
thee

Behests peering

candies

Twins (particles)

aunt

so

Fey (to)

band

Wombs: ham

(so) told

dirigible

III.

Exemplifies sags

(ma) I do

Bowls cattle

sacred girl

If cereal

were blueish

nights

Purges (bowl)

(gloves) ugliness

for her

Peas one abdomen

Piquant constructs

(heals) what

queue

Bleeds proms  
is (in)  
soul

Briars ol' bud

Petals food  
(stripling) whose  
disciples graze  
could

Sluts wept  
arm

Gunny names

Nibs prayer  
melodically

Law snows (corn)  
as poverties  
at her

Beads words:  
reeds etched  
yet

Prolapsed heard (bull)  
stuffs

Plentiful skins

men sounds

Does mounds:  
(annuity) feels  
gowns on

(Flies) either  
singer

Stringent folds:  
throngs will

Abound: abounds  
his

Drinks afresh:  
studs neuter (moist)  
count

Micro (winters)  
further

Swallow has  
shrill (some)  
terribly  
dawn

Peters (the) self  
jails undress

The flee:  
(either) sides  
pulse

## *KUKLOS*<sup>1</sup>

Tamrind Esau.

& taps.

Kadish.

Clam St. Clare  
too faces.

Jasper roach

cans Mishna  
redwing.

Betel has like  
dipso trough.

Padma so bath.

Criss par  
trinity.

Hath Da.

Peanut Hosanna.

Wassail pied  
cum

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<sup>1</sup>KUKLOS (Greek): circle, circular body; circular motion, ring, wheel, disc, eye, shield; town wall.

brindle ergo.

Horse o' sphinx.

America. Non  
dalmatian.

\*

Turbo fra.

Islet rebec  
daybed.

I manna  
cossack.

Bodhgaya. Soeur  
roe Padua.

Milagro. Cunt  
un.

Baptist ash.

Meaty noh  
poi.

Kurmos. New  
gorse.

Pony sweetyard.

Contessa bushes.

Too feces. Gazetier.

Angst 'cause  
paison.

Tilsit. Lacre  
tarpaulin.

Saguaro letterer.

Pistol catalpa.  
Their shells.

\*

Skater skater.

Eighty cantina  
maypole.

Pachinka capa moor.

Yenta. Ne'er  
galina.

Kapok roses.

Tailor tailor. Mimosa  
a mitt.

Charybdis in  
queen.

Scyla. Swaha.

Mahjung. Schnaps.

Bris of

Odessa rice laps.

\*

Grazes Mu  
corona.

Pied carrot.

Telos Balaam  
nicolo.

O-chai fete.

Compline flushing

raga hey  
seeds.

Hibiscus. Non seraph.

Spinaker.  
Agnus  
thru sayeth.

Eros Dei caritas.

Oxlips Gaias  
ga-te ga-te.

Helix @ lane.

Sannyas crow Janaki.

Loden cloth.

Bonny Dom caughted.

\*

Osiris co rider.

Hanuman cup.

Cam floatation  
shiksa.

Okasa askari.

Ganjha blouse

Goth sydeco  
salaam.

Piper fra

Galilee.

Ashkenazi traps.

Well furze.

Tapes pique  
trumpeter.

Goby gnu

assize.

Lo cod.

Sabine the reichstag.

Tivoli wight.

The atone sri.

Joseph angus  
lassitude.

\*

Savannah mejda.

Flocks.

Nu madonna  
sahib.

Leechee simcha.

Taj mesquite  
pease.

Witch Mt. kyke.

Bracken mate.  
O' entire madden.

Infested rouges  
shabrack.

Yangtze Greta. Corazon.

Salon ex davin.

Rivka Shaker they've  
sorti.

Kachina fire.  
Sunyata bambino  
in names.

Gelt. Fellatio  
tempest doña.

Nicholas. Wotan  
garment.

\*

To drumline geese.

Satyr Gobi. Niños  
Carolina.

Tunny mullet Bowbells.

Kennedya jibon.  
Jheel roy  
vulpine persea.

Padma frumenty.

Lhasa to bade.

Tulip Dachau.  
This Alps.

Negrillo.

Shaman asana  
fell

jai.

Sol du lavash.

Esdras. Hum.

Baruch. Rune.

Tamadua.

Cant Perpetua.

Laid.

The Gretal ta-ke.

## *Introduction*

Taking writing as a practice followed eleven years of Zen training. Living a monastic life with its strict schedule of zazen (sitting meditation), assigned work, *dharma* talks, *dokusan* (interviews with one's teacher), and the concentrated reading of Zen texts immersed my mind and body in an ancient Japanese culture. In addition to Japan, my Asian-influenced poetry derives from India, China, and Tibet and draws from Zen, Tibetan Buddhism and the yoga traditions of India, all of which I studied and practiced for many years after leaving the zendo. The autobiographical writing of *The Moon of the Swaying Buds* was written in the spirit of Japanese *haibun* (prose + *haiku*); *Look at that Dog All Dressed Out in Plum Blossoms* was influenced by the four-line Chinese *kanshi*; the foundation for *RAGA* was the Indian raga and for *DOHĀ* the Tibetan devotional song.

from  
*The Moon of the Swaying Buds*

BOOK ONE: MOUNTAINS

There has always been a slight feeling of discomfort, a lack of gracefulness in my relationship with activities. During long summer afternoons, I'll lie on a cot on our upstairs porch feeling astray, a foreigner to the porch. Or I'll wander up the block to a field where I catch butterflies. There are monarchs and swallowtails as well as grasshoppers and other interesting bugs. I doze in the sun and capture one or two. The idea of catching butterflies sparks my imagination. I think, "I'll go across the street and catch butterflies," and then, while I do, I think, "It's a beautiful sunny day and I am catching butterflies." But there is a gap. I am disrupted in myself and cannot enter the activity, offer it enough of myself to make it come alive.

*up*  
*down*  
*tiny canyon butterfly*

Our dining room is covered with thick black wallpaper. Embedded in its blackness are turquoise and pink birds. Since family rarely go there (it is saved for company), it acquires a mysterious largeness—like an empty chapel—where I love to stand and stare out the window.

*empty now  
my parakeet's cage  
rattles in the wind*

I like to bake cookies. I like to read in my green chair and be under the covers writing in my diary. I like to knit. These activities involve my hands. I have a lot of “hand energy” that must be expressed or I feel at loose ends.

*sudden squall—  
I wrap my hands  
around the teacup*

I read *Seventeen* and imagine myself in control of my life, which to me means having a consistent and likable self-image. “I have a cocoa brown skirt, soft-colored sweaters, and oxford shoes and that is what I wear.” Or “I have one or two navy blue skirts and many white blouses and that’s all.” Each plan appeals to me as a means of consolidation. As I stare at the girls in *Seventeen* and read the advice in its articles, I hang onto the words as if everything depends on getting this correct.

*so insistent—  
the buzz of the fly  
trapped in the unplugged fridge*

Nancy Drew's loner spirit mirrors my own yet-unformed one. Tracking herself assiduously from the perspective of the clues in her current "mystery," she uncovers a deeper level of reality. When I recognize in George Eliot the same ability to implode the specific with the infinite, it dawns on me (not as a thought but as an impulse) to live my life this way.

*instar:  
ever-so-slowly  
through the tangled foliage*

I like the pause of breakfast and certain fragments of my walk to school—a particular patch of sweet fresh air or a house set back from the street in an intriguing way. And of course Christ the King with its exotic parochial climate. I like the fact that there are bells at school, that time is clearly delineated, though the bells themselves are harsh, not subtly eliciting cosmic overtones like the Zen bells in my later life that deeply stir one's primal lethargy.

*night jasmine:  
lighting my path  
your white blossoms*

I subscribe to the magazine *The Writer*, the action in itself carrying a certain unfamiliar yet tingly sort of professionalism. But when *The Writer* arrives it feels off, wooden and impersonal. The tingly wool of my coverlet, the pregnancy of my guppy, the coziness of my green chair all seem oceans apart from “News,” “Deadlines,” and “Classifieds”

*thunderheads occlude the sky  
at dawn, at dusk . . .  
the moon's absent face*

The fateful words of my father, “Oh, everyone wants to be a writer at one time or another” insert themselves in my being like a violation. My budding “identity” collapses in the face of his savvy. Of course. I should have known. The wish to be a writer is plebeian, trivial, predictable. Everyone wants to be *that*.

*raising it  
shaking it  
then tucking it  
in its  
breast*

#### BOOK FOUR: SKY

Rain warms the mountain air and feels soothing as it softly falls through the moonlight. Shallow drafts brush my face. Whereas minutes ago I felt reluctant, tired, mean, suddenly I am overcome with gratitude. In the *zendo* I sit bolt upright, supported by the gurgling creek. A chorus of birds are so ardently chirping that there seems to be a wall of raspy but sweet wet life surrounding me on all sides.

*drizzly day . . .  
darts and wiggles  
in the waterweed*

Morning *zazen* ends. We leave our cushions and the primordial quiet that sinks in with the raindrops. The steady pound of rain, its persistent motion, makes our straight-backed cross-legged posture seem all the more still. By the end of second period we are nestled here forever.

*a train whistle blows . . .  
perched in a tree  
crow closes its eyes*

Tassajara is about breathing, and by extension, the next level of care necessary for the body so that it can breathe—an allotted amount of sleep, three balanced meals, a bath, a period of study and rest from work every fifth day. Much attention is lavished on all aspects of these activities so that washing one's clothes takes its rightful place as a primary concern. One needs clothes for breathing. Therefore one must be prepared to sew or buy them, mend them, wash them, store them so that they stay clean and available.

*fog rolls in  
fat gulls  
huddle over the water*

Chop chop chop. The carrot is now a row of paper-thin, salad-ready (they are too skinny for soup or mixed vegetables) slices. I am momentarily in control. Chopping block, *hocho* (knife) and me standing, cutting the decisive widths. I feel exhausted, but the wafer-size carrot wheels are perfect.

*Bashō*  
*your rainproof paper hat*  
*made with your own hands*  
*the one imitating Saigyō's . . .*  
*I too have felt desperately alone*

At Tassajara it rains. I have told the *tenken* I am sick and to please bring me hot water in a thermos, later, after breakfast. From my bed I hear the rain softly falling and the sound lulls me back to sleep. A band of moonlight criss-crosses my otherwise darkened cabin.

*cooling the night with its plashing  
I doze . . .  
dream of its plashing*

Sometimes the wake-up bell will ring, with its primitive and unmistakably firm ring, and I cannot get out of bed. I lay there in the dark, in the glorious warmth of my sleeping bag, feeling remote, reluctant to decide to be at this monastery. The desire to stay in bed, finally to sleep enough, to be warm, to reconsider my life is overwhelming.

*hatched  
but slow to uncoil  
in the mild rain*

Through this “sickness” my life emerges. First I “get” that I am sick, the vast extent of it. Then I recognize the tremendous energy that I bestow on the things I choose to do. I can’t help but ask why I pour myself into sewing, for example, and sneak out of *zazen*, when it is *zazen* I have presumably come to Tassajara to practice.

*full moon—facing it  
knees braced  
beneath my robe*

The answer is evident in my hands. My hands write and sew with immaculate, single-minded passion, passion that is sure of itself, pulsating and ecstatic. In the *zendo* my hands freeze. All the contraptions I can devise to insulate them beneath my robes cannot prevent their stiffening numbness.

*winds howl*  
*snow mounts*  
*the wintry thicket . . . lifeless*

One holds out for so long then gives oneself over to a chain of events by which isolated segments of one's life unravel. The contents scramble. The life force, renewed, released, slowly reconstructs itself, as if one's karma metastasizes.

*autumn leaves  
lie quietly  
in the sun*

One day I have the following thought: “I have spent eleven years as a Zen student resisting everything. What would happen if I take all the energy that I put into resisting and use it for something positive?”

*eaglet  
ripping the soldier  
free from the asphalt*

From this seed I develop “yes practice.” “Yes practice” means doing only those things that I say “yes” to with my whole body and mind. I will not get out of bed until there is something I want that much. (I have to find out if there is.) If there isn’t, I will just die, but I am not going to pretend for another second.

*shrouded in fog  
a tiny dinosaur  
inches toward dawn*

Soon it occurs to me that I want to write. Whereas formerly I felt I needed a specified subject, now I think: “If I want to write, I’m going to write. I’m going to write a certain number of hours a day just like I go to *zazen* a certain number of hours a day. I will not worry about what I write. I will concern myself solely with attending my writing periods.”

*high noon*  
*lime-green sulphurs*  
*mud-puddle in the canyon dust*

I am through with Zen Center. I need to define my own regime. Zen Center has had it with me anyway. I am told privately that unless my attitude changes, I will not be accepted for Fall Practice Period. Indeed, my attitude has changed but not in the direction that would pique my interest in Fall Practice Period.

*after the storm  
over the hill . . .  
zigzagging*

Saying “yes” finally was like a birth. And, like most other births, it came after a long period of gestation characterized by saying “no” only the “no” was unconscious. Immersed in the fog of my unconscious “no,” I failed to recognize my own authenticity.

*tadpoles!*  
*bug-eyed and squirmy*  
*in their bracken-shaded mud*

A predominant feature of this inauthenticity was a sense of impending doom. Initially it hovered around the dreaded unnamed seemingly unavoidable crisis one could feel swelling in my childhood household. The atmosphere of this swelling—forces at work that I didn't understand, the largeness of those forces (that they were way, way beyond me), my ensuing inertia and blankness, and the resulting compliance (compliance being a form of inertia)—infiltrated all my subsequent endeavors, until “yes practice” broke through the gridlock.

*warming earth—  
its scent  
in an early-spring breeze*

Likewise in college, my inability to think and to write perpetuated the sense of being stalked—that at any moment something cataclysmic might happen. Because I couldn't keep up.

*a  
falcon  
circles  
evermore  
narrowly  
down  
through  
the  
desolate  
sky*

Determining to say “yes” . . . making that a conscious act—housing the bits of emptiness and despair that belonged to me and then offering them to the universe—  
“Yes practice” meant claiming my life. “Yes practice” was the beginning of living my life as opposed to an ersatz life.

*waving long legs  
dragging itself through the widening split  
in the pre-dawn light*

Buddhism, also an attempt to heal the unpindownable sense of vacuousness that pervaded my life, turned out to be another trap. I began sitting *zazen* because I had come to the end of the way of life to which my parents had brought me up. I needed a deeper path—to access a larger part of myself. I didn't know what this meant exactly. It wasn't formulated mentally. I was drawn to *zazen* however at an important turning point.

*from broken shell  
to clump of bluestem . . .  
making a dash for it*

I tried very hard to follow the schedule because I believed that I had finally found—consummate and unfathomable—a path that plumbed the core of my being. Despite the fact that it was difficult, I told myself that at least I was on the right track. If I could just exert a little more effort, a little more will, a little more self-discipline . . .

*flat pink sea:  
saffron wings  
flutter over the prawn boat*

Ironically, the vehemence behind my determination hooked me irretrievably into another tailspin (I can't do it and there's no other choice). As I focused my energies on adjusting to the community (this, I was assured over and over, is Zen practice—"Just follow the schedule," everyone said, "while you notice mentally the obstacles that arise for you"), I failed to notice my unmitigated sense of hollowness and despair.

*slipping on the scree  
her wings smeared  
my fingers powdery*

The milieu of “yes practice” is movement. It includes ever-changing me. Doing only those things that I say “yes” to with my whole body and mind releases me minute by minute to become who I am.

*from the prow of the ferry  
watching them spin ever faster  
over the bay*

After I formally left Zen Center, I moved into a neighborhood apartment and for awhile continued to sit *zazen*. One day I had an interview with the Head Monk. He asked about my leave-taking and I carefully explained “yes practice.” He said to me: “Until you say yes, you cannot practice Buddhism.”

*an arctic basks—  
wings tilted toward  
the salmon pink sky*

from  
*Look at That Dog All Dressed Out in  
Plum Blossoms*

*Snail breeze on a shaft of moon*

A dawn moon awakens me, softly softly, its waning light.

Dew sparkles on the cobweb-veiled grass.

Still in my nightgown, I carry my dream to the blue porch  
rail.

Neither dew nor dewy cobwebs dull the song of birds.

*“Let’s go, babe!” says my dad a snapshot later*

Pale rain – daisies drink you sumptuously.

Sun peaks out behind your silky curtain of beads.

I wander through my garden, crocus and trillium asleep.

Have you stopped? No. Yes. For a moment I thought so.

*Asleep but easily startled*

Fishing along the quiet, unfrequented banks of the river.

Cryptomeria grove dark, even as late as noon.

A sudden rain, a breeze. A butterfly investigates my lunch.

“Hello!”

Like the poet I wonder, “How long will lovely days like  
these last?”

*“The sudden moon alarms mountain birds”*

After diving into red lotuses, a cormorant soars over clear  
water.

Feathers sleek, fish in beak, it stands erect on an old  
drifting log.

Poet, you describe the water bird with such accuracy and  
passion,

yet isn't it the log you have come to feel is yourself?

*In numinous light the river raptly tranquil*

My small room has an eastern exposure. Cool in summer.  
Warm at dawn.

A pair of lovebirds purrs iridescence throughout the long  
quiet night.

Creamy roses, richly fragrant, merge their scent with the  
throbbing mist.

A friend cut some and presented them to me in a vase.

*Back from fishing*

Acrid yet fresh. Life fresh. (That certain not-yet putrid.)

Boat, body, bay, all dressed in it.

Can I wash it off? Herons can't.

The sea's insignia, in blood till death.

*Wild rose, wilder with the glow worm*

At a suq, was it you I thought I recognized?

Not the meat, the fruit, nor fattened greens.

Your fleeting face, or was it mine, behind a gauzy curtain,

the bazaar deserted, it being after dark and about to close.

*I didn't realize it was raining*

I ashore, you adrift. What are we doing?

My gaze follows you, placidly.

We've parted before. The stages of sorrow I've memorized.

The expanse of blue waves is impossible to fathom,  
lifetimes later.

*What happened to the moon in the enamored  
monk's moonlit waters?*

Red fish in the ice-cold lake (crystal clear yet crinkled like  
a shoe).

A sand bar gleams beneath threatening clouds.

I lie on my back watching them unravel the northern hill.

Your voice, when you courted me, comes to mind.

*Frogs, the birds of night*

Snuggling in ("for the long haul" it feels) or at least the  
thought is delightful.

I tug the sheet around my ears, sink my body into its  
shroud.

Wind sweeps through the garden, a relief, will the heat  
break?

I am still. Absolutely and entirely one-pointed in stillness.

*“The dark moss already bears my print”*

One jay caws.

The forest and my heart resound with memory.

Not of jays, but of myself, not yet ready.

Not yet not.

*White lily in her devil’s needle cloak*

Young shoots through an old fence.

That’s me, the fence, trying to keep people away.

I tell them I’m celibate. I say I’m a monk.

Raindrops, dewdrops, the sodden leaves outside my gate.

*Peach-size in a peach field*

With ordinary monks I have nothing in common.

Spines straight, legs crossed, sitting-robles fraying at the  
knees.

Drowsy in the morning, I watch for awhile, yawn.

Chores finished for the night, I brush my teeth and go to  
bed.

*At town's end, the creaking flight of a grasshopper*

I stretch my ears.

Perk up, listen hard to make sure.

There it is. Nothing. No-sound. (I can relax.)

Release with the thud of it.

*“Two gray hairs appear in the lit mirror”*

The wind howls and becomes old wind, the wind of  
another city.

Yester-wind that once I faced, knees to forehead, in my  
tattered chair.

That was a dark time. I felt close to the snow, its  
unprovocable stillness.

With snow, even in a flurry, there was me, consoled,  
unbending.

*Is it midnight yet?*

Quiet deepens. I walk in the moon.

Hushed rays sadden. Their soft half-circle light.

The thought of you emerges. Your woolen scarf. Your  
slender hands.

A northerly wind swirls from the winter wood.

*“Stones are lean, mahogany and NANMU trees are strong”*

Bashō, as he lay dying, took his poems for worthless.

This was not just posturing. Words, he felt, who cares?

Yet each day I sweep my room, arrange my pencils  
carefully.

Seeing them all lined up so simply . . .

*Dead birch tree, your fungus shelves the snow*

My mind grows freer with the passing years.

No patience for the Three Obediences.<sup>1</sup>

But like a giant floating-heart, adrift between empty  
banks,

a bowl of wild plants eaten, discarded . . .

---

1. A Confucian dictum has it: “While not married yet a woman must obey her father; once married she must obey her husband; and, after her husband dies, she must obey her son.”

*“Knowing that friends are coming, I use my foot to  
clean around the wicker gate”*

Why complain of loneliness and seclusion when a hermit's  
life is what you seek?

Sparrows frolic, roosters crow, so what?

To be one of a tribe of mountain birds floating by a cliff,  
you needn't be a mountain bird.

*Pien Luan's sparrows*

O my son. Do you really care about the wind of which you  
write with such passion?

The river gulls, the south pond lotus, the north hill that  
sends up purple shoots?

Why should I doubt you? (That would be your answer, of  
course.)

I, who managed to lose the river's poem.

*“Icy-skin-stony-bone”*<sup>2</sup>

O Saikō, no one could think that your senses have turned  
to ash.

Your *hakubyō*<sup>3</sup> bamboo take away my breath.

A tree’s white ghost with its ostrich plumes.

“We all regret that spring is not longer.”

*Woolly blue, undulant, stark*

Our bitter fight over, I go to my room.

My philodendron, my lacquered chest – what was I  
thinking?

How can I pretend to have my bearings?

The pretty hill, with oncoming night, more and more  
blurry.

---

2. Another name for the plum tree as well as a metaphor for a beautiful woman.

3. A painting technique Saikō occasionally used to paint bamboo.

*Please don't sweep the autumn leaves that linger  
around the well*

“Wedgewood.” Yes! Finally, after hours of struggle.

Deeper, deeper, excavating associations, yet the word itself  
escapes.

Growing old, I marvel at the irrelevancies that flood my  
mind.

Su, I am charmed. Your “three delights”<sup>4</sup> move me to tears.

*A long and firm sweet flag comes from yesterday's  
festivities*

Snow hisses down. My fire sputters.

“Jonathan died last May. He was twenty-four,” you say.

A shower of sleet bashes against the glass. A green moon  
slowly rises.

Caw caw caw. One black crow dominates the northern  
river.

---

4. Morning hair-combing, afternoon window-doing and bedtime feet-soaking.



from  
*RAGA*

Punjabi bells.

Awakening to alms handed through the trees.

She was twelve.

Sparrows of Lot. Bull-red and singing matter.

Pluck. Pluck. Pluck.

Fretless neck. Wooden knobs thud.

Trajectory of me (the king, the sage's student).

His chasuble from shell.

The bowl of my sarod.

A hollow vessel. Gushing dizzily of infinity.

What's me, I say. I stay steady. Or tabloid of Him  
(its shaft of hen sound).

Sing a hymn of glory, fox.

Prince throat.

Young hair parted in the center.

Father please (before the striped-cotton curtain).

I want to dawdle amongst the piebald man.

Cousin. Do not smirk.

The beauty of laughter quietly through the flowers.

*Abba Abba* comfort me. Let me rest by your feet.

Cirrus minion (noxious hands) pulling truffles of gas

Peacocks cry my daily *riyaz*.

Bangles and silk jubilant by the fairy books.

A gabled roof, a pane of sole, truce of my ear's solace.

Alone, terrified, aching for the bird.

My little gourd plays *da*.  
Raising my chin from the rattan carpet.  
Them gigs of reprieve. (A public avowal.)  
Sons in triage . . . *shishya*.

Disparate.  
Nib of intelligence scour the pier.  
I am fed. I grow. I dilate pretty.  
But the Ferris-wheel was getting to be uncomfortable.

Banyan of sorrow. Will she cry?

She went to the river (singing bad lands of youth).

Autumn luv. We've had our words.

*Mandir* of hearts. (Votive. Celestial.)

*O Ram*. I (the Talmud).

Maladies of children yarmulke or no.

(Sari-clad) festooned with swags, hollering beneath the  
coverlets.

“*Panchamrita*,” cried the deity, mahogany voice cascading  
from the poster.

Allure. Her gentle huskiness.

She'd moved, studied, wandered in the night.

This *gharana* (*dosha* of the beaten man).

Troubadour. Wild wind. Shivered the wireless (*gherao*).

*Facing silk flowers.*

Tides and multi-waters digress.

The plait of her forehead, the small of her neck.

I kiss its locks to freshen it.

from  
*DOHĀ*<sup>1</sup>

See the underwater fountain-tree plump with fruit,  
supple and ripe.

Whereby my lama smiles. He planted this ancient seed.

Within each face he recognizes himself.

Swish swish across his *vajra* throne, his immense  
white words spill silence.

Singing, yes. A hundred-thousand verses.

They curl like jewels (amulets of thorn).

Sifting through clouds, clear-mind of enlightened  
existence.

The *Aum* of creation (through which we continually  
regenerate) arises from his astonishing way of  
knowing.

---

<sup>1</sup>*Dohā* (Tibetan): devotional song of experience and realization from the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition of Tibet. *Dohās* are meant to “reveal the inner nature of the singer and express her insights and devotion in an uninhibited and unique fashion.”

Shivering reeds. You have been my mothers,  
exceedingly kind, protective of me always.

Glistening flower, butterfly, bee, waxy petals that fall.

A bushy-tailed squirrel surpasses thousands of *yojanas*.

