

# *The Blue Notebooks*



Dudley M. Marchi

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Raleigh, NC

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## Preface

The *Blue Notebooks* represent a poet's experience of the world as well as the growth of an aesthetic awareness. Born in Fort Myers, Florida, raised in Somerville and Newton Massachusetts, traveling throughout U.S. and Canada, visiting and living in London, Amherst, Hadley, Northampton, Jamaica, Paris, Oxford, Shutesbury, Chapel Hill, Toulouse, Rome, Munich, Venice, Siena, Florence, Athens, Delphi, Barcelona, Rothenburg, New York City, Astoria, Bermuda, St Augustine, Bordeaux, Raleigh, and Emerald Isle. These are the places which permeate this work. Some names? Sappho, Eliot, Yeats, Baudelaire, Blake, Keats, Shelly, Stein, Desbordes-Valmore, Rimbaud, Dante, Catullus, Dickinson, Pound, Stevens, Rilke, Plath, and Shakespeare. Beyond the poets? Socrates, Saint Teresa of Avila, Montaigne, Plato, Aristotle, Heraclitus, Buddha, Thoreau, Jesus, Proust, Joyce, Kafka, Woolf, and Camus. My family, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers have had a profound influence on my life and writing. My sincere thanks to them.

D.M.M.  
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# The Blue Notebooks



## Bird of Paris

I.

Leonard is gone. Something I might tell  
falls from my desk, as sparrows  
do sometimes. Today in a dream,  
I seemed to play, without him.  
Air pushed through door cracks.

Nothing can help me. It's fear no doubt  
that murmurs with half lips. A square  
of rain is likelier to appear,  
than our woes to cease.  
Then the impulse to hide friends  
like infants in grass.

Look: everyone passes here at least once.  
Fire in the afternoon, petals of smoke.  
Leonard cried while something burned  
in your cellar. There is hurt in this line.

II.

The blues is dead here, but don't  
leave the sadness. Friday is almost over,  
music sighs. Open an empty bottle  
for something like an answer . . .  
They drift everywhere you glance.

He was all things, but airplanes listen too,  
become clouds of emptiness. Nothing like him.  
Thoughts never dwindle. Matches turn cold  
like the water of memories. I was right.

Leonard is gone. But don't leave the sadness.  
It is a long and diminishing street.  
Maybe he'll leave something. Perhaps he'll stay.  
But don't be fooled. We'd only break him.

## Metro

I.

It is forbidden to climb or fall  
as soon as the doors are open.

This is his welcome on a Sunday afternoon.  
Breathing hard and steps of liquid  
create the light he becomes buried in.  
Something pierces the ankle.  
The earth of the mind that no music  
loves today. He lifts the voice but  
from too far off. The light is thick,  
and after a climb, there are garlic,  
bones, and congas. The smell  
of strangers.

Who seem to have hearts,  
but live in their own silence,  
while rain lingers. Who hang  
on a sleeping awareness.

And all is calm except for living.

It's true people change little  
in five hundred years.  
Some are new and polished,  
others squirm with faces  
like cut wet leather.

II.

Someone is alone talking to himself  
waiting to be reborn  
or to begin a fresh scar.

He was left with two hands thinking,  
palms up, fishing for a dream.  
He was almost starting to get old,  
but a barrage of delicate statues  
brought back that storm  
of something acquired by practice:  
the sense and nimbleness  
of the alphabet.

There is hunger in his walk.  
He travels, swallows dead things.  
And once, while listening  
to an organ play, in a church  
surrounded by water,  
he thought he saw  
saints peeking from an arch.

The ride lights the skull.  
A frozen lunch waits. Talk to him.

## You Could Sleep this Time

This is why we stayed in the hills.  
A soft blue line  
protects us from the sting of night.

You,  
a stranger:  
Hold me in the sad peace of rain.  
A finger is moving slowly  
and wind catches in my throat  
to feel the fever of your conversation.

We sleep in the dark.  
Yellow eyes rustle  
fear that turns into a moment.  
Your eyes have deep places  
they swim up my neck  
with the vague scent of something born.

This is not the only place  
where we can finally be life size.  
But here there is time  
to follow me further back  
and into the galaxy of my nerves.

Now we hear swans  
waking from their beds.

The warm comes. The morning comes.  
Language enters without a sound.  
There is another image  
of you shaking out your dreams,  
  
and the air picked clean.

## Getting Ready to Leave

### *Boat*

The sea is like a split dream,  
water rushing in.  
My empty breath is drunk  
and in a nightmare drinks wine  
from a bucket.  
I run into redeeming air.

But it's still early,  
gendarmes whisper in the sunrise.  
I awake from the sand  
and spend my last morning watching.

Not really having slept  
I fall in love with smells  
under a window  
while sounds slip by  
and make private places public.  
Look the day is moving

Again.  
Day spilling into night,  
It's a song making the difference  
and the warm hand of light  
or some coffee to bring me around.  
I get lost in afternoon's fingers.

I is not the center  
neither is the sea  
even when curling around itself  
to play with my head.

Yes,  
I symbolize too much  
but you said you liked it best  
when waves become the blood  
of life.

And this is how it must end.  
Time to leave  
Brittany  
the graceful people  
and the coast.

*Street*

But it's getting late  
and there's no money.  
So we make the morning move  
and turn left at the foreign embassy.

This must be an important place  
where time laps at hours  
like this page does.

Light keeps rising  
higher to your eyelids  
which I remember  
were soft in the nimble moonlight.

But this is day  
I must go again and challenge  
the swells of city laughter.

And how many daylights  
will be so quick and full  
as the contours of your conversation  
and some friendly shade?

We keep on running,  
then become a story.  
Our breath keeps up  
and Europe rolls along  
with me in its way.



*Afternoon*

Suddenly I raise my head  
a cloud gushes  
spitting a racket to bewilder.  
Meaning is lacking here  
but the event is recorded

and the sky is yours.

Worlds above and inside  
listen to the moment become,  
which was not so memorable  
as a breathing hand  
about to write one more line.

The bliss of a shadow  
crawls over my personal  
asylum of blue,  
the echo of your thoughts,  
and a telephone where  
I cannot connect.

It will never happen, this  
classic performance  
of life.  
But we have some words, a summer  
or two to smooth the flames  
and quiet the voices.

I can feel the skull  
singing me its blackness  
where storms and waves provide  
lost words that the body loves.

