

swim in dirty water

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winter

john balaban said on the radio he'd translated the vietnamese poet ho xuan huong of two hundred years ago, & with his friend ngo thanh han he'd gotten one thousand of her native words recorded into written form. but there are 23,000 more words that are only spoken by a surviving few elders and when we lose our language we lose our way of seeing and telling what we know.

in just one of her words there would be ten different meanings depending on inflecting sound, and the listener would understand. but without that particular music, the listener would never know, would never even hear what she'd meant to say.

the mouse that eats beetle's heads marks her territory with loud night calls just as coyotes do

I must get a new bird
and a new immortality box.
There is folly enough inside this one.

small ash piles spun into spider webs. bees have not yet flown off. unseasonal birds and water that's forever.

when the two men approach and stand next to you one asks what are you looking at. you're standing in the trees' mulchy cushion and there are the trunks of not very ancient years and light from millions of years making its way in through the starry leaves and to the still, spring-filled creekbed. no one object in the scene dominating as the main character. birds and crickets enter & exit in this plotless scene. i'm just looking you say.

whatever the mood sky is i haven't yet in this year reached the pitch of panic where my skin's too tight to bear, so maybe i'm a bit better with my weather.

Look to your heart
that flutters in and out like a moth.
God is not indifferent to your need.
You have a thousand prayers
but God has one.

rain falls like growling dogs, like an orchard of ripe apples

the sky is letting loose all the lives that were once other waters and clouds, past lives coming back to the river

and what life there is in just one quarter inch of rain becomes millions of gallons lives

the president would get angry and then not. the chief of staff said it was great the president could compartmentalize.

now here is the sea. just now grey sky on grey water, the leaning in of sky to touch sea.

don says at his last job in colorado it was snowing one day & he was straddling the cross beam, scraping ice from it, all the while reaching for planks a worker would hand up to him. and the owner drove up in his black cadillac & pressed a button to roll down his window & peered out, yelling, how's it going, you ok? and don, who, when working outdoors, couldn't be happier rain, snow, or sun, yells, it's going great!

secretary of state dean rusk was sure it was over during the cuban missile crisis and was surprised each morning: when he'd open his eyes, all was intact.

even soybeans aren't what they once were

foam in the eddies from the dumpings

last week in the heat at the gas pump two women & their jeep:
one says jees!
the other says cheese & rice!
then the first one says jesus christ! it's going to be a hundred
in the desert!

the sky lifts, makes room for a walk between the filled-in space of rain. the sky talks thunderously but holds back.

like other seasons, it is time again for the river to let loose her fullness, enfold boulder, lay down reed, remake her contours,
flush out caught toxins. the hills chant with their rare runoffs;
its high holy days, water pouring down old dry paths, narrow chutes, through brush turned to strong incense, secret oils offered in the dim light.

the big breath of storm opening the way to spring

a month's heat
and last week's fire

the sky tinted the room red, and i knew to close the windows, ash so heavy its fallout would stay long after the backcountry had burst open and blackened.

it was in my girl years that i'd learned this kind of sky: the flames had once pulled my troop into a circle waiting to hear from the firefighters how we'd escape, if we'd take our leaders' cars, or if helicopters would come in to take us out from the crimson hills.

and at my school, far out in backcountry, the very eastern edge of el cajon, the box, the edge where the chaparral hills began their steady climb to mountains, wildfire would come close and because

of the nuns' prayers, each time, those prayers carried on though barely breathable, would turn the wind, flames stopping at the fence; snake, rabbit, fox found drowned in mary's grotto pool and in the new swimming pool.

as a grown woman driving cross-country, west coast to east coast, pushing through the miles and not, this time, 1988, stopping except to sleep in my truck or motel; through state after state, what might have been clouds but were ash, yellowstone turning over its overgrown grass, the buffalo spirit taking shape in sky and our lungs.

What is immediately surprising about Ho Xuan Huong's writing is that she wrote at all--further, that she earned immediate and continuing acclaim. After all, she was a woman writing poetry in a male, Confucian tradition.

a vernal pool has water now. snags have collected in the narrow canyons. the whole bluff has changed direction, a further leaning toward the sea. pathways of run-off scuttle through brush, patterning rocks. patterning now new pine buds, now tight pine cones, the two replacing fallen broken open cones. white snow masses break through northern & eastern horizons. after all the fastness of stormy motions, here's a still-standing barren snag topped with a green hummingbird who does not hover but sits like a goddess, only turning its head rarely.

and I am huddled around
the fire of the alphabet, still

language continually opening new places in me

there were two blue jays today; moments of blue moving
after two dark grey days.

April in the country. My hands in the dark earth, or the body of a woman, or any ordinary, gorgeous sentence.

she's sitting in her car near the visitor center. it's very cold this morning. her friend arrives & says look what i brought you--it's a blue box & a pink pepto bismol bottle. she says it will warm up, they chat. she says ok c'mon let's go & they drive down the canyon which means they're going rock climbing.

the trail is dark with the saturation of the week's rain. in many of the puddles crissi has graffitied her name in the muddy bottom.
she's left a heart in one.

a bicyclist nearly runs into me--says because of the rain
she's lost. can i tell her where to go?
i ask where does she want to go?
she looks down at a puddle and is quiet
a long time then says, to the road.
i laugh, say, keep following this path.

i step into the river & water pours over my boots, but my feet stay dry--i get only a bit out, onto rocks, there's not enough close together to help me cross. i turn back.

go up the trail, descend down to the river, walk the thin trail.
come face to face with one of those elusive goldfinches--it stays, eyeing me then flits away.

oak carpet sumac branches to part
lichen covered boulders in river ferny moss and sprouts of dried-topped yucca stalks on the eastern slopes
the sun's into the canyons

a helicopter rushes in & out. already a fallen climber?

two bicyclists above me: i don't even have a cubicle. i get through saying i love you & hanging up & the guy next to me says oh smooch smooch; i love you, too.

here a coot floats slowly up & down the edge of river
diving & bobbing its head to the surface what is it eating?
reaching some wood in its pathway,
it does not swim around, risking the heavy current,
instead steps up & trips through the branch, settles
back into calmer water

river's less foamy today

seeker

the same girl is standing on the corner holding the sale sign. the company didn't know they sent an ugly message having her there in heavy rain on wednesday and then again on thursday. today in sunshine she has escaped, reading a used tolkien propped atop the sign board.

humpback whales migrating along Australia's east coast have abandoned their signature mating song and adopted a new tune from a small group of visiting Indian Ocean whales

Ephemeral, imperfect, stories without their old authority. "Notebooks" maybe rather than masterpieces.

tomorrow is the big rally to protest the inauguration of a court- elected president in what is known as a democratic country. as you go back and forth with laundry to the washer & from the dryer
you wonder at what point you would know it was time to leave.

if you had been male when the draft was on, when would you know, how could you make the leap through states, your favorite coastal stomping grounds of peaks and lakes that you might never see again?

if you had been a jew back then, how could you walk away
from your house at just the right beginning, with just enough belief that the gossip and grumbling was warning enough to warrant such extreme action, cut all ties and get the heck out?

everyone you know is worried, and you can't tell if it's the same
as before, when there were other presidents who long before their office had lost their compass for compassion.

will it make a difference to walk and shout and sing, to write the letters, to pray?

the tide rolls further into bleakness. where the trees once were are vast quiets. now you know the stillness isn't nature's; it's the death of birds and life; all the native spirits hanging heavily, lumped into the ruptured space.

A healing, a suturing, a reconciliation...everything having been broken, or taken away.

fannie lou hamer said the kids wanted to trick the town wise woman: they'd taken a bird, holding it concealed, they would ask the wise woman if the bird was dead or alive. if she said it was alive, they'd crush it to death then open their hands. if she said it was dead, they'd open their hands and let the bird go.

but when the time came, and they asked the wise woman the question, she said the future is in your hands.

the two boys, one on skateboard, one on scooter skate, with their protesting, marching dad who says this is about freedom of speech, this is about votes counting, this is about one who got the votes but didn't get to be president. and one boy says how much farther? when can we go home? how much longer?

some are on the stage putting down a name or a party, and some are praying to allah. a wwii vet stands behind the stage holding a sign: impeach the royalty.

the sky in fish scales, then collected lungs, then mass of dark turning cold, moving from the east & coloring in the gaps all the way west.

...not to be managed, threatened, directed, restrained, obliged, fearful, administered

ginsberg put on a tie

it's confusing, it puts my head into a whirlpool, that way called "being realistic"

besides in the room of myself, where's the place to be a poet.
is it, as it was in the past, the sunny southland?
is it a cabin in northern california?

And where have you gotten your
chronology from for your master
narratives? And what has it cost you?

Loving repeating is in a way earth feeling

"When my father died [in 1979] he took all the songs with him," Ray Patencio says. "You couldn't get anything out of him, he didn't want to talk about it." Several thousand years of tribal memory [of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians] was gone. "As a child I would go with my father and sit and listen to him sing," Patencio says, "But I didn't speak the language, so it meant nothing to me. I'd rather have been going to a movie or playing outside on the street with the other kids."

"They did what they felt was right," he says. "Why? Because there was no interest in the old ways? To protect the children? Because the old ways had no application in modern society? I don't know. If they put a stop to it, they had their reasons. They agreed that in order to go forward they wouldn't pass on the language."

Patencio's generation focused its energy on building a financially solvent, politically sovereign tribe against significant odds.

at the job fair the ucsd rep says i have to have clerical skills, that's what they need. the line grows behind me, and i'm asking her to look at my resume. she says it doesn't show that i can work in an office. the list i've seen of jobs on campus runs ten pages, and i know for sure from seeing it on the web a few days before that there was one job i could do--talking to hiv positives.

at another temp desk the two women reps say sure they can find me some work, lots of work, they say, come into our office, it will take a couple of hours.

at one temp agency i've applied to, i've already seen the required video about job safety. a woman trips on an untamed cord & another woman tenderly takes her by the elbow, then hand, helps her up. you get to see the faces of different diligent women at their screens--i look at the unruly angles of their wrists; men stir behemoth vats, feed unknowns into fanged machines, lift unlabeled boxes.

at yet another temp table when i say that i'm self-employed, the five women reps want to know what exactly i'm doing. i say probably too loudly that i teach women's writing classes & yoga & do massage. they all crane their heads closer toward me and smile and sigh and move their shoulders. one woman wants to know what clerical skills i have. i hand her my resume, say i haven't worked in an office except at home for my teaching & writing. yes, she says, but have you filed? have you used the phone and fax? yes, yes just at home. her voice keeps getting quieter, and she looks like she's trying to protect me from embarrassment, but i'm telling her the truth, i don't know those computer programs because i can't work long hours on a computer any more. and she says she'll talk to her supervisor, show her my resume, but they probably can't give me any work.

By this time Mary was completely committed to the idea that she was to write of the West. She meant to go back to the Middlewest sometime, but for the moment it had dropped behind her, a far horizon, and all her interior energies were bent on sorting her really voluminous notes about strange growths and unfamiliar creatures, flocks, herders, vaqueros, Henry Miller, pelicans dancing on Buena Vista, Indians, phylloxera, and a vast dim valley between great swinging ranges. Along with these things, there were collections of colloquial phrases, Spanish folklore, intensively pondered adjectives for the color and form of natural things, the exact word for a mule's cry--"maimed noises"--the difference between the sound of ripe figs dropping and the patter of olives shaken down by the wind; single lines of verse imprisoning these things, all the sort of thing that her mother, when she found it about the house, thrust into the waste-basket impatiently-- "Oh, Mary, if you would ever finish anything!" Well, Mary considered, Mr. Kipling must have spent a great deal of time over that sort of thing, but when she tried to discuss it with her young husband, he was equally polite and uninterested. "Why talk about it?" he said; "why not just enjoy it?" And if Mary so much as intimated the need of *somebody* who would talk--people interested in the same things that interested her, in the same way--her neighbors appeared miffed; as though they said, I suppose *we* aren't good enough for you.

hello again this is the 1st line of the rest of my life

the guitar player wanted to leave the cold grey of england & come to new york, land of chocolates and nylons

What would you buy?
I would buy all the time in
the world to write. I'd quit my job.
Because it takes all the time.

One wish:
 1) time to write.
 2) time to write.
And after that.
 time to write.

and sharman, my poet friend, was noble to offer to rewrite my identity, to make me into someone who could get a job i couldn't yet think of. but she forgets that today she will be fed on an iv all day; that she will be unable to think clearly afterwards; that her son will need to be taken care of and she doesn't know right now by whom; and on monday she will have a second eye operation. she is really superhuman, lifting car-like days off herself and her son.

And when one has discovered
and evolved a new form it is
not the form but the fact that
you are the form that is important.

it was a coldest-yet canyon
just before the storm would
drop rain
the birdsong entered me
each one
a separate shape
and the rocks along the trail
were like hardwood, not softwood,
in clear waterways
some red and orange, some coated
with a gloss of yellow

"I can't think of it as a loss," Mildred Browne says of all that has been irretrievably forgotten. "Because we're not those Indians in a glass case." The tribe is moving on. She tells a story of going up into the mountains to gather acorns in a traditional manner. "It was hard work, I tell you. I had those acorns drying on a blanket by the pool and I knew I was supposed to grind them up and I kept looking and looking at those acorns. In the end, I just thought, 'I've got so many other things I want to do besides grinding acorns!'"

chain dragging from end of tow
 truck, sparking the street,
 one band of a rainbow
 the big storm clouds
 like a romanticist's
 golds and pinks and
 heavy black

two different women in line turn & say to me they're back to see *chocolat* a second time & the music's so good you can't find it in stores

when times are hard carole maso writes
 one sentence
 when they were very very hard
 she worked as an office clerk
 dragging underwater depressed
 she hadn't yet written
 didn't know her words wouldn't come
 through until she left the office for good
 (yet she said she was a writer)

rats dream about chocolate pellets; an ancient dinosaur skeleton has strange teeth & it's named after musician mark knopfler; men's testosterone stays pumped up for hours after watching a sports game; players murder or batter and get slapped with small fines and insignificant sentences, & keep on playing--this was the news

time to turn it off

ho hum. where's the good news & the women?

in the movie she gets to stay in town & make her magical chocolat

the pot of lentils has burned as i sit here writing & reading. baudelaire is not happy, writes with indulgence, and can't swerve off his track. alice walker is remembering her husband & their home in jackson.

i had to go back to mississippi's jackson a week after i'd been in a minor accident. i pulled up to a small brick police building; it was so old i was walking back in time. they told me i could not drive in this state again; i was not welcome.

the woman who had run into me with her truck had jumped out screaming

this was a different world

i had just crossed the line

i had just crossed the line between louisiana and mississippi in order to get my body into the warm waters of the gulf. i asked a young man on the beach to watch my pack. when i came out of the water, green slime ran in lines down my arms. he told me, no one swims in the water; this is where the mississippi ends, drains all it's picked up into the sea; it's pretty much a dead zone.

it's cold, cold
 energy's more costly than it's ever been
 consumers are to blame
 they say
 not corporations
 we'd just as soon be warm
 than pay and pay
 but these times aren't about
 generosity and truth
 who's freezing & falling on their backs
 isn't there in the telling
 and retelling of the facts

“Our ears pick *fin*, ‘the end,’ out of the word
faim, ‘hunger.’ The end is famished,” she said.