I look out on the bluff. It is brown and quiet. *Lama, hear  
me. Kind root lama.*

To excoriate the stars, I scream.

To placate clouds, I wail.

Clearing my throat, I chant a hundred thousand mantras.

In this way my craving dissolves.

I reach into my mind.

My room of wood is lush and dark.

(My home faces south on an embankment that  
slopes steeply.)

From time to time mists wreath its imposing neck  
like a silver scarf.

Today as I was chanting, rosary beads clicking,  
my voice became a bell from whose echo a strong  
remembrance arose.

I am in a hall with monks and horns high in smoky  
mountainous air.

Daffodils cover the ground.

Thus I age and die and see the luminous white field.

“Send me to Sukavati, please.” (I pray hard as the  
wise ones suggest.)

A cycle of teachings is repeated by heart.

I hold to my heart.

The pulse of the hum. The tilt of the sky.

Fragile fingers yawn, paper thin and shiny.

Shavings from my gouge trail to the ground.

Curlicues pile up.

In thinness, absorbed in my ablutions.

For it is written. (Our time will come.)

Fire and flood will ease all.

The gutted slope displays its roots, throbbing,  
twisting, dangling in air.

I know that I am a mountain (that I will continue  
to be a mountain) for three incalculable eons.

I'm beginning my evening prayers.

The nectar of peace seeps into my thigh.

I dissolve into my song. The cry of a bird, my  
primordial voice.

It feels like a cave. A place of no flowers

The sun, with a smell of coolness, sinks.

A slow drizzle falls.

A man dies. But it is not a breach (really).

Jasmine and rose follow him everywhere.

## THE WISDOM MIND COLLECTION 2008-2013

### *Introduction*

Between 2008 and 2013 I wrote a series of eight books, beginning with *The Tethering of Mind to Its Five Permanent Qualities*, and culminating in *The Twelve Nidānas* and *Mingling the Threefold Sky* that are rooted in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and dedicated to “stretching” English in order to create gaps so that Wisdom Mind might flow through to the reader. The idea in these poems is to not-quite-make-sense. The beauty (hopefully) of the surface language plus the strategy of “approaching narrative” first intrigues, then holds a reader, allowing, in stillness, the dawning of a new kind of intelligence. As a poet, I feel that this body of work is my most important.

The complete text of all eight books in the Wisdom Mind series follows. For more on the linguistic strategies which “baffle the mind in order to release the brilliance of the mind,” see “The *Way* of the Poem.”

*The Tethering of Mind  
to Its Five Permanent Qualities*

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NEW YEAR'S DAY SWIMMERS

*i*

In fir trees in sky, bathers on grass in no particular order. Towels strewn in no particular order.

Swimmers mostly standing in water, in sunny pool though light is muted.

Muted sounds from low benches at certain distances (air the color of crisp blue).

Clouds, sky, day, in perfect symmetry of day.

Image of boy now fading under water in shadow of darker blue water.

Pale day occurring above cold pools. Day is there next to white water and waders' bird heads.

Is white completely calm (sober) water.

As token of figure bathing and what she *feels* about bathing without reference to motion and breath.

Without reference, motion and breath *are* the composition.

A photographer sees breath as blue shadows on the bottom of a pool. The pool has no sides, no bottom, so it spills over.

Motion is outside breath in language bonded by the requisite of death in the picture.

Swimmers tread water waiting in waveless drift, as if volition (or feeling) is the karma of water.

Death is blue waterless waves in moments of preparing the picture (loose clear bodies of boys in cold swim water; bland postures of bodies wading at water's edge).

Bodies wade *inside* the water without reference to themselves in the water. Only the language of themselves wading.

In time *before* as if wading in advance. Years pass in the person wading before the water.

Proportions occur in composition of boys, water, red-and-white ball and the pool's various surfaces.

An image breaks in the internal place between two bodies.

To place herself beneath the weighty water, being water and the brain of water, is being *back* 'in' water, as in 'mother water.'

Being queer is not being the thought of oneself as that.

Being queer is the same as if one is occurring.

A field of sealed bodies limps mentally toward water.

Is repeated but is thin (what occurs lapses).

*If* she occurs is separate.

The sealed bodies of waders drift off-shore submerged.

Which is not that occurring either as it exists, ceasing and occurring.  
A length of sea, *down* in her.

Immersed in water—*being* time—suited or in the cold flesh of water. As if  
time around the water, which when occurring, is being ceasing there.

An Oranda's bulging eye perceives the pale flow of water as *fingers* of  
water, time around its head.

*Mere* voice spins on its tail toward familiar sense of twisted water, eons of  
them *wearing* water.

A syllable in the foreground is a serendipitous presence. (Others watching others in water somewhere else.)

One's hands shed sound (the intelligence of sound).

Two swans in the twist of their necks. One's hearing is the silent swans under them in the lake.

One's hearing is adjacent to the sound of them (now lit in slinky under-lake, honks simmering in little shore peep-hole).

A year ends below water. Several bodies appear surrounded by gray light.

In portentful time of being *in* the time of that which is as yet unmanifested.

The time of a wave, say, in the advent of sound before it is heard by those with hands in parkas.

Gray dawn as sound is placed on faces treading near-motionless water and expressionless bodies standing in boots at the sea's edge.

Also the experience of facing water is her facing water whether herself inside incipient sense of water.

Hearing is passed through the heads of those staring. Is an expression of sea—hearing form (entropy).

Others say nothing but in their minds is the hearing of those watching.

Which is indistinguishable from sea. And from time.

Water hearing water in the windless waiting of cold day. Its internal sound is an object of water's mind.

The heads of those immersed in water is also sound. One's hearing is also below water.

One is *being* hearing and at the same instant hearing.

One's interior sea is an object and at the same instant the mind that apprehends an object.

There is no silence in one.

Sea and words are sea hearing hearing. One imagines oneself facing hearing as aspect of hearing's sound.

On a plain there is water. Somewhere far off I hear wind or sea shattering.

A person sees direction and space without the intelligence of space (so that she is its mute face).

Faces stare at water being primitive and without location vis-à-vis water's actual boundary.

Water is there, not *for* but *being* repeating. Staring repeats the aegis of a view inclusive of itself.

A body hangs from the topmost place of water.

Inside a wave fades, e.g., there is no interior to the wave.

Yet she resides in 'no interior.'

Seeing *inside* the water's legs which is hanging.

Headless legs stand in seafoam. Others look out being on legs  
though the dripping in between is dry.

New Year's air is dry and solemn today bent near legs. A sheer leg.

*iii*

Looking through grass toward young sea water. A structure holds sea in and out of green sea-water.

Long slab of gray cold water, bodies lashed to themselves. Nothing occurs simultaneous to itself, in deep awareness of precious-moment's disappearance.

In the barren waste of vast, thin water, a falcon wears sea wild at its edge.

In slab of sea that is Dead Sea, kiosks are seen by one looking at the water.

Seen-through water, a shelf of water. The sense of sea pulled back.

Mind is green, then alone. A girl's mild body holds up like a slip.

A man is thin where he grows without hearing. Thin bird, moving against falling.

Like craziness repeating, a mind realizing hearing (the *stakes* of hearing) in the context of women asleep.

She glances at the sea, though *she* is its body. *I move but day too moves along with its falling.*

The long day slides below low clouds. White lines cut the hill horizontally.

Falling below falling, the falling of day clings, but it moves down the hill like a second pair of shoes.

A slow dog moves slowly with the blossoms' light, falling with day down to the cold sea.

A dog trots through sky, albino skin a beautiful borne white.

It shimmers in a line though it is alone. Other dogs are its borders.

As if she were day, a blind dog stops. At first it is sight, then low sight, then *she* is the sight.

Islands of rock stand in dark blue water made to appear as distant person in yellow vest.

*Do you reside? Do you not reside?* Energy, like the water, is low, seemingly bland, unruffled.

Bather's flesh is real. Mermaid's flesh glows in creamy ground of water, frosty-blue tail, sharp flapper, pointy.

Shadows on walls, like flesh, in passing moments, *is* each moment.

A full moon hangs but it is separate from night and does not spread its light anywhere.

## BARN YARD

A woman sees cows from behind slated blinds. (One slow green-lit cow.)

Luminous tiny birds in dark green columns are still-small, low-flying across the meadow.

The sound of a bird is the girl's *feeling*, not the empty bird.

One's hearing is in a mass of birds struggling (invisible scurrying touchable-but-outside the occurrence of their bodies).

Nothing moves (being destitute of hill in 'flat' hill at the ravine's bottom).

Nothing moves. Cuds move in undercurrent of dark motionless stream.

A photographer sees sky/hay/hill as composition of linear fields, muted colors divided by thin bars of black.

A tree's interior edge holds sky.

A rooster crows in thick gray air that rises then falls away rhythmically.

If I can replace myself then, taking back something from before I  
appear ordinary.

The shame of the familiar, like an ordinary barn.  
A slum in light has perfection of the afternoon.

There are lines, she is told, of carefully wrapped people.

People are dead in different colored shirts.

In the sky's translucent provenance, an elder piece of her, crooked in  
its arms like a waltz.

Trees are black in aslant nature of coming together as trees. (Dog in sweet complexion of light.)

A woman eats cheese and says her bread, which is wood, wafts from the mouth of a young girl.

Seeing imbues the loaf with food.

A girl in birds, in black sea light, rides along a canal of light.

I am their teacher so I am hurrying to get there. I begin to run.

A woman eats holding her mouth above her.

Figures emerge in rock moving normally in awareness of shorn fields.

Blackbirds rest on someone's hands in cessation of being in a particular field of sight. (Is endurance of hands or the property of folding one's fingers to make a perch for the bird's claws.)

A photograph of birds are the same birds omitted from their form so that the print is not *of* them but cut out from them and from the cessation of them.

Form without the appendages of form is an image of pure sight (omitting that action).

A red one, say, in skin narrower than herself.

If she's confined letting the skin loose. A girl is a chair sometimes in expanded position of slingback. If she's washed herself.

Where she would be fully sleeping next to it. Feeling its walls.

An empty mouth like sun comes where she does it, though its layers and layers smell like the inside of her body.

His pee in the gush of some riverless doorway there.

A 'we' suspends out, being outside water peeing or inside to feel the warm drift of legs.

*iii*

Mute in sun. Of bare air in day. Dog in sand spreading time through tall blue summer.

A man sees time from before or during himself, days of himself in continuous parallel lines.

A road veers off to unseeable distant landscape known by him once.

Waiting is touching. Still-summer air inside seated person in blank moment of dog.

A woman faces dog, though light becomes something modular.

Emptiness and light compose the luminosity of her voice beyond the composition of any structure.

Emptiness and light compose the luminosity of *his* face. He looks at the grass and this knowledge makes the grass warm.

Trees listen like grass, the *other* of myself, interior line of time  
endowing hearing with time.

Trees soak through time.

So she's dead. *There*, in morning light. The *other* of time spanned  
over light.

Not as in death but simply ceasing, though she continues to be alive.

Day falls and if she thinks it is her mother, a bell rings in her skin.

Light falls like a mask while she eats her bread. *I am dizzy with bread*, she acknowledges.

What is the connection between resting as a *place* where light is a place and the immanence of the place like a dark (dissociative) fugue?

What is the connection between her face in the sky and the never-never land of her being my mother?

The immanence of her face, flat as water, though I have never known her at all?

Slowly she becomes my mother. Night falls on black branches of something generous.

## HALLOWEEN

A child reads. Winter sun pours through the salon windows.

*Is that a skull? I mean on your big toe. Can I see your toe?  
Would you show my daughter your toe? she repeats to the girl  
applying peachy-orange polish on her child's.*

*That is cool! O my god. That is so cool.*

*Would you like one? You can have one. I mean I'm just saying  
you can if you want. It's up to you.*

Oneself as a child with those who frequent the salon being absorbed.  
Sun drains from the sky into the salon's flattening skylight.

People are not visible, barricaded off, so that she can be arriving  
there, slowly behind her mother.

Her agency cut off. Her mother's agency also cut off.

A man alone gazes at sky. He is writing. Light pours through the window.

Before dawn a man stands at his stove silently filling a thermos. Watching sky someone thinks of him writing. So that the day is expunged with the exception of his writing.

A man writes looking at sky. The day is cold in mind of person imagining him writing.

The gray lug of sky only appears interiorly.

Things ahead of one occurring.

A dog seen from its side is not the dog's profile but 'as if' cut out from its side. The dog is itself, not overlaid on its side.

Seeing the dream's sound, being boisterous automaton of dog overlaid on its side.

Hearing-behind-hearing is simultaneous occurrence of before and after hearing *how* hearing exists cut out from its own side.

The rose is from a former dream. It could be blue. Many windows open, exposed to the sun's heat.

I dreamed the dream *before* dreaming it, standing in sun imagining the rose alive.

Imagining oneself abandoned in the sense of alone on a street with or without flowers.

Its beauty outside the purview of one.

The wing of her foot in dream of blue-lit space where a peacock squanders herself. A nest of small birds also squander themselves. A child squatting before the nest stirs the nest with a stick.

It comes to one there, the sequence of who she is.

If eating there, being ahead of one's thorough eating, her back to eating as in the dream before the tree.

One's dream is not later, e.g., tall wing of peacock squandering is whole (may not be crushed or heard outside itself later).

One remains behind, which is a direction of force. Staying *in* 'behind' as if one were exterior to oneself, in a 'hole' of oneself.

Being 'there'—in the imprint of seized—the thought seized.

The smell of cold as minutes pass.

To sleep or to sleep back where *is* is *in* sleep or dreaming he is allowed to sleep.

DEAD

*i*

In morning light reading. A woman sits informally, elbows on chair, in square of light from window to her left.

Porosity of light holds resting in silent form.

Day too is quiet like a river drifts, arcs over her hearing.

A woman holds the color of herself, height of room and quiet, as if time and mind exist because their origins are fallow.

A woman in light merges with light which is postureless.

She is young inside her sitting spread in morning light.

A woman in chair is necessarily alone. Shadows bend wood against its destination.

Matter dissolves in undercurrent of herself drifting away from her harmless body.

Is it flowers or my mind emptying of them, though they remain in sight?

She may also be old. Her neck is old bent over a book. (Bathing cap and girl with octopus staring at sand, not moving.)

So dying arises. A viewpoint uninscribed.

A place utterly familiar dissolves inside you. Time dissolves, carved out of snow.

Yellow is how, in the fury of night, while daylight on land is, like a woman in the morning.

*ii*

In darkness behind something, can of something.

A building glows as if it were teeth.

Naming the mother out. Naming her outside beauty.

Like the stillness of a flavor, finding it in an old can.

I wind myself around the can's sweet edge.

The synapse between light and light's real life.

*I am real*, she thinks. Like a gash in sky, a dune is not washed of lit  
dune night.

From beyond light, the deep act of *being in light*.

It rocks in a tree she fears may be stolen.

So it's *singular light*, its own knothole of light that slips through the flower's markings.

A color is heard. (Net of warmth, through the grass to the tree's edge.)

Wilderness accrues in great spots of white.

The dog is my mother rotating on earth white-skinned.

O she is dirty. Like the end of memory, some form on her body  
beyond her own grasp.

A tourist at death impersonates someone trying to be her again and  
again.

Another person keeps her. In latent light the rescinding memory of  
that boundary.

Another person is a memory of sound retaining the physical latency  
of having once heard sound.

*iii*

A woman is bare in bare bowl of wind.

Lips green, pain the shape of day. She divides pain into sections.

A man waits for death watching birds' concoctions from their throat.

Fresh wind blows waking birds in net of family bowls.

I draw wind in my mind. Your beard creates little steps for it to rest.

Stepping over stones where rocking animals sleep. (She'd thought the leaf had them also.)

A buzzard begins, swings its heavy, lazy body. *It's the leaf's death.*  
*Inside rocking's skeleton.*

It is young-dead, waiting in the coverlet for birth to happen.

A big bowl opens. A vulture easily in distant sky fills around my being.

The placelessness of birth dawns in her mind. *May you belong here. May you swing over from death's outer edges.*

Crickets hearing death grow still. (And underneath, as if the chirps were water.)

Like a fledgling's open throat. A fledgling seeing a flower knows her throat after that day.

*iv*

A word touches you after me and before me.

Something appears blue, scrapes the backbones of this color,  
wishing that I am a blue person in the supreme daylight of blue.

The shadow of your word falls against my home. Who you are in the  
dream of my mother whose tongue has touched a lighted field.

Rushing sky she will touch other animals who face downward.

So I begin in words. Sitting down and emptying her, like a tourist latent in a guesthouse window.

*Will I recognize her face? (Because my mind preempts her face.)*

Once I forget. I race down the entire dream, imbricated, scales loosely dangling, like the mother-tongue of a stranger.

Hearing forms a line (a column in the mountain whose groin is the mountain).

My hearing is a sea of birds pressed inside their voices.

My hearing is a world shed as a locale once qualified to constellate mind.

Like a paper doll I lay flat.

Her eyes follow my voice, seeing my hearing back to its loosened page.

Who are you mother? Where, among myself, can you plan who I am?

You are born inside my body, lusting after my thigh.

A body parts from where it's left off. An ace or queen, a paradigm which can be touchless.

If you fake me, who will I be ?

If you appear my image of you shifts. (Not having readiness for a person shifts the mind in which the potential person exists.)

Which shifts the language creating that person. I translate you to being *in* and *out* of your presence and the translation is like your presence within the boundary of a word.

The thought of clean air is a foray toward a word, as if a word were a place for her to store herself. Inside the word's claw.

A woman shaves words picking up one at a time from a little bowl.

The word's 'other side' exists prior to the word.

There is no hearing outside *being* hearing, thinking one's sound is that.

A word's sound is separate from its wordness. The 'action' (karma) of a word's sound being also separate.

Reading sound, recognizing a notation as conveying one's interior sound simultaneous to hearing in one where 'one' is the same.

Outside one is also the same.

There is no same outside time. A sound repeats but it is not the same (though its label is the same). Time doesn't repeat.

A person doesn't repeat.

A crow caws, which may be interior at the same time as hearing in one.

Jays caw. Jays won't eat plums though there are millions of fallow plums.

A line spreads to the indefinite distance altering with every shift of light the millions of redwings on phone wires.

Already her skin occurring in the phone wires, dark in dark night.

The *result*? Sound hearing itself as sound or hearing itself as hearing with or without sound.

A cello at dusk makes the blue sound of a river.

A crow's caw is itself throbbing.

A woman bird struts across the green.

A woman's wooden bird is violet-colored (loud) in the smooth  
cream of a dream.

Her crow is full (empty of sound) carried in her violet dress.

She groks some sound strutting through leaves near the riverbed.

In the pearls of her feathers is a head being her enjoyment.

The young throb of her body is pure mahogany throb of young bird  
then (as if birds were, already occurring, in moment before now).

Snow birds in exotic black flap then.

*Telling who telling who in mirrorlike shaft of moon.*

*vi*

One fox in late light empties like sun. (White head in snow spilling herself into us.)

Suddenly swirling so that snow scrapes snow, continuously, like a tuba.

Fingering these years of snow, fragments of snow, suddenly (where I am).

I wash myself in thin night land, like night on a pony, skin scratched of light.

A glint of fog makes them be together in a pile.

A pile of horses neighs, stops in weatherless hill, eye-whites in mud.

Stepping backwards into water, nostrils bleached in odd pattern of children.

One horse empties into red Mongolian arrows.

Washing herself like a black bead.

Washing themselves into white sand.

A meadow is where their thin black shawls dissolve into water. Wild birds dissolve into scaffolding of water.

Water glows flat. A brown girl enters a river in late light.

Among her is a swamp. Now present in a dance as if she is waking  
(first) between herself.

A girl enters her body first.

Sisters occur. (I am borrowed together with my mother.) As if  
hearing the cry of her own future child imprinted in her femur.

A fetus moves, birds, trees, former pets.

Wool is made from parallel sheep in arbitrary cubicles in sky.

He sings to them such that his voice is like a large mother's palm.

Here is a lamb from where it was once. (Because she saw him once.  
Sky on clean line of ceiling, rafters holding up ceiling.)

Though her condition arises from touching, she cannot imagine  
herself as an object.

He lays the bird aside so that his children may see it but not know it.

A proprietor is thin. Her arms are shaped like paper. Which she folds like a doll's paper.

Drawers full of paper are of different weights and textures like a man she knows that reminds her of a city.

He plays horn. The gold in her cloak becomes the color of his skin waiting.

The time of his voice seems separate from the steady *sotto* voice that could be a doll's voice.

She takes place in his legs like the legs of her husband. (Legs fold in manner of his countrymen.)

She thinks, *Good. Now I can be like a line moving forward outside present time.*

The edge of her in her clothes is so thin it might break in her clothes.

Not a fetish but still knowing that the fetus is buried.

A child breaks up. Is intensity not-yet-worked. (Repeatedly becoming an object of *formed or shaped intensity*.)

A brass's ethos retains. It places anywhere in a formerly-worked object.

Hearing the stark name of a previous person. One may write the person.

Entering memory (an object in her mouth), ladling it up, placing it slowly where it belongs.

Your willowness enters song. You delicately twist your hair to a feeling that's like a country.

The pain of sight together, now in a specific setting, where a person's capacity for song (metonymy) fits tight.

A dog gobbles flowers. Space retains his passing.

A child waits, like weeds wait for flowers, retaining the passing of former names.

## THE PALLIATIVE OF MIND

*i*

A rock drinks an animal's life, easing it into the mountain. If a sentence goes on, it's her mind stringing pieces of her eyes.

Seeing the movement *before* the animal and hunt and hunt, as if its skin were alive.

*Before the air, that was the air of the people, lilies were private flowers,* she was thinking. (A flower's skin may be public skin yet lay beneath private air.)

An eagle turns, *repairing* air, like a squirrel turns to face a flower, as if some band affixed him to the flower and he is sure it is *that* flower.

The gallop of a squirrel is mixed with air, *carved air*, yellow like cowslips.

Throwing itself after air (but the cool flank of air). *I know air already*, you murmur.

The way light hits a flower or stone at dawn. Night *behind* night, blood in sunlight rising.

An animal, young in sky, washes back from sky. So I memorize sky, at the same time *think* of sky.

Wind becomes sky, light through distant tree trunks if sky were there, or, light with trees with no sky allowed.

A bird hops on grass, *weathering* the grass, leaving little igloos of white.

Lines of a bird grow down the bird. *Will grass survive its wing's blue tip?*

An old jay caws but its caw lacks the shrill, coarse modulations of a jay's caw.

A bird in flight brushes a flower's head.

Waiting rests as day passes in the flower's knowledge.

How the day as it rests admits further day. Like a flower is alive and its secondary life, encapsulated off, will not be allowed to overflow into it.

When the day ceases to be day because, you say, *it's fixed*, I know this.

A quip of birds from the far river rise. A hill slides into the valley's dark night while someone reads pressing himself open.

A gull circles a wedge of water, marking the water with her eye. The memory of her skin is limitless, like the memory of her cry, before a kill or later for the sake of others.

Wind, too, gains qualities by its forcefulness with things, its *hand*, say (a piece of sun cut off).

A crack in light, like a painting of light.

*The palette of wind is gold, she mutters, the boundary of a man playing chess in light being the dead person.*

A flower emits voices behind falling sun.

A flower is soft and the pain of soft reminds her of a sea of heads.

As if her life dreams its own violence. If a bird disappears, she may have asked for this to happen.

She begins to think that mountains wash out mountains. That the sea of heads form a land on which to walk, which she calls the *isthmus of larks*.

So a bird flies flat and what is it about its sleek blue mind.

*Is a bird a bird or quality of place dawned by the bird?* you mutter.

You look at a chirp, though it could be surreal. A tree *comes* just at the point of sky.

Phenomenology of the tree rides not so much on the stature of the tree but like the tap of a cane, where it goes after it is hidden.

A sycamore branch in late light sheds, as if sun splashes scattered shards of larks through needles of light-fall.

Time is little drops like from a spout drip-dropping the bough.

*Its stem is underground*, someone says, and I have a memory of a double stream flowing deep beneath the earth.

You tap on the stream to *awaken the stream* so that the leaves stop shaking their light out of it.

*though actually it is the same earth*

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*Rat Dream*

An old woman is born. Her hair dries and her  
mother thinks, *I have been her mother again.*

Might the woman's nature leave? Rats scurry from  
baskets, which are old baskets, hexagonal fields.

A night bird sleeps. Its dreams are down to its feet.  
Which you say is the bird's body before the skill  
of the bird's body.

Its wings lay flat in the smell of new grass.

*Commentary*

A quality of him, *home words* say, is the same as the man speaking.

*I already have that person*, I think because his blood is smooth also. My blood is smooth also.

A person moves, effortfully or effortlessly, and she thinks, *Is this a waste or not?*

She thinks it is bliss but *thinks* it is *her* feeling bliss.

Is *filigree* air, like in the rats' playpen? What can hold  
between a feeling and a queer girl child whose boots  
tips curl in shame?

I am really talking about rifts, what holds between her  
fear and the rats' miserable-life fragility.

There would be an object connected to my playing, like  
*saying* playing, as though words are desire.

The likelihood of death browsing itself into *my* death  
could occur and I think, *O yes. It is death!*

Each word has a flower. The times of the flowers  
converge so that she conflates words and flowers,  
*speaking* flowers.

Pansies in sun beneath the red breast of a robin, here  
and there, merge with the robin's legs.

A duck in scattered ripples darkens. snow falls, resting  
in a petal's shell.

An infant puts a flower in its mouth. The muscles of its  
mouth move by the flower's warmth.