Again in my sleep there are faces  
but this time melting  
and the water runs between us.

A flower opens its eyes  
you breathe  
and the only thing that moves  
is your endless day.

## Desire

This is not the language  
that makes us laugh.  
That is perishable  
and easy to lose  
emptying into the slow of a dream  
among the dark inaudible voices.

It was long ago  
in towns like ours  
where new born widows  
made love to floods of images.  
It was liberty  
and the inexpressible universe  
a new thing that would bring  
white rain.

All day long we lie awake,  
as a sandstorm divides the ceiling.  
How did these raw waters  
warmed by your words  
plunge down between us?

We made no sounds that day  
nothing changed  
there was nothing more to say  
except to talk music  
and bury the dead.

Rebellion seems complete  
yet it is never complete.

Ice shining on the windows,  
our hands, a rented room,  
blue teeth in a painting.  
You hold me and pretend to sleep  
and in defiance  
converse with dark forests.  
Then, something lullabies  
the breath awake.

One thing is certain  
it is never certain  
and we are not  
creatures of the air.

## In the Light of that Evening

i

This is the one called mother  
twisting in the belly  
of her netherworld  
and her husband  
stalking the curtains.

Screaming forth  
a slap for the little ass  
while clenched fists  
applaud the day  
watery dreams  
and the blue palms  
and the crystal waves of light  
and the bath of her skin.

April's sun  
here comes the son  
a final tongue on tooth  
white knuckled letters from the south  
flushed with joy  
and weeping with life.

ii

In the old photograph  
posing in her lap  
in some New Hampshire forest  
she breathes the thick green air  
and tells me not to pick  
my knees  
those amber scabs in the dusk.

Those dream hours  
sober blue  
sleeping white-throated  
swimming in the misty pool  
screaming like a dark river god  
in the mud  
in the brook and its chattering weeds  
little fishes nibbling slime  
squealing in terrible delight  
awake  
and cry for the balmy  
shadow of her bed.

iii

What if I now fail to awake  
or am seized like a droplet  
clinging  
to the torn web called life?

Under the words you promised me  
an everlasting sea  
Bracing against the ugly swells  
and the needles to my nape  
nerves like quilts of moonlight  
this ship rudderless mama.

You, the constancy of earth  
heart of providential iron  
I sing like silver  
and am lost again  
in the cold beads of rain  
so far away  
I hush  
and can smell the length of your neck  
flickering  
then vanishing like a sinking coin.

## When I Was Young

I.

I was the thin boy  
always the one turning  
with mixed green.

I had a frightful walk  
lovely liquid eyes  
holding an unexpected word.

I could never tell anyone  
about the polished flowers  
about the secret clouds.

Let no one see me in season.  
Someday I'll return  
and bring an unexpected gift.

I got this idea  
to plant my legs in the sea  
and call the ones holding my neck  
to warn them of my heart.

They will hang like gestures  
under a slow fire  
waiting to burst  
in the dark rain.

Under one blue star  
I would shiver in the wind  
like some wild thing in winter.



II.

Early in the morning — in my room.  
I would dream of feathers  
in the light blue light, and kiss  
the warm face awakening me.

I would slowly count the oases  
shimmering on the walls, the camels  
beneath my bed, breathing hard  
in the suburban summer heat.

When I was young. Dream at night.  
Sometimes nights of blue rain  
and wise spiders crawling on  
the eternity of my Venetian blinds.

When I was young, Indians  
coming over a hill, someone saying  
something in a Chinese language.  
I'd be scared, bury myself in the cool  
side of the pillow, captured  
by Christian pirates.

My room was the last frontier. Hiding  
in the cracks of the floor,  
hair trembling in the invisible wind,  
holding my breath  
under the heavy atoms.

## Mojave Reflection

The memories come after sunset.  
why leave Sante Fe?  
rhyming with Albuquerque in the heat  
of the Glorietta turnpike  
where even collections of national monuments  
on the still maps smile  
or roads curl like nerves  
eating 300 miles on route 40 east  
the tragic beauty disappearing  
into a white coffee cup.

Yesterday drove  
and split the burning  
of primitive dust and silence  
like a thousand bats  
then a cozy road  
a neon restaurant  
and hello my name is  
house of cars and guns and may  
I serve cream on the side  
instead of dry brain  
in the desert?  
I'm just a white slave doing  
time until the wrinkle of dawn  
passes and oh obsessive needs  
and the smell of her breath  
as a head hits the table,  
asleep.

How long ago was Needles?  
Could go all night but think instead  
at last of silent cars  
and engine bliss only ninety  
dusk then desert steam  
and nothing but fists of wheels  
and not so fast this damned pedal  
struggles with the blue interstate  
and the desert bush.  
searching like blind flies.  
and how far is Nuevo Laredo?  
as devils scream in the night.

## Snapshot

the earliest memory is at 3 a.m.  
distant kitchen in dark humidity  
grandfather coming home  
from the night shift  
startling silverware  
and the sound of voices  
the recurring thunder of a spiral staircase  
as a child awakes in sweat  
blinking at a gang of moths.

and somehow the night's mouth  
opened like a wound  
made him think of these  
worn images  
as the voice of mother rises in the air  
between the need for coolness  
and black and white  
which bubble over and moisten the inner  
ear.

## Nearing Baudelaire at Midnight

Never seen blackbirds flying  
but I've felt like crying  
of winter and ice  
and things that I know.

In your room  
hell has no sunshine  
only a blue breeze  
of sensibilities  
lost moons  
and pained animals with flashing eyes,

The last time I see  
that you were meant just for me.

You say there is no satisfaction  
in a world of naked days  
sick and tired of visions  
and what you dreamed of last night.

You climb the green wall  
to drink vacant paradise  
and the spiders in your bedroom  
can no longer find  
a word  
to draw a smile  
from the stranger.

The last time I see  
that you were meant just for me.

## Even Cowboys Get the Blues

The kind that I mean  
scrape matches on zodiac boots  
clean living versus the machine  
(I really want out of this bourbon smile)  
to cut the heart of headlights  
and feel the dusty team  
of cactus arm  
and dogie thigh.

Tonight in quiet nests  
and in deserts  
i look as I've looked before  
at stars falling  
and long to study your lips  
as moustache plays guitar  
and twilight's needles  
drop blue details  
made beautiful  
by horses and red lariats  
and the stillness stinging your face.