“...ecrit, recit, *the ‘written’ and the ‘tale’*: one and the same word with its letters scrambled in a
 most natural way.

“All writing offers its share of the telling,” she said.

last night at the catering job we were in the rotunda area of the aerospace museum; it could have
 just as well been a nylon tent perched atop mt. everest in a mercilessly biting blizzard. the
 kitchen set up outside in the back was caught in passing rainfalls. the main course: a light
 arrangement of one slice each of potato, eggplant, and zucchini; one slice of chicken and three
 thin flakes of beef; a scoop of chutney; a swirl of balsamic sauce; a sprinkle of parsley.

the guests had already gobbled appetizers

it was the dessert that seemed most hefty: a small mound of bread pudding sitting in raspberry
 sauce, custard sauce, and chocolate sauce; garnished with mint & powdered sugar, a chocolate
 truffle
 on the side.

would anyone sleep that night?

the assistant chef with strong new york accent making big arm sweeps, take these boxes, put
 more water in the steam box, where's the powdered sugar, laughing, cutting her eyes over to the
 everywhere-at-once serious head chef, anxious, wanting it just so.

the crew plodding along, trading their chinese and mexican back & forth, & using english as the
 common medium.

my whole body shaking to its core, a desert sparrow about to go stiff; had to get home & get into
 the tub.

It was on one of these solitary rides [into the Sierras] that I reached the conclusion that if I stuck with poetry I would have to reach for the largest work possible. In the face of this landscape it seemed petty to do anything else. I realized even then that if my energy & talents were not up to it the decision was a foolish one, but I took comfort in Blake's proverb: "If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise."

there's a billboard that says escape

the wise woman says
 all meditation is
 is repeating your mantra
 & remembering yourself
 to be aware of your self
 the subtle levels are affected
 and even if your thoughts
 keep going, you're meditating

Perceive the ether. It is always still, always serene, enveloping the entire universe.

For wasn't she always snooping about the family's business & turning things about in her writing in ways that made the family shudder? There was no talking to her as you talked to regular people. The minute you opened your mouth a meter went on. Rosa could read all this on her sister's face. She didn't need to speak. And it was a lonely feeling that she had. For Barbara was right. Aunt Lily too. And she could no more stop the meter running than she could stop her breath. An odd look across the room fifteen years ago still held the power to make her wonder about it, try to "decipher" or at least understand it. This was her curse: never to be able to forget, truly, but only to appear to forget. And then to record what she could not forget.

small birds in a bunch pecking the sand
 for minuscule meals when one runs all
 the others follow

more kinds of birds here than
 in any other county in the u.s.

suzanne was sprinkled with bits
 of grass & saying she's aquarius
 looking to futures
 and back then she got disappointed
 150 grey days and an exploded
 ship's black cloud

Now it rose up--the life she could have lived (*par les soir bleus d'ete*)

is feu loss or fire?
and what is leaf--feuille?

rainfall made huge green weeds
but soft ground to ease them out

the woman speaking of her
rape in the chilean prison
and about all the
other women her friends
and strangers
a flat-out account without crying
not a story chiseled on
a therapist's couch
but worked out in places like this
talking to get women going

falling back into the arms
of she who can not be imagined
she herself young enough
to not understand
why it is there's a distance
in her but knowing
too much historical crises
in her town and country

one woman of privilege listens
kisses well and
floating on that wave
for what it's worth
more than the past's atlantic
& berlin wall between them
she's the kind to go on--
still, she's keeping clear
of incessantly persistent barking dogs

women don't stand on corners
with cardboard will work
for food signs

tonight eminem will sing on the
grammies the company spent
millions to get him the limelight
says the former act-up spokesperson

when the poet writes & it gets out
it can mean trouble--
one way or another

*

Russia's great poets were all about 35 years old.
Scraggly trees wandered by the canal in dim sun.

*

the summer of 1954 they
died they were beaten they tried
to talk & work black & white to get to vote
mississippi was hot

*

tijuana's growing and there's
no more water or power
there's work, sure, but shack living

*

it's ok character is appearing in
song it's just that most listeners
are used to taking it at face
value the i is the singer
or close enough

grass-slivered sized caterpillars creep
wherever you walk

lorna says judy garland didn't open her refrigerator door
& sing into the light

There was a small compody up George's Creek, brown wickiups in the chaparral like wasps' nests. Mary would see the women moving across the mesa on pleasant days, digging wild hyacinth roots, seed-gathering, and, as her strength permitted, would often join them, absorbing women's lore, plants good to be eaten or for medicine, learning to make snares of long, strong

hair for the quail, how with one hand to flip trout, heavy with spawn, out from under the soddy banks of summer runnels, how and when to gather willows and cedar roots for basket-making. It was in this fashion that she began to learn that to get at the meaning of work you must make all its motions, both of body and mind.

in 1916 lara ingalls wilder
was saying it was pretty recent
that she wasn't hauling water
back & forth

if you have the technology
for instant heat will you
use it or go without?

your first answer please without
analysis of factors
some kind of line was made
but as a class of people
females can't live up to it

substitute xx for female
or xxx for a kiss

who would that be
filling me up

i speak i see
i have no rival

we are laughing that the rain has graced
 our forty days
 the days are the rain's not ours

what was once smell sight
 and all the rest
 like glasses of wine

o love like love i didn't know
 i knew

nada rupini
 o sound without sound

out of the old wanting
 & guarding & spending &
 the lostness of broke/
 brokenness

but money, *and* money is an exchange
 of energy my friend says

but i'm wondering what kind of energy?

this is more than a breakdown
 now, this wide eyed state
 has been going on my whole life

i gave a half hour interview massage at a hotel

before & after he talked hours, availability, willingness to work two places

i'd just touched his naked body, i told my friend
 and he had no comment no response

i had to ask him
 did you like the massage

he said he'd be training me next week with facials, and parenthetically inserted, it was excellent,
 as he ushered me out the door

she said she got the picture &
 she didn't like it, couldn't do it

i have no idea how to make
 more money
 because so much in this
 culture occupies falseness

occupation: untruth

*

That I had to conduct all my research in Oregon had been part of the stress. How I long to escape everything, have enough money, come to this room and write, really write. Go where I need to go when I need to. Time to walk to those blocks to see for myself.

*

All these ruins necessary for the reign of the spirit

*

you were always knowing
 you were supposed to
 you wanted to
 be writing

any desert having no spareness
 vital and great

The breakdown was supposed to have been caused by overwork. There was that item, of course; the curriculum was crowded, the drive cruel and incessant. What did [it] for Mary, however, wasn't the amount of work expected of her, the hours and the mark set, but the unremitting fixation of attention on objective detail, not of true learning, but of pedagogical method...At the normal school she was simply redriven over the curricula of public school grades with immense and boring particularity; spelling, punctuation, phonetics, arithmetical devices; history reduced to a precise allocation of names and places, middle initials of unimportant generals, dates of undecisive battles; reading reduced to the rendering of the content of literature in the most explicit rather than the most expressive verbal terms. Along this trail you were nagged and lashed with the utmost efficiency of regimentation, and the least allowance made for individual variation. After five months, combined with cold weather and the stuffy diet of a period in which green vegetables were unattainable at any price, and bad colds not admitted to the category of excuses, Mary was sent home in a condition which old Dr. Hankins looked grave over, and suspected that it might have something to do with the natural incapacity of the female mind for intellectual achievement.

...Having done little else but go to school since her sixth year, Mary knew that small graduated doses of instruction were an irritation and a hindrance to her. She learned best by subjects, by units of knowledge which had a kind of wholeness in themselves, taking by instinct the center of the field and working out to fringes overlapping the next subject and the next...in the winter of 1885-86 public education was established on the inch-by-inch method, and it was at

what was done at the normal school, no matter how impatiently, that minds like Mary's
champed upon the bit.

she had a spot on her lungs
in x rays
she went back today to be told
what it is--
the doctor said, looking at the
1st chart, it could be lung cancer
but she's not a likely case--
& then he flipped to the next page--
oh, it's nothing

According to [Dr. Drew] Pinsky, those who binge on alcohol or drugs "tend to have more
psychiatric pathology" than more continuous drinkers. Experts agree that [Herbalife's founder]
Hughes, with his genetics, early substance abuse, and a pathology of unresolved childhood issues
and repressed feelings, fits the profile. "He resorts to alcohol as a way to numb his feelings,"
theorizes Haraszti. "He finds that to be effective and he is not motivated to change."

For Herbalife, so dependent on Hughes' cultlike appeal, public disclosure of his problem
could have been a bombshell, equivalent almost to the scandals involving televangelists Jimmy
Swaggart and Jim Bakker. "I would have thought it would have a profound effect on the
business because the distributors so admired him," suggests [former employee Perry] Turner.

I wish (*she whispered*) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why I am I, why I can
cry, I wish I wish I knew, I wish oh how I wish I knew. Once I am in I will never be through the
woods are there and I am here and am I here or am I there, oh where oh where is here oh where
oh where is there and animals wild animals are everywhere.

When a frail farmer named Tefvik Esenic died in rural Turkey in 1992, it was also the death of
the Ubykh language. He was its last speaker, and with him was buried the voice of all those who
spoke it before him. So too, when Roscinda Nolasquez died in Pala, in San Diego County, in
1987, the Cupeno language she spoke also ceased to exist. When Red Thundercloud died in
1996 in South Carolina, so died Catawba Sioux. And when, on the Isle of Man in 1974, Ned
Madrell was buried, so too was the language of Manx, one that when Madrell was born
accommodated almost 12,000 fluent speakers.

"Languages die like rivers," Carl Sandburg observed.

and here it would seem from some change she knew but couldn't name where it began she was
no longer the name or names she once claimed; and indeed, for the time being she could be
either for all she cared; she knew the perils of being; she could be indulgent, decadent; she could

be all kindness and peace; she knew, she'd felt the pinpricks of each in the other. there was drunkenness in identifications. the solace of oblivion had never been hers. "she was the wave pulled by both moon & shore."

she who kisses the x

she becoming tracked by sun
weathered by illusion's suffering

Just as an artist has at first a hazy idea of the picture [s]he has to produce but later a clearer image begins to emerge in [her] mind's eye, so at the Sadashiva stage the Universe is just a hazy idea, but at the Ishvara stage it becomes clearer. The experience of Ishvara is "This I am."

when she reached that deep canyon, which on hot days of southern california had shades of hawaii and new mexico cut in, she settled herself under her favorite oak tree and knew she could never utter words again; if a bird did not descend with the power of prophesy; if no poet or perfect love passed by asking time or direction, she might remain the rest of her years in contented peace.

because, what, then,
is really going on now?

in the peace cafe it is 6 am,
in the sunshine cafe

to be. on the radio:

another race massacre--this one
in sierra leone,

who is going in, not said

Neil Bush, the president's son, and his
band of outlaws. The Silverado Savings
and Loan Association. Hi-ho Silver.

cit, she who is intelligence
 there must be awareness
 there must be will or desire
 only then does action follow

we as a people not really sure
 what we want

pleasure-seekers & unhappy

make a wish & blow out the candles

march marching in on wind

at the club, 80's music, no one
 to get close to

Let us stay a moment
 before we go

it's still the ones coming home
 at four and five o'clock pm who have
 the storyline here

one half of a past's ticket still in hand

one part moving quickly on the current
 of the rain swelled river

and now a guy's gone in & shot
 his anger into the high school
 named after an indian chief
 santana

bang bang
 you're faceless

silence chaud et fauve, qui s'impose
 a ce mutisme mutile

warm & musky silence imposing
 itself on the mutilated muteness

she who has radiant teeth
 which resemble the buds
 of pure knowledge

her teeth, like birds,
 have 2 births
 (1st egg
 2nd, when the egg hatches, as the real bird)

baby teeth fall away

when 2 leaves open up as one,
 sound and meaning unfold
 into the undivided, are one

In infancy, two teeth appear at first. In time, one gets two rows of sixteen teeth each. Sixteen syllables of sound and meaning are likened to two rows of teeth with sixteen in each row. Just as the sixteen syllabled mantra illumines the heart of the worshipper, the gleam of Devi's teeth as she displays Her charming smile dispels all darkness from the heart and makes it blissful.

all this sitting in peace
 and you're still crying
 feeling who's lost

wherever deer can get to
 & mountain lion sure
 to pass both getting tagged
 so humans can understand who
 is enough for whom

no two to couple
 lips unlipsticked
 kissed spaced
 out return
 roam in place of
 mountains
 there above lone pine

About half the population of Lone Pine were true "Mexicans"; not early Californians (Spanish), but descendants from one of the refugee groups of the last disturbance before Porfirio Diaz, still so immensely patriotic that they always made more of the Sixteenth of September than the Fourth of July. They had settled in Inyo about the time of Cerro Gordo. There was the remnant of gentility among them--manners, old silver, and drawn work. I do not know from what States

they hailed, but they seemed to be largely akin, and the Indian blood most noticeable among them was Yaqui. Juan Ruiz, who was runner for several mines, used to make a twenty-to thirty-mile run with a package of mail and medicine and such-like on his head, in about the same time as a good horseman, and for half the money. It was not good form at Lone Pine to make social equals of the Spanish-speaking families, except, perhaps, one or two, like the Relles Carascos; but Mary collected folklore, Spanish idioms, and cooking recipes among them with great gusto. What goes by the name of Spanish cooking in most parts of the United States is a bastard relation devoid of art. Only among the old families of New Mexico is the fine discrimination of chile mixtures to be found, especially the chile morenos. There are no such tamales and enchilladas made anywhere now north of the border as were taught to Mary by the Senora Josefa Maria de la Luz Ortiz y Romero. There is the savor in them of the hours of happy concentration that goes to the making of them, which is one of the ways in which the linkage of cookery and culture is proved. Food in which there is no flavoring of brooding attention has no value but as an antidote to hunger. Sometimes still, when the flow of words with meaning is stopped at its source, and the typewriter, as Dona Josefa would say of her metate "does not wish to work today," Mary will go shopping along the side streets and placitas of Santa Fe, and come home with just the right kind of pounded corn meal, with a fine fat pollo or two, with red beans and chiles, colorado (only we say colora'o), with a pile of clean white corn husks, with garlic, sesame seed, chocolate, olives, and goat's-milk cheese. Upon these she will brood awhile, and fix and prefer, and afterward work circumspectly for a day and a half before asking anybody in to share the result. After which the typewriter is never so willing. These are the accustomed motions of the self in creation, the better now and then for ancestral exercise.