Rats kneel to her and in her mind become true rats.

*The weight of the snow is heavier than words, heavier  
than stone, she marvels.*

*Is the Christ child born of air, through holes in the air? For  
the blood on snow is real transferred blood, alive in  
the mind of the boy.*

The beauty of a rat *depends* from its limbs. Snow folds  
and the boy becomes its eyes.

*Cow Dream*

A double flower begins in the folds of an infant's hands.

If you see its face, which is the fruition of your  
knowing, it may be a small, infinitesimal aspect of  
knowing.

*The fetus is standing*, someone says. She imagines her  
hands under its armpits. She spreads it on leaves,  
which look like artist's hands.

Wrapping purple leafy fingers around its bits of unborn  
life, she climbs a person inside the lark's mouth.

The fetus shines and she takes it to school. *The forest is ill,*  
she says. *Anything tall makes my blood quiet.*

A series of events moves in one direction only, like trees  
taller than sky.

A woman sees a bird and thinks something about its  
eyes. A clean, fresh feeling becomes that feeling  
regardless of her initial sense of affection for the  
bird.

Roots are veins ripening in her body though still hot  
as coal. This is why a bird's cool blood is the most  
delightful fowl quality.

*Commentary*

In the ether of white my baby fumigates.

The flavor of her skin holding a flower to her nose. each  
particle is a bud and inside the bud's head.

Flower and water are protectors, with the net feeling of  
white, as if a lotus absolves its entire color into her.

*I made my baby backwards*, I say. I am trying to  
remember if the long lowered arm vibrates.

Trying to recall time, my baby, offering of morning fields.

Young rocks sit like cows in sovereign pasture squares.

Or you may instantly be the baby's wisdom mother, the  
stronghold of you and your baby going somewhere  
pretty.

A spider's thin web zigzags into sky, whereupon the sky's  
dimensions shift.

If you appear, my image of you shifts. Not having  
readiness for a person shifts the mind in which the  
potential person exists.

Which shifts the language creating that person. I  
translate you to being *in* and *out* of your presence  
and the translation is like your presence *within* the  
boundary of a word.

When you appear, the interior land shifts making sounds  
like stones.

A spider's thin web zigzags into sky, whereupon the sky's  
dimensions shift.

Later you say, *a spider drowned*, juxtaposing your seeing  
with what you recall.

But one imagines tall black trees or a cow that hangs in  
privy to the cow.

*If I see the cow with you, but if I see the cow alone, we  
have to know where it exists.*

If a cow eats air, the air still exists.

Each and every cow jumps over the moon properly.

Meaning is the experience of one cow, before dawn,  
slowly traversing the earth.

A falling star holds up the whole earth, so that its drop  
is a pin-prick against water or color.

*It is my mother born from my body*, I'm thinking, while at  
the same time seeing faces of other relatives.

*Tiger Dream*

Sun from behind the mountain falling on the threshers  
and reflecting from the lake gains depth from the  
sound of falling.

The sound of water over stones at the lake's edge is like a  
darting bird.

If she wakes, she couldn't say the bird disappears, but its  
breath dissolves, like an undertow at sea.

*How igneous (fiery) and lucid are the bodies of tigers, she  
muses.*

*Commentary*

Each day the sun slips over the crest of the hill and  
lights the yellow grass.

A cat climbs the hill as though dawn were in its head,  
entwining pieces (petals in branches).

A day-moon slides below low tide. Fall-out from one's  
skin protects it from further harm.

Tide emits tide as she wanders down the coast, empty as  
a battered jug.

A woman carries a jug dexterously embroidered on silk.  
The woman's skin shines like the interior pink of a  
river.

The dimensions of the jug's magenta is implicit yet  
exacting.

*Out* is not a direction but an aspect of conference  
around the jug's battered aggregates.

Bringing yellow *out*, where *out* is a structure of color  
*and* light, intensifies *out*, as if its DNA changes.

There is an hour in which her memory will be there,  
where light falls in rain on a tiger's flickering head.

A stone woman prays, hearing sun in sun. (She dreams  
its *precise* nest.)

A magenta flower glows so that I feel free at last. A  
magenta flower glows, disappearing in its skin.

Light jumps back as if she has that person again.

Death is color-added-to-color.

Color *learns* color by touch, like the *feel* of rain from  
one's bed.

What if the occurrence of harm refers to the difficulties  
of *offering* the harm? In the broad space of an  
animal, a wound in a woman's thumb feels like  
embroidery of jasmine and honeysuckle.

The necessity of something and its form *is* the tiger  
sleeping, tail to tail, in tandem with something.

*Hare Dream*

An angel glides silently through air to where the child  
Christ sleeps. He sees her as a crow, wings folded,  
watching.

A blue flower in the wing of a bird hovering near the  
birth, is not *in* the bird, since it fluctuates in light,  
while the bird remains unchanged.

In my mind there is a bed where I drop off.

Christ and hare both slip through my mind and  
land where a hare might or where someone needs  
something.

*Commentary*

The bird whose markings fluctuate remains unchanged  
independent of its visibility.

Yet her girlishness has continuity. *Limbs jumbled in the  
corner are still free limbs*, I'm thinking.

All the animals are resting. I know them from the inside  
as if they have *said*, and their word is a death-rattle.

A golden crow or laughter is said to be a paradigm of  
activity then.

So there are words, then under-words.

Black words like a river so that her thoughts,  
pummeled, are the hard thoughts of stone people.

They burn a branch of all their people, then turn to ash.

*Am I the person? I am the person.* I decide I *must* be the  
person.

While a glistening star holds night within its skin, a  
twinkling star has no interior where night can sit.

So she lays with the animals whose foreheads quiver.

So many ducks and goats being *causes*, songs where  
voices are *tongues*.

Sweet air sweeps the ragged flowers. sweet air sweeps  
her hair. (Winnowing its hair is also an object.)

The beauty of the straw in the wake of a bird flown  
away. As if the whole world encased in shadow-  
brought-to-bear-upon-a-field *stops* the straw in  
time.

I'm thinking time occurs separate from the straw, *beside*  
the straw, and in its looseness is neither created nor  
destroyed.

Seeing something *against* time, as if time were *old-*  
*fashioned*. A shoe, for example, is eligible to loss.

To be dead again, in the simplicity of its skin. I hear a  
leaf and think it is in the well, so we are together.

*Dragon Dream*

*It is just beyond her body to sleep with him.*

*It is just beyond her body not to sleep with him.*

This is the moral of a little play. There is a lodge. A young girl is invited into the main room. She is black with very bushy hair, dressed in a silver princess costume, carrying a wand. She comes in and behaves very sweetly to a guest but her parents think she is faking her sweetness and really being sassy so they ask her to leave and come in again, this time being genuinely sweet. So she comes in again behaving slightly differently. Each of the two times signifies a different moral.

*Commentary*

A doll talks and if she's a tall doll, *in dependence on a listener*, her presence will not disperse far.

Her body covers her life as if it were a cast.

Mop-like braids fall to her waist. *If I were a Cyclops forging thunderbolts, I too would be being born* she posits.

A man binds his mind so that it doesn't scatter. He tucks it between his breasts. *How have you left your mind before?* someone asks, speaking politely.

After long rain a man leans on a gate. Hair-thin legs  
race along the rim.

A disappearing chirp *has* appearance, like its body is  
young yet forever carried in its old mother's womb.

For her presence *gives* also. Her feet and ears also.

She grabs her limb dangling in the breeze like a cocoon.

Cobwebs in sun are strings of pure time dangling in a breeze.

Cobwebs in shade land, decrepit before time, cave into time.

Part goes up. so that time feels like war.

Another portion rolls into air—holding air, lighting day back.

A whoosh of wings feels like an effigy, some sort of charcoal beast fluffing its feathers, eating sky with upturned beak.

If what is visible close by is remote, vast visibility, I inhabit my thoughts more fully.

Inside is a stage whereas outside is somatic. A great slaughter of beings is contained within their death.

As if a holocaust is *found*, as if future beings *trip*. Sky washes sky as I watch a dragon fade, wings rubbed by sky's shadows.

*Snake Dream*

A woman seeing an animal sees it belly-to-earth *raised*  
*above the earth so that it floats on a small peninsula.*

A python, like a bladder, coagulates the sludge, eating so  
much sludge.

Light from its eyes shoot out little tails of fire and she  
wonders why its death seems so friendly.

*It dies on the highway 'cause it's slow, someone says,*  
*thinking of sand. It vanishes in squares, as if*  
*striations of sunlight are old.*

*Commentary*

My mother is dead. *How could she have forgotten her shoe?* (A hazy memory of a dream where I'm a colorful bird's tail.)

She sees the bird hop and its hop disappears into the tail of the bird, into the tails of her children.

*Here is a whole bird, she thinks, its tail discrete like a discrete word.*

If one dies, among birds, a red-winged bird is heavier in its body then.

Caught in her own heirloom of light, a woman sleeps in  
distension of moments that appear to be there.

Old birds swarm. Quadrilles of people (fitting the crate  
around the edges of her body).

Immersing herself in a log. Some say she *is* that thing,  
as if she hops inside it.

*Mother, I am blind, I say. Your pink toes reveal nothing  
any more.*

A yellow fowl touches logs contingent with animals  
who knew the logs as sky.

Of previous people drawn on the backs of stooped  
women. She felt she was that woman. That her  
yellow earth bloomed in the night oil.

Afterwards there are leap years then. Like fields of  
potatoes.

A child hops, square to square, with her own  
convergent yellowness.

The emotion of yellow, say in meat or chirps. The same level of color in the blank place of sky is like borders in sky mirroring the bottom of her eyes.

*Is it painted?* a child asks. Her sewn face has alterity and depth.

Pink is here and you are *sure* of the color. Before being born, grass is this color.

To bring back sky, it *pulls* the sky so that sky folds comfortably over everybody.

*Horse Dream*

*Where is day?* someone asks, and I see the twin  
nature of black, oil of black, mountains stark and  
wet.

Pearls seem brown like the bottom of the sea.

I whisper something and the animal's ear flicks. So she  
lets her leg give this impression, a pearl in the dark,  
in the blue of its stomach's shell.

The mare's perch is illuminated because blood and  
ecstasy are to birth like an underlying river.

Air rushes in, steadying my mind. *Your words are my mother, I'm thinking.*

Long legs curl around a shriveled coil of knees.

An insect wanders off. It's a baby I see and my heart breaks for its infinite slow old non-knowing of direction.

*Just get through the line. Get to the yellow snow. To the bridge where you can puke. There. To cut yourself out.*

*Commentary*

The sky frames your face and all the different skies.

You're the crow against the sky or quadrants of an  
insect's shell from the perspective of sky.

The *place* of you is like the essence of your eyes.

So you're blind, sort of, and another person sees the  
tension of that space, the *acoustic* opacity in that  
space.

She may know a sound but if she turns, it becomes a  
measure of far and near distance.

*I wear sound*, someone says. (The slimy pearls are the  
physical sensation of womb.)

The woman's space, lighted by sagebrush, transcends the  
confines of a life, though it can pull life  
toward it without abrading its transcendence.

She wants it to be white, like space in a word's world.

Pearls are steam. The lug of its knee or inside the beast's  
thigh.

She may see blossoms, a sprig, or she may see pearls as  
old mothers marching.

The blue horseman is blue light, though we're, through  
it, seeing death.

On a bodice is a pony, which drips into me, until things  
become small, but they still die.

Watching-minds twist to a cumulative suicide. A  
windhorse flies but it is *still* still, asking me.

*My daughter is young.* I see her climb inside the  
windhorse, her long fore-fingernail painted with  
geese.

I determine to seek them, over the hedge, inside the  
parts where it hurts the most.

*They only read lips in the blinding darkness,* cries a priest  
from behind a screen.

*Sheep Dream*

I have a memory of green, in a hole, in a moon's crater  
called *the bottom of the pitcher*.

A woman fills the hole with crenellated wings. I admire  
the wings so she cuts off a piece and hands it to me.

A man's voice held anterior to its space makes his  
presence real. *I'm not cold*, someone says.

*Is cold an image like young sea blossoms, purple flowers  
just above eye level?*

*Commentary*

I recall seeing myself in a dream with the sensation of something touching my toe-bottoms.

The dream includes a variety of skin sizes. Certain shapes whose edges contain sky, I clearly remember in my hand.

The skin of a lamb is irreducible, like the skin of day bound by fleshy rock and sand.

A day may not be prior to itself, happening alongside each and every event of breath.

Shells on the cowboy's coral hat are new surprising  
shells, shiny, polished, with no sea showing.

I forget the boundary of possible seashells while  
holding the thought of their appearing in my spine.

An appearance occurs against an old barn door. All  
stags as they are burnished beat their heads dry  
against some tree or other.

The parity of their body is the parity of voicelessness.

Flinging off his gossamer, hanging it up to dry, dancing  
about the pan, *drinking* the pan.

The memory of the color green is tinged with repeated  
time like little beats with a glove.

So I *learn* green. Whose solemnity is sky (*view* as, say,  
sky).

I look at green and become an old woman.

I *chew* green and the rich saliva gifted by him.

Is a *tenet* of color, a *primer* once left off.

As if the person were a taste congealing inside her very  
own wisdom.

I drift within its skin, an opaque membrane of light,  
allowing pale color to metastasize.

*Monkey Dream*

A flesh-colored pear is with the heaviness of birth.

I look into its head wanting an immaculate black  
stick.

The pear tree has birds arranged in its branches  
artistically.

Here are flowering birds, whose trees spin into air, her  
feeling for the blossoms, sharp as thaw.

Monkeys race, seemingly, though it could be bones  
rolling and disappearing.

*Commentary*

How the weight of a bird hopping along a fence, a tiny  
bird new to appearing, not yet carrying the birdness  
of its mother.

*The more anchored the mind, the more an appearance  
weighs nothing.*

Light is bone. think recumbent, dead-seeming, like an  
animal playing but really guarding beings.

Fossilized wings show the giant wingspan of an early  
species.

If a bird eats a worm or if it turns its head, an animal  
sniffs age, sees age in the pattern of its feathers'  
colors.

Cells of color leak, wandering over the wing's rough  
neck.

The flesh of the bird appears in its hop, its last place of  
hop, what's possible before lifting off.

An animal gauges the belly of the hop trying to  
determine the feasibility of killing its hop's dark  
past.

A young bird stares and something birdlike travels  
upwards.

A mud-colored bird blurs into mud throbbing there in  
her mind asleep.

You could say she wears feathers and the feathers  
unfold like a resplendent bird catching its reflection  
in sky.

You could say there are rivers, battalions of orange light.  
A child spears light, ravishing light laid out as in  
death.

Seeing the feather of the bird through a branch in noon  
sun, one remains in the bird and is swung, like  
through an opening in sky.

So that there is both the bird, belly like an urn, and the  
bird so saturated with birdness that it is unseen  
against its own background.

A group of feathers on the same bird, for example, are  
separate and distinct yet we think of them as the  
bird's feathers.

The arm of the bird is crooked. In skinniness in sky.  
Distance is its face in the resting sky.

*Bird Dream*

Three birds move in air as blue as water in a dream.

Three branch-colored birds land on a branch in the  
borderland of the bird's robe.

Behind the songs of birds he fingers a chip. *Is it thin?*  
*Without the chip's color?*

Seeing its form as a bird, first eagerly then angrily, the  
way beauty through a gap in sky breaks into two  
whole containers of sky.

*Commentary I*

An ebony feather shines, its blackness steely, like the  
hard black knuckle of a bird.

A discarded feather, arched like a fish, rests on the  
earth, its magnificent bow gleaming.

Sun-black birds hover over sea, so that black is both  
inside *and* the holder of itself.

Or like sea repairs to sea, *wraps* bird and sea into  
something apocryphal.

The time of the bird is *ideal*, you say, by which you mean *supremely excellent time* and I think, *Are time's qualities measurable?*

If it were touchable, the parts of a person might organize around it, like one's senses congeal around a smell.

Bird clouds drift. Sky too seems to be drifting but it is still, I assure myself.

I am comforted thinking the sky is still.

Time enters the wing of a bird where the colors break  
between blue and very dark blue.

An animal waits allowing time to sway between its belly  
and inhabited spot on earth.

*It limps*, she thinks, though it is a genuine limp, with  
each and every particle of limp belonging to *it*  
specifically.

In a certain angle of sun she is able to see the limp  
passing to a future animal at a similar spot on the hill.

*Are the birds girls?* The impact of sound makes slowness material while its *direction* is immaterial.

Saying it is less like looking than a cloven foot with little clea's or talons.

And maybe she is that or maybe her body is simply the thought of a bird-filled body.

Later I dream the three birds are crying. *Fingers of hair blow with the wind*, my mind observes, referring of course to the talons.

*Commentary II*

Three bird's bodies whose bones are like a forest. you  
know its color from the pure knowledge of color,  
without seeing its precise color.

Lines of light catch the bird. The motility of light  
critiques the contours of the bird's beak.

Part of the air surrounds a branch where three birds  
rest. Rays of light touch your back, which, if I touch  
you then, evaporate.

As if the boundary of your back were hidden by your  
back, but nonetheless yellow, like light in a dream  
person.

The profile of a bird, in a gold ball rising, *shapes* a mountain called *bird mountain*.

A crow erupts, turning gold turning curves. I cannot tell a crow from the image of gold feathers somersaulting.

The bird's dream arises from the ground of its own birdness. First moonlight on rushing water, then pink stars like angels, then tree tips in a treacle bar of sky, threading itself through the birds' raised mouths, beaks pressed apart like lips.

A thin sun crawls to earth and is maintained by strong earth, though actually it is the same earth.

How a beaver floats under *sky-words*. He *hears* the birds  
as if gathered together verbally.

An end-bird leaves its formation over water. Its blue  
bowl leaves, rising in sky.

Which somehow was known, the way a line is known  
as beginning *here*, though, as you say, *lines are*  
*concepts*.

How many meanings flow from the bowl into heads  
that look away?

*The robin's breast is red*, you think, yet you are  
unsure and think maybe it's a color that *contains*  
red but is not red.

Caring is present though you cannot find it in the bird's  
body.

An insect the bird eats enters the bird's blood. *Is its time  
the same? Likely not*, she thinks, since an insect eats  
and the food slips away.

A dragonfly on cloth (conspicuously beautiful) devolves  
into your eyebrows.

*Dog Dream*

I walk into a meadow and all the dogs' mouths open.  
Presences are out who remain unseen and may  
instantly slip inside.

A witch flies out but it is just a stick. *Mommy, it's just a  
stick!* a child cries.

A woman tells about her smelling, it being equal to a  
dog's when she was pregnant.

Crickets chirp in a field of rabid ones. Their intervals  
are pure, like the pure white flaps that poke from a  
new bird's tail.

If a dog is my interior ash force, it romps the hills with  
butterflies sitting there placidly.

If it yawns, behind its tongue are beings sucking  
flowers, looking like black ghosts.

Behind its tongue a world of beings cook. *Its unconscious  
is preserving food*, you say, but I think it's making  
speech, readying itself for a life.

A string of dogs hangs in sky. Daughters of sky gather  
cobs. Hussies also wear cobs.

*Commentary*

A dog in grass hears a young bird chirp and inches towards it. Hearing, but not seeing, one bird, then a group, early, as if the sky were nothing.

Or as if the sky were intelligence, like a presence that the birds knew about, but if you looked there'd be nothing.

*Another offers food, but I am offering something more gentle, she says.*

The dog's belly is in the grass but its ears are inside the hill.

Each day a dog returns to its spot on the hill. Its body  
rests but its eyes are vagrant. (By vagrant I mean  
slim—*the eyes of a crow on a wire in rain staring at  
wet grass.*)

Rain gathers above low hills, like rain in a painting  
stays mixed here.

Like the footprint of the doll, once left in a storm, has  
neither situation nor destination.

Five children laughing pull grass to the river. The air  
around it blurs, emerging from weather.

A bird and dog move, appropriate to pleatless rivers of  
air.

A bird and dog sit, appropriate to the posture of all  
birds and dogs, *which is genuinely sweet*, she guesses.

The time of the bird is not the dog's minute-to- minute  
watching, though the bird hunts from the sides of its  
eyes.

A dog has parts, which each have times, so that a *melody*  
of time pervades its movements *and* posture.

Posture, too, is a way the idea of an act is projected.

If it is blue there is a door so you *enter* the posture,  
though the light *in* blue might leave you suddenly.

The dimensions of a star are not of a star's body but are  
fixed in her, displaced by her movements.

She moves and the star achieves its posture.

*Pig Dream*

A longshoreman sees night. He looks at his hand. As if  
night or water or distance were simply depths for  
the color blue.

As if night were still night only very far away.  
The appearance of the color and its instant of  
apprehension is nothing more than an action.

Before the action the color doesn't exist.

*Where does aqua go?* she wonders hearing flowers  
falling, falling where they adhere, into a world  
of tea.

*Commentary*

I am today again. I fall within time, tall time in a frame of  
tall pieces of color.

A bird's red wing releases the inside of its color. I  
look inside. *If blue were there, its wing wouldn't  
exist.*

A teapot's rhythms are cascades of water falling and  
I imagine that I too am falling, in strands, like a geisha's  
hair.

*Is it the lines or the openings where things recede, emptying  
themselves out?*

Being moved she falls and I'm thinking it's a young,  
fluid sort of fall.

*But air is internal*, she thinks.

*O mother of sky lugging me forward. You break off but  
I catch you.*

A voice through fog portends the precise ominous  
chartreuse where your eyes look out.

When you see blossoms causing a two or three  
dimensional image to form in space, your eye opens to  
that space.

Space, she thinks, exists, crosses back from where the person  
was alive.

A bloody bird from the beak of a hawk clicks the  
nature of night. Its cry is her face clothed as a human  
bird.

*The blue of a cross pinned to the mountain.*

Thoughts divide into lineages of translucency,  
sun-dazzling corruscancy.

I define *grow* passively. I point to a flower and say,  
*That is a growing flower, unlike its shadow  
spidering sideways.*

Now she belongs to an infantry of animals. Packs of  
pigs form cover near the kraals.

For example, a girl *thinks* the hog, but tells her mother  
to draw the hog.

# *Mother's Warm Breath*

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**BOOK I**

*Birds*

**Once I saw a bird**

still and pink  
standing in a grove of trees.

At twilight, on one leg,  
growing thin  
like a very young girl.

*Might it catch a bird, swallowing its bones?*  
Its vessel holds sky  
carrying sky to a different place  
where it is fresh.

When the birds blew further away,  
she felt the sky with her hand.  
The gray corolla of old ones,  
on a washed-out hill,  
colors broken off.

*How old is she?* I ask, but they are sobbing.  
A woman watches,  
remembering herself through the bird.

*Rare beauty is begun*, he thinks,  
seeing into the hill the limitation of my seeing  
where the dead person lingers.

*It is myself*, looking at the grass,  
seeing its kindness suddenly.

Food is offered,  
though a throat could disappear.

*Every given moment that you perceive is the same thing,*  
you say and I'm thinking, *It's the bardo.*  
*It just arises and you see.*

You throw a piece of cloth on the hill.  
*To see if the hill has green in it.*  
Then you rub the cloth,  
gently touching your fingers.

Sometimes the cloth is wrapped in sky  
and when you touch it to your face,  
it moves jerkily.

The hill is seen from the belfry,  
its transparency of light  
merging with the green motion of air.  
Light crosses light  
on the edge of their fur.

The latitude of fur  
as a place for light to rest,  
each hair being a *support*.

Husky wings in low night.  
In low fur.

*Blue is blue, I'm thinking,  
separate from mirroring,  
blue or a mountain  
or a person's face.*

This face is my own face.  
The slight sound of a bird  
fluttering in a bush  
could be bells  
or roots like cascades of long fragrant hair.

A vulture scatters flowers  
and I saw that she saw  
that the wings of birds  
are light-fields.

**And now it is night.**

Seabirds play in frothy chips of glitter  
coiling like an aroma  
that is not one aroma  
because fading light gathers  
*p*acks, fish, flies.

Bone-buttons in a bowl,  
like lotuses in lakes,  
drift behind her mind.

A rabble of dogs snarl.  
Whose limbs are dogs  
stiffened in their tracks  
or crooked trees  
dwarfed like a witch.

There is fear  
and the notion of drifting across,  
as if a button is a raft  
pulled by sky,  
little awakenings by little awakenings.

And the fire-pink, its ontogeny,  
how it came to be, as you say,  
*erupted.*

*An Avalokitesvara appeared on the bone of my foot  
when I took birth as a dog, a monk says.*

The time of his bones  
or sweet hair falling  
on the muscles of his shirt collar.

You wander around  
from dream system to dream system,  
listening for yourself  
being handed to you by someone.

Is like air being handed to me  
by someone.

The time of sky has no direction,  
no containment,  
is and is not a vast field.

She looks at the hill but sees  
the logic of the grass,  
a memory of death in a bird's harsh call.

What is *behind* the grass  
*erupts* from the grass.  
*Is* in her, as *is* in flesh.

A bird purrs and its heart drips  
as the color of night thaws.

The flesh of the bird was broken that day.

Which wouldn't hold its feathers,  
as the flesh was *keen*.  
(Old ones said *provoked*.)

I see you on the edge,  
a fissure or cleft where a breach has been made  
and I think, *Am I the breach?*

The gestation of wrongness is not carried by wings  
nor the deep drop of cliff  
overhanging the swollen stream.

Being in the dark with so many mountains,  
so many startled animals.