## Christmas

Nobody knows when he was born — out of the luminosity  
complete with tired paint brushes — *consumatum est*.  
It is as if we could live on a rustic gift, or some winter  
love in a grey corner, or just wait for the sun to stay.  
But christianize pagan celebration and wait forever.  
It was a question of the Saturnalia that was in the wind,  
and those tight-lipped fathers were no fools. There  
was no particular celebration of Him, just the exchange  
of candles and dolls, and maybe a bottle of Falernian  
or two. Back then the solstice was shot through with life;  
there was no emphasis on the birth of the son rising  
through the winter darkness to save us. New England  
finally triumphs in the nineteenth century, and carols  
today smell like roast beef and the capitalist stink.  
But oh, where is the son now?

## August

Blue umpires on a Sunday afternoon  
the count was full  
and sister tagged along with stories  
of how she hated father.

I was lousy on the base paths  
and we lost.

How my neck burned  
as the dark chain  
of her bicycle  
clanked circles in the driveway.

I could have shielded her  
with my thin back  
but she received the blows  
those deadly hands  
continuing to fall  
on her bruised soul.

I hear veins scream  
kick the bedroom wall  
and try to forget her animal eyes.



## The Problem with Miracles

To Jeanne from Chinon

Now I know  
how you could forget  
that everything else exists.  
The alouettes  
play in the summer flames  
and a jar of poppies  
glows on the table.  
The hills seem empty  
since you've been gone.

I'm thirsty you say.

Sometimes feeling small  
away from papa.  
Others, marveling at  
the bliss of blood  
and foreign conversation.

A heart's pain designs a supple sword  
and we are left  
with those hard months  
the evil grasses  
chilling your lips.

The fact is  
that when night swallows your hands  
the lightning comes  
to roar in your veins.

War is fading  
you choke and cannot order words,  
then become Saint  
in the last light of autumn.  
Helmeted but still  
bright as a flower  
not trying to escape.

In the morning they pick through  
your warm bones  
and heart spilling onto the ground.

## Rimbaud's Letter

To Vitalie from Harar

I have received your package  
of last year.

The mail takes six months  
since this village is separated  
from the sea by deserts.

Yesterday it rained.  
Very desolate here. I'll be  
a millionaire soon!  
Outrageous Abyssinia!

A Catholic mission here,  
a French priest, native children  
whose mothers I love but . . .  
A great deal here:

filthy food, thick coffee and yellow air.  
This is not the saddest part. Today  
I greeted a young nun,  
her smile was like a fresh cut.

## City

Another life is being led  
through the patterns of traffic.  
Working woman with violet heart  
sliced in two  
looks for her lover  
Come to me near the river he said.

But she can't.  
Must work like papa  
must count tomatoes  
and cut pork.  
Quiet hands sort onions  
in the dirty moonlight.  
She could be sitting now  
turning soft pages  
without a smell.

But she must express the store,  
as her apron or her heel  
listens to a blank  
shopper's reasoning.  
Waiting for awhile to skip upstairs  
white wine and peaches,  
there's baby too.  
Head tries to forget.

She dies again every evening  
thinking about living,  
and the tired bread  
of her back  
waiting for day.

Open forms of evening  
dark coming up  
we admire her  
honest as cotton.

Look at her colors.  
They'll keep until she's ready  
to bury them  
as her child looks up  
and reaches for mice  
that peek from hollow shade.

## Eclipse

Tonight a god or two looks to us  
for assurance, wondering why  
we have forgotten what we tried  
so hard to learn.

There must be a decision,  
whether the kiss of a beach  
on some morning is worth  
the green core of the human will.

The poetic gift is not rare,  
numbers ride down hills  
on golden ponies at dawn  
and daily help to produce  
the bliss of summer harmony.

But across a field the wind blows,  
a wind that makes one forget  
what a memory is, or what joy  
a sad grey can bring.

In the cove of a lyric  
an old ship lays enchanted  
laden with alligator eggs.

Satin mahogany hides in a dry corner of the hold,  
waiting for something to be shattered  
and to quietly breed another youthful vessel.

But listen to the quadruple of any voice,  
and something hides the darkened moon:  
vermilion explosion of an old dream.

There must be a decision  
between the fleeting breath of war  
and the sheer landscape of struggle.

## Memphis Blues

No wonder ancient lips get ready  
to move. There are night loops  
of city buses, a child running,  
trying to leave home.

His heart is as robust  
as a coca-cola truck.

Sweat leaves a stain in the air.  
The perfect rhythm lock  
lying awake in the next room  
with garlic greens and Hank Williams.

Then the tension of aunts  
starts talk around the table  
and the coffees and southern moons.



## Dream of Truth

As if nothing else were worth it. The magnificent poetry of reply does not understand paradox or the blue and white winds that make each attempt at understanding nearly useless. It has been called the triumphant purposiveness of victory, the domination of that authentic earth of family. An offering is an easy way out; an open secret is a hateful sight to so many. The old weakness / true love modality. A **sincere** pang of immortal grief is hung around the neck of the mistaken son, the misused pig: cut too late for sweet bacon yet too early for raspberry Jell-O. Another instance of adopted identity. As rusted weapons slide into scabbards, the jeweled humanists, the loving fathers, the lying doctors, the confused mothers gaze at the silver promise of **lie** and combat the world with a great galore of meat and smoke and the final ash of **what is**. Let someone else restore the corpse of victory, cracked hands, dry memories of a tree. The more true, the more likely to disappear. An evening bird ravages the crop of the daily search for the love, the home, the true, the one, the soul, the body, the other, the word, the poem, **the truth**. But the poem is dying, **you** live far away, and in the burning enclosure of a room, stones drift into the history of your death (the death of your history) — a land of dirty snow and fruit. Another cliché falls onto a cold desk. A search is needed for the next turn to take as the sand of a winter's wish becomes a plant with a shoulder crawling up a leg. A nightmare with lips of morphine, the lungs of a voice, a trellis of mistaken love, and the deafening silence of an unwritten letter **home**.