she could hear
 quiet then inserting the story
 the way it should go
 to root out the false parts
 or the energy to give
 a hand squeeze

to be known beyond your room
 given flight to write in another
 place's room
 grants and prizes
 selecting you out
 of your inside dreams

(grateful acknowledgement to
 so and so, and so and so,
 to the arts council, to
 the x foundation, and
 xx foundation, and to
 the x arts center)

in winters there are frequent planes
locals stay put
not having left you, oh southland
of tourist illusion, have i let memory
of heat enclose these three
months of rain?

in sleep or half sleep i'm singing
i hear my throat is open & clear
& there are other voices
there's the kind of harmonizing i love

did i do the right thing?
i ran i should have stayed
i heard the gun
i heard the heavy fall
right behind me
my ears were there but
i was already gone
running

(santana high school girl)

how can I talk to myself without
immediately turning myself into another?

in my dream the same cooks
were at the restaurant
i could waitress there again

i could do a thousand jobs
i've done before

they say detach--it doesn't matter what you do

imagine thanksgiving
all that food
it's not like you were in
any of the wars
all the others you know
who were in it

who picks at the fruit
who chooses dark meat

dialogue now
and remember the mind
makes up that it's more than
one voice

trenches of the same thoughts
feelings burrowing into the body

they say meditate
in order to be absorbed

static of drain
 full gray
 & more budding rain

no hogging's ok, still
 earth's gurgling up what's taken in

how soon sun
 quiets chain
 linked storms

it's harsh to jack
 up utility the roof's paper

one two three
 skate the poets' lines
 this peppered-rain day

the south african frog mate
 is missing
 she's jumped aquarium-ship

my friend's upturned her office
 but found no frog

i wear a visitor's badge
 the design center is all offices
 it really is the kind of place
 foretold a hundred years ago:
 on the basement floor
 is the office of culture
 the coordinator's
 job's been eliminated
 no one knows why
 the assistant's in a rush

lobby stairs lead up
 to a no-walled cafe
 the eel has eaten every
 fish in the tank &
 no longer rises vertically
 gasping in hunger beneath
 a rock

We talk across a wound whose
origin we still don't know

do you massage noses, the five-year-old asks

she who is slender waisted
tanu madhya
she has such a slight middle
the present
this now hardly even exists

what do you declare?

pen & paper what's left of the wilds
meditation
friends & mamma

crickets appealing to one another
for matchings
all night long

in film frames writers
have a life
even if smoking & drinking too much

slipping away from one's own dharma
will not bring prosperity; it causes
loss of shanti/peace

a mirror can reflect with a bend
in itself, itself
but will not recognize itself

burned out stars of ten thousand
years ago
a light you look at now

a bird must fly with poise
can not look side to side
to clean under its feathers

guhyarupini she who has a
secret form

Jewish, the question which does not stop questioning itself
in the reply it calls forth.

He said, whenever you ask yourself a question you are in a way Jewish because the Jews
have already, and more than once, asked the same question.

the storm in the bucket

whatever your job is for the time being

out on the salty desert lake
all the birds noisy and bobbing

soon to be

knowing where to go next

a bird knows its place now

step on a thorn & be happy
it saves you from the ditch
where your leg would have broken

The Indians had names for every little spot. Many names I have forgotten, but each name meant something about that place. Otay means a kind of weed that grows there, that is, a lot of that weed grows in that place. Jamacha is the name of a wild gourd and lots of them grow in that place. Jamul was named for a kind of weed that grows there. the Ja part of the name means that it grows where there is lots of water. Point Loma was called mat kunyi--black earth--because that is how it looks from the distance.

We used to hunt for fish, shellfish, and other stuff in the ocean and along the edge of the ocean around Ocean Beach. There are so many houses here now I can't find my way any more. Everything looks so bad now; the hills are cut up even.

colors form unlike the city
the skinks of red and orange
cross the road

two squirrels tangle as i screech
wheels before them

you must show up for yourself

[of the Yamana of Argentina:]
 Among their variations of the verb
 “to bite” was a word that meant
 “to come surprisingly on a hard substance
 when eating something soft
 e.g. a pearl in a mussel.”

whatever’s bugging you isn’t worth it

your tears when you pray
 are lights for deva

a devotee’s tears are the light of
 the world. the candle melts to brighten
 the light.

“grief is an expression of gratitude”

when we pray with open hearts,
 the effects of all evil spells vanish
 you need not fear
 any more about such things
 of course there are some
 bad times in one’s life;
 that is not from any
 evil spells cast by anybody
 do not be misled by these

a sound upcreek could be someone
 but it’s not, it’s probably a frog in the grass

It had never been any part of my intention to write short stories. If you have access to the popular examples of them in the early nineties, you will not need to be told how little appeal the sentimental personalities of that form would have had for a mind always reaching wider and more deeply into the movement of American society. But the Kipling tales, with their slightly mocking detachment, their air of completely disengaging the author from any responsibility for the moral implications of the scene and the people of whom he wrote, had at least pointed the way for a use of the sort of material of which I found myself possessed. There was then--there still is I suspect--deeply rooted in the American consciousness a disposition to take offense at what is strange, because being strange it implies a criticism of the familiar of which we lack any criterion of authenticity other than that it is ours. Mr. Kipling had, happily, made his tales so completely strange and far away that comparison failed, and one could, as my husband had said, “just enjoy them.”

I do not know how much of this I was conscious of at the time. There was that stream of knowingness which ever since adolescence I had felt going on in me, supplying deficiencies, affording criterions of judgement, creating certainties for which no warrant was to be found in my ordinary performance, setting up in me the conviction, which as experience I have named I-

Mary, that all I know has always been known by me and used as known. At any rate, it was as I-Mary walking a log over the creek, that Mary-by-herself couldn't have managed, that I wrote two slender little sketches, one of which is so completely lost that I recall only that it was about the death of a Mexican lad in Tejon Canyon, and another about what happened to a Chinese truck gardener, which I have included in the *One Smoke Stories* with few alterations, to show that at any rate from the beginning Mary had a true instinct for her own best way.

“God,” he wrote, “will never know who He is, being so deeply Himself in the incommensurable absence of Self.”

The book leafs through us

there was never a monastery
a convent a sanctuary
it was all made up by your mind

the wise woman wanted to know if
people were still in the ashram.
they were.
she was for a moment lost
to the world

despair breaks open possibility,
as, in a desert, a stream appears
around the curved canyon wall,
sand not yet swallowing it whole

why light is best bright when working
has to do with two/both
parents asleep/depressed/
tranquilized and you house-
bound no you weren't a boy
that's why you must stay in
and on Saturdays your father
could groggily move to the tv
for twilight zone

gaining ground on how to proceed

blitheringly passionate

marine-layered moody

yoga has tendrils in you

up through the weeds calling the hotline
for the voice of reason
she keeps putting you on hold
everyone's calling cause it's sunday
she wants you to call back

circling the notices for work

who you could make yourself be

change your attitude the guru says

just before the hot bath another client calls & cancels

last year's dissolved & this one's
already becoming salty

it's not the point there is none
when there's meaning to be found
it's random in the randomness

just like that blue brodiaea growing
at the bottom of the canyon &
the little orange tree blooming despite
already summer-like hard ground

the usual things said from the hotliner
sounds like you're at an age where you're
concerned with now but also
with what's to come a retirement
are you looking at other jobs ways
to live are you in a group could
you get a counselor

so you feel like you're air there
& crying stupidly because you're
not getting across this depth

they want to give you simple answers
show you how
it's not so bad

& not to be dramatic
but you've been trying to show them
pictures of vipers
on the ready
you've been on the watch
all this time
you want to know
can you rest

and write a poem

they say oh i used to think
it was best to stay out
of the system
but now i don't, there's something
to be said for it, for
joining it

they're all bitten up

It is the
place where you can learn that everything has a skeleton, a
structure
of bones that is more important than the flesh, so
changeable, which covers them.

tapa tryagni santapta samahhadna candrika
she who is the moonlight that
gives joy to those burned
by the triple fire of misery

look through the lens & what
do you see?
snap shot or not there's
the surface of the world

glossed wants and faded wants

when she was not sitting she was
standing this is the picture

and pen not in hand the poem
poured she was standing
and chopping zucchini

where is the piece
it is here

you have big sighs
she says it is a question
i am not happy with me
it is typical to place a book
next to bed gravity

you mean to say it and it is
a wonder that there is an
answer

silence is global

you will not in particular
attempt to cut breath you
will not in particular attempt
to cut breath

why is no one yet the attraction

you heard singing

the engleman oaks

speaking what d. called your
discolored english

one kiwi, peeled one pear, peeled, cored
peppermint coriander tea

rendez-vous at the dredging

is that k. in the ticket line?

mexican beans in the side cafe

the familiar pose of sleep

stein was able to claim: I am not pleased and certainly I am not more pleased. I am so repressed
and I can state it. I can say. It was bitter.

talk of an apology to the chinese,
and then the waiting

while we worried about another
cold war the outcome
of waiting

dreams without quality
a tongue ready but no one
for sure kissing

weeds & rain, full fridge &
bank writing

uninterrupted rain months
later the much favored
big cold clouds

no one leading the way

maso stein woolf doubiago notley

you were with them in
need of conversation in need

coming close to one your
eventual consummation

this is for her because i have
yet to reach her

don't go yet

do you remember
the deeper green of
the canyon here? purple yerba
santa, yellow deerweed--
lupine, locoweed?

enough to eat

already hot & yellowing grasses

oh, the writing still here

We are living in a system in which human worth is determined by money, material wealth, color of skin, religion and other capricious factors that do not tell the true value of a soul. This is an insane system.

a book is a suicide postponed

the wise woman says let go of “mine”/mind
 the sparrow holding the fish
 in its mouth & the crows
 chasing it
 let the fish go

and she adds--
 be fish
 because fish know how
 to swim even in dirty water

i begin by cracking the
 hardened shells around my heart
 tap & crack & slip on out

So much I want to drift, into story land,
 take life a little easier

clouds come together
 into ice floes
 eagle lands empty bellied
 of snake and berry,
 swivels head over
 taken land of
 rich scrub--blair valley--

eagle stays above on
 old boulder

*

off in the distance, east
 of the one-footed mesas
 the wind-stirred smell of sage
 rises like priests' incense
 over sand-blasted smoothed granite boulders
 in sanctuaried unpatented hills

there's where we skip the gold
 sieve our souls

*

a quarter inch of rain here
amounts to millions
of gallons of water?

*

this earth
provides for its family
doesn't waste the light

“i wasn't trying to be a hero,
i just didn't see the other way”

she was stepping as if she were
hopping but slower (because
of fasting on water and living
on her body's reserves) & talking topic to
topic and because we're poets
i didn't think anything of it
going into the stream
easily and it wasn't til
i got home & some words played back
the picture came to me--yikes!
she's going down
that long thread of clarity
the lucid stones of her
going without
somewhere now washing out

. . . the conscious self, which is the uppermost, and has the power to desire, wishes to be nothing but one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain Self, the Key Self, which amalgamates and controls them all.

If ever I flee to wilderness to die,
it will be to snow. Thus this snow
at bed time comforts me.

on the trail i thought of
 the woman who'd been praying &
 at last god appears &
 tells her she can have whatever
 she wants, just ask
 so she says let me think
 about it
 she goes & asks her friends
 & they all have suggestions
 but after a month & still
 no clarity she prays
 & asks god what
 s/he suggests
 & god says i thought
 you'd never ask

s/he says--
 ask to be happy
 no matter what you get

one thousand steelhead trout
 left in california
 a few making
 their way in at the creek
 above the san onofre nuclear power plants

Isn't all writing nature writing?

the buddha-like dog rolling in dry
 dirt, reveling with a smile in
 all the wind, resting in midday
 underneath the worndown
 white truck

sage burning in early mornings, beeswax candles

no season the best
 i've had bad weather feelings

blows in any time, any year

in her own time, her own good time,
she comes to me
like my whole being's in the kiss

and i haven't kissed in six years

you pick an odd time to feel
like a tree

pine or sage
all the incense you'd ever need

all the questions sieved

in the creek

after the black sand beach, the
watchtower peak, after not knowing
what she meant, moussaka and peaches,
and the stretch of silence
spread far out past anticipation

alone
deepening, enchanting night

now the canyon releases its sun soaked resinous scents

to be born as a human maybe 50,000 lifetimes, that's all, to snap the moment in two well then
wanting & wanting to write, writing into the shimmering blank space, blank and vibrating,
gertrude's getting into the car & alice has the picnic basket, my friend doesn't remember how
much or how little to eat of the hot oatmeal, women here don't know how to eat, all kinds of
dreams of food

how local indians have come to advertising “700 yards of nature” & their billboard shows a golf course

here comes the sun into my shade

The truth's in you, there isn't very much to it
There's nothing to it--

diatribes coming out of boxes

the guru tells stories of the
teachers who have so much to say
and the ordinary worker who comes
along who may have only
one word to say as their prayer

someone's picking up a gun to take on
their walk

you're sitting down in tree's shade

there's pleasure & then there's pleasure

World is divine. Human divine. I
now define human as divine...
Wickedness is a vacancy. Behind it,
I propose, humans. But also each
species. And plant, rock, water. Divine.

there was a mean cobra--it was boldly killing a lot of villagers. the wise woman came & gave it a blessing so it would be gentle. soon after some boys came along & ruthlessly beat the familiar snake. years passed and the wise woman returned one day & found the snake weak & hiding under a rock. the wise woman said it's true i told you to be gentle, but i didn't say you couldn't hiss.