*Please don't try to tell me  
there are animals in the sky,  
someone says as she dozes.*

To affix a buzzard's beauty.  
To stay born and follow the animal's trail.

A huge white edifice  
from afar looks like sky.  
*Why is the sky white,* she thinks,  
not realizing.

An animal rests,  
luring her and stroked by her softly.

*Were I white*, she thinks,  
recalling the knocked door of a nunnery,  
whose square of light  
crawls over sand.

In the distance other people are stroking animals,  
pouring them in a jar  
or vacuuming them up  
in a little tube.

I suspect that their voice  
*still blends with the night's stream*,  
like the trees and  
like the real body of the people.

Or like an old nest simply left.  
In things said *back*  
in the voice of a stranger.

A woodpecker's peck  
may be connected or not  
depending on her emotional needs.

The boundary of a bowl leaves its edge,  
its age in lines  
around the bowl's broad hips.

A word in time creeps through its own wet structure,  
sentiment (throwback)  
or some anachronistic nest  
that slips away from its structure.

All this time studying the dunes  
that crack around the sea.  
An animal is dead  
and breathes dead breath.

Is still as a cross  
at the edge of a white field.

*I dress and wait for death  
though I am already in death.*

Through the wall  
a delphinium *wears* light,  
carrying it to the people.

An animal eats, rubbing skin against sky,  
so that there is a larger sense of  
*being* in sky.

As if it'd been alive  
for that moment of passing.  
Wind pools hills, luffing,  
and at the same moment,  
passing.

Sky holds the animal up.  
*What holds up the sky?* she thinks,  
watching the animal's hands  
resting on its stomach.

The animal moves.  
Leaves move, and grass, like blowing hair,  
settles closer to the earth.

A squirrel flies through air  
and the angle of light through its hair  
is like the ribs of night.

Dawn in a squirrel  
is a raindrop's fresh earthiness.

A squirrel breathes in covenant with something.  
A fizzy motion of air  
blurs her vision of its claws.

Whether or not it is from  
the sweet squirrel's hair,  
her trouble of hair,  
inside its shell of hair.

His experience of his hair  
versus her experience of his hair  
in the moment of his jump,  
though she is further from his hair.

The non-location of the feeling  
later reifies in a dream  
of rainbow-feathers on a stick  
and a man waves the stick,  
touching her forehead.

You almost know who she is,  
yet you do not know her.

So you cannot forget her.

Rubbing the bird,  
stroking its hair so that it is soothed.  
The old ones receive until they realize *I'm dead now.*

*I am half ghost. I eat all of their hair, always.*

*Someone belongs here, she thinks,*  
having the memory of her mother's hands.  
A bouquet of birds  
contains her mother's feeling for color.

The hair on a fly, motionless,  
contains the memory's breath  
clinging to the hair  
before it disappears.

The hair is not an image of sky  
though it has sky qualities  
and has come from the sky.

A gallery of eyes has the willowy look  
of lost people.

A shadow from the sky  
holds the hills apart,  
like a tuft of hair  
emptied of sea.

The beauty of a fox,  
its pink quick speed.  
Wisps of hair, air-brushed.

Each night the sun slides out  
below the clouds,  
behind the *sun leaning*.

One color leans and the other leans,  
so that there is a clean surface  
for the air to move.

The rim of her body moves  
like the rim of an animal  
twitching in sleep.

Now I regret my voice  
in the trees of them.

A woman lives in her neck,  
settles in her neck.  
A cloud on its side  
is a vague motion in her heart.

Night lashed on its braid  
folds around her back  
like a shell.

A bird's neck is infused with life,  
but later, after its song,  
she does not see the neck  
and thinks it is inside the bird.

Geese prefer milk  
in this extreme world.

*Ah, geranio!* someone exclaims at an osmanthus.  
It is November. The rareness of sky, wind, birds,  
in the month, in the sorrel  
and clay rocks of the past.

Two doves nest high in an oak.  
One sits on a branch.  
Engorged with sun  
the horns of its center relax.

I see death spread sun around your arm.  
Empty snow-light  
like a glassy puddle of melt.

The nipple of the bird,  
its sound in the dark  
and thud of its fall through the cliffs.

A butterfly lands  
so that her face pauses.

Hearing the bird  
she follows her mind  
into the tail of the bird,  
into the tail of its children.

Hearing the bird  
the occasion of its air  
and complete *symphony* of  
chromatic features.

The delicacy of its wings  
as the deity pours flowers.

**Awakening in snow you hear birds.**

Their call is deep,  
rising from the riverbed.

I *hear* your face in the  
echoing of trees.

Bare branches on bare ground  
like quills in cold night.

Each emitted word  
in the compost of earth fluctuates.

Seeing the stark barren word  
flicker like grass  
covering the bird or  
place in the meadow where the bird grew.

Your words are mixed with flowers.  
Mermaid words,  
half letter, half calyx,  
draws the mind down.

Like a word may be breached,  
or *defoliated*, she says.  
Its skin waxes blue  
across the chain-fenced field.

Sometimes it slips from under itself  
so that virtuous, non-virtuous, neutral  
maintain in the word  
*after* it is broken also.

Then her words are the only true words.  
(My own experience  
were also her words.)

Awareness deepens to a pool.  
If I feel each letter,  
the heart of the word will be calmed.

The impasto of color,  
of her face and of stone.  
The course of her face being  
*before* the face,  
so that someone else,  
seeing the light,  
could arrive at her face.

Her approaching her,  
*before* her,  
its existence as an ache  
rising over the top of the hill.

Ultimately birdness is a very primary,  
bottom-line, open-ended  
sense of awareness.

Experience is what arises in awareness,  
the way light, say, accretes  
across a frozen pond at dawn.

Through the wires it is done  
as when a thing has progressed  
beyond being erased,  
beyond a point where  
it can be forgotten.

You are *marked*  
and for how long in this sky,  
reposing on a col on the summit-line.

**A hummingbird in air,**  
whose qualities, imbued with dahlia,  
*sits* in air  
independent of the dahlia's redness.

Simply seeing the flower's shape,  
discovering its motility, *qi*, or,  
as if wandering about,  
its intrinsic comfortableness.

*I'm lucky, you say.*  
*The brand of the child is mine to keep.*  
(You can see the furry flower  
hugging its own passionate surface.)

An insect's leg outside the flower's horn  
dissolves in cold winter fire.

*We are one sky in ourselves and in sky, she thinks.  
Sky is air changing into shapes of sleep,  
but it dies into sky,  
gentling itself out.*

Air is thin then,  
feeling through it to her breath.

*Is there a place, like sky  
or inside a flower's head?*

She knows the town of sky,  
*slow ice of all sky.*  
A parallel sky, like a mountain park.

Your face holds sky and when I look  
I see a particular old sky.

Gestures are like sleep.  
The pathos of trees stroking the lake  
with their leaves.

A woman wears red  
in the tall lean elegance of a bottle,  
as if her shape were identical with the bottle  
and also an old bottle.

A drowsy man walks, carrying logs,  
so that in sleep  
the sound of their falling enters.

Red leaves cover death,  
the substratum of death,  
the materiality of blood thought of as *her* blood  
or *her* past.

You are started.  
You begin in my mind  
before you are you.

Sometimes rabbits and prairie-dogs  
scamper among the grasses,  
but hers, now dead, would be found  
among the leaves.

An image—*a chameleon's green in earth*—  
comes before or after the image,  
as if you could peer through leaves  
to the war in the leaves.

**Being thin, I see mountains.**

Shade within shade is where a horse sits,  
but internally, like shade  
crosses a person's eyes.

I live you in my body.  
Is not ahead of her body,  
as a woman lags in her body.

Wandering around ahead of her large body,  
a woman reads and the words  
take place in her ribs.

Teepees line the land  
where she sets up her drums,  
in eggshell light,  
thin with beautiful pale colors.

A jeweled pheasant drags the wind  
and fog is smeared through the pebbles.

Her crimson wing (*still in the limb*)  
lays on wind,  
relaxing the wind.

Sun floods a leaf  
battered by weight.  
Swirls slowly down.

Sun mows *down* into a bone of air.  
A person notices and moves  
with a slight 'reflect' motion.

That circumstances repel.  
That there's resilience in a  
'reflect repelling instant,'  
the gambol of repelling  
now in a cloud  
on the clearing's north ridge.

Each time you climb a piece of sky,  
you are imagining it is sky.  
Vespers are said in a chapel on a lane  
and the words reach the road  
but do not stay in its memory.

A body lingers on the road,  
then seeps through the road  
draining through the aquifers.

A child climbs a pole,  
beside a string of birds,  
beside the waves hanging there.  
His ladder to the sky  
has no reference point.

*Come sky* he writes but spells it *cum*.  
The cum of sky,  
the sound of birds scuffling song  
through evening weeds.

Rainbows, sometimes regarded as dragons,  
appear together as double rainbows.  
They soar into the sky,  
*mani jewels* threading from a string.

Cold lake, for thousands of yards,  
soaks up the sky color.

Once there were birds  
damaged in the flowers.

If you look at the horizon after the bird,  
the memory of the bird  
or red, where the river flowers leaf out.

A bird sings strong  
and her *will to sing* is strong,  
though it frightens her.

Her will to sing becomes a branch where she sits.  
Thus singing loses singing.  
Subsiding.

How dusk fills the tree  
is how the child's weight is borne in her.

Its feelings are a bowl  
whose qualities come from the base of itself  
and is how it truly feels about itself.

A bird sings and as I look beyond you to the bird,  
my mind follows my eyes.

But if I gaze and my mind wanders somewhere else,  
something shifts in the figure of a pigeon  
I remember touching.

As if a pigeon were a natural replica of itself  
so that seeing it  
is seeing dark.

Holding the bird,  
sheltering it in my pocket,  
its warm life drains into the fabric of my sleeve.

Seeing the flower in a mirror  
and the emotion that caused her to see it that way,  
a little death.

Whose attribution is not an appearance,  
is not opaque,  
but fluid like a wall or statue made of butter  
in the still mind of a soldier.

Flower is flower *and* time in her mind  
out of darkness.

*The end of sight is clear dogwood*, he says,  
where *clear* means empty  
and *dogwood* the clear light of space.

A lama moves and I see his quiet ribs.  
*My grave is made from logs*  
*so that night will be left there*, he says.

When the dogwood becomes earth  
we say the flower dies,  
but a child leaves a meadow  
not its life in the meadow.

## BOOK II

*Sky*

A woman rests. She is lying on a bed back-to-back with a seated man. Touching is there but its *time* is not there.

A woman rests *between* time. Like time in special settings and she is the setting whereby time vanishes.

So he *paints* her body, being invisible and also seated on the bed juxtaposed and contiguous with the other person. He paints space though it looks like figures on a bed.

The woman's experience stretches toward the man but is unknowing of the man.

I see light in the interstices of her body contracted around  
their crash in her body.

As if shadows cover the hide of sky's body, the concept  
of sky's body being a short cut in time back to the experience,  
*opposing* the experience.

How sun against the grass continues to the sky, the  
enclosure of sky, like seeing encloses sky,  
*sky-before-sky*, and the hour of sky's *midst*.

A sapling touches sky or exact moment of sky as philosophy  
of *this* sky, beholden to no other sky.

So there's sky and my experience of *being* sky, opening my hand,  
letting time be one of sky's animals.

A woman at dusk is green because the animals in sky are the color  
of the trees.

As if there were sun in young green sky so that green may  
grow wild.

A pool of birds on the bayside rill, the knowledge of which, the  
absolute utter familiarity, not of birds but of birdness drifting south  
along her orchid's lips.

A feeling begins. She might have been asked to teach this feeling, as if birds learn feelings once they wander from home.

Like the sleeve of feeling relating to the sleeve of skin. If she notices, if she sees the bird seeing the feeling arising in her, transparency for transparency.

The relation of a sentence to a bird or words to *things* (a word exposed in the skin of a woman cooking, knowing something not depositable in the room).

A bird is light, being light-in-light, or air, in light, in water or air-in-air, like a line around air.

Shape slips to shape. *Slips is for life.*

Sun rests along with the woman and her chair, the fluidity of time  
crawling over wood.

How light against wood *pulls* the woman, *wing of chair*  
affected by the pitch of the wood's fire.

As if war were there crossing a line of hunger.

A bird begins, *darkly flying out*. Someone sees the bird and thinks of Icarus falling as if falling is time and a boy falling is a measure of falling's resonance in the person.

A woman *hears* the self of herself falling, from the *inside* of falling, outside any limits of time.

Passing it off as the *performance* of her falling, her experience of falling outside her experience of *feeling* falling.

Angling its falling and the scattered tits of its breath's loose scabs.

A boy falls in neutrality. Between the *feeling* of death and death.

I *have* the person, I say, instead of when he was the person, as if the person were its birth, and also, the experience of its birth.

Being *hey* in the spread of a corpse's tail.

We strain events through time as if age is a place jilting her to there.

A cricket squeaks, objectifying air, seemingly.

The mystery of its disappearance in the dominance of a breeze, as if breeze intrinsically *contains* squeaking.

Yet an eminence rubs off. Light alternately occluded and revealed.

A cricket faces east though it is unseen and comes into east slowly.

Even my mother disappears in the red carriage. She waits at the side of a snowfield in her hat, which is an elegant hat, beyond her capacity for a hat.

A hawk skirts sky along the places where sky stops.

As if place were not the hawk but all things touched by the hawk.

A caw is like space, gluing space where caws are space.

My mother is a cloud like day across a hill. *Hill* is an agreement.

A being's short life, without the *affection* of life stirs a memory of experience exterior to what is beheld.

Like an offering thrown *opposite* the sign where a negative force originates.

The lines of my hands sink with the sun. *Who may you be crawling where I am, dangling from the riverbed?*

Sometimes I think that my spirit sleeps in water flowers. *I sink into the land spreading like a shadow.*

Violence exudes from the flower's previous color as in her mind she cannot find the color.

Something sad, say, may look to you like a color, like fate is a color.

Seeing is *conveyed* like a boat conveys seeing, seeing death and then its color. Seeing's inside *is* color.

A woman begins, though her face is absorbed, dark in a dark room.

As if dressless, a woman reclines at the bottom of a space, perfectly alone.

So a body grows down into itself, which is how a painter can paint himself and not *be* himself.

Seeing the inside of time, the *constraint* of time, like a flower in a cornfield blossoms into a puzzle.

The beauty of air, moist, and her experience of moist as she breathes night, in and out heavily.

As if a shell forms inside both of us. The shells of her are lines turning light into a quality of time.

Density holds time like water in a lily congeals (sets) so that a cause happens and the result looks like a lily.

The pinkness of time whose insides are flowers *is* in things, shells smelling this way.

A bird begins slowly, is *risen* slowly.

A vague line of mind annuls the feeling in a word which is replaced with lines of time tracing the word's beauty.

Time appears but it is color not time. A bird's loveliness is time.

Slow is the horizon itself.

## BOOK III

*Mother's Warm Breath*

DOG

My old mother barks. I hear her over death.

*Wake up*, someone says. A letter dissolves into the being's feathers.

All the little animals *timed* to her, playing we, playing the arms and legs, so that there isn't anything left.

The portrait of a dog, its perpetual yank of teeth is a portrait of *dissolve*, where *dissolve* too is liberated from what's false.

The brain of the sound loosens into color.

*I, a dog, claw myself out of solidity.*

Her toenails are claws and she gets to choose which kind of dog.

As the brain descends, darkness descends, in the *no-house*  
where the dead assemble.

Is the claw a bone? It seems to weigh more than the bone.

Like the weight of a bone being suddenly too heavy, as if her body were the wrong body though the bone is okay.

I'm trying to remember. Wings are divvied up. The track of one hovered in a spoon.

I dedicate something, which sounds like a word but I am dead.

Fades in a distant dog. There is a waterfall. Dogs fall into her body.

Fades to sea (kerfluffle of brook) the mountains and rivers of that tidepool.

The wingspan of a dog has white speckled markings and there are *heavenly dogs* which she painted.

The jiffy of her dog, *o my god*, in its quick march toward its drumbeat.

Someone whispers black, which is enclosed in black like in a wedding of black and me.

Since its aggregates are black, I call myself *black* and sit in it like a dish.

The sound of day stops. The wooden dog stops.

My hand is me now. So you can't tell. No one can tell.

## HAIR

Her mind is hair, white, earthy, cropped, like *total hair*.

*Give me your hair*, someone says, which I think is my mother asking for my hair.

Offering hair on a platter, the sound of a plum sits in its color, as if the stomach had her name etched on its flesh.

Ripe and dark, like the rind of her being scraped and tossed away.

It is the bed inside her mother.

*Mommy!* But the bed is a plum in which the mother insists  
she sleep.

A thin bed, fragrant from practice. As if her skin were too shallow.

Which could be food from the settlement of her father.

A hair is fed. An offering of hair yielded to the mountain.

A youngster bird grey in the mountain. In its plum,  
spooned up and *being*.

The bird of hair speaks and it is a warm bird, as if air could  
be a bird, the *wait* of their tongues having never before  
been brothered.

My voice and your hair thrive on a metronome of waltz time.

One fixed to hair. For example nuns, in the white folds of wandering hair.

Which the nun hides in a shell, so it is there, with her as she washes, and she knows her hair thoroughly.

I, the voyeur, do not perceive her *hidden* hair. I *may* not and *do* not grasp this internal shield.

I, the voyeur, am outside the circle that her yellow hair makes there.

I *intend* hair, I say, and begin to practice those qualities that support it.

I mean from its depths, like the nondiscursive mystique in the drape of a nun's habit.

You are allowed to be hair, bottomless hair, through drapes whose folds hold the depths of hair's feeling.

I lay upon a rock, ministering to them, to the empty linearity of her mind exposed on a hot day.

SKY

I make a connection between my mother's *towel* as an object and *towel* as the nature of my old mother in morning sun.

She grooms light in the endless cleaning of herself.

She bends over sky. I *draw* sky like a lesson of myself.

From outside through a window, an image of her in split-second segments.

*What a filthy piece of sky*, I say, brushing the air with a spoon.

You feed sky to the person. A leaf through her skull  
blows down the valley.

She recalls something, the dead child's face, or more liminally, think  
of a still-born's face.

So sky is subjective, like a private game of cards, shuffling, dealing,  
from the bell of each card.

Sky is an *ability*.

As if there were a zoo of sky, a rib of sky inside the bird.

*At large in death* inside her own emaciated wingspan.

I *hug* sky, the *limbs* of sky, mimicking fruition as in starships.

Being an angel then, in my own hole of sky. Now I am gone but we still talk, don't we?

Now I am not. The bone-cake of me gone.

*My old mother's bones are quarter-moon bones.* (Whose butter bones suspends from the sharp essence of her breast.)

Sky stops for a moment. Or tree of sky which I experience as a cuff of sky.

Eagles rest on it. Are forms projected outside, as if they exist very private and wrapped up.

To ascertain the rhythms of sky your fingers tap to that.

As if the mind of one were a baby. On the shore of herself, as though time itself, as though time were *there* running alongside time.

Time is color then. A capability from the old river.

## PIGEON

A girl steps out of her tall black dolly. The mother of one, like a doll plopped in the corner.

Where is her prettiness? A certain prettiness that you know, that you can even touch.

Soft breath from her eyes, but the eyes themselves are rocks.

A songbird peers, caws. A fish caws to the harmony as if it knows who it really is.

You are the person that you have forgotten. As if the real you fades into air, indistinct from the particles drifting across your face.

Where waking sees ground and you are the ground, not dead wood.

Being privy to ground (king of ground). A young bald bird sits parallel to the window.

The hill inside the bird. (Knowing the hill from seeing the bird's shadow.)

A bird bell tolls by the river of her father.

Wrapped in a dress she tucks her wings. So she is just a dress. If you look you see a dress plunked on a step, asleep.

Tucked in her dress, tucked like a bird. The spectrum of her inside a chilly bag.

But her feet are young.

The pigeon is immovable. She rests inside me, looking through me to my daughter.

A bracelet at her feet is like a rock carved with her tongue.

So I wrap my tongue in bandages. Is the hawk's wrist in mountainless dead-lands.

In the feet of our voices, the feet of the birds are calm.

Inexorable coo, are you bleeding?

The harp of you, though the monk swore you'd be spared.

Seated in its knowing, its face in shadow is alive.

So I forget who I am. As if the need stopped.

MOTHER'S WARM BREATH

*i*

Mother's warm breath, like a *plate* of breath. Yet it is old  
breath, having eaten many crackers.

*My breath is a wall*, she whispers from *real* breath, instantly present  
to birds.

The energy of the animal appears to be experienced internally, its  
breath (a shadow) withheld in its own stem.

What's left of mind as a squirrel leaps out?

If she pulls air out, in a tantrum say, or *superior air*,  
parceling it out to descendents.

*I feel the sweet journey of your air*, she muses. Swift and  
stark, its transmission in a jar.

A harem of air bustling down the hallway, a *trance* of air  
parting through itself.

*I am cleaning my air*, she's saying, as if the air were inside  
her stomach.

As if the air were blood and she is poured into a glass. *Air is definitely blood*, someone says.

Warm green blood from the mittens around her legs because there'd be a war of dogs, afterwards, in the bushes.

To accrue war she saves up the *noble green color* because *pure view is always seen through the light of the five colors*.

*My nails are on fire*, she says, seeing her hands in a later version of hands (like being friends with her hands when they are dog's hands).

*How many hands are in the dog's hooves, she wonders,  
because paws are everywhere.*

*As if all the hands were grabbing her tits greening everywhere.*

*A birdhouse of tits so that the feeder-birds chew green blood from  
the mother.*

*I am ordained in blood, the samaya "blood" whose liturgy  
I've accomplished.*

My mother is a *place*. And a being from there having qualities, as if she is also from there.

From the inside of her being her, gradually becoming her in the same taste as russet-pink.

Russet-pink is a field carrying one's pure essence, like a whiff, *oh! that's her!* Maybe some pawmarks.

Totems of her gaining belly from herself.

A place is by chance (like pain is a guess).

Like a lid with its definite jar, she's attached to this, thinking maybe there's no other jar.

The lid has a slogan, which she wears and thinks it's not right if her family does not.

Like a *birth word*, say. *Every person has one word.*

Held adrift by old old hearing.

*Don't touch you!* says her own face. (For she recognizes the previous resentment and its marks on her old face.)

As if spring follows summer and we are already at the beginning.

If my father is murdered, does that mean I am dead or (like *one's face in sound*) about to be dead?

A legacy of light is separate from reflection, like a legacy of dog only sees itself.

So there is mourning but not knowing. She could be a dog thinking she's a dog.

Her formless growl cracks like a flower, like shards of voice but one hears only the thinnest outermost skin.

I harbor myself in the familiarity of something, air, leaves, peacocks running across a field.

People coming in like the last second of her knowing.

As if she'd snapped her teeth. *Stealing* knowing, she becomes simple.

In the interstices of a plan, like knowing skips to what's there anyway.

The value of her in the real actual sitting down, till she rests.

It's a disclaimer, the notion of a dog on the outskirts of her own dog.

*Her groin is young. Her pointy nose brings out the animals.*

Her voice has tongues and the tongues also have some. The muscles in her tongue carving my name fast.

That's why I die, sipping myself away.

Being old and cold, living in a box. I pull on her tongue so that the air can be colorful.

*Can you fit into a word?* I ask politely. (It is a long thin tongue.)

A droplet of rain ripens. Where is the daughter of this body?

Are *boxes of tongues, postures of tongues*, juxtaposed and contiguous with one's internal experience of tongues?

Her name begins in the back of my throat, bubbles in throats, like a cliff of throats.

In the *fro* of the dream, as if beauty were beyond it.

I look closely at her throat whose little hairs wrinkle. I saw them be calm.

A stream of heads are throatless and I begin to think, *SHE STOLE THE THROATS.*

I, mother of a word, am also mother of its flesh.

I, mother of a throat, cannot know its container.

The ebb of a word still in her mouth. *Whaaat? Whaaat did you say?*  
she'd say, as if lugging the word up.

Her *whaaat* is space, each letter jettisoned from crayola.

# *White Bird*

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*First Grandchild*

1

The Jambu continent is called the Jambu continent because a fruit of the great Jambupriksha tree fell into a lake, making the sound “jam.”

As one thousand buddhas will come and the teachings flourish, this Jambu continent is considered supreme and is called “*The Victorious Southern Jambudvipa.*”

*This continent contains twenty-four great lands, ninety-nine small lands, three hundred and sixty different clans, one hundred and eight remote areas and one thousand and two extremely remote places. The Land of Snows is one of them.*

So hovering in a row, the breath of the row in its high peak of rows.

Squares of light are cool settling night in a row.

The hill air is cool, like a tower of air carrying through to nothing.

Each night the sun yields its bit of darkness to the child. The darkness squats and *plays* dark but the child knows that it *is* dark.

The child counts the *pieces* of dark unsullied by subdued and broken darkneses.

Dark is solid but is also its own lamp. That's why the sun is dark.

Each night the sun gathers its arm. Each night the sun electrifies the sky as if sun is sky's fathomlessness.

*Like being awake in your blood before it is your blood in the subtle state of not being at war with sky, you mutter.*

Clouds of crows carry sky back. Should I, quick, whisper in one's ear?

Each time one dies, one's breath, like the moon, hangs from a *hook of sky*.

Like a leaf crosses a twig and he waves the twig. The twig had already been waved though.

To sleep in oneself, as if one is alive, but not really, only until something happens.

As if the clarity, the full-on *bindu*, amortizes itself, emptying itself, as if the leaf too, wheeling from sky, drops from the *throat* of sky.