Now a bit of dog, a tired sidewalk, a rotting paper cup.  
A vague moon spies two bodies in a desert, a lizard expands  
its breasts under the tough gaze of circumstance, under  
the malaise of deceit. In the frustrated mind of water angels  
wait for glass photographs of horses to soothe the quantity of  
outdoors, the timidity of certain extremities, and **beauty** which  
defies the **intelligence**. No one will awake from this dream because  
no one sleeps very well these days. You were born somewhere  
in the south. The wind was red. The false calm tore your hair.  
You were born on the steps of a motel. You mix the clouds  
with ugly verses, and thirst for what you think is solitude.  
Transparent being, yourself, feather of a century, **child**  
of brute tonality, You will pass away to appear, then all will be.

## After the Storm

After the storm we were left with ourselves huddled in some corner waiting to remember what to do next. In the next room gray light astonished a wall, and questioned the existence of our silent energy. We walked on the ceiling for awhile, put bandages on assorted fingers, and peeked outside to assess the damage. The evening sat heavy on our eyelids. The sky searched for a tone it had once known, while the wind ripened into autumn ritual, waiting for us to admire the porcelain of its breath. Somewhere a child is running loose, a bird is startled toward a field's edge: living bird phantom. Then there is the darkness, finally, we go on speaking to the night, get tired, and speak of childhood, skinny mist rising off of waterfalls, wandering animals sniffing for sure-footed food. Something happens, absence makes itself known to us. Some other thing dominates the world, breathes dimly, lives for the flesh of dreamers, who squeeze their legs with hearts pounding, huddled in some corner. There is knowledge in the eye, but it is in the broken rains that we seek answers. Energy reaches out so far that it denies ourselves, raising a dusty window, digging for onions in the moonlight, sitting on a lean bullet of silence. An orphan of simplicity knocks on the forest, restores mystery and kindles youth, brings cold soup on a hot summer's day, becomes beautiful and silent. We have a broken wall, automobile fenders, blue jars, and must be patient with the new shapes, the naked colors, the orbits of words. The nails and boards of our arms become drugged with the harsh stars, the pointless battle of planets, once clean faces, and a garden full of weeds. A cricket passes an open door, we disguise ourselves, and become part of the new world.

## What Happened near Tu Fu's Garden

1

He waited for you  
in the warm blizzard light.  
You went to him, learned his worth.  
You have tasted gardens, vexations,  
torn his letters,  
watched the sun eat words.

12

One day  
he waited in the wrong blizzard.  
You pushed him into a rowboat.  
A meadow lost its glow.

53

You walked.  
Wind splashed the morning.  
You waited for him  
  
in the shade of a plum tree.

74

The river was cold.  
The grass spread out  
for six or seven miles.

97

Now, your door stays shut,  
dancing clothes idle.  
The room flows with music lost  
in the evening  
as the moon moves.

## Midnight Menu for Lovers

Others may sing of volatile allurements, and for those that play the game, something is truly bred. The movement of space and nothing that is worth missing.

These times. Twilight no longer soothes the breast, but dinner will bring prosperity, indiscretion, a purple evening and a drowsy time that lets others wait. Maybe that space where suspension lives, a dry dialectical drunkenness, the greatest of all arts . . .

The pop of chocolate chestnuts makes a nice accompaniment to the fresh croquettes and the almond croissant of praise which greet the pure canopy of your love.

The onion tarte à *la parisienne* fills the air while peach pastilles mix with the lemon moths. The cold ortolans are enjoyed and conversation turns to the spicier endearments of noisettes italiennes.

Cinnamon scones unarranged and the order of pepper tartelettes stir the body into the middle of a little warm water. When moistening is complete the fermentation of American whisperm begins.

For savory western recipe of virtuosity, let myth of watercress toss the rich garden vegetables, stir the oyster coquilles, and plunge the soul into some edible brambleberry steak.

The name of it comes, for sure, from the suckling pig of the Occitane, the chipolata of moral sausage, the boiled pudding à *l'anglaise*, and the gazpacho with heaping sides of mincemeat fritters.

It is time. Somewhere the cream of Christmas omelette will make a difference.

## Journey

I awake that morning as the wind moves over the leaves. We climb the walls of Montségur, an arrow pierces my armor and I tumble to the soft red earth of Southern France. The counts of Toulouse keep on fighting under the cold sun while I walk through a garden in the underworld. The moon is blue and on a nearby hill I crawl through a grove of wet elms and think of reflections on a dark lake in the afternoon. I try to rise again from the bloody field. Oh, the fire in my bones! It is night and groaning flesh sweats in crumpled black steel as I try to pull myself from under my Lord's horse. The promise of glory and riches he had told me! My heart tightens and hears the smell of screams and waiting among my friends and their bodies and waiting for someone in a white robe to bring me water and waiting. I listen and feel some light, spend the evening praying, thinking of my vassals off in the distance drinking, swearing, and wondering where I am. Where is that victory? What is the true earth, and that thing called justice, that thing called simplicity? What is that scratching behind my eyes? Now I can taste the smooth pebbles of a mountain stream. I remember that day. We stopped and rested in the shade of a tree.

## Blue Poem

Logo, locus, the place where things happen.  
Multiplicity of moons.  
Irradiation of memory,  
and buildings in the wet sunset.

The dirty pink arms. The dark blue eyes  
of twilight. A year passes  
on the way home.

Home was a souvenir, sad grass winding  
around old pears, laughter from the  
front porch in the dark, summer trees  
in the warm wind.

Mornings  
where sun filters through  
the rain. The cold walls forget  
and I drift awhile. Purple waves  
of an old story.

The canvas of evening  
ends again, while stars stimulate  
the cold parks  
dotted with still trees.

Demystification of confusion  
cleans the light, falls away,  
leaving time and pieces of eternity  
floating lost in a cloud.



## Night

Between two stars a cloud burns.  
Light becomes lost in mean watercolors.

In a wind of dust and roses, we wait,  
while outside the curtained windows  
the city laughs and sings wildly:  
a multiplicity of cities chattering  
throughout the air.

As the night becomes cool and green  
we hear the grief of unborn animals.

In a dream, salted by the winds,  
we sail the seas,  
and try to stay warm  
in beach caves.

In the morning, waking in a field  
we see birds  
fighting for pieces of the sun.

## May Poems

#1

Fierce blue ocean, somewhere in the mind.  
Large white flowers, somewhere on a museum wall.  
The black contours of petals, emphasizing  
that afternoon in a large room,  
miles from the hot noise.

And through a turnstile is still another  
world. Vertical gray and bloody rose,  
horizontal black and green. More  
untitled abstracts, dirty beaches waiting  
in the distance, dead weekends,  
and the foreheads of sad children.