very young girls
in south africa
raped by those with hiv

it is believed
any illness
can be removed
by intercourse
with a young virgin

the government refuses
free anti-viral medicine
the parliament
is growing thin
and death is from
unknown causes

in south africa
while the sun was eclipsed
birds flew toward their night homes
lions yawned
just as they do in their midday naps

what they chant as the russian newlyweds
kiss is "bitter bitter bitter"--
have the bitterness now so that
it will all grow sweeter
& what they say, too, is
may you have many children
though no one believes it--
where would they live?
how *could* they live--
deaths have piled up
their whole war wracked history

it's closer than close
when we're friends, talking

grapes climbing up the stakes
we had our hands in the middle
of winter cutting the vine suckers
frightening mice nests

i miss some things, everything

over a camp site table, two forks
dipping into one pot

the distances

cool coastline forest each summer
cloud shadowed winter desert

looking out for the place marks
where natives tended native plants

the mark of irrigation stones
placed in hillsides
to draw the water down

quiet typology in the topography

bioengineeringbiodiversityconference here

torn at the sleeves of words

someone in disbelief
saying you you you

the latest is studs & tattoos
as always getting
naked
is hip

figures like angels coming in
wearing bright purple, yellow,
pink shoes (no glitter)

who says mine has a lot already

some girl, the one i once was, with a shocking pink purse
could read big books had a big vocabulary

whatever i say i mean
i probably mean i do my
utmost best to mean

i came close & closer and then
our words got out of hand

and anyone is different and so
who is to say why what they say
is not what they mean to say
in all innocence

she's putting her hands together

whatever you say

one big heart

under this earth some dissolved
clay pots, some bits of bone

twilight says he can not forever dwell in who he is

she says
we'll either be drawn
closer to the sun until we
burn up totally and fall
out as ash
or
we'll get pulled to another sun's
galaxy

or
just fall apart

*

george mcgovern regretted
dropping a bomb on an austrian farm
during world war II--it had
to be released, it was stuck,
otherwise they'd all die in the plane.
he saw that it was noon &
knew, having grown up on a farm,
the family would be
eating their midday meal

he lived with that guilt

but years later the farmer
called into a radio show--
said his family wasn't home--
they'd gotten into the shelter--
& they didn't regret losing the
farm cause it was helping
to rid the world of hitler

*

choices choose me

I must have been between five and six when this experience happened to me. It was a summer morning, and the child I was had walked down through the orchard alone and come out on the brow of a sloping hill where there were grass and a wind blowing and one tall tree reaching into infinite immensities of blueness. Quite suddenly, after a moment of quietness there, earth and sky and tree and wind-blown grass and the child in the midst of them came alive together with a pulsing light of consciousness. There was a wild foxglove at the child's feet and a bee dozing about it, and to this day I can recall the swift inclusive awareness of each for the whole--I in them and they in me and all of us enclosed in a warm lucent bubble of livingness. I remember the child looking everywhere for the source of this happy wonder, and at last she questioned--"God?"--because it was the only awesome word she knew. Deep inside, like the murmurous swinging of a bell, she heard the answer, "God, God..."

How long this ineffable moment lasted I never knew. It broke like a bubble at the sudden singing of a bird, and the wind blew and the world was the same as ever--only never *quite* the same. The experience so initiated has been the one abiding reality of my life, unalterable except in the abounding fullness and frequency of its occurrence. I can recall, even as a child, leaving the companions of my play to bask in it, as one might abandon the shade to walk in the sun. There is scarcely any time in my adult life in which it can not be summoned; with more effort at some times than at others. Most people probably go on all their lives trusting their intelligence or their traditions for the unimportant issues, and for vital matters listening to the voice of the Sacred Middle, which they explain according to the mythological beliefs in which they have been brought up.

she'd bring the eggs in & leave them on
the counter for when she would
wash them
but wouldn't get to it so may as well have
bought eggs
so gave away the chickens

"it is true & i know for a fact," she said, as we walked this trail, "that a president's wife, walking, tripped over a root here." and how odd it seems to put against the spinning holes of infinite space a diminutive figure with a silver spoon on her head. before long you resume a belief in important people: but not all together in what they put on their heads. our american life--one slat of light. then we put silver spoons on our heads and say, "i am someone!" no, i try to resume, as i walk, the independent feeling from being early or late, but with the uncertainties of the self, the heaviness descending or then lifting, no princesses or female shakespeareas in this collective past.

wishes like a decayed tooth

learn then to love the questions

large numbers of swimmers and waders
 all ages
 in the contaminated lagoon
 only one small 8 1/2 x 11 warning
 tacked onto a pole--& no signs
 down at the water's edge

swamiji climbed so high he was
 lost to a glacier
 embedded with thorns which he had
 to cross with bare feet
 then climb down
 a frozen fall
 no food or water for days
 the first person he saw on
 the trail ran away
 screaming
 bringing back a small clan
 of men with spears
 swamiji sat down and chanted
 they stood, puzzled--one
 of them went away, returned
 with another who said
 i am a teacher--they
 live so remotely they have
 never seen a white person
 such as yourself

I'm not sitting here nothing's sitting here but this poem
 writing itself

she has narcolepsy, falls asleep when
 i'm massaging her back, she wakes with a start--
 lots of people, i say, fall asleep,
 even without narcolepsy
 i want to stay awake she says

hot wind and an arroyo toad

she hurt her arm because, orchestrating,
she made larger than usual
gestures for the organ player
at the back of the church
who could only see her
through a small square mirror

tree, ever-bearing needle, cone, nut

cave poet

cistern of ancient pure oil

ancient whale brought up from lake casitas

the scientists can't tell for sure--
is there global warming? is there
danger? is there too much carbon dioxide?

why stay in college, why go to night school?
don't I look different this time?
ain't got no letters
what good are postcards
I ain't got nothing at all

why go anywhere at all?

you can't be found on the internet

now i learn the fool in the deck
 is one who sees
 and the death card isn't hung,
 just dangling by one foot

The very proximity of a task, placed where you all but trip over it, will make it indisputably yours and no one else's. The lives of those who bear witness to this unwritten law are characterized by a marvelous, enviable tranquility.

Worry about money also depressed Dorothy's spirits.

flowers send petals into the july dust

*

out by the meadow pond
 the old worn down granite
 holes, the picture of
 family women getting dinner
 together

*

no other reality exists than reality
 a spasm in the shoulder
 a hawk in the tree & a jay squawking nearby
 a duck & her seven ducklings
 moving across the full length of pond
 it's all possible all at once
 the praying mantis in the act of mating
 eating her lover's head

*

the eyes of a pet racoon
 hi mom in sweetness & then
 biting that human mom's neck

*

significant other all others

*

the river picks up rubble but keeps moving to the sea

dorothy day writing her best not in the voices and causes of others but from her own personal struggles

private pain public pleasure

letter poem
and that on-going fragmentary
journal

we are living more than once
the version of this story

that's how you recognize
character

in these times someone
does or doesn't take her hand
and gently ever so gently kisses it

lushness unzipped & fallen
on the floor

because existential, yet
to really know naked

focus concentrate simplify
if it was only that simple

a stone a leaf a spring

one day we stopped at a utah park on our way to wyoming 2 adults 5 teenagers and 1 toddler
pouring out of a light blue ford econoline van

one day getting to the resort of reading all that you ever wanted

you must stay in the world
in all its reality

someone calling the dance realia

you remind me of
a wiry girl
who sat on a granite boulder
and in standing slipped
into icy creek pool
we laughing she stunned

the one way ticket

bring along something light
to read

you could laugh a little

without foreign tongue
but getting by with a
willing tongue

these entrances these
approved passes into ports

especially the ducklings

and hawk in oak

nervous over saying the forbidden--
no

whatever did i want from you

grammar's gone

when all along we all were
in the parade dressed
nothing like ourselves

amelias going where they
could not be found

freedom in the letter diary poem

one to the other, pinned inside
the dress, atop the sewing box

good phone talks

less of theatre movies even books
more the instrumental silence

moving toward the portal
of crone

less energized to fight with anyone

walking for peace in peace

now the wayward complaining
tongue has to catch up

to smile

overdone tragedy trashed

dorothy day cried many times
in her passions and purity

we dressed as planets
and the stars

I see a little clearly at last what my writing is about and fear I have perhaps ten years courage and energy to get the job done. The feeling of getting oneself in perfection is a strange one, after so many years of expression in blindness.

There will be a book that includes these pages,
and she who takes it in her hands
will sit staring at it a long time,

until she feels that she is being held
and you are writing

That you are a spiritual seeker is not something you need to show outside. It will manifest in your behavior without you having to try.

if you come back, look
for me

becoming again bone-like
the past scraped away
by twilight desert wind

an israeli man was working in
a nuclear reactor fourteen years ago,
he took photos of the place when
he realized the product of the plant was
for weapons
later in his world travels he was seduced
by an israeli secret agent,
beaten & drugged, & shipped shackled in
a box back to israel--
he's been in solitary confinement for the most
of fourteen years

to speak in a language
that heals as much as
it separates

i am certain i have nothing
else i want to add
to my list of evaluations
and petty criticisms of others
each time shooting new holes
in my already riddled middle
those violences undoing
the diligent efforts to be whole

i say no more no more
and then the tongue runs
off on another binge

how the blind girl typed
out her name b-e-s-s-y

poetry the grub within the leaves

summer's enlightenment
of stopped time
winter's enlightenment
of staying inside

how i will never know
and still, how i will write,
compelled like the sycamore
to make buds, leaves, and
let them go

pages and pages

neighborhood cats one by one visiting the yard

i touch their backs and shoulders
that ache from the same place,
repeating the small cycle
and carrying their loads quickly, quickly
they know it they say "should"
"i should slow down"

(the mystics often
had weak health, got
pissed, cried & cried)

quel heure est-il?

forgetting and going on

when i listen i say yes
sometimes interrupt
when we both know the rest

a few bees at the oak's trunk

a few black feathers

if it's hot like that i turn
back & wander among the trees

knowing time & putting it aside

the pager going off at 5:25

going out again?
(rhetorical?)

sincerely

but not yours not anyone's
not even
mine mine mine
in a lifetime wholly redone
from other lifetimes

**

august is turning the sun down earlier already

why hold onto hot or cold
the biggest challenge is to make
neutral comments about the weather

sit under a carrot tree
for two hours
writing in late light

writing about nothing in particular

sierras

1880:

two thousand antelopes who drank at a water hole
 millions of birds
 went when the water was drained, the tules burned

the fish died belly up; the plentiful otters ate all the fish then starved; racoons ate the last otters &
 soon wandered in threadbare coats til their own fall

that's the dry quiet of what was the san joaquin lakes

where the water was supposed to flow didn't quite work. the rainmaker came, but it was
 overdone. the dam overflowed; the expensive, extensive flume broke.

what you see now of development is like aftershocks of a huge upheaval

one day ishi's small clan was overtaken by a dam's survey party.
 the clan ran & died.

one day ishi stumbled out of hiding, he too, starved

In July, 1902, investigation was begun for the reclamation of arid lands there [Inyo] under the National Reclamation Bureau. All reports and estimates of costs demonstrated that the Owens Valley project promised greater results than any other for the cost. Individual owners made transfers of rights and privileges. And all this time the supervising officer of the Owens Valley project and Mullholland, chief engineer, had been working to secure the waters of Inyo. Everything had been done. The Reclamation Service had been won over. The field papers had changed hands. Transfers had been made. Sales had been effected. A Los Angeles man, Eaton, had been in the Valley all this time spying and buying; he and his fellows had represented themselves as representing the Government, when they had in fact been representing the city [of Los Angeles]. There were lies and misrepresentations. There was nothing any of us could do about it, except my husband, who made a protest to the Reclamation Bureau. But the city stood solid behind Eaton as one man. Nobody raised a protest except Sam Clover. Clover was a newspaper man and an honest one; he was planning a new journal on his own initiative, and he was made to pay for the protest he made. No citizen protested, no clergyman, no State official. Prominent citizens from Los Angeles came up into the Valley and added their voice to the general consternation. Mary did what she could. And that was too little. The year before she had built a house--the brown house under the willow tree. She walked in the fields and considered what could be done. She called upon the Voice, and the Voice answered her-- Nothing. She was told to go away. And suddenly there was an answer; a terrifying answer, pushed off, deferred, delayed; an answer impossible to be repeated; an answer still impending; which I might not live to see confirmed, but hangs suspended over the Southern country.

“Mysterious epidemic,” she said.
 “Words were dying of their absence.”

The Owens Valley is part of that section of the West [burdened] with the Nevada Nuclear Weapons Test Site, countless chemical and nuclear waste dumps and military installations, and untold illegal dump sites.

arsenic dust clouds blowing from dry owens lake confounding lungs

I like that name the Indians give to the mountain of Lone Pine, and find it pertinent to my subject,--Oppapago, The Weeper. It sits eastward and solitary from the lordliest ranks of the Sierras, and above a range of little, old, blunt hills, and has a bowed, grave aspect as of some woman you might have known, looking out across the grassy barrows of her dead. From twin gray lakes under its noble brow stream down incessant white and tumbling waters. “Mahala all time cry,” said Winnenap’, drawing furrows in his rugged, wrinkled cheeks.

run-off that would have been checked by native brush ran into the visitor hut, piling in two feet of mud

loving sage loving redwood

sand blowing in big clouds in a passing dream

a never-ending show of cloud sculptures

*

how do you keep the wolf
 from the door? he asked

i could see the wolf,
 and even more than one,
 and i would welcome them,
 loving them

then i understood his way
 of seeing, i had to translate,
 then i answered, my eyes
 flying to four corners, “miracles”

*

Je suis celui qui suit.
*I follow the one that follows,
 says the page to the page,*

*the word to the word
 the point to the point.)*

*

skeletal words and drawing
 bones to parrallel
 the animals even a whale
 but what exactly
 is the beak?

*

the woman who deeded her farm in perpetuity to a public that could learn & remember how it looks to have animals people plants & dwelling webbed together would be rolling over in her death slumber to know that the freeway crosses over the place now.
 the farm's whittled down by a ballpark and a cement walk through non-native grass.
 and all that's left is her house & a driveway's circular flower planter.

*

Does being lonely mean to crawl like a worm or to bow your head to the ground? But *sol* is kinder than steel, *l'acier*, and confidentially calls up the verb *solacier*, "to give solace." Does all solitude want to be consoled?

*

a passing dream
 large clouds of slow moving
 drifting sand

san francisco sitting in poisons
 and san jose the worst
 of all

Oh sweet don't go.
 Back the same way go a new way.

Other examples of air quality impairment from drying inland water bodies include California's Owen's Lake, which in recent years recorded the worst airborne particulate pollution in the United States...