2

Then her speaking image of a person catches fire. In my dream a man is wearing birds and my speaking image of the birds . . . she clearly sees the long stream of qualities pouring themselves all over his body.

A woman eats holding her mouth above her. *You are tall, and your mouth, too, is a tall, lean mouth.*

She longs to be near what she's sure she remembers knowing, as if an image has an ear and it is *your own* ear so you want to be near it.

Like the sound of her birth in the far-flung distance of birds.

Because the air is there whether you're awake (or you could be awake beforehand).

Whether before, occurring as in the darkness of something. I mean *before* the crows, but the dakinis have already taken them.

If one's mind clearly holds what *is* previously, to recall how in the past such things exist anyway. (Like the woman washes her hair in a lake and the lake nearly dies.)

It knows me in its eye. If I part from me, the rape is left, but the eye stays inside my belly.

So much water making her a person, like a bone in water is the slain inside her.

Instead of her own, she is *their* hair, the skin of her hair being *mother-hair*.

A portrait of hair tucked in one's mother, *as-if* it is *her* hair not having quite left her mother.

A woman locks her hair. It falls inward and she feels the falling inside the hair's cud.

The *her* of her hair is not in my fingertips.

The *her* of her mind lacks the valence of my sorrow.

Lung and tail, I consist. I *am*, I say.

I am in the boat of me.

3

*I am her. I am her.* I think it is my mother saying something in a dream.

She sleeps in *her* now, but it is the *memory* of her, not the person *being* her.

Thus people see a form's endless slipping, like a tour of herself drifting along her bloodstream.

At the *foot of air* (like a bloodspot in air) or is it the real air.

*Is that death*, you ask, because the straightest line is death.

So much down deep as a spring morning.

When she wakes it is still down, so close to her face, further and further.

I'm trying to remember that particular mustard-color, like a blood-bath of *down*, stand-in for all *downs*.

Birds grow down. Each harp of down, each plucking twining chord of down's interior pause, so that I *am* (in the pause).

A hummingbird dissolves into its own pure form. One thumb moves as if venturing towards it slowly.

*Oh!* the mother dolly begins, but it is a pretend mother. (However there *was* a possible mother, I mean a mother exists who could be her mother.)

The *real* mother, whom she'd not yet met, would not have said *Oh!*

The beauty of sky relates to birds flying out of sky.

At dusk the hill withdraws into its form. (*Through* birds, quiet has a mode.)

*First grandchild is extreme*, I think, as a mode's emptiness accrues.

*I am that*, I'm thinking. A tree lashes night to quiet, then falls away leaving the quiet naked.

4

Being the person dreaming and now, saying hello to the person who, in the dream thinks, *I am also the dream!*

Dreams implode inward and multiply, like a virus, sort of.

The belly of the dream sits in its plate as if the mind of someone were growing from the plate. *I am eating for my plate*, the mind says.

*I am my own faller, being in my mind my own kind of falling. Death is in the center.*

Being the person dreaming, though dead again. A mind *thinks* but is dead.

A young bird falls as if from the sky but it's from the water where sky was.

You hear the drops of a being, then each piercing droplet of being's time.

I *feel* her sky in the mass of me today. She *smells* the inside of me today.

Empty becomes empty-in-the-mass-of-me-today, like a bone gets loose and falls away in the rain.

A stream of fish crosses her heart. One drinks her milk and is appeased in its fish-ness, like a baby fish would be coming out of its shell.

The baby is frozen. *Not many war people come here*, she's thinking.

Blue is raw, the ocean like teeth. (Inside the teeth are the color of the teeth.)

If a dream implodes and then its bits of dreams (I'm thinking hounds of sky-hawks flaring their wings, *tooting* their wings almost.)

Even without the wings there can be an experience of wings, but she prefers the sound of her mother's skirt is to sun like the breast of the sea buried in it.

Because the things that we are turn about and become who we are.

*I am definitely your mother*, someone whispers softly, but it is just my voice as if far away.

5

A bird's song fills the morning. Between song and morning there is space. Like she could draw an ideal of the little bird's voice.

So tenderly green, so *now*-green. A bird doesn't speak but its motion is stored in its body.

*How will I know*, she says, watching the bird see its own face.

Seeing itself there, nipping at air, the traces of itself still in air, like a grike, say, pushing the bird *inside* its air.

Seeing the brain of the face. So much medley tearing up the face.  
*Each person must unwrap her face, memorize her face, someone hollers.*

*It's like a belfry, you comment. A ring of bay and little sips of sky knocking about the water.*

It's hard to say if the air falls away, the lure of *away*, behind the fog (what's actually taking place).

*A bowl of green water may be placid tight water, but it's me being tight, accomplishing green, you whisper.*

Air leaks from her bones. *The last moment of air is the thinnest air,* she's thinking.

*I take my thinness seriously,* he says, placing his mother in a bowl.  
(As if an animal blows away and is found on its back in a bowl.)

*Air gets tired,* you say, but if you clutch air, mauling a poor, tired section of air.

A dull green bowl holds the water of my air, because the mind of the person is a *trilogy* of air told through mother-air and father-air.

*You* in my air on my birthday cake sighing. (Though I did not.  
I was only sighing for her.)

*You* in the village of people-less thought searching for that  
connection.

*The gist of a bird is the animal of its relatives.* (She could see its ochre  
bill and the young tooth of another new child.)

A symbol of one's animal seems to slip down her fingers, crawling  
over them also (*and has its own animal also*).

6

Each night the trees slip into sky becoming themselves.

*Does the grandmother exist?* She sees the sky weakening back.

Her creamy eyes bulge, slipping back to themselves. She imagines the trees rocking.

Trees light passing tips of sound. You watch them disappear, like a man walks back to nothing.

The lips and teeth of wood hang quietly in grandmother's face. *I am wintering in me*, she says. She doesn't want someone speaking out loud.

Time is exposed. *Grandmother!* I gasp, but it's a heart gasp, like her death.

Within the death are letters. *If you harm the death*, someone begins, because a letter is flesh, beautiful as a peacock.

Her breath too might swallow itself. So many rings lapping waves of sorrow on her broken dress-buttons.

See an eating turkey seeing, the pebbles of its eyes weighing down  
the sky.

It's because grandmother's skin looks tight. Her eyeballs are too  
poppy like she sees through time, whereas I don't.

Seeing the ignorance in her skin, its reticulations hanging. The  
crevice in her mind, its wrinkles hanging.

Seeing her shape press itself there, like the mud of a bed of a river.

Her heart, too, imprints into her skin, pressing its shape into the room.

*I may find sky*, she continues, forgetting. To me her mind feels brushed.

*I am fine*, she says, creating a support. *I am fine*, she repeats, her wooden gaze lasted to her. (*Fine* is space so her mind is protected.)

Grandmother's body's *space* seems heavy. Sometimes she leaks out. I say *leak* because, later, if she moves, aspects of her do not move.

*The Elements*

## EARTH

*A tulip's knowing is from before knowing, you say mildly. I'm thinking, That's time. Like when Khyungpo Naljor displayed the five Tantric deities present in his five chakras saying 'From now on, never see me as ordinary, not even for a moment.'*

*Time is your own mind, you repeat, and I have a memory of myself disappearing, not in death but somehow being me another way.*

Like I'm me without a precedent, as if your body is you in the name of a foreign person.

*A spring of dark lingers in time. It was time before but now the boy draws time. The clear beauty of one whose color is the great color.*

To hear the evening sung in night's dim peace. I am  
me and then the person who is really me.

The traces of her (or *bowl* of her) like she could be that  
and grow into someone saying *hello* to someone.

The collapse of yellow altogether unnerves me. Like  
the sheer end of yellow. *Time seems to be more like  
that, or the feeling of time sticks on you, you add.*

*It's just whatever you see the world, like a childless  
person sees, actually, what is being passed over.*

One imagines time folding back into the cliff. Death, as a figure, turns into a rock, though its flesh is soft, pinchable like a human's.

Behavior takes place *after* its occurrence. I move and am aware that I have already done this.

One imagines time dripping over the hill. She hides inside, feeling *hill* into its space, so that all her lifetimes happen together.

Only when you are completely through it can the ink of "hill," the swift calligraphy in its soft Western snowfield, become a roaring *geshé-like* blessing.

## WATER

A junket of fish is in the crook of a man's mind,  
so circular in his mind, as if the world, as if his mind and  
the world become the dawn of fishlessness.

Far and near, like the junket is *as-if* versus the smell inside his head.

So many fry wandering around, *as-if* eternity, the  
transvestite, is just more precise fish-hood.

*As-if* one transmutes the fish's consciousness to a Pure  
Land, which is just an aspect of *my* consciousness  
seeming *as-if* far away.

The man bites off its head, mumbles, then throws the fish toward similar headless fishes.

As-if its distance wakes me, like the throes of a cloud pressing space into its shape.

The memory has shape and the shape time. Distant and close merge in the fish, which has *duration*.

I mean an imprint of time settles in its skin, *as-if* its skin *had been* that.

*The fish is ME!* (The afflicted mind is an inward-bearing motion.)

Nevertheless, as the fish recedes, the ilk, all the ilks share the same essence.

My raspy throat converges with the cut throats of that fish pile. *Rakshsas wandering through sky enter into people's throats*, she recalls.

A residue of fish coats the skin of my throat and sometimes I feel I am not my throat.

I am longevity instead. Because someone prayed.  
Someone saw the pile of fish's bodies and prayed for  
their long lives anyway.

*Mercy lasts, you say flatly. The fish enter the divine is  
all.*

The man who cut their throats knew the precise  
consequences of his action, therefore his assiduous  
practice of slicing, tossing, eating, *as-if* his belly were  
a globe.

*His belly WAS a globe, you say.*

## FIRE

An island backs toward night. Thin slabs of shore and soft eyes heaving toward these.

Am I dead? (I am nine birds.) A quarry of birds drifts in fragile evening sky.

A lion mounts a yak washing back through sky. Sky is a floor and the two animals are flying but they are really on the floor.

When lambs are in the sky meowing, each lamb *is*, a cross passing over the water.

A bird is poised. She rocks her space gently.  
She offers her tongue to taste what is held off.

Because she speaks in such pure stream, her *gaze of tongue*. *Each and every blade of a zinnia is me*, she sighs.

Swarms of arms lay at her side. It could be death. *I am the stomach of my death fallen to the earth*.

Embers of me are held in sky's arm, but *which*, which arm actually slides over the horizon?

A bird or fish toned by where it flies, slips into its landmark.

A graceful bird, its lip chewed by its mother. She reaches to its lip, chewing passionately.

*I try to chew passionately.* (That is how she instructs her infant birdlings.) *I want to be kind* is said by the mother.

The mother of my lip, I lay awake wondering if she is happy.

AIR

*The razed town is part of a wall now, I'm reading,  
and I know that really the bones and eyes are me only the  
book doesn't reveal that.*

The skin of the town is injured, which I carry. When  
something touches my skin I feel both the present and  
the past, the way it *feels*, taken by itself, without  
anything added.

Animals are there. They recall their skin. Some  
animals scratch, as if they could scratch the knowing  
away.

I see a being and know that it's me being that being in  
someone's time that's simply slower than knowing.

*I am always dreaming time*, you say, as if tenderly knowing the color of your grave-clothes.

One forgets that it's knowing. A thought presses through the ridgelines of one's hand (the silence inside one's hand).

Like a monk *knows* something, which could be light or snow or lilies but it doesn't matter because his teacher sees it also.

When I press on light there is a thought inside, just beneath the skin, like subcutaneous knowing.

Sometimes I hear a sound closer than my skin (the *distinction* between me and the skin). *I definitely have never heard this sound*, I'm thinking, all the while knowing absolutely that my skin has.

*If you look at a flower then close your eyes, you definitely know the inside of the flower because your citta has assumed the flower's pattern.*

*So if you forget the flower you can still have it, like you can crawl inside the flower.*

*If your citta is alive, like a rooster in a field. Each dawn the freefall of wings.*

## SPACE

Now it is summer and cherries are hard, nubile on-the-tongue.

Now (as in India) I climb a *shed* of sky.

A bird eats a worm near a tree, but it is space, their host, the nucleus being the passion of one.

Walking westward in sky, where home is a plate of sky. Howsoever I walk, the stride of space is one.

A woman in my dream walks briskly down a hill and I, a cornucopia of space, am overflowing with little horizons of spaciousness.

The space that she wanted was the space inside *her*, that she would see say in a tree, the way a branch gives way to sky.

A bed is spread beneath the tree, wider and deeper into the tree.

Each night she looks out on the hill and if the lines of sky land quietly on the hill, in integrity with its grass, she feels she is *dreaming* grass, maybe being *inside* the grass.

Huckleberry Finn also. Floating down the river he feels *inside* the river and when he is wholly inside, his breath stops.

If you envision light at the point of the *trikuti*, the small light there that enlarges more and more, as long as you visualize that amplified light, the breath stays stopped.

The gross perception of breath leaves me now. Farls of nothing leave me starved.

Death is a *place* and someone *goes to death*, as if going is the non-going of an echo.

*The Fourth Part of Air*

You look at the sky through the tusk of a hill and a cloud disbands of scattered ones. A songbird chirps. The cry of a dog turns to sky.

As if a nerve from sky measures her appearance within a context of light settings.

A leaf unfurls, then fades into sky. Space is not sky, even though she's dead.

A bone of sky (one, two, three line up as skies), a *wheeze* of sky as if gotten out of the desert.

A bird touches sky. It seems so sure. Sure displaces sky  
just at my ear-tip.

The space of my dead mother is a content of mind, a  
shock of *rest* fallen from sky.

Birds click sky toward the *perfection* sky. In their space are  
flowers falling.

And after rain the full bare sky, deep black, like a sea of  
shells.

I see a woman in a brace and the brace holds her up, but  
the brace is just breath.

*I am definitely what comes out of a trumpet*, she's saying. Its  
echo is like her whole mouth. Movement inhabits her  
whole mouth.

It slowly slips down, though the girl in the death house,  
she's too thin. Her death is too *there*.

Very tangible air (*cloth air*) arrives in her there, in the  
fourth part of air, breathing her back to air's non-air.

A woman sits alone. The lines of her life spread. Her  
body waits for air to tip.

The branching off of age grips a person's face. A certain  
opaque color inhabits it like a lake.

There is a hat-bearing person. What I hear is the hat  
swinging from side to side.

The flesh of such greens. Like crushed paper in a branch  
sweeping ground-cover into green.

My mother is a color (she could *grow* her color), like if a  
bird constellates in the blue of its color.

As if her face were on me, a faint breeze or burr in the  
side of the dead one.

In other rooms, *under-rooms*, a glimpse of her death in lieu  
of *knowing* the deep accord of her own death.

The candles of a shade breathe the word without the  
illusion and the breath of us exchanging ourselves.

So I laugh and compliment a person on her color. *What's that shade?* I say and she says *marigold*, which is SO beautiful.

She is wanting to *tell* the color, but is it the *real* color?

*Real* could be a color. A woman sees me, an impression that doesn't erase her image of me.

*Now I am real*, I'm thinking, as if *now* contains the moment that that can occur.

*Am I alive? Maybe I'm just space. I am an interior walking through the door.*

*The time of light may pass, you say. Light may fall outside its space.*

A lattice of light, a *pod* of light, gobbling space, or not space, light's *taste*.

You locate the light in the undergrowth of darker ones, a pale glow as if I am being buried.

Food is light. Teeth are light. Her teeth grind back. Its  
*Use* is her presence.

Her teeth are like a sling of teeth hitting you in the air.

So there are mother teeth and father teeth beginning from  
the beginningless white and red *bindu*.

Now, in the *age of teeth*, I mean hers are swollen and I am  
left with something I cannot piece together.

*White Bird*

1

A man wearing birds, *sitting* in birds, inside the birds' flow.  
Together they're called *White Bird*.

*White Bird* grows tall. *White Bird* hugs his own legs back.  
The meditation of sky streams into his heart so there's a  
*passage of heart* into which he may relax.

*White Bird* relaxes back into his heart, breathing white, like  
the beauty of a seed or wind in a bird's hair.

A man sits in wind wearing few clothes, but the birds  
come and sit on him like clothes.

*White Bird* stops. Summer light swarms his shell and the blue shell breaks.

The beauty of his wing fills with sky.

A gull too drags its sky. As if it were an ear gathering in sky.

*Beauty is sky. Beauty is rain in sky's past sky.*

My mother's arm is pure, its curve of sky seeping into structures.

Then later someone says, *That person is a dead person.* So then I think, *The beauty of sky's color flows from her arm reminding me of her arm.*

*I want to wear sky,* I holler. (I am in tune with degrees of my mother hanging from death like a soft shoe.)

Her yellow armpit sags, like old newspapers would be lying fallow as they do on distant fields.

A man buys socks but it is really death lurking in sky. *I want to dust sky out so that my limbs swallow themselves.*

He looks, passing by death, as if he is new, *in sky now*, as he puts it.

*O look at the birds! They're combing each other's hair!* (He's watching a bird gather its gorgeousness.)

My mother is a line. Within the death-lines she is one.  
But a node on her blackens and then she is not my  
mother.

I know a bird whose color is sky before the sky admits itself. Like the brain of a color if sky admits the bird.

A mountain is visible *inside* the bird then. Its color dies then.

A queen bird releases into sky. *There's the sky!* someone says, as if there *is* sky, the *location* sky.

*That bird knows me well*, I'm thinking, because the bird is mostly dead.

*Here is a corner of sky, mother says, fondling a dead bird wrapped up in her pocket. (The bird had lost sky. That's why it died.)*

*I am the oscillations of a flower, inside, like a flower's brevity, she whispers.*

A tall bird tumbles through sky. The touch of its voice is like a raw egg folded into zero.

My mother feeds me air, the tablature of air, doubling air, forcing it to become air to something.

I dream of air (a box of air) because I conflate air with my dead mother. She could taste the flavor of the box and in her mind suck out the box. (Secretly she criticized people who didn't suck.)

Her feet swell in air. The ascending foot, like you could crawl inside the foot.

*Who is the end of my mother? Who is the end of my death?*  
(I am organizing myself backwards.)

*Flowers fall, but mountains blossom in air. Born in air, I'm in air already, like a broken piece of air.*

2

Sometimes a tree lies flat against sky and its outline in sky makes a sound.

The sound has a color that is not something I know.

*The sound of a flower goes anywhere, you say. The water of its breast dribbles down the grass, which is old grass, with old sound, barely any.*

So then I think, *My mother is dead but when I sleep with her, I'm old.*

A woman stands alone. She swings her eyes out past nothing.

*If you look at a squirrel and see it very clearly, its feeling pulls back, pulls its loyalty back.*

*Squirrels are always alone. May the squirrel never be alone,* she continues, as if time were a bottle of water.

As if a young calf molts or a snake coils around a flower and then *is* the flower.

*Is it true or false*, a child demands, hearing that petunia-lands exist.

For sound doesn't die, though its lineage may, like Buddha Shakyamuni's dharma.

*Sharsin, Muni Sharsin*, they say. *Muni Sharsin* means Buddha Shakyamuni's dharma, which the Buddha said, without the lineage will die. Thus the longevity of a sound's *hand* dissolves into its legacy of repertoire.

Which is *not* acquisitive, does *not* form a habit of being.  
It's the loin of the habit of the sound.

3

*Can sand laugh?* You see sand and then sand's throat. I mean the lax throat of her death-rattle.

*Is it a whole throat? Be aware of the whole throat.*

Take the climate of her throat. Like she could set it on the sill and it would still be her throat.

Because things exist, and then exist, and their detritus is left in the mouth of the person.

I see a photograph of her throat, which is not the actual throat. *Where is her throat in the wake of that?*  
(I'm guessing *that* means *after* her throat.)

*Does it learn?* you ask. (I'm trying to remember if her throat learned during its lifetime as my mother.)

Someone is the location of what *once was my mother*. (There are pigs, dogs and someone is riding the dog.)

It's the still core of an eye, thus my mother *almost*. She begins in her heart, like a step ladder of hearts all within one heart.

A little dog trapes across the edges of a carcass, its spots blowing toward birth.

The weight of its space creeps under space. (This is called 'opening the space gate.')

Her parakeet that died can release itself in space. (She pictures her mother in an agony of space, beyond what she can imagine as *being*, as if her mother *is*, somehow, without *being*.)

Take a maximum bird. One feather fills the canyon and its children eat plentifully. BECAUSE FROM TODAY SHE IS NOT DEAD.

# *The Bardo Books*

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*Death*

A man breaks fish. The man mentally smoothes its fins so that they don't stick out.

*I'm waiting to be black*, he's saying, but it is food he's uttering. I can see the food grow in his eyes.

Though the black diffusion of fish swims away from the horizon, the fish continue endlessly.

I *see* the fish who is my brother. Its time is pink like mine. We flow in the same yard.

Maybe my mother is a former fish whose throat  
was broken by the man.

I offer her a word. I lift the word to the level of  
my forehead.

*Where's my death?* she is asking. But I think it's the  
clairvoyance of my mother, the instant in her  
dream wandering around her body parts.

Once she saw sun draining down a mountain path,  
like the ridges of a shell, the beauty of a hump on  
death.

*Before my mother is dead, I begin, but you say, No.  
'before' is a word.*

*Words are time. Of is its existence.*

The time of the word, *dead* (the word), hanging  
from sky, is an activity that she knows from already  
having been dead.

Time is not skin *in* which body parts are wrapped,  
but *of* ineffable pink flamingo fluff, later, back in the  
hotel room.

So there is this dream of a mother somewhere in death. Actually she isn't dead, but merely spaces I shuffle around.

As if a cold steel point is inserted in her with the sense that *this is correct, this is good to insert this inside you.*

*It's the dead person*, she thinks. Like a Harlem of *her* lying on either side of me, but someone says, *No! Go to school*, as if wherever she is *is* center but not the center *of* anything.

Then I go, *Oh, she's dead!* seeing as before, heavy rice-tassels ripening in the fields.

\*

Low sun from above you on lilies, blue flags. She  
walks a hill and the cool sun is prescient she feels.

Like a garden of animals, caribou, birds, rhinoceros  
soaking, so that the sun emerges in them darkly.

*Dusk is like a hen absorbing herself into her chickens,*  
she murmurs.

The wrinkles of the sun swell on your back and I'm  
thinking, *There's the sun*, but it's just one of the five  
poisons.

A man stands on a hill. Light and birds and leaves  
dribble from his fingers.

*Unnnnnn*, he utters. *I am without rivers. I am without  
a sound that can be replicated.*

As how light passes through death, like the skin of  
a bird peeled from its wing.

A young bird honks, honk-honk-honk, as if its  
feathers are a territory, too excavated, almost the  
whole weather.

A body melts in sun. A herd melts. A melted herd is called *downward directness*.

Because what is isolated is stopped. Air's *inside* is caught. *Upward directness* stopped is like movement's absolute inside.

A hat might exist, in this sun, like snow in sun or a flower pressing sun.

*The beauty of the hat is because our world is situated at the heart level of Buddha Immense Ocean*  
Vairochana, a person remarks.

Sun slips to sea as if air were sea so that within  
slipping there is existence.

Sea is fact. And each sea avuncular like a family  
structure.

I look out to sea and the green ripples wave and a  
little boat drifts like a concept I can forget about.

The splendor of water admits a line of morning  
light, which could be light repelling its own limit or  
light irrespective of her sense of limit.

Somehow a bird slips away from its limits,  
therefore it exists, like a rainbow or a raindrop.

The fusion of a shell touches a current of shells, or  
like the inside of a wave, if I died, it would be the  
same as seeing the wave in a mirror.

If I look at the sun, slowly, imagining it's a  
meadowlark, something is solidified in the tense  
mind of my hand.

A mirror *appears* to take my hand inside, but I  
want my hand to be its own inside.

Which is *of* time, like being *fed* time. Taste is in her neck, the city of her body.

A dead boy leaves a trail in a house toward the bottom of its body.

Like if a peach dies and becomes decipherable, like the inside of my food.

Daylight in a voice or the skin of sea is a separate gesture cordoned off as if for *that* you would have to stand in line.

I am now a person touched by sea, the motion of  
sea inside the horse, harvesting the horse.

*Maybe the artist drew the horse's shell after it was a  
horse.*

*The beauty of a horse is forever, you mutter. The  
scale of a horse inside a man or a man possessed by a  
dzo pulling a blazing cart of fire—the lines of thought  
cannot, like a 'shippei,' be grasped tightly in one's fist.*

*If a horse eats sea, it's sea's endless rocking land, the  
climax of one becoming one again, recycling what has  
never left.*

*Bathing Suit*

A woman begins, is the value of space, like a child  
in a pool, shuffling air in which hard wood is air.

She breathes through wood, taking sharp quick  
breaths. *I want the soft cloth of children*, she's saying.

Her breath has height and the texture of children  
swimming, new swim, out and out, yet clearly  
touching the bottom. *The mind of wood may rest  
itself to completion*, she murmurs.

Wood and air is swimming there, in the space of  
air filtered through a dark forgotten memory.

She is complete air. She tucks herself in air, as in  
the taste of breath, the babysteps of breath.

She is anterior to her air and tries to tie air like a  
ball.

Someone gives me a ball and I tie up the ball. I feel  
certain that I want to tie the ball.

She calls it air because it's there like air, but  
actually it's a kind of stupidity.

Swimming is like a captivity in its body. Every minute in a row I am swimming everywhere and wanting to spend my time swimming swimming swimming.

Because death, too, is an integer. I say 'grass' and it follows me into longevity.