Problems of another evening.  
How to get to the end. Cool liquids,  
stretching, and thin books. Clean windows  
and new skylines.

# 2

Under the sunset of the one hundred and thirty-seventh  
avenue, walk people with emeralds in their eyes, cool cotton  
breasts, and pieces of the universe.

One million smiles, deceptive curbstones, localized  
perspectives. Sometimes it is like this. Others look  
at the sky below, feet barely touching the earth.  
We think about moving about in bottled air. Any day now.  
More lights, more people. Any moment now:  
free interpretation of the landscape.

The winds turn grey and through slim buildings grim  
alternatives. Puppies in windows, red sneakers,  
and old smells. Then, the glow of American frescoes.

# 3

Lost in the botanical garden. Birthplace of the thin skin  
of Indian lands. Thousand year old blossoms under  
the wood pine. Stepping carefully over the cold grass.  
Then the meaning of pain. It turns blue and trickles  
down dark Chinese trees. The laughing  
and talking of small round voices. One sentence  
touching another. A forehead brushes a cloud:  
white teeth ripening in the electric sun.

In a valley of the city, a mountain laurel slowly opens,  
its secret slipping around the bold rocks, before  
the deep rains come crashing down.

# 4

In the cool white room, green peacocks spread  
their tails and walk around in the cave of your thoughts.

Hours before sunshine, distant lands behind the forehead.  
It's the time of year to search for warm grasslands, lean  
on each other, and drink old wine in the new shade.  
In the shade's grace we wonder how language  
emanates from your collar.

Over the hills to the east, the sky is still blue they say.  
But here the wind is dense and the stars wet. The birds  
fly so low that they can hear the loose moments  
between your words.

## Dreaming over Africa

The wind is so fat over the Kalahari. There are no words to describe it. Giraffes gallop across the dry riverbed, dust rising in the slow motion. It is the hot season, time to squeeze tubers and watch a little water dribble down my son's laughing face. Far away, I was told, other people with big wheels and hard animals are trying to kill the sun. This is difficult to understand. In the evening around the fire, my family chews dry roots and talks about the gazelles to be hunted tomorrow. The orange moon is smooth tonight as laughter gets lost in the honest blue hills, our voices disappearing in the bigness of the dark. The rains will come soon. We'll live in the trees awhile, hair getting long in the wet branches.

## Liberty in the Backyard

The dry city breeze leaves our foreign guests speechless,  
on the roof, dancing in the pulse of lights, their smiles  
as nourishing as children's lips. On the roof we could see  
the rest of the world. Angels slept in hammocks, listened  
to us talking under the generous sky: then planets weeping  
on the primal horizon. Somewhere there were birds  
dreaming, cats being born, and neighbors basking  
in the light of their televisions.

In rooms below, strong ghosts sneak around cool corners.  
Long ghosts that cut the moonlight, and make small voices,  
waiting to speak. Again, the wind goes silent, people sleeping  
below, their breath warming the red rain in the black sky.

## Liberty

I.

Liberty and generosity, quiet ships on the new water.  
Here is that other life. Tired bones regenerating  
themselves. Conquering the crops. Here we are.  
That red flame in the clean sky.

Liberty and genocide. Rose colored dust on hard skin.  
Bathing in long moons, grandfather's stories of wild elks  
by the blue rocks. Crane tails flowing from buffalo robes.  
Here comes a ship, the smell of olives. Far-away frogs  
singing near the water scatter in the half light.  
Ships full of voices, hairy faces on the turquoise sea.  
The big ships and writing, the forest burning.  
Look they say, look at all that land. New lives.  
My family's memories resting under the water rushes.  
The wind roars over the hunting grounds, blazes under  
the black sun. Old feet kicking new land.



## II.

Fighter planes over the city today. In the brassy moonlight, people drink things, laugh, and wonder. The birds watch and wait. Hope is lost in the thick air, buried by hard windows, strangled in the sad weeds. What's left? Voices floating in the stolen moment, celebrating the deaths of others, in the swollen night.

The wet streets. The moon drops its white nail on the window ledge. Sitting before different pages with the same hands. Soon. All is lost. What matters is to do, to do something before violet light fills the air already filled with waiting and waking and sleeping between the thick choices.

## Revelation and Development

Because that's one of the better things we can do.  
Writing on water, writing on air. Beyond the clear  
outlines of the golden city, there are twilight filled rooms,  
the purple rustling of a page where the sun falls and leaves  
behind the world's agony, as a gentle face smiles. The wonder  
of the stars is known, and for a second, the dark cavern  
where days and nights are spent is bright with white wings  
and delightful animals, which come out of hiding.

The crimson of day doesn't reach here. Only nocturnal  
blue, thoughts of desert journeys, the branches of sweet  
song quickening breath, visions drifting away.  
And this youth pushes its head through the liquid of life,  
becomes alive, and speaks in silvery tongues.

A silent lamp watches the moment last forever.  
It is like a walk to the edge of the woods, a daring  
feeling on the neck, the nose filled with a new bloom.  
Hyacinth embraces summer's peace of land. The brook  
runs on, into the future, into the past. Hands are filled  
with pieces of planets, with secrets of crooked trees.  
This, the sacred garment of existence.  
Oh, that orbit of wonder,

your beautiful blue soul.

## After the War

I.

Things tried to sort themselves out.  
We walked through time, dull moonlight,  
quintessential earth.

Woke up in the morning.  
Cleared a new beginning.  
Where was everything?

Sitting in the morning sun  
and not knowing why.

When the earth starts to glow,  
who will understand what it means?  
All the scientists are dead.  
Why, why, why?

Time leaves slivers in a heartbeat,  
whispering. What is not understood.  
Who cares? Leave it. Pick it up.

Earth goes to sleep forever.  
Light hanging in the burnt air.

Who says that in the morning  
the sun will shine? That the ponies  
will awake at dawn?

On the roof it is bright,  
maybe it's morning.

II.

A long way to go. Thinking really matters,  
and the hard solitude of night.  
Where the ancient and the new  
produce thoughts and words  
that shiver in the chest.

All the machines are gone.  
They are asking for poems again:  
no one can remember anything.

Sometimes nights in former rooms.  
New ideas and older skin. Other selves  
and the same eyes.

Too many dogs in the city. Love  
that sneaks around corners. Hate  
that buzzes like flies  
caught in storm-windows.