Nothing more dramatic ever happened in the history of Western jurisprudence, nothing ever engaged a more brilliant array of legal talent than this struggle between the English and Spanish traditions of water usage. It spread like one of the summer floods over the region in question, over the whole State, coloring its politics for years. The weight of legal tradition and scholarship was on the side of the English usage, and, against the more immediate necessity of the common good, determined the decision and became nominally the law of the State. When the decision was announced which gave Henry Miller all that he claimed, even the Governor publicly stated it as a calamity...It was Mary's first grown-up encounter with the salient American capacity for loyally upholding the legal formula at the same time that its inutilities are completely evaded. She remembered it years later in London when a friend of hers, a California engineer, was being criticized by an Englishman who had had dealings with him. "He never," said the Englishman, "breaks a law, but when one gets in his way, he knows more ways than I ever thought of for getting past it."

"Oh, yes," said Mary, "we do that in California at least once every morning before breakfast. It keeps us in practice."

"There is a vast upheaval of matter," says Virginia Woolf just before she notices someone standing over her. And in a letter (written some years later) she recalls the moment:

I shall never forget the day I wrote "The Mark on the Wall"-- all in a flash, as if flying, after being kept stone breaking for months...and then Leonard came in and I drank my milk and concealed my excitement.

keep the water coming and you could run without hardly stopping maybe sleep a little as if in a war

the river takes side trips where it's clear
to the rocky bottom
or the big river is deep & thick
the river's held up but goes on through
the rivers get down to the ocean

oliver stone says he kept the actors out in the bush
for ten days with almost no sleep & there's no way to fake
that look of irritability & weariness
but i think, why recreate the past?
here the birds have things to say to one another
a boulder sits unmoved in the creek

the majority of raisins in the world
come from the san joaquin valley

the slivered moon is a strong beam
stars out how much we miss
by being civilized

i leave the radio on when i go on a trip
& just as i was walking out the door
to head up to the sierras
a man called into the show
said you're talking about all
the new housing in san diego
but where's the water going
to come from
& the woman guest said oh yes
she was very interested
in water she'd just come back
from a meeting in northern california
they have lots
of water in northern california
& it's just a matter of bringing
it down to southern california

i found myself at the edge
of a sierran lake the wind blowing in bursts
ants and jays and little wave songs
shale and pine needle floor
shadows hastening me to turn back
& the friendliness of quiet transportable

i'm in hot creek
and bubbles come up--
i put my hands behind me
on the river bottom & move one
then the other, heat shifting,
heated breaths of the inner earth
coming through the sand & rock
into cold river into my hands
at times large handfuls
of tiny fish jump together
they or the bubbles speckle
the water's surface

i'm in the shallow part, no one
ever thinks it's great there, but
it's perfect and wrapped
in quiet red and blue dragonflies
are dancing the fish visit
my legs

muir says the quickest way
through the universe is in the wilderness

do you pray before imploding a building
tery gross asks the guest
o yes always always because
we're relying on nature, on gravity
on what's bigger than all our
careful plans and preparations

smoke has filled the whole basin
it's pink in the twilight
yosemite's burning
this is what happens each august
i return--but this one must be huge
you still see the campers hikers
fishers backpackers
the smoke pulls on your lungs
pains the eyes
strong winds growl & bellow

not a cloud in sight
 again i'm at mill creek
 have laundry laid out everywhere--
 hanging from slits in my car windows
 over the lounge chair
 over the edges of the dish pan
 threaded through the side mirrors
 the antenna
 laid out on the plastic yoga mat--
 this hot wind is helping--
 also off the camper shell's back window flap
 gives new meaning to
 "hanging out her dirty laundry"
 (but it's stream-cleaned!)

now the creek pulls the stones
 & polishes the pathway
 wind can not take over
 the directions

austin didn't grow up with dancing
 the midwest methodists thought
 it was the prelude to sex

In April...Mary was released from the long spiritual drought that was coincident with her commitment to organized religion. It was a dry April, but not entirely barren; mirages multiplied on every hand, white borage came out and blue nemophila; where the run-off of the infrequent rains collected in hollows, blue lupine sprang up as though pieces of the sky had fallen. On a morning Mary was walking down one of these, leading her horse, and suddenly she was aware of poppies coming up singly through the tawny, crystal-sanded soil, thin, piercing orange-colored flames. And then the warm pervasive sweetness of ultimate reality, the reality first encountered so long ago under the walnut tree. Never to go away again; never to be completely out of call..."Nearer than hands or feet"...Only the Christian saints have made the right words for it, and to them it came after long discipline of renunciation. But to Mary it just happened. Ultimate, immaterial reality. You walk into it the way one does into those wisps of warm scented air in hollows after the sun goes down; there you stand motionless, acquiescing, I do not know how long. It has nothing to do with time nor circumstance; no, nor morals nor behaviors. It is the only true and absolute.

lightning fire's smoke
fills the valley
squirrels go on digging around
in leaves chewing branches
gnats swarm

muir says saunter don't hike
forget milk, butter
& the mess meat will make in your pack

moonbows are arcs of multi-colored light
in moonlight

switchbacks:
to slow down the ascent
graduate the steep climb
help ease breathing
not a straight line to your destination
but gets you there

switchbacks of mind
back & forth i'm looking down
once in a while up
til the pause
til the top
then loop down or retrace
switch back

yosemite falls can be caught
up midair by the dancing wind

here i am then strips of sunlight
making the underwater river rocks glow gold
dragonflies bright bits
of light circling & moving up-down river
skin-warm in six months the river
will be full & no one will linger near-naked
at its edge

the mom standing in the river
the little one hooting, darting
arms up & around, the mom
yawning, the rock face mountain
glowing, a shadow growing across it

two ducks go up then back
down the river
let their bills drop, tails turn up
as long as the river gives grub

backpackers from czech republic
started in jacksonville, florida
went to mexico & here
to all the national parks of the west
their country was where once
everyone had a home & a job & food
& now there's those that do
& those that live on the streets

the ducks stand & poke their
bills under their feathers in &
out, in & out, then in & stop,
sleep, standing in the river

war

11/1/01

the sun goes at five now that the time's changed—the sky tonight rumpled with storm-black-and-white clouds, both getting washed in saffron, then anointed with red

crow on branch calling out the last bugle calls

they're walking and driving out of kabal
taliban have been going into house and mosque for safety
drawing american bombs in to women and children

here, the fallout of maintenance workers and waitresses who can't get unemployment

dorothy day living on five dollars a week for a month
a writing assignment, one of her first:
she could pick when to not eat, unlike others

dorothy day could do no less
no more than write—
she tried part time jobs
she tried nursing
she wrote when others
were unemployed and hungry
when the u.s. kept going to war

10/31/01

an oriole alighting on the windowsill in the desert—far out, alone, you're unlike a bird—it goes
it returns looking chirping at what you are—

it's being afraid, that's the real suffering, getting the picture stuck in the head, rolling hard and
hurting the insides, something setting open the dam of adrenaline—there's nowhere to go—
cabin-fevering the mind—it's the best challenge to be in the presence of pain makers and getting
to the clearing without moving an inch—all the old bleedings staunched in the pinprick peace—

10/30/01

“they gonna need more than bullets & beans this war”

And we: spectators, always, everywhere,
looking *at* everything and never *from*!
It floods us. We arrange it. It decays.
We arrange it again, and we decay.

10/6/01

these dreams
 having an apple pie & knowing
 if i give out pieces
 to everyone that's in the room
 i won't get a piece
 & i'll feel better
 in the long run giving it all away
 than the short term
 pleasure of having a piece of pie
 but in that moment a part of me
 would really love
 a piece of that pie
 there's always ice cream,
 of which there's plenty,
 & my favorite, vanilla

the seepings of doubt & dislike
 going far

there's the hawk swooping
 in and out of the palm tree
 rattling the fronds to get
 at mice
 a lizard surfaces out
 of dried mud's crack

without hate, a cluster of
 imperfectly contoured clouds
 resting in the cool blue sky

all that can be poised
 plane and boat
 and each youngish person
 all the way to the older
 more practiced fighter
 surrounding afghanistan

someone's selling bin laden piñatas
 over the internet
 already candy-filled
 a stress relief center has ordered 25

if i said it wrong or hurt her feelings
 once, long ago, is it in my reach
 to bring up my own peace
 to co-habit my mistakes
 with unquestioning joy?

a job lost and waiting for interviews
 this wheel of spare fortune
 the long-houred carnival day

10/4/01

*“Out of the fog of the word savoir, ‘to know,’
 looms the word voir, ‘to see,’” he said. “Knowledge is essentially seeing.”*
 We shall carve in the space between.

another part of the world
 becomes a story to learn
 geography to discover

each day, lessons on the radio
 turkish music
 you have to go further
 imagine sudanese women
 who are unscarved, a girl
 picking through the rocks
 of afghanistan

of course the feature is male
 always, even though foreign

there’s no order and yet
 it’s more orderly
 when we can get along
 and when each of us
 has money—no one then
 has to ask the other
 for some so there can be
 bread to eat and a bed for sleep

fired—let go—from the massage job because
 their biz dropped after sept 11

i make the basket, as in rumi’s poem,
 with one hand, collaborating
 with another’s hand

two surfers sitting on the cliff bench
 a pigeon in one's hands
 the other surfer says, lunch

9/17/01

now the sun sets over the east mesa, cool air settles in, a dog barks, planes rumble, you can hear
 the engine take-off roar though it's ten miles away; forever, someone across one or another side
 of the canyon is plying their chainsaw, their motor of some sort;
 yet there is the big breath of the canyon—in the day, when the sun's out, hot, in the night, cool;
 crickets, given some brush or rock shade, sing, so their song is continuous, garlanding the
 moments; a bird begins the day, another one is with it; late, far longer than the sun's light, the
 bird song fills the space of sky,
 the hollow of canyon

9/16/01

this is not good and evil
 it's long long held pain
 someone not listening to someone

there are concerns
 and there is getting on the next plane
 because that's what you
 have to do

the igluik eskimo woman who went out
 to pee and was suddenly
 struck by a glowing ball of fire
 all within her grew light
 she then came back in
 saying

the great sea
 frees me, moves me,
 as a strong river carries a weed
 earth and her strong winds
 move me, take me away
 and my soul is swept up in joy

looking for how it's going to go
 getting laundry all pinned up
 and a breeze, not even
 a strong one, toppling down
 the line-up

more happening each day
 than what can be accounted for
 recounted
 one two three four
 numbers won't work for making
 this picture
 planes fly over this peaceful canyon
 going, going, gone

someone's coming
 friend if i have anything to say
 not enemy, not any terror
 i might picture

i don't watch tv
 rarely see movies
 so what i know is from the radio

my friend says they replay & replay
 the crashes and so maybe that's one way
 or maybe from the habit of watching movies
 it's made it possible
 to cushion the shock

i'd rather not
 stories are always vivid enough

how sound turns us around
 quiet or song
 a moment of peace

what it was has been told
 in enough words to outlive the moment
 and it's been done
 done already
 remembering is a path
 and then there's the divergence
 of other ways
 a psychologist says tell it
 to one or two intimates
 the rest said gets too diffuse
 who was in the forest this august—
 those happy hours—
 they're all gone to other times
 one is right now folding

just laundered shirts, matching socks
what you just did, too
one is picking up the phone
one is too tired to think
after what happened
there's what has to be done
even the story is changing
in the current telling
hinges last so long on doors
before needing a bit of oil
even how you say what
you've been saying lately could be
put away

what might get out of the bag
if it's not held the way
it's always been
the words taking the shape
of this new body—shed of
old layers of skin, muscle, bone,
not lost in the past, forgetting—
this where you are

candle

glittering thumb tacked
 trail
 leaves and stones

one hand waving
 grass clumped in sun

Mary went back to Inyo and finished writing *The Land of Little Rain*. She had been trying to hit upon the key for it for a year or more, and found it at last in the rhythm of the twenty-mule teams that creaked in and out of the borax works, the rhythm of the lonely lives blown across the trails. She had great pleasure in writing itAlready she had begun *The Flock*, shaping it to the movement of herders and their sheep, going back to Bakersfield and the Tejon for renewal, to the shearing at Agua Caliente and the games of handball at Noriegas.

inyo means the dwelling place of a great spirit

this little one—maybe he's two—with his parents on the peak—is talking in the phrases his parents speak

and how is it later you break from the pattern & find others that become your own

trails & dirt roads here & there as you survey the landscape—efforts of our times,
 of ones who are long gone

but sitting here, peak top, no one could have ever been here. you're hardly here. it's outside
 the marks of time.

material—means what comes from *mater*, earth, the gifts of the earth

so it comes, so it goes

*

i come from acorns and deep clear springs
 feathered flights and crow calls
 i'm not going to guess how it will be

the two kids with their dad
 walked across the canyon
 and then back up with excitement saying,

“that coyote under that bush,
 that coyote under that bush,”
 and so then last night,
 two thirty, a different coyote call,
 unlike the usual night talk,
 howling with sirens,
 yipping in exultation of a hunt,
 this time one coyote’s short calls,
 repeated, repeated, repeated,
 til i was fully awake,
 one female recognizing another,
 she must be giving birth

hot & hot wind dry heat
 and climbing, warm limbed & sweat wet,
 brisk reaching walk to get to the top
 to get onto the saddle
 where there’s one laurel sumac
 angled enough to cast mid-day
 half moon shade
 five crows crowning the far up blue
 aligning their wings with
 high wind patterning the cloudless sky
 not in circles not in v’s
 their random own ways one casting off
 and far away east

cabrillo wanted to save the day
 his guys were up in arms
 against natives who pelted spears
 throwing them out
 away from the native headland
 cabrillo rowing in cabrillo leading
 reinforcements cabrillo climbing
 the rocky promontory
 eager and anxious
 slipping falling
 rock & sandstone snagged
 returning to ship injured
 he hadn't come in search
 of fights but fell for one
 he'd come for pepper
 nutmeg cinnamon
 he crossed over to his death instead

he says he was xrayed as a kid & at 14 had thyroid cancer that they cut into his throat for & got.
 he loves to fish in the twin lakes outside bridgeport. once he docked his boat & it was so nice,
 the mountains and all, he sat in his camp site for four days, that's all he did. he says because
 of the cold winters the trout in the lake are pink inside & are delicious.

dried rose petals in high desert
 a carpet remnant
 at the edge of the warm spring
 an electronics box full
 of partiers' trash
 coyotes at crowley lake
 and then again in the canyon at home
 i've been hard on myself—
 the house looks clean

if i take money out of the picture . . .

here the sycamore trees crackle in breeze, the waterless mud-patterned creekbed is a canvas for
 moss dried rock, grey grass, decay-laced leaves. no selling involved.