The absence of time, like grass without time, or a lizard in its skin but outside time so that its purity lay in its body.

The brain of the sky snaps an instant to its purity because everything perceived is Buddha Vairochana.

My mind vanishes then. Inside its skin it has its  
male and female aspects.

A pool of mind is a passage of light, raw light, the  
membrane between the watery part of light.

A person flows through wood and is the breath of  
a swimmer, like two dead people in love.

Air in a heart is the same air resting there.

\*

A woman walks but she is dead. Her red dress is dead. She is pasted on a page like a paper doll.

There is a handbag and hat that can be separately attached, which is how clothing exists if the person is not living.

She longs for herself in the stray black bonnet, alone, by the sea, soft as a wave.

She takes in sky like a flower sky. *If I see you, then see you as if you were an outline, it's like seeing an avoidance.*

An image of a body has the sweet porous colors of  
body + ideal body, like the image of a bather  
standing under sky where sky, a haze of pink,  
traces itself onto the person's body.

Piercing a bather snugly wrapped in towel,  
piercing straight through her body.

To be a small body on the underside of the color. A  
*housekeeper of color*, someone remarks. (A bird  
swims in time that has already escaped.)

I see the bather's legs, long and clipped, its posture  
of mind rooting repetitious shadows.

The body is a uniform wearing the person. Color leaks out. A painted bather's body is how light looks like this color.

A bather's cap and suit mark that person. Blue is the form of the feeling of her standing within boards shaped like a skeleton of sky.

Boards in sky have a plethora of sky as if it's sky that's being constructed.

The mark is interior, like the film of an angel disengaging from its body, wrapping itself around a life, saying *I am my own angel*.

Opaque light under a bather's knee, reflecting from its knee, because we're through the knee, seeing a miasma of lustrous color.

As if sky *is* knee because of the bather and sky's proximity.

A bardo of knee makes time that is a color. (The interval of a knee where red skips to a color.)

So a painter paints a shape that is an appearance of time's color, like a word appears as object and can *be* the object even in darkened space.

Sky sheds words. The language of its space  
harkens toward direction, as if each object has its  
indigenous essential direction and the painter paints  
*that*.

The interest in a knee wells up from light, like time  
plucked from myriad pools of time that whisper, *I  
am that time*.

Roses are pure gold, their presence sartorial,  
upright. Scent is cast by their shadow.

I sleep myself back to a set point of sky, like a *ration*  
of sky, raising the *mass of doubt*.

*Black*

A black bird's hair flows in the wind as if instinct pursues forward but forward is inside its body.

Because ordinary birds cannot implant as an animating principle the non-direction of breath.

A black bird lifts. Direction, not sensed, but *being* in the time of the bird's body which the *is-ness* of its nest matches.

*I know your breath.* The vibration *now* channels through the black part because black-on-black is how its breath is sheltered.

Sweet water on the bird (the bounteous color of black as a form) dissolves back into its body.

High black, like butterflies leaving imprints, in deference to that, which, after disappearance, is what is left.

The allure is time, direction underneath itself, falling through wind, gushing through a mountain stream.

She stares into a lake. A butterfly drifts on the surface of the water. Its wing is torn and she imagines its life rising briefly above its death before drifting off.

A body dissolves and there is no memory of its  
having been undissolving.

Like a bird whose hair got swallowed of its color.  
It is sizeless, jigsawing red, as if red is the surrogate  
of all possible places.

A man taps a bird on the window of its head. *He  
can dissolve without passing away*, someone says.

*Then* I am in my body but not captive in my body,  
because the reflection of my body as a “high” black  
bird got swallowed up.

I describe an ideal of bird, a content of mind, like  
the sharpening of her hair so that she has little  
*vajras* of hair. *Don't suck your hair*, her mother yells.

An ideal of something ripening, a child's bird near a  
nobleman's. *I want to put my bird near his so it will  
learn to sing with the same beautiful voice*, the child  
explains.

Her body has a sound and each limb I trace around  
my leg. Its breath-imprints paint the space of  
breath-swept thought.

Like crammed flowers in a barrel hold together the  
heart of the person.

*Vajra* is extent, *no hair* the space of being so happy.  
A mother abides and is in favor of her (as at a  
baseball game sort of).

A wind-stroke of abiding, like the earth on its axis,  
which as we find out, doesn't make any difference.

To cultivate the awkward eye, the bird's back eye,  
under its shoulder sleeping (in the bottom way of a  
being's shrill sleep).

The circumference of her sleep makes a limit in her  
body so that she cannot move beyond the elusive  
space of her body.

The *no-hair* of her is exact her, so the mother  
thinks, *I am not her.*

Then the mother fights. *I am her also. Somewhere,  
like the bird, is why I keep one near me also.*

*Slow* words are on its belly. If you crawl under the  
bird, you see script you can decipher.

A lexicon of hair (like a ballet of hair) so that  
repeatedly we converge on the edge of earth.

*Cow*

A woman paints cows in the passionate arena of  
some easiness in her.

She relaxes into cow and paints a full and complete  
rectangle of color from her own memory.

Like a wheelbarrow of cow (red squares may  
faintly vary according to the grass, which the  
woman doesn't paint).

The woman paints cows but she is actually painting  
her mind waving a *khata* for three seconds at  
death.

Of course there is the painting of a blue girl as if  
the artist's mother were dead.

*I too am in deadland.* That quickening sense, as if  
she were a hall. The animals of a person come out.

Once I was pure. Now the casing of kittens  
unfolds on my bed and my mother's ignorance  
spills out.

If she cooks I am afraid. If she hears I'm in the  
dynasty.

Then a bird swoops down, soaring like a vulture.  
The tail of the bird shines its domino  
white/red/black.

No-cow is cow, cow-time, or the fun of its calf,  
who is ticklish and laughs.

So there's a *double* cow, my dead mother's mind,  
instead of her having her own.

A woman *plans* her mind but quickly pastes  
something over it so it is lost.

The milk-white bird lands on a cow's head. The coils of the bird are like the *value* of wind suddenly.

The cow sits without breath, skin colored like a tree.

The moon could be a boat and the cow jumps over the boat only it is sitting and breathless and there is no water.

An old cow moos from below itself upwards. In the gaps of the cow, because the light of the moon makes the cow REAL.

A brown and white cow grazes on a hill. A  
common cow merging with the hill, as if it were a  
shelf holding all of the hill's karma.

The speed of the hill slows. *Its eyes are just  
beginning*, you proffer.

A dead person becomes permeable. *I'm that  
buttercup! I'm golden in the cow, a clear gold  
buttercup blossoming in the cow's stomach.*

The tenderness of rushes and sweet voice of birds,  
a broom and bell till all sounds fluff them out.

*Hunt*

A songbird steps through sky, absorbs the moor  
into its shadows. Its woolly bottom carries the  
number of nights it has been alive.

The habit of sky moves in its bones. As how a  
verb, energetically transcends its sphere of  
meaning. The *chore* of it is the meaning.

The movement of the land, wet and cold, rubs the  
man's limbs. His gun is slack like an intelligence he  
can't quite muster.

A game bird's flesh in air absorbs the brother air of  
his body. As if the bird is hunting his body and  
*knows* the use of his body.

The head of a bird glows. Is it day or the bird?  
(The motility of its edges seeps through day like  
water.)

Pieces of day. A pigeon moves in its body. *If you  
leave air, there is no air*, someone says.

Sky bathes air like lineage brought from air. *I have  
a pearl between my tail which can't cross over the  
threshold.*

The wing of the bird drains of its flight as if one's  
life is sped up so one can die.

The beauty of a kill hangs in fog, which is what the man is seeking. He is married to kill still living there.

He is in and out of color. Like he could *pet* the color, whose correlate is nativity.

*My stumps have knees but my legs cannot hold them.*  
(Plum light weaves through my idea of the sky's body.)

A bird is brush, its gaze a throb. Its blueblack wings dip and slip.

It feels like decomposition, flesh, rare-pink, a nick  
in the bird's wing.

The hair of the bird, digested by its mind in the  
mind of its karmic murderer.

Whose bardo may be shot up. I *eat* sky, then the  
outcome of its body. (The belly of the bird  
waddles through flowers.)

As if he eats his former mind thus twice-killing the  
bird and the potential of the bird. A moor fowl in  
the tentative sense of *locale*.

*Birth*

You are pock-marked like my birth. The  
wrongdoing of one in a long stream of Indian  
nobles.

As if calamity rode in and no one was there. A war  
of one or no war being so violent.

Like the Church or war-torn hearts afterwards in  
the alley, the animal's eyes, dust to what is feral.

The press of them, like cups, which is the smell of  
my birth in them.

You come like a gust and intimately, where *intimate*  
is my finger.

Touching you, inside a stone, in the hearth of a  
house there.

Your mind is alluvial. If you roam I see the stubble  
of water pierce through you like an arrow.

A bird hums inside its beauty like the inside of a  
sound heard only by its bird.

If a bird arises from time and then the quick shape  
of something yellow, its gorgeousness is there.

A tin of snow is your gift. The idea of immanence,  
a decoy of a time.

The idea moves into other bodies. Cage-birds  
chirp in the bedroom of a sick person, making their  
singing esoteric.

I *count* snow as if one, two, three *live* in the snow,  
are part of the snow's paradisaical logic.

## *Figures in Blue*

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## DAFFODILS

A woman alone at a large open window gazes at the sky. The soft flesh of her arm folds around a basket. If she is dead, the colors may be alive.

Her soft flesh holds a premonition of her, calls its form within the form of its space in sky.

She is miming sky with her body. *Taming* its color, like a double her of color.

There is a sense of intense activity in the buildings and neighborhood, so familiar, yet her skin is not that.

Angst from the street, but what prevails is the face  
of a person waiting.

An agony of light chugs through her body.

If she could roll out her body, like make a road of  
her body, there is the sense of that being all there is.

As if her flesh were a habit, a woman stands in sky,  
catching it in the drape of her dress.

As she rests in the bare window she is dead. *I (am dead)* she says. It stands like a point of view.

A strip of death is on the woman's arm.

She wants the death eagerly, like time tucked in her arm. *On the crest you can just touch death*, she feels.

She sees an arm (the boundless ordinary nature of her arm) in a gown, in the sky, wrapped in a column of the unsaid.

Sky like sea, around a woman hugged by sea.

A man is a response (like sky and a sea wall). The  
*float* of him sinks, then appears on the horizon.

*I am exempt from sky if I empty myself toward it.*  
The flaccid man's ribs absorb the thick musculature  
of her arm.

Daffodils range, placated by time, but it is the habit  
of deep slumber.

## EAGLE

An old man sits, quiet like a log. His knees are  
crossed. Somehow he is stalling, unplaced, like the  
woods of his head.

If he sees age, it is good age he feels.

As if time happens twice in the crux of his body.  
But it waits.

The spine of an animal coils in air as it dangles from  
a limb, sun stroking it nervously.

The man sees blue in a bulbous core of light. His  
outline bobs just outside his body.

There are animals in his body (the knowing of what  
locomotes the folds of a man's body).

Sun spalls time. Something is heard but he is dead.  
*Giddy* describes the animal climbing out of his eyes.

As the animal creeps away, a  
rising eagle empties (gathers slowly) into his body.

The eventual empty sky or incremental bardos of sky, as if sky is one continuous living membrane.

The ridge of the eagle's motility in my mind dwarfs its vanishing in clouds.

I *think* I see the contour of its movement (the bird's flying outside the possibilities of its body). It leans into the land, then drains into sky.

As if a boundary included in its disappearance also imprints the bird, sky and the part of sky that's thought.

I dream myself to being the majesty of a body, a sphere with an eye as in the self-view of a mental body.

I dream myself to a shape that looks like a fresh smell.

The sloppiness of birth, if I seek its tail in the crack of myself, whose poison, excrescence, great gelatinous spookiness hang like an old breast on the person.

The androgynous bearing of a breast, sagging in day like a normal breast, the normal day of *no-day*, as if she were a fog leaning over and asking a question.

## SPRING

A child peers from the spines of a sapling, tender  
like soft eyes. A knuckle propping her cheek seems  
stiff, awkwardly awake in a dark rivet of sun.

Now is *between* joining what is present to one.

Light on the blue wall is making the child public,  
though she is alone, miscible, her feet are alone.

To replay time, like a child's favorite story, has the  
same soothing sense (her being a rabbit) again.

The foreclosure of a life being locked into this sky,  
this orb of seasons and death, such as the spring of  
sky.

If a baby walks in sky, she too is an example of how  
containers simply amplify karmic structure.

Pink flesh makes a covenant. An eye is silk and  
slips out.

The play of a person's face, in perfect precision  
with her, drifts in sky like a boat.

Like she might trip over her body wandering  
through a scarlet field. If the container formulates  
from inside, slippage becomes hostile.

Spring touches the nonlocation of her ground, the  
pace of her mind as a shield.

There is a string around a mind still *situated* in her  
body though no longer biologically *seated* in her  
body.

Many insects collect there. It is a grieving ground.

Sometimes the sky looks like ducks and I remember  
floating on an arrow toward a city.

Like time in a foot where sky is the foot. A  
thinking person's thoughts die in little clumps.

So the impact of the arrow, the *brain* of the arrow.

When it dies its bones and tongue smell of spring as  
if spring were something *made* in its body and later  
revealed by its body.

## JUKE BOX

A woman in her doorway looks up. She raises her hand to her hat as her head tilts back. Summer is high. The image of sun fusing with her body such that she *becomes* the sun, its place in sky resting back toward herself watching.

Her feet are bare in high-heeled shoes. Soft folds of her dress stir in a slight breeze.

The description is a protection, a barrier placed as a scene. There is tension between herself and the scene.

The brim of her hat dips. Its motion is time. There is tension between the time of her hat's dipping and the time of the sun streaming through sky, creating decrepitation in her body.

The woman is loose. Her bones move as she rests back on her lungs. The woman breathes in conjunction with her lungs as if everything in her world were contained within a bagpipe.

Her body no longer shields her, she feels. She lowers her arm and brushes its skin to remove the tension that has resulted.

It is a thick body, like tea leaves or lamb. A body like sweet fruit.

She leans against a piano. Her body is not a pianist's though.

A woman hungering for her body moves along the  
edges of her body. She moves it to her heart,  
toward the belly of its hair.

The chaos in a hair, a flank of hair, but the true  
flank refuses to spread farther than its own body.

Sound cuts space bleeding in her bones,  
tourniquets of sound in her hemline.

Being the grandmother of her sound, the great  
great grandmother of her highest lightest sound,  
like an unsound, sound with a backbone.

A moth spreads funerary wings across a fragment  
of sky. I see her skin (the *sound* in skin) hovering in  
its body.

Dusk over grass lights a spot on the moth's wing.

There is a dance in her, but she will not know it.  
She looks away because she sees this.

A juke box dissolves, calms into a shuffle, a slow  
dance of days in which she can be ready.

## FUZZ

If you look you see a little fuzz of hair above the head and neck of a blonde woman. She appears to be standing, waiting in a stall, reading a magazine.

Her headband clears a space that she inhabits if I think of her.

What is the real face? The photograph of someone living, but it is a paper face, double non-living.

*Is how we wait for our mind to know what we are, the fragrance of a number gone.*

I want to cry when I see her hair, stiff with an idea  
of a place she might take up.

Her skirt is loosely feral. Gravity is a lesion on her.

Her laugh I infer from the hair. *I live in my hair*, she  
says to you casually, like a caucus of hair  
opprobriously abusing its own hair.

She will relax and be her hair, the spine of each  
hair. Little hairs on your forearm.

Sky gathers around her hair. She lifts her hand.  
Sky crawls under her hand as if it recognizes its  
mother.

Her hand *is and always will be* the life inside a hand.  
The belly of the hand is in the woman's eyes.

Time is umbilical, as if her hand suddenly defines *my*  
amount, more accurately than my amount.

A cop's black leather hand pushes back night  
because he knows he can. (He is a shepherd of  
fire.)

She passes herself (and her periphery) walking  
*down* as if *down* were handcuffing her.

All arrows point down. Night abides making space  
for its light because night recognizes its same light  
family.

There is a robbery. The lapse of a person (the  
mulling of its eye) whirring in air a few centimeters  
off.

Night rubs night so that *death can carry the sky to  
the people.*

## SPRIG OF LAUREL

A woman's full body in the folds of her soft full body may be a portrait of death.

She is looking at sky, loosely alive. The painter paints light so that its breath is exposed in the folds of her t-shirt against her shoulder.

Her hair is loose, pushed back behind her hand. It bends *in* like a child.

May I loosely let go of her emaciated hand, like a turkey in flight hangs in sky, loosely falling away from its flying.

That the painter requires a sprig confuses her. He sticks the sprig into her hand. *The gnarled causes of a hand are beginningless*, she's thinking.

Air seeks the awareness of her, making a thin film between life.

Soft desolation keeps churning against a wall. *If I carry my shell up, the image of a bird. Hell is a bird which flickers in and out of being married like that.*

The room exists partially to mimic a bird flowing, but it leaves a bad color.

The wait of a woman at the edge of air, sweetly  
like a wing, swift and awake, so as to sweep the air  
close in.

An image of her heart is showing on its face, which  
turns inside out so that the heart is holding the  
face.

She smiles the smile of the face as it has appeared  
both during its growing and later during its  
samadhi. Even angels have faces in her, she feels.

*Until* is the memory of one—*until-when grasses*—or  
*how-long grasses* is her own memory of one.

*Is there, without the girl, a girl holding a sprig? (I'm wondering if she is simply an old longing.)*

Like if you die but you don't, does your feeling for the girl disappear?

If air dies but the girl is living, what happens to my feeling if she is Vajrapani?

I offer light and smoke to an unassailable space, an aphasia of space, like a *belt* of space.

## TULIP

A woman sits facing light. Sun hits her hands resting on a flowered dress. A long row of windows stand in the dawn quietly.

So that we too (*that's* our mind). She is not existing in sitting's aspect.

We don't see her eyes. We *infer* that she is reading from the texture of her skin. As if her skin is reading.

To which her body, she feels, is surrogate. The space is there but not available, which the act of reading addresses.

The resonance of a reader's mind coagulates in her earth sign. Earth is time, then making a little bowl of it for her head.

As if time were skin, like a family of her body,

*I want the boy erect, she says. I want him like a card as its colors fold around it.* She sees the color of the dead one so that she could be dead again.

Autumn is the frame. Red leaves, violet sky, like a chop signing him off.

Sometimes I hear her death, like lip from behind a word. Words are a prick, *prick, prick*, thin as air, but some say. *No! She's round like a ball.*

The word is alive. I speak it by touch. *My eyes bulge and my mouth puckers, but I am dead first,* she is saying.

The lip moves sleepily. In sticky summer like a heavy foot. *See, it's wandering through a vibrant field of flowers!*

No one arrives, which has the pleasant feeling of continuous sky.

A moth breaks off sky. It spins around then lands  
on a blue wall. A marking on its wing trails through  
its fur.

Wind through a hill *because* of the hill holding a  
place for it, is how it can be that.

*Its feathers are broken.* Whose long arc of pastness,  
like the wings of a crane fanning out in space.

Death is imposed on blowing branches against a  
wall, like nearness and life, beauty and wilting tulips.

## TREE

A girl lolls on grass in a tutu. *The blue ruffle of a violet is the same as sky*, she's thinking. (Blue is not a location but a warmth of pressure around an object.)

Gathering rain presses against sky, then falls in squares mirroring the farmland.

Tonally it is dark. The musicality of a land (almost *neon* in the palm) plays a doubly dark magnetic field.

The *thought* of sky, dispersing itself to its own full origin, may be death in its still quiet flush.

*I am older from sky, such as a waltz dovetailing sky. A guardian of sky sprinkles saffron across her body.*

Appearance quells in patterns against light, the curve of her hip, then flaring and draping over something we can't see.

If she could rest in sky, but she is aggravated. A tuft of cotton sticks out from an ear.

A fundament of time is exactly a cigarette, the vagaries of a thumb suddenly weak and drifting.

The dissepiment may be a tree. Roots are bones,  
bone to bone in strange woolly clusters.

The corpse is alive though. Its tongue is its mind as  
soon as it wakes up.

Mountains of sad trees but one tree lays its limbs  
out wide, direction carpeled to a simple fruit.

A caravan of heads, rolls and rolls of swaddled  
heads, fades into a bluebird's call.

Rain through sky, through the greenery of sky. Fire  
and rain create a pocket.

You are dead. Something in the pocket reaches for  
you. The spirit just sticks its hand into your body.

Then he gives it back. *A golden carp of golden bones  
escapes you*, it says.

The ache of a tree, like an arabesque of bones,  
sheds its trace imperceptibly.

## THUMB

A woman partially hidden by a wall stands in midday light. She is a rounded person with soft brown skin. A curl falls on her forehead.

The fullness of the setting demands a potential connected object so that the image of her doesn't fragment.

A second woman seated facing away eludes space by an unseen motion, the peep of her hat, the beauty of thin leaves layering sky onto the woman standing.

Wings of sky make flowers that look like birds, a spire of delicacy inside the person.

The view of a partially hidden woman is absolutely alive. Someone is jealous. A man shuffles by if he is alone.

How light hits air is how the weight of her appearance, a tulip feathering out, a painter paints *that*, the feather-weight of appearance carried by a woman's body.

A town of women grow in light. If she's free. (A dab of blue is not freedom though.)

The man wears blue but he has not achieved the purity of blue. What is not blue's purity is like another person.

I am watching sky and a dark man watching sky.  
The time of this sky is the non-time of looking.

A vast amount of sky may take place inside his  
belly. If he sneezes it is there like his own twin  
body.

Part of sky is a clear line of intensity but part  
scatters like sun over a pool.

In the lordosis of sky the pulse of his blazing white  
undershirt refracts such that light stops *behind* itself  
inside his belly button.

A person waits. A brown bare body holds the tension of waiting. Nothing moves except (slightly) his thumb resting on the waist of his jeans.

The excursion is in the neck, like sky along his neck. As how the eyes of a bird to a person from a distance form an intimacy one can't touch.

I make pleasant. If he waits for the portion he will ultimately be, like shine in a deep pool or wind in a rabbit's eyes. I place my heart in some wishbone there.

The wishbone pops like time in the dead man.

## BLACK

A humpback wearing red fishes in black water. He leans against a tree if it is angled in a cloudless morning.

A bird flies out. Pierced hair slithers onto its wing.

I am startled by the parity of a simple action by a simple person relatively relaxed, covered by time.

The size of time works through day, like fish breathing mud, squirming against day's barriers.

Perhaps the artist, as an effigy of death, makes the bird to avoid or ward death off. The bird could be suicide (or way of performing a natural process).

Since the wakening of the bird, correlates (empty of the bird) may look like a higher stage of bird.

Mountains and rivers are faces with hollow eyes.  
Stiletos in air hang prettily from blue satin.

Clouds are like a string of pearls where one pearl is black and that's why they're all there.

A cloud in the shape of a bird hangs low in evening  
sky. Its shadow forms a hump.

The cloud could be a door swiveling in space, a  
spark of lavender in grass, only it is black.

*If black peers from the death of me, I may lose track of  
its trajectory, confusing it with life, thinking it is my life.*

A nerve of sky pierces my side so I walk with a  
limp, which reminds me of a mountain's breast.

A painter paints a mountain, *shedding* the mountain.  
(Black replaces black in the subtle crevice between  
himself and what he discards.)

If he is where someone lives then. *We place ribbons  
on our mountain and let its water fall out.*

You can kill a mountain by shutting your eyes or  
looking at the mountain thinking of your dead  
mother.

No color rises. Orange turns to sand in a country  
without flowers.

## COW

If you throw some earth on a table, the figures in the earth, what is there to be derived, from air, from a spell, like a flavor.

There is a geomancy *there*, taken from the harbor.

Immanence in eating, what stands in front of it, so that when something happens, it has already happened also.

*Also* is time. An eater places that against a numerology of color, like the brown wall of the room, which is neither earth nor his dark hand.

The thought in a wrist and each bare lobe of hand.  
Yellow is crucial in the gentle unfolding of its earth  
element.

Hunger is the border, divination the table, a  
context clean of all past expression.

I am born each minute that the man eats bread. I  
place a palm against his brow. My mind is what he  
digests.

If I think of the person, yellow almost *becomes* the  
person because my mind and the thing don't  
separate.

An eating man's neck, free of all justification in him,  
is a portrait of time swallowing a neck. Electrical  
swallowing speaks the ache of time in his chewing.

I'm reminded of a dog, knocking over cans, scarfing.

A neck is a mental neck and the throat swallowing  
death thinks that it is still lunching.

*A petunia taking birth near a cow means that the  
teller (time) will definitely complete the yugas, it  
rambles.*

A cow wearing red is gliding toward rebirth. Its mind is a plum that it sucks while they tear up its body.

He draws the cow down into his body so it can rest and finally sleep within his body.

Like if snow were food, the sense of miles and miles of snow. Still, the person's throat has not even a particle of snow in it.

If snow were crafted in earth with it in mind instead of sourcing it from sky (like the pair of lovers floating in sky with death in mind).

## MEADOW

A face in the light of you, which is dusk or early morning. Wind in hay and the tall anchoring of a blanket, as if her hair were the blanket.

A cat bays in the moon whose face appears in the light of you.

Dew is thick. The loosening of its weight holds an even placement of view.

Arms and hair curve like grass in the exact amount of their sleeves.

Acres of red born in the same sky. A man watches  
light stretch and thin across the hay bundles.