Weeding the garden of the self.  
Inner shots of a nightmare.  
Furniture and books in cars.

The poor and sick alleviate  
the pain by consuming  
more hopeless dreams.

And where are you tonight,  
as I cry out?  
The miles of air separate us.

## Nora's Song

Wanders somewhere in the big universe,  
cool clouds in her hair. The jasper mountains,  
the pale petals,  
the soles of her feet.

Sunset. On a boat in the lagoon. The breeze.  
Snow falls and cranes leave the shadows  
of her hair,  
and head for the moon.

Secret places in her silk robes.  
Vines glow, vines which once withered  
in a lost garden. And now:  
Pheasants on the warm river bank.

Memories ignite and bones and  
the world remember her. The paths  
she walked. And now,  
rainbow light on the forehead,  
wild flowers on the open sea.

Miracles in her arms. Waterfalls  
in her old pictures. She smiles,  
then continues to wander in the night.

## Lelea

Goes by in her old coat  
speaks to rain under the sporadic sky.  
In her shiny leather boots,  
she leaves traces on the soft wet bricks.

In her thin fingers she holds something:  
papers on injustice  
in the history of foreign events,  
on beggars in forgotten countries,  
and starving children on winter floors.

A new philosophy somewhere to hold  
her together. From the library, she watches  
it snow wet snow. Cold white to purify the air.  
Warm legs sitting together in a small room.

She has some answers  
she wishes she had given  
during last night's conversation.  
Under the cold sky, her eyes stay clear.  
Sitting half warm, trying to write  
a few more words.

Walks by in her old scarf, touches the wind.  
When she dreams it is a strong dream,  
used the next day, woven into a friend's life.

On the sidewalk she talks  
to the air. Cutting through her life  
in round thought.

## Outside

The sirens stopped. There were things coming from me that morning, water poured from your mouth as you looked at your skin in the mirror. We are ready to fly anywhere. In the window giant blossoms try to find their way in to touch your arms. You were sleeping and now the beach in your hair moves to the sound of the traffic. You sit in a chair under the covered moon, while the grasses of your breath move in the space created by your folded knees. It is the last moment. Bombs explode at noon and on the streets it is cold and it is autumn in the room, and memory and years are waiting on the wooden floor. A new color is what we need. Some way to hold onto those other evenings: thyme in the air, lilacs under the feet, rosemary and forest in our pillows. Now, we walk the streets, and watch other people singing on rooftops under the lonely stars.



## The Blue Notebook

Then opening the pages of a self-styled history, a country of lives, words arranged, so he'd feel better in the evening.

It was so much fun: post-war commercial Christmas. Smiles in the morning, camera lights, red ribbons sticking to Dad's slippers. More egg nog, more ribbons, more. A forest of lights in the living room. The warmth of everyone around kisses and donuts. It's all on the home movies. Yet somewhere we sensed, we kids, that outside there were hungry Santas that day. Sticks and cold socks. Old cars and dirty turkey bones in the snow. No festival of crumpled wrapping paper, no shining morning. But here, warm smells from other rooms. Ideology of holiday. It was so much fun. It is still swimming somewhere in the body, a heavy motion, red and black and green.

## World Series

Ever since we were young we waited for the white ball to climb over the big wall. It usually came at the end of the evening, scuffed with rusty dirt, rolling near someone's cruel foot. Twisted blue cups glistening between the red wooden seats in the cool green light. Gone home, cried, dust covered sneakers, sleepy eyes, the crumpled program, the torn ticket. It never happened like it did in other cities on television. Crying in the back yard, swearing in the late summer sun. Then we left the city and those white and red uniforms far behind. The white ball slept in a dry leather glove on a dirty shelf of a crowded closet, and the green wall was barely visible through the mean blizzards.

In a dream, the ball kept sailing through the soft night, climbing further into the sky until it hit the yellow moon. The air crackling with the sting of wood, people on their toes in the magic light, the emerald grass and the chocolate soil. We still wait for that moment. The dust flies, hands slap hands. Evenings of blue arcs, pure geometry, and bards of the body.

## Vincent

Burnt flower in the heart of a wheat field, the unfinished sky.  
Thistles in the brain and thirst in the undergrowth. Something  
comes apart in triple ideas at night then lives inside a star  
where the spirit twists endlessly. Frozen poppies explode  
inside the eyes. Trees on the banks of a stream. Crows  
take your breath away in the dark blue afternoon.

## Psyche

Psyche jumps off her horse, looks over the unfamiliar skyline and hangs her head: “Here history is polluted with hard fog under a sky where blackbirds plummet. There must be some life left. Today, the clouds seem whiter than the teeth in one of those beautiful magazines.”

“I’ve heard that only a few golden villages remain, where the atmosphere is clear and wet with laughter. I must find one, where peaceful palaces far away from this world of words and numbers sit and dream and people still sit and dream.” The yellow wind blows another day of dust into Psyche’s tired face. She slips out of her sandals, curls up in a dirty white robe, and sleeps next to the underpass.

Her dappled gray horse remains close by and dreams of fat Macedonian apples. In their sleep there are blue voices throbbing above as she sees grandfather for the first time since losing her way one evening, long ago, riding over the throat-dark sea.

## Ode to the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility

First there was the machine creating words. Yet this time not a human machine. Here, no purple quill scratching yellow parchment in the rain of red candles. Words strung together in magazines which lay stuffed under old radiators. No more ancient joy of recital where wine flows from poet's lips to lover's face. Here, machines storing up dead words for next year. No more drinking halls where bards sing of those good kings going down to the dragon's den for the peace of people's night. But words painted on walls in large white rooms in foreign cities explain what it feels like when one wants to turn over a rock in a cool field and see what crawls from underneath. People who pay with their souls to have a few of those old precious words adorn pleas for their coffers to be replenished by the acquisition of artificial food. Here, no more prophets with electric hair crying their visions from mountaintops. But morning tries to bring something, continues past the sky, and distributes its roses over the dead land. For here, too many garlands of fatted words, slippery mouths stealing whatever they can from each other, hands spilling pain into the air. But voices, scattered, looking up, very high up, on some days watching cold leaves fall to earth. Coasting through the twilight some birds stop and laugh at what's below. Time swells as emaciated angels look for a place to spend the night.