I finally had to sell [my son] Aurelio to a Mexican to get food . . . They were mean and made him work like a man all the time and even beat him . . . Santos was just a baby when his father died. One time we walked into Tecate looking for food and to hide from that man, just baby Santos, and the girls, and me. We went back because we couldn't get anything to eat in Tecate. Out in the mountains at least we had what wild food we could find.

When Lupe was eleven or twelve, a man wanted her. Bernardo Mata wanted her. His mother said they would give us food from time to time if I would give Lupe to be the wife for this man. So he married her and . . . [he] beat her and his family made her work real hard all the time.

someone has a key to a gate
 they've been up this canyon
 practice shooting
 now their truck rattles out
 to the two-lane highway
 sun & mountains take bigger roles
 absorb all visitations
 the desert floor's unvisited stretches
 flourish with cholla & creosote

o'keefe got her years to make
 the mountains bright pink
 got her hours of shade
 laying midday under her truck

sun's got this day and so i walk
 not so far as i could
 and sit long hours
 first up in dry creek's cover
 now in sparse desert willow shade
 the other side of my car
 best of all but ground's
 black with working ants
 one part crater, one part
 speckled holes & subsurface tunnels
 it seems they have a lot to do

left alone "to read retreats of bygone days which aimed to make you begin a retreat in a state of remorse, self-examination, penitence—I endured it for two days and could not wait to get away, to get out on the streets where I could breathe, walk freely, sense my freedom from restraint. I felt that I had been in jail, in solitary confinement."

last night a jeep rolled by, one shirtless guy standing up, saying, i'm just checking out that everything's ok out here

a highway patrol car at one of the desert crossroads, what you'd never see in the past, before the attack, i wave, the driver on his cell phone waves back

this desert cut up with private and public lands
water getting used up

By 1875, the Kumeyaay had become refugees in their own territory, Southern California's first homeless people.

Another difficulty was that successive waves of European disease had decimated not only the population but also the knowledge base maintained by the *kuseyaay*, or plant specialists, who often died without training successors. The knowledge of when to burn and when to plant and harvest native foods began to disappear.

. . . perhaps most important, access to the entire range of habitats in Southern California, on which the traditional gathering and management practices of the Indians depended, was no longer possible. The desert was still available to the Indians in 1880, as were acorn gathering areas in the higher mountains. But mid-elevation areas such as Jacumba and the McCain Valley, places that provided quick access to a wide variety of plant sources, had been taken over by American ranchers. With these areas closed off, the Indians' whole subsistence pattern fell apart like a house of cards. It's no wonder that some Indians resorted to butchering American cattle, animals they saw grazing on land that had once been theirs. During the 1880's and 1890's, some Indians simply starved.

*

i think of muir in alaska, coming upon an eskimo village, going into the homes and finding whole families, unbreathing skin and bones, starved, lying under their fur blankets.

they had to sing their songs
alone or with each other
a hundred years ago
you didn't turn on the radio
so what songs replayed
inside their bodies

The less familiar energies of the wild world, and their analogs in the imagination, have given us ecologies of the mind.

last night i read of the marshall & tanya south home & their family life. it was not a well conceived plan to live a primitive lifestyle atop ghost mountain in the desert, and to live without a close source of water.

In 1947, Tanya filed for divorce, citing the affair, the bleak existence at Yaquitepac and its effect on the children, Marshall's refusal to help gather firewood, his absolute control of the family car, and a scheme of his to start a polygamous community in South America. She also charged him with physical abuse.

tanya lived there 1932 to 1947. the story doesn't say what happened to her once she left & moved to san diego but does tell what happened to marshall.

So many of [the Kumeyaay's] hunting, gathering, and land management efforts were community based that the kind of individualism the Souths pursued would have been inconceivable. And as anthropologists constantly remind us, the Indians were not "simple" people, nor was their lifestyle simple. Presuming to take up their way of life in isolation and with just a few years of practice is remarkably arrogant—especially when that way of life has been lost to those who originally followed it.

ken keysey says the merry pranksters
 went off to woodstock
 & he was in his barn house
 the same one he still lives in
 & he was up in the loft, where some people slept
 & he found a candle stuck in the straw
 that had been allowed to burn all the way down
 & he thought his grandfather & his great-grandfather
 wouldn't have gone for this
 that he was all for enlightenment
 but this was not the way
 and so that's when he decided
 to break up with the group

and john muir got caught between worlds--he loved the wilds—but enjoyed bringing people in with him on explorations. he really got lonely when out for stretches of time by himself. he eventually felt compelled to marry and home base on his wife's family farm near Oakland—and to take journeys out from there.

yet his health would plummet if he stayed on the farm for many months at a time.

We used to hunt for fish, shellfish, and other stuff in the ocean and along the edge of the ocean around Ocean Beach. There are so many houses here now I can't find my way any more. Everything looks so bad now; the hills are cut up even.

I tried to live with several different men, each one said he would take care of me but each time it was always the same. I did all the cooking, washing, ironing, and everything, all the work I had always done, but it wasn't enough. I had to cut firewood and stack it. I had to clear land and cut fence posts. I had to work like a man as well as the house and garden work, hard, heavy work.

If I didn't do enough to suit him, he would beat me. I have been black and blue all over so many times because there was still more work to do. Even with all that, each man would get mad about feeding my children and beat me for that. When the man would not let me feed my children, I would have to find some one else to work for. I was beat so many times. It is hard work to dig fence holes and put up fences and everything, but I had to try to get enough food for my children.

I have known, to some extent, what the Earth Horizon has been thinking about. Measurably, its people and its thoughts have come to me. I have seen that the American achievement is made up of two splendors: the splendor of individual relationships of power, the power to make and do rather than merely to possess, the aristocracy of creativeness; and that other splendor of realizing that in the deepest layers of ourselves we are incurably collective. At the core of our Amerindian life we are consummated in the dash and color of collectivity. It is not that we work upon the Cosmos, but it works in us.

i'm a migrant writer—going where the sun shines & the weather is moderate

muir had many jobs

at the bottom of the mountain
a tramp, maybe john muir, sitting
in the shade of his shopping
cart rolling a plum
from palm to palm, finally taking
sweet bites from it

this rip tide pull, this whirling
dragging down pool
of short term work, no work
looking for work, patchwork work—
i remembered the way out
was not to swim straight towards shore
tiring myself out
but to go out the side
paralleling the bluffs

At odds with his work for every obvious reason, his restlessness almost drove him to distraction . . . he still did not know how to live in a way that would satisfy his passions.

. . . he spent long days rambling in the wild . . . On the one hand [his inventions for carriage parts]...was to free humans from manual labor; on the other hand, as labor-saving devices, they often put people out of work. No matter what he did or where he went, he kept running headlong into the same kinds of paradoxes. But then Fate intervened.

“This affliction has driven me to the sweet fields,” he said. “God has to nearly kill us sometimes, to teach us lessons.” . . . He would walk and walk until he found his heart’s home, and the rest be damned.

what do i keep? these crates of winnowed books, so many sold with each move—
these few pieces of furniture—handed down from mamma when gran would no longer
know where they were
files of classes i’ve taught and will probably never teach again

look at the birds coming in
from all over the world

there’s a black hole, unlike
others scientists have seen,
pouring out energy,
instead of taking it all in

mind settling down
into fingers and heart
ocean waves running
from left to right and back again
of this body world
these physical hemispheres

apples are falling, some sweet
some already rotten

Mind, conscious mind reacting on mind shaping the world. Mind in the trees and birds
and insects, mind in flowers.

dorothy loved to close the door, read and write. that happened in the evenings or
when she claimed to be ill.

water overflows from the colorado river into the salton sea and the salinity there kills millions
of fish, birds die

a girl, once, reading of log cabin days
and then a teen making bread and yogurt by hand
the supermarket triumphant as sole stock & larder supplier
a soybean hard to find

(pioneer days, hair in a braid, long dresses, but the world in vivid color—carson's sea poisoned,
but then i could still surf the waves without getting sick—

earth washing out and stones
coming up that were hidden underground
to be used in season
for grinding food

it's myth there's rock in the mush—
we kept it clean

dorothy day could do no less
no more than write—
she tried part time jobs
she tried nursing
she wrote when others were
unemployed and hungry

yesterday down at the river
above the trees two crows started calling
back and forth as they rode the wind
they circled, taking the currents up
and other crows, calling, joined them
soon there were others
and they spiraled, up and up,
from the north a few more would come
the orb of crows rising, there were thirty or more,
and they lifted high,
black winged whirls

i was climbing the mountain,
walking backwards so i could watch the crows
they rose and rose
they scaled so far that if they were calling,

i could no longer hear them
 the sky was white & they could have singed their feathers
 i turned & climbed in a regular way up the mountain,
 with the crows in the sky behind me
 i did this for a few minutes
 then turned around again,
 walking backwards
 looked up high—
 and not a single crow could be seen,
 i looked around as if through binoculars,
 maybe i wasn't looking at the right spot or low enough—
 no crow in any direction

dorothy day: I have always been a journalist and diarist pure and simple, but as long as I could remember I have dreamed in terms of novels.

The Land of Little Rain was published, and had great success. Mary was at the Hittells' for that, and got to know the elect: Miss Coolbrith, Charles Warren Stoddard, who was living then at Monterey, John Muir, William Keith, and Markham. Of all these I recall John Muir the most distinctly, a tall lean man with the habit of talking much, the habit of soliloquizing. He told stories of his life in the wild, and of angels; angels that saved him; that lifted and carried him; that showed him where to put his feet; he believed them. I told him one of mine; except that I didn't see mine. I had been lifted and carried; I had been carried out of the way of danger; and he believed me. I remember them still.

the kitten, lucky, is looking out the screen door, head darting with the movements of moths

later veronica's holding lucky, who barely can stand the holding still with a room full of people, and veronica says when she's taking a shower, ellen hands her the kitten and she puts a little of the water on the cat, lucky does ok, she takes it, but, veronica says, next time she's wearing a tee shirt

the spring pool
 vibrated and mirrored and bubbled
 and that, a voice said,
 is you

the dullness of temples
 that have outlived
 their practice

the question might be—how little can i live on—rather than—how much do i need

what you *should* do is not necessarily what you can do

the angel came in through the window
all this traveling, tiresome
ordinary timed moments,
she could not lie
down

people almost step on their
tiny metal, fallen angels—

easy to lose

When the demonstration was over and I had finished writing my story, I went to the national shrine at the Catholic University on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. There I offered up a special prayer, a prayer which came with tears and with anguish, that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor.

As I knelt there, I realized that after three years of Catholicism my only contact with active Catholics had been through articles I had written for one of the Catholic magazines. Those contacts had been brief, casual. I still did not know personally one Catholic layman.

there could be rain
in the night's house clickings
and crackings
but usually, looking out into the dark,
the ground rests in its southern
parched pose

San Diego County—indeed all of California—is an orthopedic basket case. For millions of years, the ground beneath us has been shattered by slow but sure, incremental changes that can be read, by subtle observations, in the jumbled topography existing here now. Tectonic forces have bent, broken, displaced, and distorted our county's granitic bones; fractured its backbone (the Peninsular Range of mountains); sliced and crumpled its sedimentary skin; and altered the circulation of its surface water.

While California's most wrenching and violent movements tend to take place east and north of here, close to the great San Andreas Fault, even coastal San Diego bears the obvious marks of a landscape broken into sliding strips during geologically recent time. Faults with monikers such as Coronado, Silver Strand, Rose Canyon, Florida Canyon, and Texas Street cut

north-south across the geologist's maps. Most are considered to be relatively moribund, but not so the Rose Canyon fault, which may muster a magnitude 6.5 or 7 earthquake sometime in the next few centuries. The Rose Canyon Fault is thought to be the extension of the historically active Newport-Inglewood Fault--the culprit in a damaging 1933 earthquake centered at Long Beach.

on the drive out, a writer's being interviewed on the radio, he's saying it would be best to not focus on the self, all the attention from the public getting one to look at one's nose and going cross-eyed in the process—i'm thinking—& i don't know why—he's ken kesey—& he's saying hemingway got messed up by his self attention, he says a writer should just stay home, not live in new york, write like falkner did, come out for an interview maybe every ten years—& then terry asks him lots of questions about the hallucinogens

and terry says that was an interview with ken kesey done in '99 or '91 & then, to my shock, she says he died of liver cancer at the age of 66 on saturday

the u.s. is on the ground in afghanistan & finally i heard an official say today that the u.s. doesn't have a plan, they're going on with how it goes day by day

and that seems to be the way creative people go—it's surprising to hear the approach being used within the tremendous regimented configurations of the military

the catholic worker retreats were nourishing for her; they were quiet a lot of the time, but also a priest would give a talk on the gospel and there would be discussion. she was on retreat with and among others. she thought most catholics who went to weekly mass didn't get uplifting experiences like she was getting at the cw retreats.

I think to myself with a touch of bitterness, the ordinary man does not hear the word of God. The poor do not have the Gospel preached to them. Never have I heard it as I hear it now, each year in retreat, and with the sureness that it is indeed the Gospel . . . One has to make an attempt to know God before we can love and serve him. Or try to know the Unknowable. The search goes on as long as we live.

out east the clouds
had not collected
but driving back down
to the western coast
grey had collected
into large sinking masses
only one peak
getting a thin partial slice of light
and a slab of blue
protruding through the south

a fissure of orange
to the west

one flock of birds hastening
through the shift

a plane full of people
exploded today
and spirits lifted away
from the pieces

at the trail turn-out
there was the cement foundation,
looking so small now,
for the once-existent little store—
now the pipe ends bent, a clutter of decaying
bits of plastic, broken glass
at the rear
here, too, was a small village of trailer dwellers,
now earth patches and the dirt road are left,

the people booted out
by the forest service that reclaimed
the land, returning it
to a more natural state—
without people

I enjoy solitude. It's probably selfish, but why bother about it. Life is much too important, as Oscar Wilde said, to be taken seriously.

tasha tudor says she's going back in time when she dies—back to 1830 so she can keep making her hand-spun and woven clothes, grow her pears and daffodils and milk her goats. she quotes the monk fra giovanini—"the gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within our reach is joy. take joy."