To comb a flame, his face against her hair. Aghast  
is what abides beyond the scope of shape.

Shape is space in its aspect of brilliance, her face  
through shifting breeze brushing hair over shadows.

The *waist* of a scene expands beyond its boundaries  
so that meadow convexes anterior to sky, like a  
bulge in sky, as if it were dead.

The eye of the painter focusing on a meadow is  
how my mind wants the space of its real dead  
body.

They want it to be kinship, *we two together*, but in  
fact it is a splurge of shape (the potential shape of  
sky).

Someone paints night, space consecutive with  
darkness, as if one space is *more* dead.

Death is space whose appearance results from  
space, unbridled in the soft of *low*, emergent face  
on stone.

Night releases to *I* as an object. A winterland of limbs. (The winter of her body *is* this very body dead.)

As if sky were alone a century beforehand. The sound, heavy through night, retains its weight in light.

I locate you back to the outreaches of sky. Low slow land is a transparency in her body.

Prehistoric quiet covers up day like a sheet.

## *The Twelve Nidānas*

### NOTE

*Nidāna* (Pali/Sanskrit): “cause, foundation, source, origin.”  
The twelve *nidānas* are an application of the Buddhist concept of dependent origination. They identify the origin of suffering to be ignorance.

I

A man's hand in the midst of him, a simple  
expression of earth, the junction of red earth in  
lieu of something indeterminable in the person.

The anthem of his hand, the flesh of his dark hand,  
as in the blood of someone you know.

The attention of a leaf presses itself outwards.  
How many lights pierce through the clouds  
achieving themselves in its bit of space.

A tattoo of leaves touches his head lightly, like an  
angel's hand anointing his crown, passing on the  
light of him.

A man may be carrying the images of an angel's body, the division of light being the tilt of an angel's body.

He is wanting the complete light, the sense of arising trapped in the angel's body.

A concentration toward okay between what is presented to one, some subtlety coming to one.

Like an absence that one carries, light vanishes light, innocuous space beyond what one recalls.

The shadows of two people make a darkness in a field indistinguishable from the two people.

As how a silhouette of space, imaging the angel's dark form, as if his hand in pledge behind the eyesocket were internalized.

His image of him, whether his angel is dark, a dark dark angel as a transparency on his desire.

A filigree of space tips alluringly upwards as if it were imaging his own guts and belly.

Maybe he were a queen then. Maybe so many  
queens in a reality that is fed queens.

The city is an outbreath, a dark fabric of sky, as if  
sky were the angel's eyes.

A cat gets up, walks slowly over to sky, intuiting a  
sky that simply dissolves into a cat's body.

In the congregate of moving, dawn dissolves to sky,  
what holds between his feeling and a cityscape of  
sky.

## II

The sky bleeds dark and lucent from its writing. A calf is clearly struggling.

The absorption of a star, a linguistic signal, allows the sky to dangle there.

Elements are like memory and function as a support. Earth is easy, though it moves to the ground and vanishes.

Her mind pours light on a stalk-still bird and it *stays* still, then moves to the ground and vanishes.

Something in the calf holds hostage as a fight, like war in its family that has descended in its body.

She *sees* calf, the procession of a body. It is a baby engrossed in a footprint so its head is down.

Leaving one guessing. *Is this real? Is this a fact?*  
Repetition is and is part of the calf. (I am feeling its feeling deep in my armpit.)

Repetitive, *not* an irreducible spacing, is easily closed off, like dreaming or forgetting that in fact you *are* a calf.

If she promises to be her eyes, the extension into space, not the calf but the contiguous motion of its body.

Because the partial mind of seeing (the invisible-inclusive eye) binds what's unavailable to what you see.

Touch without touch, action without action. a feather-light eye touches the world back, like her death or above zero (if she were a lamb climbing out of her eyes).

I seal space, closing my eyes lightly, touching things lightly, because my eyes touch and are touched and this has become onerous.

What if seeing and touching were not simultaneous, that having seen, the product of your seeing does not come back to you?

If time boycotts time *and* falls to clear seeing, its ersatz life exposed?

Pairs of eyes peer through the dark, not seeing *something* but just the consciousness, *knowing* knowing seeing.

Like you could skip seeing and just *be* seeing because the past of an eye comes from everywhere.

### III

I walk through trees, a series of squat willows, and see the space between the willows as time.

Because it's not the space, it's the emptiness of mind (whose energy is grounded to its darkest possible color).

Taking birth beneath a tree, I want to feel my longing for the tree, my deep thought of you in its disentangled precision of stillness.

One bends, taking its time, a full earth of time.  
*How do I wander into its leaf?*

Merely touching earth, gently touching the awareness of earth, like the beginning of day in earth.

Leaves stretch to sun, the full breath of sun, but I am left gasping.

My reference point is fading. The underleaf is blank. But blank itself catches me in a kind of double-take.

A gap exists but she refuses to see it, which is a third sort of fudging, like the darkly yellow on the leaf's bottom.

*That yellow cala lily, earth and earth-consecutive-with-darkness, a coincidence of blood and dark and color, such a yellow, heavy and unknown.*

Indexed to light, this card of light folds around the sleeve of your body.

We take shelter in abyss, which looks like a color, magenta calligraphed in a cala lily's cup, deep in the cup, its fire.

Color filters light is not the net color that the cala lily *tells* by way of its earth sign.

#### IV

Night is her skin, its pleats the quiet fold of her.  
Background and foreground are the memory of a  
skin wearing dynasties of her.

A bird touches night and her skin moves as if it  
were tied to this.

As if a mass accumulates in a narrative of space.  
*Now* preserves as a robin opening out of its  
capacity in me.

I want to pet it. I want to cry. The intimacy of a  
word *before* it is a word, so that it's *now*, in the  
interval, wears its own full body.

How many tiers live in a word and the hues of the tiers in the space of the word's awareness.

*I, the word, in the space of my form, imaging my form, like a lion in its death throes.*

*I swallow you and emergence in a word. (The word's shape is how death looks like this image.)*

A cold press of wind through a word's tired body could be hell or a word separate from its word.

To feel into a word, which may be neutral, but may be like an animal who *gets* the word, as if the word were a *lesion* in its body.

The lesion could be freedom because a word has no location, like a break in the hills. (Mostly our words are skeletons of themselves.)

One senses the transparent quality of its body, an unchangeable power that runs alongside its body.

I am a word. I am the ultimate fearless word, beauty or sky so that there is nothing in the way.

A word lands on her cheeks. *Unspeakable* is the word. *Unspeakable* is the crutch, the *cane* of the word, the transparency of the word that relates to her as a body.

As how several letters cast a sense of time, like a painting casts depth, which is the image of death in a room.

Then the dream of the word amalgamates. First there's sky, then the full comportment of a body. Sky-swaddled words catch the light of death.

I want to believe each word, like pray to the word, because you want to believe in its denial, forgiveness, everything.

A word lay in snow. If you lift the snow and suspend your idea of the possible, it's like space linking space to all constellations of that word.

The sheer resplendence of a word, as how the daughter of a word, a whole lineage pouring out from its god-father.

A child picks up a word. It's the enjoyment of the word, the shape of all commodious expressions that the mind living in that word carries.

In a tapestry of texts, I am in the moment of one, as if I had gone to sleep.

## V

I juxtapose pink with weather, seeing color emerge from shape. Pink constellates to a pig's body.

Pink's trajectory, inclusive of pig, breeds pink into a legacy, but the real pink transmits its pinkness to the pig.

The pig looks pink because it's lost track of the *possibility* of being made vivid. (*A rose is a rose is a rose* brilliantly demonstrates the part of a rose that's impossible.)

It burns a background to itself. A tenderness comes out. *That's* the leap, the already-known, like a rose seed.

Yes is a style. I grow an extra bone. *Here is my bone*, which makes me happy.

Its yes is and always has existed.

But if I misuse it, if now, seeing my bone, I make use of it in a negative sense, which is vivid, even shocking because I carry my own style in them.

You are involved with a style of being, relating your experience with a perception of your experience, e.g., crazy-shell pink, but pink reduces itself to nothing.

I am a limb braced on a trapeze, but I am an ostrich  
dreaming with my eyes shut.

If the pink is “swimmy” (it almost makes me cry—I  
could dwell on something that could happen).

The forefather of a dream may be jealous and  
hoard the dream. (I am again that bird, rosy  
plumage taut, ribs holding my scrawny body, which  
is an extremely crowded situation.)

What swims around the dream comes back. Me  
and my projections are put into a bag and I push as  
hard as I can.

I am trying to fit into one particular bag, which becomes my limbs, a confabulation of infinity.

Essence doesn't flee. Essence stays with being. Time puffs itself into a thing, like saturation, which can resemble a pink color.

As how the consumption of time will alleviate time's stoppage to the degree that the person *feels* time's stoppage.

*How* is style, toggling illusory and dream, instead of coming across the material of a dream, offering it space because terror needs space.

## VI

A teller's face recedes. Silver bars entrap his shoulder, tie and shirt collar. If you search for his face, but it's the *no-search* that finds his face.

*How much does it cost to find his face?* (Now I am a slim finder of his face.)

He passes me money. His hand does not touch the bills that I receive because relinquishing receiving, I just take the money.

The transaction questions presence. If I arrive on both sides of receiving, everything disappears.

One face of *no* face moving casually like a normal face. (Though the man is naked, his face seems even more naked.)

Because energy needs a context of definite, specific events. *If you are handless, there is still the environment of hands, like a throat of hands about to swallow your body.*

His shirtsleeve is hiked exposing a man's wrist, vulnerable, droopy, as if the man's energy floods into his hand, skipping the wrist, which could be the wrist of a different man.

The flesh is white. Cold light yields a sting of hours, time defined, no long upright.

The essence of its white is like a king wearing a hand. (That the king is wearing a hand depends on the viewpoint of the person.)

A symbol of white spreads across the palm, a legacy of wind, like air that is yours.

Something begins, is loosely held in one's body, casting a sense of depth (as if its symbol *is* one's body).

A glove on my cupped hand cradles my lung, anchoring to the extreme, up and up to the hand that is so extreme.

It's how image and matter falter. Mother and child  
meet but the mother's mind does not meet.

You can see this in her hand, ring finger lax, then  
the laxing itself takes on existence.

First sky, the fatty mound of a thumb, then figures  
topped by shapes inferred to have existence  
because sky undeniably has existence.

A person's hand is how sky looks like this body,  
which is so sad but is not her hand.

## VII

A woman's mind is young. It kneels like a child at bedtime. At the breathline of her wash she makes a path.

As if a host is sketching the scene in white, the choicelessness of white, which is why it is so alive.

One two three child-of-her-skin hang from the edges, yes, and in them is the color yes.

In her skin there is washing and the taste of white as in the climax of living now.

About the logic of white, as soon as you *say* white, whose living experience can only come from space, she adds passively.

The painter paints white as a form of disappearance sourced from the white that is her.

So that nothing is derived, like the five kinds of eyes or a woman's clothes that can only be cleaned by fire.

The washerwoman looks down. *Down* is a color as she sits with her body because how many of us sit, actually *sit down* in our own body.

Someone leaves. A panel of white looks like a cap  
and she is confused.

It could be a bird with a beach plastered on it, the  
only spot the deepest bottom of her pupil.

If I throw whiteness on the bird, like a piece of  
paper can be a bird.

I touch white out but its geometry blurs, without  
guile (in its own nature) between what is so  
fervent.

## VIII

I wake before dawn and feel the emptiness of blue  
in my body.

The country smells blue and little sprouts push  
from the earth.

Blue light through hills absorbs into space,  
dismantling wind, coloring distant swallows.

Blue may be light but boiled down to the earth of  
light so that even its image rides on a tiger.

The quivering of earth vanishes with night.

Blue is a response in its flimsy filmy costume. *Such sweet blue, the nalo of blueness*, I mimic.

As if a cloud, like Dombipa, in a practicum of itself, throws the skull of itself to the place of its future self. The ground where it lands becomes frozen in the wake of how much blue is possible.

A lizard-imitating-a-stone, a flower in natural connate sky, as if blue, sprung with the blue of sky, confabulates through beings to the absolute blue of sky.

As if sound were blue and what sound touches also  
(inevitably) releases the sound of blue's body.

*I live in this ground*, a person says, who keeps the  
mountain close.

Release is not *into*. His body along with a dimple in  
the meadow, in plentitude of them and what  
follows from blue's generosity.

I hear its song in the flakes falling downward but its  
echo is up and the time of the song even higher up.

The sound of a mountain is soft, like a flock gathering inward. (The continual motion of the flock even down to its belly.)

Each relaxed posture would be all the positive postures that the flock would be able to express.

Sun kneads light into a sound of relating to light, tonsure-snow in sky as it washes over the vastness.

I feel susceptible to snow as if I *am* snow, sun rising over snow, refusing to go to sleep now.

## IX

A man has himself crafted in day, as if his  
monasticism lay *into* precise day.

He stumbles upon himself, sniff sniff in day, which is  
not particularly intelligent, but which is following  
his body's refusal.

*I won't be day*, he says. *No!* for him is moving  
ahead, as if a man is sculpted to the precise mind of  
who he will turn out to be.

As if his man precedes his infant and the sound of  
that cry is so very stunning.

The man in the shape of a bird, his perch against sky, is a large space inside me.

Like a bean grows and *there* is sky (the imprimatur of sky) leaving only the action.

If he weren't sky, 'cause the elements are really deities, if he weren't a rim of sky hungering for a space to be.

Seeing beyond the man, flashing back but still beyond the man, seeing a bird whose profile appears to be part of the sky.

When a man is a bird, the left of him shutters and he hides a little.

Then the conviction of *no*, its dead-on precision of place. *No* is accurate, its discipline is accurate, the precision of reverent so solid and solemn.

*No-sky* shatters the *upaya* of mortality, what forms in one's mind, like lace on a tree.

Will the man topple? He hovers on a ledge. A thick sinuous rope hugs the caliber of who he will be there.

X

Devotees mingle among bolts and bolts of fabric as if in this course they are studying water as all elements, but not sex. Ears are exclusive of sex.

She lays in a room worrying if her water is enough. Exclusive looks like branches of a tree.

She becomes the fabric wildly and coils and how many bolts will fill the bottom of her underworld.

Joy abides in the flooding of the fields, in the bones of her voice (having metabolized her voice).

The person says no, he doesn't want sex with her,  
which she feels in her ears, water on people's  
doorsteps.

Seeing the water hearing, as if *that's* the *that* of the  
first stage.

A ritual vase holds the cup of your essential water,  
which is your dead poured slowly but sounding like  
a roar because you're dead.

As if one's mind, replete with death's form, like  
when can an animal convene if everything violet  
embodies a just-broken crucifix.

A consort of energy maps intelligence onto place,  
like death is a place and she dances on the place.

The place is dead yet searches in itself for a feeling.

Dancing on a corpse, holding the mace of a baby's  
body (what prevails between dead and the clean air  
of its body).

Jumpstarting dead, regarding oneself as dead.  
Watching myself leap right into her.

XI

A carousel of birds raises a curtain with its beak  
and I pop out. (It's a charm on my mother's charm  
bracelet.)

Rhinestones on her sweater are flecks of light  
shaped like birds whose fingers touch the bottom  
of the sea.

An imprint of the bird remains in the sea. *All  
animals and beings are the size of the sea*, she is  
telling me.

*Lightly, lightly, like froth on sea, we lay our footprints  
out over the land.*

As if a bird becomes a bird first inside its own belly.  
The ease of its float, so hospitable and safe. Such  
nakedness stalks the nothingness of space.

The flight exists and *then* the bird. First, if he is  
perched, as if a wrong thing will be completed in  
him. (The grip is what's completed, that it has  
already happened.)

Like the gait of a bird whose shape scatters. I *see*  
the songs instead of hearing them suddenly.

One sings. One sings. Thus he is above himself,  
explicating what may slip away.

The logic of a bird is the same as winter sky. Look straight into its eyes and it becomes invisible.

What's this math that makes a double bird but the bird is there anyway pecking at the icicles.

I live in a cave and you can't inherit it. Birds make my cave legible.

Its snow runs wild (which is how the bird can remain quite healthy).

Were it a bird or cloud in the shape of a bird, a  
place in sky repelling its illusion in space.

Were I snow falling on birds' wings, am I in its  
song, esoteric.

Aloneness is there despite the bird trembling. You  
can feel it in its space, what he cannot sing to you.

The bird and I are brothers. Our song is the same.  
Throw a spearhead and it's the same. It will *always*  
become a flower.

## XII

A tendency to real occurrence turns into space. A person is space. He is white, having been consumed by fire ravenously.

His eyes lay on his face, like the words of his face (*what would be taken from me manually in abutment to my suicide*).

The awareness is itself but also the source. Its seriality in space follows death along the trail of its body.

That space between *I* and willing to die, that streak of *I*, like the nature of the real person habituated to *I*, but not definite, slightly fishy.

If she thinks about the man or remembers thinking him into experience, a shift occurs, invisible yet definitive, who she is, which is so real.

Because his skin is night now. A skin of wanting peering at a body, a locale.

He separates from time as his swishy body folds, not physically (he is still groping) but the grope looks like a river.

He gropes like a person in the slow motion of a dream, more and more till it is no longer slow, but some preternatural sub-slow, a mirror image of slow's interior.

The man's death appears violent because the man himself is violent, but it is just death.

Being a natural pause between death and its appearance.

I no longer wish for omission, a map of space swallowed by some organic, mechanical process.

The line between impression and breath, awareness and space, digs into space, mixing mind with space.

# *Mingling the Threefold Sky*

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## WHITE

A man in the dark is a dark man. He calls me from  
inside the dark water.

That I recognize him in the night without waking is  
a growing urge of mind.

And then the man appears. I gradually orient  
toward the man.

The tremulous multiplicity of pause, as if dark is  
pause, an umbrella of veins puffing and dissolving.

It senses her and stops. She orients towards the stopping like the possibility of a person who *would be* out of darkness.

The stop reveals its form like a word reveals the sensation of something, the *commission* of a sound that holds the language of a word.

Sound fills the cavity and she is there pressing. *I am practicing the word through its darkest cubits of blackness.*

*O sister word! Hold insouciance to any word and you have the word resolved even of the idea of word.*

The man holds the word in the space of himself, in  
a word made ready for itself.

Such that time is rescued out of her, the long day  
of time. *I am a thin bone of light, like a duck of light to  
nothing.*

The *floor* of the word, the long trouble of the  
word. (She feels from the word a certain mastery  
of negation.)

*I will live in the word. If its boundary is something  
produced by the word.*

She tries to feel her floor, but she is thinking about a cavity, something fluid like a worm and she wants to *say* the worm.

A moan is a moan and where can it reside if not on her floor, the speech body of that word.

She jerks it up but trips so that *she* is the floor and the glue and the shame. *I have a habit of glue*, she confesses.

A flame of everything sears into shape, which is not the word, but the colorless basis of its Pure Land.

## YELLOW

A vein of sun hits a woman's cheek. *What is her face*, she wonders, a blush of cheek beneath the long hair of her goldenness.

How sunlight fills the sky is how the mind myelenates appearances to her.

Whose milt is on the edges. It stands in front of sky such that all she sees is sky.

The absolute knowing of sky, weather and sky, like a prerogative that's *said* against which she may stroke her child.

Though she sits facing away, *as if* it is in her, one feels the age of this *away* as her.

The painter paints time locked away from its material, like her own personal face exiled from her face.

As if *away* without location is the real time, the real completion, a recrement of sky, the *other* loneliness of sky.

Rangjung dorge's face. *Its light is not what is in me that way.*

As the moon releases into sky, shedding yellow  
back to sky, you see a person's face deep in the  
heart of the eye of one.

Day walks out of day losing track of its intelligence,  
the part of day held back from day or the end of  
his life which is so heartbreaking.

Sound at a distance extends from in front of him.  
The arc of his face leaks into shape.

The space between her face, the moon's display of  
face. (The features of her belie her apparent face.)

✧

The color of day, two figures in a plain, as if two  
were possible outside of itself as a number.

As if day were a point dabbed like paint onto the  
brief cortex of togetherness.

A pattern of her in yellow, such that she too,  
though *he*, the *he* of how they came to be here  
forever.

Where clouds are yellow and birds are yellow, a  
double portrait of her, which is *them* as who she is.

It's like these two things, the way light throws itself over land, *them* as a pulse, a stream of apposite colors.

The metaphysics of grey within a yellow space, or closeness, the *duo* of her body coming to be the grey.

For this she'd received an empowerment. A doleful space of air. A *prosody* of air.

The belly of the mind leaks the containment of them, as how the painter lifts the *them* of them and simply puts it on a piece of paper.

Waiting is the movement. Waiting is not resting because the aspect of *pair*, a person's hat of hair, the tip of the world at the edge of his hair.

The man is not. He is thinking about something else. His hat facing light holds the tension of his being there.

The skirl of light obscures to fading light. A vague sense of waiting hangs over his elbow.

Now he is home listening to its softness *as if inside me I have finally found my bedfellow.*

✧

The fold of a tree over light on a road, if she is *in*  
the road, the sense that she would be there  
anyway.

An old live tree, like the life of someone screaming,  
is the language of the tree pushed outside its form.

What colors grow untouched in her, her and her,  
what she sees on the Paris streets.

Old registers hard even in a bit of shade.

What is it in a tree that seems to be erased, as if emotion were space, and the subtlety that is part of the tree, the great washing over of space.

The way time holds light on the *inside* of her which is how color organizes itself toward a person.

It makes me question whether sky is the same since movement is not limited (I begin to see sky as limited).

Fifty three skies settle in my backyard may simply be sky pouring out sky.

The painter's mind meets tree and recognizes where there *should* be a tree but it seems like a real tree.

Tree is how time rests back on its own mind.

Because trees need repeatability. Its eye is that prostration. *I will catch my eye in the rigpa of her eye.*

Sacraments repeat in the full verse of eyes, the laying on of an eye, a closed eye or even an eye asleep.

## RED

Someone paints a dream thinking it is the person,  
cuts out the dream and the dream becomes its  
word.

*Now the person will know and his word will have the  
letters of an eastern province.*

He is tied to this loosely as if beyond the chance of  
knowing, a bodice of time (angling loosely) down  
the crevice of his back, loosely.

A man in a horn makes a home for himself in the  
horn such that the space in the horn opens to the  
vast expanse of his own mudra.

Looking east into space as it pales into sky, he is hearing her painting her but not from the source of her hearing him hear her.

A rattle, disassembled by his mind, appears at the flounce of her skirt-line.

*Can't* also. Can't relates to time as an index. *Can I fit? If I were who I am?* The equation nags a memory.

What is the equation for the mind outside the time, the Sugata of time, each *tissue* of time.

The sound and the struggle to receive it in his body, like its bloodtype is wrong for a person with his body.

It's a situation of her blood becoming ready to be her blood, *after* the pogrom, *after* the sea. Actually red is Word.

*Shtetl* is the adjective. *Can't* is not east, nor made from the red of tongues.

What translates from the sea (because her ankles hold the sea) now *able* to be a sea, steadying up the sea.

The fib of the girl groping through herself, because  
real hearing is just itself, cheap like the wrong  
mother.

*I am swimming for ten minutes, cries the Ocean  
God's one-eyed children.*

Though the habit of time makes red seem almost  
hollow, the dakinis say, *no, please, our joy is red.*  
*Outside blessing there is no red.*

I tear up. I realize who she is in the scone of her  
red body, like an offering to sky or how the dark  
sea holds up sky.

The intimacy of red is like hearing the sound of  
your birth.

Or the birth of red, like at Yale where red is a  
park.

What pertains outside of what we think of as a  
color (if red were a smell and we put it in a jar, and  
someone opens the jar).

If sound is red, coming to synthesis in a word, the  
word lifts off its word, the clarity of mind raised to  
the red of the word.

Her body is red and her penis, also, is a thick red.

Like you could vacuum red into your hand let's say.

Fucking red, sliding her hand up the thick course of  
all procreations of red fathers.

HOW-at-large is how the mother dissolves. She  
*clothes* the bars that tie her land to red.

Breaking back the skin of its tip, some say it's the  
cut itself, the brave cut of red in the hollow of its  
mind.

The mind of red cusses red, backwards toward the  
front of its tongue.

*The lungs of the sea are hollow of devotion.* One  
keeps its body close like a vajra “dick” of red’s  
secret body.

Tongue, mouth, body are as if painted red, but  
gushingly so  
that the green of red, the deep soft of green’s pure  
body  
becomes red’s Luscious Body.

## GREEN

I look out on a hill. It is bald with exuberance of  
old decaying objects.

A shallow hill and sense of day dissolving is a lateral  
memory of time.

A shrub is alive, its decay is alive. The slope of the  
hill may not be selected into finitudes.

In a cycle of empty light, no birds land.

I see a house of rolling hills as if the hills had taken  
refuge but had not taken a vow of refuge.

Hills and hills of bedding in light, the *taking* of light,  
the laying down of light.

The observance of the vow is definitely green,  
though below the ground dark movement churns,  
as if the spirits of light are upset.

A pretense of green, which is unfortunate, like the  
mistress of the beds whose greens purvey a chakra  
that can't settle.

*The engine of green is continuous*, she says. (You are sitting in a room watching a broadcast on a small screen near the ceiling.)

Many people are there, like a corporation of *there* (the sense of *there* is inside them, which they now realize).

Their ribcages have come ajar, but instantaneously and with conviction, like *This ajar is final*.

As a woman teems into the room, what stands as her own body. Mind implodes its fulfillment body.