## Elegy

I

Then she said to us, sensing  
the movement in our feet:  
I would like you to come closer,  
and hear the wind beneath my breast,  
before I leave tonight, slowly,  
like blue fish wriggling their way  
to the stars.

In a room of wood and paper,  
We would undress her,  
wash her, and wrap her soul  
in smooth cotton.  
The ocean will surely swell tonight.  
We'll drive out later,  
dive into the water, taste each molecule,  
and try to remember what it was like  
when we last played at low tide.

She's leaving tonight.  
We can see the fixed points of her life  
hovering about, zigzagging  
against the flowered wallpaper.  
The fireplace downstairs is cold.

But it's June and that's normal.  
Broken, our voices, our limbs,  
cold and motionless on the bare floor.

Trying to talk about  
the fate of her atoms.  
We feel like running away  
to the North Pole.  
Now scattered in the black yard  
under the cold moon, each in a green  
metal chair, remembering her in an old  
gardening hat, sitting on the front porch  
under the wet sky.

## II

Miles away some sand blows up and spreads  
over the cellophane backs of the waves.  
She escaped and went running over fairways,  
not wanting this to be the night to leave.  
We watched through the hard car windows,  
dreaming intermittently,  
of sinewy forests, which blew cool  
in the late August breeze.

Beyond the North country,  
they say there is a land of eternal sunshine.  
Virginal spheres  
and harmony of air.  
We awake and sadness is sharper  
than cold rain on a young face.  
She's still out there,  
and we are like stones in the fireplace:  
blackened by years of intentional forgetting.

It's time to remember.  
She sits up, glances,  
drinks, and asks to see the flowers  
one more time.  
There is movement outside.  
We can feel a white wind  
blowing through the walls,  
walls she no longer recognizes.

This makes no sound, yet it is bigger  
than all the others. It deafens us,  
we look again, she says goodbye,  
and leaves for several days.



### III

On a path deep in the forest,  
We hold back the clouds in our brain.  
Look again, there is the dull motion of birds.  
It is time to remember. Autumn mornings.  
The thickness of the cold dew. Then it is night.  
Coming home through the short grass.  
Her head bounces like a sunflower  
waiting at the back door.  
She'll be back.

Another morning,  
We found some old clothes,  
hung them in front of the fire  
and sighed. And slowly, slowly  
she appears. Walking on rain water.  
Breathing the deep cool air.  
This is the first step  
toward her dream.  
A moment's victory.  
Body and lips beat eternally:  
all that remains in the vivid light.

Now we sleep like wine and make an effort  
at becoming. We adorn her hair and take refuge.  
Treasure buried behind her ears. She is a sphere  
of night, lightning green. Hands smoother  
than the dunes.

And what word is there  
for a cemetery in the snow?  
All that is left now is snow.  
Yet it is intact, covering absence,  
keeping time alive.

## Somewhere

I

Ragged boys in the streets of a village in Mozambique show us their dirty thin wrists in the dying green light of another day in the uneven brown streets. Tonight, they will sleep huddled five or six together wrapped in potato sacks, stomachs screaming white pain, bones in the numb air rubbing against grey faces. Scarred ankles cuddled together in old newspapers trying to wrap out the African cold. Mama in North somewhere, Papa in South. We spend day begging, no eat for two day, I like come America go school be capitalist have warm TV bed food. I cum wi u? Their dry lips rustle through the radio and I turn my head.

## II

Somewhere under Metropolis city pale ankles in  
a silver train. Yes, going to shop for last night's  
dream. Maybe an Oriental image for the blue room  
or an Arab one for the white. Oh those days when  
I can't buy. But today can, can, can. Pure fingernails  
scratch pink skin. Green eyes gaze through dark  
tunnel glass. Today, today. Beautiful room, beautiful  
store. Grey limousine. Smooth boxes. Tonight,  
tonight. Ethiopian food on small tables. Slow  
images of night passing by the restaurant window.

Oh city, oh honey,  
oh money made  
on the wasted  
lives  
of those  
peo  
ple.

## Evening Eclogue

Can your quiet face and wise breath be preserved here as in an ancient statue? Why can't it be held forever between hands, the soft brown hair dancing in the window's light? Will you turn and whisper through wild wet teeth suffered dreams and the wood smoke of memory? I don't know what this means to others. This square room, world of my life. Sleepy words grow out of you like fragile branches on black trees. One by one your words are like soft little bodies shining out in the dark. They turn blue and speckle the skinny moonlight. We're here just like people everywhere in the vineyards and stockyards and backyards and graveyards. But here it is different. Your skin is honey and your sleeping throat: fat blueberries. The western world sleeps and sometimes groans. The cat's face glows and I sit up and wait for a miracle to appear in the thin darkness. The cat hears fog drifting by and your words sink away into another world filled with silent mice and girls in white dresses playing in an autumn field. I don't know what this means, but I can't live without your sleep. Writing poems in the tightening dark, without commas, maybe with a flashlight. The square white space is captivity. But here you will always be, on these spots on a page, even while your sleep freezes, your waking waits, and your voice stops. Then new words are red ribbons spinning around in the black distance.

## Electric Astoria

### I. CIRCUMSTANCES

And you finally came over, eyes intermittently  
changing from rivers to roses to snow on the sea.  
Eyes finally free to see their first image.

The first lines of evening, frescoes of a hidden world.  
And in the country, olive trees cry, and birds arrange  
themselves for the night.

### THE MOON

abandons its light as you stop walking and listen  
to the flood of words passing by in the cold. Silence.  
The strange sources of experience. Judgement =  
error = living on loud silence, living on words. Looking  
for that new language. If a face comes near, you  
are not scared to experience its odor. The oil spots  
on the street are no different here. Violins play  
from a window and nobody talks to you. Welcome.  
Living in a dream, waking up, reading about past  
lives in brown books. Letters, newspapers, mornings  
on the wet balcony.

**CAN** you feel the festival of life, carnival of the new bohemia, international speech of the self-proclaimed last generation? Starvation of a world. Destruction. Women walking in black. Buildings on bodies. In the morning too many thoughts and try to write home. **IT IS HERE.** Afternoons alone in the cold park.

**CLIMB** a poorly paved side street and crunch the broken glass and find everything dominated by the length of your damp breath in the violet shadows. Even when you walk along the boulevards people try to examine your heels. Where a voice tries to speak. Angels weeping underneath the dark arches at dusk.