There was a part for her in the Indian life. She had begun the study of Indian verse, strange and meaningful; of Indian wisdom, of Indian art. The Paiutes were basket-makers; the finest of their sort. What Mary drew from them was their naked craft, the subtle sympathies of twig and root and bark; she consorted with them; she laid herself open to the influences of the wild, the thing done, accomplished. She entered into their lives, the life of the campody, the strange secret life of the tribe, the struggle of Whiteness with Darkness, the struggle of the individual soul with the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man. She learned what it meant; how to prevail; how to measure her strength against it. Learning that, she learned to write.

for three hours, spaced into toxic moments, he padded across the roof, sometimes i've heard birds walk nearly as loudly there, he filled in spaces with black thick guck and some clear, filling in the spaces around roof pipes, closing the flashing around the fireplace, sealing the cracked chimney

the nature of water to fall from the sky and once it reaches a surface to keep rolling or sinking, that predisposition would lend itself to unseen leaks, water making its way between roof and ceiling, bloodline passageway of water, only a small clue to the mystery at the south inside end of the fireplace, a tiny spring dripping onto the floor, or into a square red plastic box i placed there—the gathered water making its way, by way of my helping hands, to the flower bed

now the water, if all occurs according to human efforts, will roll more directly on a course from sky to roof to earth

tasha tudor found a small wounded snake in her rock fence & brought it inside, gave it a grass nest, it liked her warm hand, curled there at nights while she lay in bed reading

Poets tend to hover over words in . . . troubled state of mind. What holds them poised in this position is the occasional eruption of happiness.

. . . increasingly all my writing tends toward poetry . . . This must have developed naturally over time, though I think it always created a problem for my prose, which might have had a happier life if I had called it poetry.

whenever there was a feeling of absence, someone gone out of my life, or some small personal mistake blown up to catholic-confession-time proportions—then the sky was like the poster in my room, flooded red, and the encrypted words were all there could be, a holocaust survivor believing in love and god even in the silence

the loneliness i got in growing up was big and achy and i felt older, way older, i felt i was still someone from some other time, i understood feeling and experience before i had experience to have such knowledge

so when i came across words in a book or in listening, i knew those essences—and it would take years into adulthood before i had the words in my mouth—though my body, my heart had them fully formed already

it had to be by the body moving out of stiffness—the old body i had as a girl—into the flexible one i gained in adulthood—setting me loose, and by the bridge of words, traveling out of the past with the sustenance of a freed range of language, in me and spoken aloud, doubt & hope & all—alongside the continued deepening directions of silence

It had been for a long time in Mary's mind that the story—that knot of related and inter-consequential incidents which make up the pattern called experience—must have come down to man by more intimate ancestral inheritance than the poem even. What she needed for uncovering the line of descent was a vocabulary expressive of experience—that is, things done leading to appreciable consequences, by which stories could be conveyed. She was finally to discover that vocabulary in the language of signs—arm signs chiefly and two or three vocables—invented by herders for communication with their dogs. This is much more than the vocabulary of verbal commands such as are used in the hunting-fields; a vocabulary of sentences expressive of the whole phase of an experience such as *Sheep missing on the left, go and find them; Round the flock and hold; Round and bed the flock*. What Mary discovered that winter was that, by piecing these sentences together in the pattern of an incident which had happened often enough to come easily to mind, and by narrating the incident in this fashion on occasions on which it was plain to the dogs that it could not refer to a *present* circumstance, she could afford them pleasure, such as they learned to invite in the same way a young child invites the re-telling of a favorite tale.

tasha tudor says she knows there's no forward or back to time.
she wore 1800 dresses as a kid because they felt right, even though other kids made fun of her, &
when she dies, she says, she's going right back to 1830

arjuna in later life was left
to his most human state—
krishna had moved on—
arjuna was out walking
the city street and thieves
came along and to arjuna's dismay
he no longer had
his bhagavad-gita-warrior-time strength
he had forgotten krishna
(how?!) and so
did not receive grace

“protect your right understanding.
discard the ego which you
have hidden behind your knowledge.
always contemplate
nonattachment, . . . equality,
and . . . true love for all.”

doing is better or not doing is best
not doing in doing is best of all

lots of people are saying
it's great to want more
and go for it

but what i want
 what i want to know is
 is it ok to want less?

lots of people want more
 but i want to know
 if it's ok to want less?

saint julian of norwich asked for
 suffering that would be equal
 to christ's
 but what she got beyond nearly
 dying was a conversation
 with god
 (seeing god as both mother & father)
 and finding out that there was no need
 to seek out suffering,
 that no one was a sinner,
 no matter their wrongs,
 that all are embraced in boundless love

Feeling that as a grown adult she should provide for herself, she applied for a position in the Kern County schools and was given a contract at the Old River School, where she was to start teaching in the fall of 1889. She was to live at the home of Darius M. Pyle, who was presently manager of one of the large ranch-dairies in the area.

Mary Hunter stayed at the Pyle home in the Mountain View Dairy until her marriage to Stafford W. Austin in May, 1891. Her original plans to teach in the county schools failed because she could not satisfactorily pass the teacher's examination, once in the latter part of 1889, and once in the spring of 1890. However, serving as a tutor to the three Pyle children in the mornings, the remainder of the time she taught privately the other children in the vicinity. In this manner, she says, she became acquainted, as a writer should, on how to write of the West.

hoping for the outcome is lighting
 a candle stub life

the allure of the admired one
 is as enduring and useful
 as a wedding dress

I was out of it, smitten anew with the utter inutility of all the standards which were not bred of experience, but merely came down to me with the family teaspoons. Seen by the fierce desert light they [Netta and Challoner] looked like the spoons, thin and worn at the edges.

the storm had gathered in the mountains, a black borderline, and there in the desert, startling light plays from journeying storm clouds, wind patterns going south, then north, and ever west. yellow, red, pink choreographies coming stage center out of the desert hills and taken back into heavy-curtained shadow—wind leaping above and late in the day falling to ground level, great power moving other clouds, those of dust and sand, all searching of city days stopped, the choices for What to Do with My Life—How to Change—nothing here, made into a breathing, walking human, one creature in the landscape—

and yesterday terry gross interviews
 the young writer whose mom
 was a truckstop prostitute
 j.t. is being asked to tell, to tell
 more, to tell it all
 and terry even wonders if he's a
 real thing
 because he doesn't show up
 in person for interviews or readings
 or lately appears in mask
 and sunglasses for photo shoots
 but he says
 he's been writing for oxygen
 a way out of a life of drugs
 not to be someone who is
 a writer
 he says he likes to dress
 sometimes as a guy sometimes
 as a girl
 and so he doesn't want
 to go out and get hurt
 because someone recognizes him
 and says he isn't what
 he appears to be

someone's got a wagon wheel in their front yard, another's got a fake well—settlers moved in to the natives' homes, like someone who brought furniture into your living room—and stayed

the wheel marks the spot of
 local massacre, remaining starvations
 the slopes are getting shortened
 backcountry's got casinos & their traffic

snow on peaks is pretty—
 peaks that get to be parks
 get to stay clear

To follow the dark paths of the mind and enter the past, to visit books, to brush aside
 their branches and break off some fruit.

so much for the monkey
 whose hand is still in the jar
 seeking the coin
 let go of the coin
 or break the jar
 make a choice

Have no desire for the fruits of your actions.
 Be one who is free in every way.

yellow bats were thought to have gone away forever from this rare home of california fan
 palms—but they're here, eating the yummy bugs

bin laden is sitting on the floor
 and laughing

a psychologist has a name for him
 the common american does, too

*

bin laden likes to make
 up a poem on the spot

*

desire nothing and receive the entire universe

*

i'm being led, it seems, as i walk—i am in a room and did i forget to bring my notes for teaching,
 did i clear out what i was supposed to this month—and there is the talk show host, waiting—she
 says she's going to interview the migrant woman fieldworker who has been living in a plastic &

tin shack in a north county canyon for five years, she's saying that a family living on 40,000 a year is considered living below the poverty line—

i drift out, i'm not much of a tv person, in the hallway oldies are playing

there are 40 tigers left in the rwanda jungle and the former poachers are being paid by the conservationist non-profit to shoot with cameras

in a 150 year-old thailand family home, the living history exhibit, the woman is asked to chew some betel, she does, and then she spits it out

then i get to the next room
 where the wise woman says if we
 eat leaves and have nothing
 else to eat, no matter,
 and anyway leaves have vitamins

i step out then, walk
 in the forest
 and i have heard that bin laden
 is a poet
 i ponder this
 how good and bad
 can be practiced
 with the same gift

so it is that
 what is left of the forest
 makes a space
 for questions

on mars, i'm told,
 a canyon stretches four miles deep
 from borders as far as
 the u.s. coast to coast

“If they would do this and this, they would get along better. If they would think this way, the way I think, if they did as I do, they would not have this mental breakdown.” It is everywhere. It is among those who work in the bureaus; it is in us who go to live with the poor . . . If you say your rosary; if you keep better hours; stop drinking . . . Oh yes, we have many plans to help the poor if we could only feed them, shelter them, clothe them . . . without assuming that we had all the answers.

ice overcoats come on
 and off with tradewind weathers
 boulders glimmer
 shiny winter lights, snow imposters—
 only revealed by either an abundant heat—
 and the rock doesn't melt—
 or knowing that same place
 in the mountain from a vantage
 of years

Sylvia Plath: P.S. Winning or losing an argument, receiving an acceptance or rejection, is no proof of the validity or value of personal identity. One may be wrong, mistaken, a poor craftsman, or just ignorant—but this is no indication of the true worth of one's total human identity: past, present, and future!

why should i notice my toes?
 when i roll up my spine, the links
 to the past get loosened

the tangerines on the neighbor's tree
 ornament the night

if not winter cold after summer heat if not rain in this canyon where you walk now in burning
 waves remembering spring, if not the moment stilled

then what?

if not sage and coyotes

then what are these remnant hopes? still?

one walks and talks the ordinary,
 closes one eye, in these last days

she hip-hopped

i wrote a poem, or kind of a poem,
 every day, to anyone, to you

i sent you the dramas, the remakes, what had no complete tie together ends

bon voyage

she says, let's talk later in the week

yoga, meditation, poems

have you eaten yet?

i hear chanting. the temple, where we opened to the filling of song—i see a woman in a red robe

a desert, an ocean, a mountain

the sublime southern sunlight

the cleared cold dark

and us

. . . we have to lock arms for the cause and shake off all pervasive self-doubt about the futility of trying...The challenge for writers is to rekindle idealism, to bridge the gap between what must be done and what we fear we cannot do. If writers fail, I'm afraid, we'll stumble to the brink like the class of fourth-graders I met not long ago. With worried looks, they told me, oh yes, they understood there was acid in the rain, poison in the ocean, the forests were shrinking, the animals in trouble and the glaciers melting. So what did they want for themselves? They brightened. A Hummer, a Jeep Cherokee, a Dodge Viper. They wanted a million dollars like Shaquille O'Neal.

we have come together for yet another holiday, one person calling it a day off, eaten the sweet and rich food, eaten more than we could really enjoy, some of us have watched the whole event like a person from a country whose customs are not anything like these—and the habit of silently naming others as if they were wrong-doers, that old habit sloughs off, at last the mind is tiring of its principles, its way of seeing, now we are the witness who has no language, no code by which to criticize—of what use was that before? to be set apart, the alien who translated every gesture and word into an error, specks of dust to be wiped away, oh no, that territory of perfection has been left behind, in fact to discuss the past, the usual accounts have also been left behind, whether homer or helen, the epic is gone, what lesson is there to get if there is no longer good and bad, if the mind rests in the shimmerings of constant changes ushering forth from one constant source?

you're in the quiet eddy of the river, you've tried going upriver, tried going downriver, and it's just not meant to be, you have already got what you need to swim and float right where you're at

i think of tamar, dorothy's daughter,
receiving the last royalty
of a book dorothy had written
a check of seventeen dollars & some change
so small
tamar had to write back, asking
what it was

No matter what catastrophe has occurred or hangs overhead, [a woman] has to go on with the business of living. She does the physical things and so keeps a balance.

time will go on and on, droning, pulling the ones who participate in its line of reasoning, time is not listening, it is busy and carrying on its precision of seconds. the secret door out is all the pauses, rooms of their own, spaces without concern; the ancient text says in the moment after spinning, in a sneeze, in running for your life

and dorothy felt compelled to stay in the work, to be the spokesperson, to live out one vision, and to do that action with others, as a common person, to go the "little way"

palm trees that have taken a hundred years to canopy the desert spring, their travel as seed, their eventual crumbling into the coarse granite sand—

time when you were in prison, when you did your best to look at anything but clock or calendar, to watch the slice of light, to love the face of the hardened keeper, to love all of the ones, not just some, the others who had no choice to be there

once you had given your
 attentions to the kiss
 the lovely hands
 you marked the passages
 of time by the in-coming
 outgoing tides of love

you see a couple now,
 she's just snapped at her partner
 the other does not lash back
 the toddler, at the last turning page,
 claps its hands

lighting the candle
 watching the flame flicker
 holding a hand around it
 careful of wind of fast burning
 resting opening the achy limbs
 and back to the big land
 lying down in the space
 it's come to give to you
 there, across the way, are those
 black on black silhouettes of hills in the night
 all night each night hourless

sweater & sleeping bag

sitting up, silent

without angel visitations
 any visits
 yet not alone, somehow,
 held

**

In the word *lumiere*, 'light,' there is *miel*, 'honey,'
 the touch of sweetness.

An island, ile, lies in the honey,
 and *El* within the island.