✧

Windows play to light and glass and hair and  
pointing, but the heel of the point is old and its  
green is old.

Sucking green, like at night when she sucks the hell  
out of her body.

Her form stands inside the essence of her body, a  
symbol of space like a letter that stands for space.

The dawning of an arm through a glass of green, a  
species of pirouette on the point of her final green.

She feels stuck in the glass, both sensing its meaning, but like a dream, sensing a peripheral lurking falseness.

*In the wild of glass, how can I be born in so much glass?* (The rectitude of her sash has long been known by the girl.)

*Anything formed loses nascence,* someone cries. Crystal becomes a deity, rice a snake lashing about as a protector.

Movement has stopped but the agony of time, a dancer stands in the glass of her toe shoe's time, like an *asana* of time.

The still of a dancer's back, if it is *of movement*, is not an image of my feeling.

Because there needs to be green. *That's the mandala inside my whole body.*

*The nuance of the color will convene in me. Its word is laid in me.* Quiet morning light brings a bowl of it to her forehead.

Day is her support, the first position of mind, a turn-out of mind so that day may grow long.

## BLUE

A paradigm of phrase, such as a woman bending, whether it be evening or fall, in the slow motion of bending toward something.

The awareness is in her neck and gentle *down* of softness as if the profile of her face faces a separate direction from her face.

As if her face stands beside its own absolute loveliness, revealed in *down* whose axis is not the axis of the intelligence of her body.

Her body sits down in the weight of a person's shell whose full curving masses become, some say, the *racial quality* of the shell.

Race is blue as in the catching of a mind, a shallow remainder of mind deep in its inheritance.

Whose *dristi* settles, both *in* herself, if her mind spreads to his through her body.

That a *dristi* can be queen combines a long history of sewing, how her character can stop (though the motion of bending does not stop).

As a painter paints the lack of occurrence of mind, she goes in which is instantly the real mind.

*Am* is the assessment. (*I am new, clean as sky.*)

Because boredom is open and joy is open, like if I am a bird and then tomorrow the intervening presence of myself.

Whose scent is in the *tukdam*. The bird grows small but she is dead.

The awareness is there and the vicinity, too, holds the bird.

*She's a shot bird. (Shot is a value.)*

*I am in the purview of tenderness, she's crying.*

*I am a broken bird. I am raped and then I am a bird  
again.*

Is heard through a clearing, but it is just the bird  
and she shines its light so prettily like the repeated  
sequence of a waterfall.

✧

Here is night and death lies bleeding, the deepest  
black of light at the edge of a sparrow's forehead.

Its dark internal quest pushes toward what is exact  
in him, to say a state of dark at the bottom of his  
pillow.

And there's something else that I can't remember,  
a holocaust of birds being the blackness of pale  
color.

The space of black is the barren essence of a color,  
like pain or *his* mind that we can no longer say is a  
color.

Blackness is alive, palpable in an accused person. A guard senses it trembling.

The black of an iris makes black out of light. *It's the kingdom of black blowing black across the fields.*

What is this word, like a domino of air, which they cannot know, cannot take. Light enters through its scales.

*We welcome you into air*, they say, but they have no idea of air, they are just *saying* air.

The guard sees a scale and says *this is the scale*. Its stillness is black and its water is black.

*Like a bodice of death is effluvial and lightly striated colors.*

*Said* and its air that comes to him from somewhere. Saraha is the name of one, whose arrows have the thickness of one.

*Is pierced in my hair (or half of hair)* excoriates the poverty of its word.

He sees the mind in the word as a sudden realization, not just the vision but as a particular situation.

Like time exists in time, but due to the power of infinity of ordinary errors stays fully dissolved in confusion.

*Past doesn't exist*, the guard repeats. (The struggle to extort a sense of how *exist* can be.)

The blue motion of a star, the torture of the star.  
In the ash of it is a word, but not conceived, as in  
the slow fingernails of his father.

✧

Blue land falls to dusk before dusk falls, like a taste  
that opens in your heart.

A wind of blue settles with sky as it fades over the  
land.

A gum-tree is quiet. Air absorbs its light.

As if a penny were dead, slow in slow night. The  
slow vase and touch of winter.

His view of mud in the full jelly of the land, blue or black as he calls to her primitively.

Shadows of time pour out their place so as to not encounter anything.

Shapes at a distance may be sky making arcs, a vagina aroused to sky and open to sky's subtleties.

Blue is space. Dusk is source. In a lapse of wind, the *skin* of rain hovering, a word that has departed.

Lust in the wet land. (I fish into my mind.)

Mud in particular stands beside each light particle differently.

Night is light. Night is so light. If you touch it it turns into memory.

He stares into blue as it softens into *not blue*,  
making distance from elaborations of blue-on-blue,  
blue-on-*not-blue*.

Dusk in a hill dissolves into a cow, visible but indistinguishable, like consciousness.

The cow has an umbrella. *The dakinis are playing their drums*, people say.

A rainbow is the deities welcoming the cow back. The local wisdom deities are so happy to see the cow.

The cow allows its happiness to be seen.

## LATE WORK 2014-2018

### *Introduction*

Late work (the poetry I began writing in 2014) addresses a different part of the brain than my earlier work.

The element of space directs itself no longer to wisdom mind but to lesser-exalted areas of the self.

That human beings are primarily relational takes on new significance.

Formerly silence was *in* the word and *was* the word (introverted). Now it is also referential (extroverted).

New Year's Eve  
listen—  
snow is falling<sup>1</sup>

Sensation becomes memory.

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<sup>1</sup>*Pale Sky*, p. 10, (page references to the original publication; see bibliography for details).

What erupts may be from the reptilian brain but may also stem from more highly evolved areas.

Meaning extends beyond the word into clusters of words, sentences and remainders after the sentences have passed.

The mind of the woman is warm, her sweaters and chickens and all the places on the boat . . .

“Hello,” Unn offers.

“What?” shouts the woman.<sup>2</sup>

Meaning finally is useful. Before, it not only was not useful, it obstructed what was useful.

Before there was the boat. Now there’s the other shore.

The *device*—thinking you know what it means—becomes authenticated by the text—you *do* know what it means.

She wondered if the fact that things ceased to exist in her meant that they ceased to exist.

Does time cease to exist or does it flow

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<sup>2</sup>*Sunny Day, Spring*, p. 3.

parallel to what looks like one's existence?

What is one's existence? What is the relation between time and one's existence?<sup>3</sup>

It means what it means to you, but meaning is *intended* whereas in the earlier work, the flow *toward* meaning was simply bait.

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<sup>3</sup>*Ezekiel*, p. 78.

from

*Sunny Day, Spring*

Unn had been reading. Light from the dawning sky fell upon her book. “The days are such that I hardly need a lamp,” she was thinking when she heard a click. “That would be Töl.”

Unn returned to her book and to the deep silence of the day.

“Was that Töl?” Aware suddenly of how quiet the house seemed, she paused. “Was that today? Maybe it was yesterday.”

Unn tried to remember precisely when she’d heard the lock on the door click, but she couldn’t be sure.

She closed her eyes. Recently she’d read—the article was in the *New York Times*—a war victim who’d been tortured was being treated for post traumatic stress. Though he’d suffered physical pain, his main symptom—what was intolerable to him and wouldn’t leave him—was the loss of a sense of time. He simply had no idea of where he was in space, of how much time had passed or how long any activity

would take. When the therapist slowly said, “Take your time, Sergio, we have plenty of time,” it was as if his sobbing would never stop.

from

*Ezekiel*

“My eyes are watering it’s so cold.”

Her cheeks were flushed. He thought he saw them flicker for a second.

“It’s just my eyes. Everything else is fine,” she added, blinking rapidly as if the action itself would warm them.

“We’re lucky it’s so clear.”

Luciano didn’t feel like talking. He was looking at the sky *and* looking at Ezekiel.

Silence filled the air as though the universe were voiceless now.

As though a core, a point of reference, had irrevocably been torn away.

When it fanned out spreading higher and higher and higher, it left Luciano and Ezekiel in darkness.

from  
*Pale Sky*

*From the first moment I enter the zendo  
I am changed.*

*The fragrance, the clarity stir a deadness in me that  
I've lugged around and lugged around.*

*I recognize it with my teeth, behind my ears, between  
my toes, the bottoms of my feet.*

*It is startling and immediate.*

*The same sense—almost a nostalgia—filters through  
the air, the grounds, the trees.*

*People talking, jays cawing. It's just a caw but its  
rawness makes a point and repeats the point and  
repeats the point.*

*I'm hearing the empty beginning, before the person or  
the jay get involved.*

*Even the air rattles with its mind.*

*The sound is fresh. It stays cool in the heat. Beyond immaculate, its cleanness is original.*

*The wind in the trees is crisper. Leaves are more defined.*

*Colors are subtler as if elsewhere, even elsewhere in the same range of mountains, this feeling is quelled by the lack of an inherited intelligence.*

*The legacy of mind, big mind, Zen mind, establishes the legitimacy, even of the pansies.*

*Traipsing in my getas down the rain-drenched path,  
my muscles know precisely the beyond-knowing of its  
importance.*

*Like a nocturnal bird seeks a safe place to rest during  
the day in a vacant attic.*

*Chirps and caws sprinkle through the air as dawn hits  
the trees and pale sky colors the brick wall that I am  
staring at.*

*It's this path but it's the sky and the eon's sky and the  
yuga's sky and all the yugas' skies.*

“O n e . . .” she said mentally, listening to the soft stream of air through her nostrils.

“T w o . . .” started at the top while the air was in her nose but the sound, slower now and more nasal, seemed to be coming from her throat.

“T h r e e . . .” though the “three” came as an afterthought.

The person to her right was leaning forward on his knees trying to fit a third *zafu* under his buttocks, but the second one kept slipping out making the third one lopsided.

Eliza stayed still. Steadying her gaze she continued counting exhales, but her mind went to the day—she’d so wanted to make a personal connection.

“Is there anything I should bring?” She twiddled a strand of hair too tightly around a finger.

He yawned with his jaw, without opening his mouth. “You’ll be doing the personal lists.” It wasn’t really an answer.

Then he’d simply stood absorbed in looking out.

She wished he wouldn’t shift around on his pillows so much.

*“This morning early Roshi, peacefully, died. We  
continue our efforts along with all beings.”*

The words entered the hall toward the beginning of  
second period.

Silence. More silence. Bristling silence.

But it was soft.

New Year’s Eve  
listen—  
snow is falling

*We just sit. It is like something happening in the great sky.*

*To express our way along with all beings—we sit for this and it will always be the same.*

*Whatever kind of bird, the sky doesn't care. That is the mind transmitted from the Buddha to us.*

*Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, practicing deeply  
Prajña Paramita . . .*

from  
*Elm*

A nighthawk's cry startled her.

As if in response Machie moaned.

Her hair, loose now, lay over one cheek and the palm of her hand over that.

It was her right hand. The long middle finger reached her jaw.

Her other hand fell toward the corner of the bed.

It was a child's hand.

“Take me to bed.” Machie had said it first.

The warmth of her, undeveloped, a little skittish, had been unlike the smooth, clean-burning warmth of the woman she was now.

Her dark places were warm.

Sometimes even now . . .

She could be sixteen any minute.

“Can I know you? Will you live?”

Once she'd seen a picture of very young Machie in roller skates laughing, arm slung around a boy.

But her eyes had looked old. Her laughter somehow stilted.

Living old, a child lives out her oldness so that when she comes of age she has the knowledge to be young originally.

A scar on Machie's shoulder took the shape of violets.

Despite the scar the shoulder was young and fresh.

Might it be that the scar, the result of her experience,  
richened the flavor of Machie's innocence?

The scent of a baby came to her. It had the close warm  
softness of sleep.

A faint wild crying from the violets ebbed and rose, ebbed  
and rose.

The piquant odor of blood, Machie's menstrual blood, rose from the depths of her slumber.

The scent was full with the presence of Machie's womanliness.

"It's like blood that wants a baby," Naoko'd once observed, meaning only that it was a rich, good blood.

"Don't say that," Machie'd smarted.

Along with the smell, pungent yet sweet, was the memory of the smell mixed as it was with their past.

“How did you lose your virginity,” Machiëd teased, egging Naoko on with question after question.

She looked so new. The undone braid fanned over her mouth.

It wore an echo that carried time like the condensed feelings of sadness that made the air crack.

“How many women have you kissed?”

Machie had asked and she had asked but they were just sounds to cover the amazement of their passion.

Outside there'd been thrushes singing themselves crazy.

“Let's find a less-musical bird,” Machie had joked, rolling out of bed, pulling on her jeans.

“Okay, let's.” But the neighborhood was transfixed.

“So how many women have you kissed?” insisted Machie in dazed sobriety.

Lying face up with her legs spread wide, bedding pushed down, Machie slept on.

Her head had slid to the far left edge.

Lips pursed, the usually broad mouth seemed almost to form a heart, puckered at the center and totally unlike her.

Her bones were resting. Even her teeth seemed to be resting.

from  
*Mary's Eyes*

i

cold and snow. the sound of snow falling. the young  
novice's eyes  
it's (the) forgiveness that she notices  
(an old noticing) she feels

thinks about Christ. will she marry him. she has already  
married him (she feels)  
asks if she is sure

[bells sound in the background]

figures appear. the clink of plates, spoons,  
hush of nuns eating  
the *rule* of the meal (omitting) the meal  
the weight of the prioress's eyes

readings turn to time (the word *Mary* repeated)  
verse empty of her suddenly

ii

a tall girl and her girl (their “astrology” of brotherhood)  
the eyes of one watching from a second-floor window  
what the watching girl is thinking versus the couple—  
walking, carrying books, talking  
loneliness and time. more loneliness and time

“crippled time” she muses opening the sash for a better  
view  
as if time and her ribs—as if time *stopped* her ribs  
“see” she presses placing a hand on one

INTERLUDE

alone in an open room  
water and wind (their) hardness in time  
wearing out time replaced she feels with time  
the freshness of wet blows around her lightly

[her sense of the sea (awareness) of time (her presence in  
the room) co-adjacent with time]

her dog too on the rug below  
one eye opening then closing (seemingly) content  
the sand covering its body and what the sand *says* about  
its life  
the dog's ear and what the dog is noticing (waiting) for  
something to end

sees the waves of the sea melt into sea  
its song vanishing to nothing  
the rhythm of the vanishing repetitive (prayerful)  
the earth (too) which the sea hears

listens to sea (the sound of the sea breathing) the  
implacability of *sea* time  
its power and its blueness circling her like a tiger  
the tiger's immaculate stealth

blue late-April sky, sound of waves lashing  
the girl's jaw remembering something ungraspable  
the sea itself ungraspable

thin (soft) time which she dreads  
the *coming* of harm, ripening and then, moonlit  
*coming* to know (*coming* being its own naked color)

“soon” she thinks but it's vague  
the upshot of vague like a portion of a color

notices sky, a shadow of a tree, the mind of the tree  
transferred to a form  
what the form may imply and whether or not she  
generalizes its significance  
*reads* the clothes for clues

sees Jesus in his robes rising a little (bowing) toward  
her (slightly)  
sees herself seeing the vivid reality of his form  
the body of Christ (touching) it with sight  
(its) aperture and tone with regard to so much happening

the event—Jesus rising—and then again rising—  
“toward her” *had been there* the first time (she is realizing)  
as if his life took place  
(in her mind a lion yawns)

[but it's clapping. someone is bowing to an act seemingly  
ended  
the impossibility of blue (since it stands for itself) ending]

authority of blue (standing for itself) attentive (to) what  
we *call* color  
which may have taken place previous to time or even  
in some other time  
“what is my color before there was color”  
ransacks blue as if it were light instead

## NEW POEMS

### *Introduction*

These poems are written as *tanka* (Japanese: “short song”). In terms of treatment of subject, *tanka* resemble the sonnet. Like a sonnet they employ a turn which marks the transition from the examination of an image to the examination of a personal response. Instead of a *haiku*-like flash of insight, *tanka* quietly recognize things as they are.

from

*City of Sleep*

It's quiet outside  
during the night it rained  
but it's quiet  
I'm alone  
no one knows my thoughts.

Black clouds through gray pre-dawn sky  
move forebodingly toward the hills  
sounds of night linger  
I want to stay awhile, listen  
what prevents me I wonder?

Old now, I live in the city:

A temple bell wakes me  
*it's not your bell—you don't have to move*  
I tell myself as I'm turning over  
it's dawn, the sky is pink  
thank God.

I hear you cough from the other room  
while you are having breakfast  
and I think how it could be that  
you are no longer in the other room—  
what will I listen to then?

*It will die soon anyway*  
I think, snapping it off  
before anyone sees—thus,  
because of my rashness . . .  
o the damage done by my rashness.

Inside me  
is a ghost of me  
I saw it yesterday—  
cold, unwell  
it had blue eyes.

You and I, sweet bird  
hang together in this spot  
you stare out  
I stare out  
please don't forget to return.

Responding to a *tanka* by Saigyō (1118-1190)

Ten Poems for the Lady-in-Waiting of the Second Rank

*Adding one more  
to the graves  
at the foot of Boat Hill,  
we make you  
“someone of the past”*

Your “someone of the past”  
speaks with such sorrow, Saigyō  
as for me it won’t be long . . . pray for me in  
my life to come!

## Chronologies

### *A Personal Chronology of External Life Circumstances*

1942: Born in St. Louis, Missouri's Jewish Hospital.

1947-53: Elementary school in University City, a suburb of St. Louis.

1954-57: Hanley Junior High School in University City.

1958-60: University City Senior High School (avid reader, diary writer and aspiring pianist studying with Harold Zabrach).

1960-61: University of Florida, Gainesville (study piano, music history, composition, theory).

1961-62: Hebrew University, Jerusalem (study Hebrew, Torah and piano at the Jerusalem Academy of Music).

1962-64: BA in English at Northwestern University. Receive Ford Foundation Fellowship to study linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin.

1964: Choose instead to study Middle English at the University of California, Berkeley; meet Arthur Weiner, fellow graduate student in English and reader for the poet Thom Gunn.

1965: Arthur and I marry.

1966: Receive a secondary teaching credential from U.C. Berkeley.

1966-68: Enjoy teaching high school English at Ygnacio Valley High and Pleasant Hill High; win "Teacher of the Year" Award from three education faculties (Stanford, Berkeley, San Francisco State). Have a harpsichord built and begin studying harpsichord with a very gifted teacher, Jean Nandi, a student of Gustav Leonhardt.

November 1968: Arthur and I separate; I begin sitting zazen at the Berkeley Zendo (part of the San Francisco Zen Center).

Summer 1969: Attend Summer Practice Period at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center with Suzuki-roshi.

Fall 1969: Move into the Berkeley Zendo; and, encouraged by Jean Nandi, begin a second BA, in music, at UC Berkeley.

1971: Move to San Francisco Zen Center and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in order to practice Zen full-time; ordained a lay disciple of Suzuki-roshi.

1980: Leave Zen Center after eleven years, realizing that my practice needs to be *writing*.<sup>1</sup> I had already abandoned the formal practice of music, consciously dedicating my musical ability to writing, selling my harpsichord and donating the proceeds to purchase a great temple bell, crafted in Japan, for Zen Center.

1980: I move to an apartment on Haight Street and begin writing daily, publishing poems in small literary journals. Become friends with Beau Beausoleil, Leslie Scalapino and Merry Benezra.

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<sup>1</sup>*Moon of the Swaying Buds* describes how I came to this decision. Through Zen I discover “Yes Practice”: only doing those things I can say Yes to with my whole body and mind. By then, however, “I am through with Zen Center. I need to define my own regime. Zen Center has had it with me anyway. I am told privately that unless my attitude changes, I will not be accepted for Fall Practice Period. Indeed, my attitude has changed but not in the direction that would pique my interest in Fall Practice Period” (*Moon of the Swaying Buds*, 2017, p.392).

1980: At my first poetry reading at Beau Beausoleil's San Francisco bookstore, Robert Duncan is in attendance and asks, "Would you read that again?" He encourages me to send what I had just read to a new poetry journal, *Credences*, published by the Poetry Collection at the University at Buffalo. My work appears in the inaugural issue along with poetry by Duncan himself.

1982-1986: Leslie Scalapino arranges for me to move into the apartment next to hers in Berkeley and we give joint poetry readings and visit other poets, including a memorable trip to Albuquerque in 1986 for a reading at the Living Batch Bookstore and to visit one of my favorite poets, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge. I work as a personal assistant for Billy and Alice Shapiro and begin publishing books of poetry with small, independent presses.

1982-1993: Yoga-based meditation practice with Self Realization Fellowship. I am attracted to this heart-based practice, which complements the mind-based Zen I knew; I especially appreciate that this community, founded by Paramahansa Yogananda in the 1920s, is led by women.

1985-1990 Complete MA in Clinical Psychology at John F. Kennedy University; meet Brendan Collins, former Benedictine monk, photographer, teacher and psychologist.

1990: Brendan and I marry; I begin private practice as psychotherapist; continue publishing with small presses.

1995: Meet Adzom Paylo Rinpoche, meditation master in the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, and begin a concentrated study of Tibetan Buddhism; complete the *Longchen Nyingthig Ngondro* under his direction and guidance. This form of Buddhism brings together the heart *and* mind practice I have long sought.

1997-continuing: After the closing of so many small independent presses, Brendan and I establish Night Crane Press; I continue writing early every morning, working as a psychotherapist, practicing Tibetan Buddhism, and enjoying living with Brendan.

*An Internal History of My Relationship with Language*

“The literary persona who enacts the poet’s struggle can be glimpsed, always, in one early work that Ted Hughes calls the ‘first,’ which contains, in a single image, ‘a package of precisely folded, multiple meanings.’ The origin of this image is a trauma, usually hidden from the writer’s consciousness, that partakes in a wholly personal way of some destructive aspect of cultural life.”<sup>1</sup>

The dates are vague. We live on an army base in North Carolina where my father, Charles Sher, is stationed.

While he is overseas, I live with my mother, her three volatile sisters, her absent father, nervous-breakdown-prone mother, and a slightly older, noisy and aggressive male cousin. In this household—I am two—I begin stuttering and am diagnosed with

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<sup>1</sup>Diane Middlebrook, *Her Husband: Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath—A Marriage* (New York: Penguin, 2003), p. 245.

a “nervous breakdown.” The symptoms—stuttering, hypervigilance and nonadaptability to change—are consistent with recent research on pre-school children in traumatic, disruptive, unpredictable environments.

I am removed to the apartment of my paternal grandmother who says to my mother, “You can live here but I’m not paying for her milk.”

With his impressive purple heart my war veteran father returns. “Honey, that’s your father.” “No it’s not. *This* is my father,” I say, pointing to his photograph. I believe I am four.

A primary memory is sitting on an outside step striving toward collecting all my words and feeling extremely frustrated that I do not know how to write.

My hysterical mother and war-traumatized father fight constantly (about money and sexual transgressions on both parts).

I act out in elementary school. Feel very very ugly. Take refuge in reading the interesting books provided by my mother.

I rock in bed, at my desk in school, in my rocking chair when I am reading.

Begin to adjust socially in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, become a cheerleader and am liked by boys, but I cannot think analytically and only do average in my classes, which feels not only humiliating but somehow wrong (incorrect).

In 10<sup>th</sup> grade an English teacher compliments what she calls a “parallel structure” that I use inadvertently. On the spot I decide to become a writer but am discouraged by my father who says, “Oh everyone wants to be *that*.”

Thinking and writing analytically continue to be problems all the way through graduate school, though at Northwestern I devised a way to pass written exams, receive my B.A. and a Ford Foundation Fellowship to study linguistics.

Meanwhile in high school, in an outside study, I test at the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile in math and language, and have been in a longitudinal study for gifted children ever since. (I am now 77.)

Oddly (to me) I feel I “belong” in the gifted group yet consistently my drifting mind and grades do not back that up.

Eventually I have the following thought: “I CAN’T see white like everyone else, but the black I see is not nothing. It is rich and full of music.” I begin to feature it in my stabs at writing (having still the sense that I do not know what I’m doing, but liking the result).

The thought that it is something is a turning point.

Based on recent research on the neurological effect of trauma, my frontal lobes probably were dysfunctional, but my implicit memories and awareness were not dysfunctional. Since this is all I have, I lavish my attention on THAT.

I discover that I am hyper-aware of aspects about language that most people ignore.

With years of disciplined Buddhist practice behind me, I force myself to write from the *right* side of my brain and discover a whole new relationship with words.

In retrospect I feel that were it not for the trauma—whose effect was at the forefront through my thirties, into my forties and to some extent is *still* present—I would not have seen, certainly not so clearly, the contents of the space brightened by a shut-down left frontal cortex.

I feel grateful for the passion that insisted on a way, and eventually found a way, and made it *my* WAY.

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<sup>1</sup> Contains the following out-of-print chapbooks written between  
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## Resources

The *Gail Sher Digital Collection* in the Poetry Collection of the University at Buffalo contains downloadable copies of almost all of Gail Sher's poetry books and journal appearances as well as audio and video recordings of interviews, readings, and discussions.

[digital.lib.buffalo.edu/collection/LIB-PC011/](http://digital.lib.buffalo.edu/collection/LIB-PC011/)

The *Gail Sher Collection* in the Poetry Collection of the University at Buffalo includes manuscripts, notebooks, correspondence, photographs, artwork, documentation of her published work, and many of the journals in which her poetry appeared.

[findingaids.lib.buffalo.edu/repositories/3/resources/572](http://findingaids.lib.buffalo.edu/repositories/3/resources/572)

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