"Words addressed to God are insular words," you said.

then this body filaments,
 fogged, fathomless

the dreamlike house, there
 is the woman pulling up weeds,
 there is the tour bus taking
 the express lane, there are the splatterings
 of rain

jealousy, disappointment, fear
 have no firm residence

i am in motion and not—
 there the peppermint is rampant,
 there the quail
 are perched in yucca

the river flows

its hallucinatory play of lights
shimmers and fades

there were no chains no extinction

those thoughts
i had thought there was a riverbank

the icy parts falling
still patchy beneath manzanita
though higher up peaks embraced
with linens of snow

ravens take no mind of the dipped weather
sky blackens their wings set in
like jewels, black & black

SOURCES and NOTES

- p.4 “I must get a new bird...inside this one”: Anne Sexton, “The Ambition Bird,” *Complete Poems*, 300.
- 4 “Look to your heart...God has one”: Sexton, “Not So. Not So,” 473.
- 6 “What is immediately...Confucian tradition”: John Balaban, *Spring Essence*, 3.
- 6 “and I am huddled..still”: Carole Maso, “Rupture, Verge, Precipice,” *Break Every Rule*, 169.
- 6 “Language continually...in me”: Maso, “Rupture,” 176.
- 6 “April in the country...gorgeous sentence”: Maso, “Rupture,” 189.
- 9 “humpback whales...Indian Ocean whales”: *San Diego Union-Tribune* 30 November 2000: A21.
- 9 “Ephemeral, imperfect...rather than masterpieces”: Maso, “Notes of A Lyric,” *Break Every Rule*, 39.
- 9 “A healing, a suturing...or taken away”: Maso, “Notes,” 42.
- 10 “not to be managed...administered”: Maso, “A Novel of Thank You,” *Break Every Rule*, 77.
- 10 “And where have you...cost you”: Maso, “A Novel,” 79.
- 10 “Loving repeating...earth feeling”: Maso, “A Novel,” 82.
- 10 “When my father died...against significant odds”: Melanie Finn, “When a Museum Serves as a Tribal Elder,” *Los Angeles Times* 5 May 2002: E3.
- 11 “By this time Mary...good enough for you”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 228-229.
- Mary Austin (1868-1934), playwright, poet, essayist, novelist--wrote of California’s Central Valley, the Sierra Nevada mountain range, and the Mojave Desert in her younger years, recording the Indian traditions and oral stories of the area, as well as describing the entire ecosystem and the settling of it by Americans/Europeans; later, she lived in New Mexico and furthered her writings of the Southwest. She writes of herself as “Mary” and “I-Mary,” the latter being the one who is her most true self.
- 12 “What would you buy...all the time”: Maso, “A Novel of Thank You,” 88.
- 12 “One wish...time to write”: Maso, “A Novel,” 88.
- 12 “And when one...that is important”: Maso, “A Novel,” 101.
- 12 “I can’t think of it...besides grinding acorns”: Finn, *LA Times* 5 May 2002: E3.

- 12 “Our ears pick...famished”: Edmond Jabes, *The Book of Questions*, translated by Rosemarie Waldrop, 3.
- 14 “ecrit, recit...of the telling, she said”: Jabes, *Questions*, 7.
- 15 “It was on one of these...would become wise”: Philip Levine, *The Geography of Home*, edited by Christopher Buckley and Gary Young, 195.
- 17 Perceive the ether..entire universe”: Gurumayi.
- 17 “For wasn’t she always...she could not forget”: Alice Walker, *The Way Forward is With a Broken Heart*, 66.
- 17 “Now it rose up...bleus d’ete”: Anne Carson, “Hopper: Confessions: The Glove of Time by Edward Hopper,” *Men in the Off Hours*, 59.
- 19 Russia’s great poets...in dim sun”: Carson, “TV Men: “Akhmatova (Treatment for a Script),” *Men*, 105.
- 19 “There was a small compody...both of body and mind”: Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 247.
- 23 “That I had to conduct...to see for myself”: Sharon Doubiago, “Ramon Dead,” *Into the Deep End: The Writing Center Anthology 3*, edited by William Luvaas, 19.
- 23 “All these ruins necessary..of the spirit”: Jabes, *Book of Questions*, 20.
- 23 “The breakdown...champed upon the bit”: Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 151-153.
- 24 “According to Dr. Drew Pinsky...suggests [former employee] Turner”: Matthew Heller, “Death and Denial at Herbalife,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine* 18 February 2001: 35.
- 24 “I wish...animals are everywhere”: Gertrude Stein, *Doctor Faustus, Really Reading Gertrude Stein*, edited by Judy Grahn, 305.
- 24 “When a frail farmer...Carl Sandburg observed”: Robert Lee Hotz, “Speak, Memory,” *Los Angeles Times Book Review* 10 December 2000: 8.
- 25 “Just as an artist...This I am”: Ksemaraja, *The Doctrine of Recognition*, translated by Jaideva Singh, 12.
- 25 “Neil Bush...Hi-ho Silver”: Carole Maso, *AVA*, 88.
- 26 “cit, she who is...does action follow”: *The Thousand Names of the Divine Mother: Sri Lalita Sahasranama*, commentary by T.V. Narayana Menon, translated by Dr. M.N. Namboodiri, 362.
- 26 “Let us stay a moment before we go”: Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, 233.
- 26 “silence chaud et fauve...mutilated muteness”: Rainer Maria Rilke, “The Migration of Powers,” *Rilke’s Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy, 21.

- 27 “she who has radiant teeth...pure knowledge”: *The Thousand Names of the Divine Mother*, 25.
- 27 “In infancy...makes it blissful”: *The Thousand Names*, 18.
- 27 “About half the population...ancestral exercise”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 251-252.
- 31 “how can I talk...myself into another”: Edmond Jabes, “Dialogue of Life and Death in the Word,” *The Book of Dialogue*, translated by Rosemarie Waldrop, 4.
- 31 “We talk across...still don’t know”: Jabes, “Pre-Dialogue, I,” *The Book of Dialogue*, 16.
- 33 “she who is slender...hardly even exists”: *The Thousand Names*, 360.
- 33 “slipping away...shanti/peace”: *The Thousand*, 447.
- 34 “Jewish, the question...asked the same question”: Jabes, “The Question,” *The Book of Dialogue*, 41.
- 34 “The Indians had names...cut up even”: Delfina Cuero, *Delfina Cuero: Her Autobiography: An Account of Her Last Years and Her Ethnobotanic Contributions*, edited by Florence C. Shipek, 24, 27.
- 35 “Among their variations...pearl in a mussel”: Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red*, 80.
- 35 “a devotee’s tears...brighten the light”: Ammachi, *The Thousand Names of the Divine Mother*, 434.
- 35 “when we pray...misled by these”: Ammachi, *The Thousand Names*, 442.
- 35 “It had never been any part...for her own best way”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 231.
- 36 “God, he wrote...absence of self”: Jabes, “Notebook, II,” *Book of Dialogue*, 63.
- 36 “The book leafs through us”: Jabes, “Post Dialogue,” *Dialogue*, 69.
- 38 “It is the place...which covers them”: Diane Wakoski, “Night Blooming Jasmine,” *The Geography of Home*, edited by Christopher Buckley and Gary Young, 399.
- 38 “tapa tryagni santapta...fire of misery”: *The Thousand Names of the Divine Mother*, 357.
- 39 “I am not pleased...It was bitter”: Gertrude Stein, “Pink Melon Joy,” *Really Reading Gertrude Stein*, edited by Judy Grahn, 111.
- 40 “We are living in a system...insane system”: Joy Harjo, “When we were born we remembered everything,” *A Map to the Next World*, 17.
- 40 “a book is a suicide postponed”: E.M. Cioran, quoted by Heather McHugh in *The Father of the Predicaments*, 39.

- 41 “So much I want to drift...a little easier”: Joanne Kyger, *Going On: Selected Poems 1958-1980*, 53.
- 42 “the conscious self...controls them all”: Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, 310.
- 42 “If ever I flee...comforts me”: Chase Twichell, “Snow,” *The Snow Watcher*, 48.
- 43 “Isn’t all writing nature writing?”: Henry Taylor.
- 46 “The truth’s in you...There’s nothing to it”: Alice Notley, *Desamere*, 82.
- 46 “World is divine...rock, water. Divine”: Notley, *Desamere*, 118.
- 50 “I must have been...have been brought up”: Mary Austin, *Experiences Facing Death*, 28.
- 50 “learn then to love the questions”: Maso, *AVA*.
- 51 “I’m not sitting...writing itself”: Notley, *Desamere*, 126.
- 51 “why stay in college...nothing at all”: song by Talking Heads. “Life During Wartime,” *Stop Making Sense*, 1984.
- 54 “The very proximity...enviable tranquility”: Carol Lee Flinders, *Enduring Grace: Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics*, 13.
- 54 “Worry about money also depressed Dorothy’s spirits”: William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, 209.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) co-founded with Peter Maurin The Catholic Worker in 1933, a radical Catholic lay people’s service and activist organization. Prior to her Catholic conversion in 1927, she had been a journalist for the Socialist papers, the *Call*, *The Masses*, and the *Liberator*. Her passion for social justice was brought into full expression with the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality for the homeless and unemployed, a lifestyle of living simply and serving those in need without government funding or salary, and without preaching to those served; her writings in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper and her books based on her personal diaries, experiences of finding how to live in practice the fundamental principles of Catholicism/Christianity; her public speaking, and her activism opposing all wars.

From ages 16 to 24, i was involved in the Catholic Worker, starting with volunteer work at the Los Angeles CW (1975-1976), co-founding a CW in Santa Cruz as a Community Studies major (1976-1977), dropping out of school to create and direct a San Diego CW (1977-1982), and ending up back with the LACW (1982-1983).

- 57 “we dressed as planets and the stars”: Maso, *AVA*, 200.
- 57 “I see a little clearly...expression in blindness”: Maso, *AVA*, 201.
- 57 “There will be a book...you are writing”: Rainer Maria Rilke, “Der Darkening Ground,” *Rilke’s Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy, 92.
- 57 “That you are a spiritual seeker...having to try”: Shree Maa.

- 57 “if you come back, look for me”: Maso, *AVA*, 117.
- 58 “to speak in a language...as it separates”: Maso, *AVA*, 163.
- 61 “In July...over the Southern country”: Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 308.
- 62 “Mysterious epidemic...their absence”: Jabes, *Book of Questions: El, or the Last Book*, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop, 75.
- 62 “The Owens Valley...illegal dump sites”: Carolyn McConnell, “Closed Circuit,” *Orion*, 20:3 (2001): 41.
- 62 “I like that name...wrinkled cheeks”: Austin, “Water Borders,” *Land of Little Rain*, 127.
- 63 “Je suis celui...to the point”: Jabes, *Book of Questions*, 80.
- 63 “Does being lonely...to be consoled”: Jabes, *Questions*, 103.
- 63 “Oh sweet...a new way”: Anne Carson, “Catallus: Carmina: I am Ver Egelidos Refert Tepores (Now Spring Brings Warmth),” *Men in the Off Hours*, 39.
- 63 “Other examples...in the United States”: Brent M. Haddad and Christopher J. Brown, “Drop Bid to Revive the Dying Salton Sea,” *Los Angeles Times* 15 July 2002: M5.
- 64 “Nothing more dramatic...keeps us in practice”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 212.
- 64 “There is a vast upheaval...concealed my excitement”: Anne Carson, “Ordinary Time: Virginia Woolf and Thucydides on War,” *Men in the Off Hours*, 8.
- 68 “In April...true and absolute”: Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 198.
- 73 “And we...we decay”: Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies and the Sonnets to Orpheus*, 59.
- 74 “Out of the fog...the space between”: Edmond Jabes, *Book of Questions*, 21.
- 75 “the great sea...up in joy”: Uvavnuq, *Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women*, edited by Jane Hirshfield, 193.
- 79 “Mary went back...handball at Noriegas”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 297.
- 82 “I finally had to sell...hard all the time”: Delfina Cuero, *Delfina Cuero: Her Autobiography: An Account of Her Last Years and Her Ethnobotanic Contributions*, edited by Florence C. Shipek, 60-61.
- 82 “left alone...solitary confinement”: William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, 335.
- 83 “By 1875...first homeless people”: Lawrence Hogue, *All the Wild and Lonely Places: Journeys in a Desert Landscape*, 119.

- 83 “Another difficulty...Indians simply starved”: Hogue, *All the Wild*, 120.
- 83 “The less familiar...ecologies of the mind”: Gary Snyder, “The Practice of the Wild,” *The Sacred Earth*, 69.
- 84 “In 1947, Tanya...physical abuse”: Hogue, 161.
- 84 “So many...originally followed it”: Hogue, *All the Wild*, 160-161.
- 84 “We used to hunt...food for my children”: Delfina Cuero, *Delfina Cuero*, 62.
- 85 “I have known...it works in us”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 368.
- 85 “At odds with his work...then Fate intervened”: Gretel Ehrlich, *John Muir: Nature’s Visionary*, 54.
- 85 “This affliction...rest be damned”: Ehrlich, *John Muir*, 58.
- 86 “Mind, conscious mind...mind in flowers”: Mary Austin quoted by Lawrence Hogue, *All the Wild*, 217.
- 88 “I have always been...in terms of novels”: Dorothy Day quoted by William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, 222.
- 89 “The Land of Little Rain...I remember them still”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 298.
- 89 “When the demonstration...one Catholic layman”: Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 189.
- 89 “San Diego County...centered at Long Beach”: Jerry Schad, “Roam-O-Rama: A Guide to Unexpected San Diego and Beyond.” *The San Diego Reader* 9 August 2001: 70.
- 90 “I think to myself...as long as we live”: Dorothy Day quoted by Miller, 341.
- 91 “I enjoy solitude...to be taken seriously”: Tasha Tudor, *The Private World of Tasha Tudor* by Richard W. Brown, 38.
- Tasha Tudor is probably in her 90s now, though she’s not telling. She is an illustrator and author, primarily of children’s books. She lives in Vermont, has a spectacular garden from which many of her illustrations derive, makes nearly everything, including her own Victorian peasant-woman type clothes. Her books and way of living have been a companion to me nearly my whole life.
- 91 “There was a part for her...she learned to write”: Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 289.
- 92 “Poets tend to hover...eruption of happiness”: Fanny Howe, “Doubt,” *Best American Poetry 2001*, 117.
- 92 “increasingly all my writing...called it poetry”: Howe, *Best*, 255.
- 93 “It had been for a long time...a favorite tale”: Austin, *Earth Horizon*, 266.

- 94 “Feeling that...write of the West”: Donald P. Ringler, from introduction to Austin’s *One Hundred Miles on Horseback*, xiii.
- 95 “I was out of it...worn at the edges”: Austin, “The Fakir,” in *Stories from the Country of Lost Borders*, edited by Mary Pryse, 215.
- 96 “To follow the dark...off some fruit”: Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, 180.
- 95 “Have no desire...in every way”: Shree Maa.
- 97 “If they would do...all the answers”: Dorothy Day quoted in William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography*, 330.
- 98 “P.S. Winning or losing...present, and future”: Sylvia Plath, “Cambridge Notes,” from “Notebooks, February 1956,” *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, 255.
- 99 “we have to lock arms...Shaquille O’Neal”: John Balzar, “From Bad to Worse,” *Los Angeles Times Book Review* 16 December 2001: 5.
- 100 “no matter what...keeps a balance”: Dorothy Day quoted by Stanley Vishnewski in his introduction to Day’s *On Pilgimmage: The Sixties*, 8.
- 101 “In the word lumiere...insular words,” you said”: Edmond Jabes, *Book of Questions*, 65.

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