## II. PALLADIUM

Midnight everywhere, summer in February.  
Stepping into a postmodern underworld, we  
think of Petronius. Rich pagans and models,  
sublime in their thinness, classical in their stillness.  
Suns fly overhead in the old theater, three  
thousand feet trample the sweat of dead actors.  
A gaze. A wealth of bodies.  
A million dollars worth of shoes.

Oh, Palace in the city. Evenings on boats  
on underground rivers, dark  
rhythms and smells, and maybe  
some conversation.

Lately we've been leaving things behind: scarves,  
books, old friends. The morning's marrow is a savage  
country with the playing of its drums. The air goes  
feathery, the numerous windows, the lights reflected  
on teeth. There is madness in the world, sad animals,  
weather which kills, the heavy intervals of sea washing  
over us.

Came to a field and the grass was silent. **WE THOUGHT.**  
We held on tight and took off our shoes. Another type  
of language. Rubbing the heavy grapes out of our eyes  
as we remembered.



In the islands we would awake under the heavy branches,  
turn eyes seaward, and wander in the tough air.  
Pale rain and yellow shells glistening on the shore.

No words, days without paradox, and dolphins  
on the horizon  
mingling with the universe  
of our shivering thoughts.

### III. OUTAKE

The pain and joy of the family  
shoot down the arms. Specks  
of winter cook prematurely  
in the grass of an old photograph:  
picnic at an outing, lost faces  
basking in the appetizing sun.

Colored blankness answers  
its own questions and does not  
listen. Broken genealogies,  
misplaced heredities. Clear faces  
once so smooth and smiling.

**EVENING** under the eyelids. Moons  
dangling from the ceiling, illuminating  
time. New territories at last. Shaded valleys  
and rich hills of the shrimp-streaked sunset.  
Charcoal moments. Lost tribes in a dream.

Swallowed a lightbulb and journeyed into space.  
Belly glowing extraterrestrial – living electric bird.  
Fingers are fuses. Software of consciousness.  
The planet becomes a cool dot on the blanket  
of infinity, and we use the glow of your abdomen  
to illuminate the star ship.

## Poem of the Month

It was maybe on a Tuesday  
that the blue wind blew  
and left us speechless  
under the alabaster clouds  
of a city sidewalk.

We went inside.  
No more pacing around  
at the cold white gates.

Inside it was warm  
and we waited.

You gathered yourself up  
and tumbled out  
laughing and shivering  
with ears like  
wet roses.

We wrapped you  
in warm things  
white and turquoise  
and listened to your first sighs  
under the warm lights.

The room was bloody.  
You laid there  
hair rustling,  
scattering  
new rhymes into the air.

## Museum of Young Nature

I can no longer see you,  
but I think it is quiet,  
as I sleep among my animals  
and breathe warm smooth.

I can feel you out there in the black.  
Your shadow turns  
from time to time.  
I sigh and inhale  
the still white cool  
and gaze  
at the stars behind my eyelids.

I'm going to try  
to raise my head and call for you.  
A small voice  
that beats its soft wings  
against the hard air.

I see  
your strong fingers  
and it rains outside.

I lay on your ideal heart,  
colossal breath,  
and glow with peace.

## Love Among the Ruins

Between one age and the next, the bending of an elbow.  
Maybe it happens in a mirror brushing hair against  
a pale wall and a dark blue sky.

But when ages pass in the blink  
of an eye, how can your thoughts turned cold forget  
the soft mornings of some time ago, the awareness  
of everything, and a small spot  
on your lover's face?

Sitting up in bed until noon  
while the world burned.

That would be a confession, if we were home.  
But living here in the city, no one knows us.  
Progress moves its slow blind feet and huge  
compulsions spill onto the pavement and onto  
the choking leaves.

## My Family's House

Listen.

On Sunday morning everything is breathing and sleeping.  
The walls are still and outside the grass is cold and wet.  
Through the window's reflection, I try to stare no less  
deeply than I used to. The trees, the sky, are painted  
on those windows. And somehow, through all of this,  
flowers the beautiful unused furniture in the living room.

Don't recollect too much.

A few steps is enough, those red afternoons.  
But further back appears the baked blue ocean  
in the sunlight, the time to share and to ripen  
together. Now crossing the path of my grandmother's  
daily footsteps. How many left? Don't remember.  
They hurt too much.

This is the time.

The smooth air coagulates. The time  
when the world returns to the shadows  
and wind comes to chatter in the ears.  
Then daylight anticipates,  
and shatters the calm emptiness.

## Echo's Poem

Somewhere  
I hear  
Echo near  
making my hair  
stand  
on end.

Now  
some melodies  
in the rafters  
of her ear.

A cold song  
a feeling  
the afternoon rain.

Stretching  
in a pale shirt  
on the train.

## Over the City

the fog is grey  
and pink.

the golden streetlights  
color the faces  
of the homeless.

gliding by  
a beautiful smokestack  
its white puff  
swelling in the black air.



## Light

will pass  
through the reflection  
of your eyes:  
green oceans of curiosity.

Your lashes  
blink away  
the attacking mosquito.

A surprise:  
your fingers interlace  
and under  
the frozen blue  
your face is sprinkled  
with the end of day.

## Car

So new  
and black  
and shiny.

Gliding  
under the grey sky  
and the orange moon.

## Memory Lane

Old conflict and new, in the thick green afternoon,  
as we sit under the old pear tree. New and old producing  
shadows of past lovers walking through the yard at night.  
It is then very quiet as the old taps on your shoulder  
and tickles the back of your earlobe. Behind the house,  
a family used to live somewhere in the spaces between  
the grass, and old shoes lie buried underneath the tomato  
plants and wait for new neighbors to dig up their stinky  
memories. Nearby a tree crashes, and no one remembers  
the name of the family living in the house on which it falls.

## Ritsuko's Dream

i

Yellow fog  
the year fades away  
no green left to hide the grey.

xii

The wind comes  
morning light fades  
chilled steeples in the rain.

xxiv

Fat sounds in thin disguise  
the voices of insects  
scratching the yellow stars.

xliii

The mists arrive  
and no one knows  
how to write a winter song.

lxxvi

Twisted plum tree  
a guitar plays in the dark  
white petals under the garden gate.

xcv

Lightning flashes  
between the fish  
trembling in the blue thunder.

## Scene

In the islands we awake under the graceful branches and look around in the ancient air. It's so often that we want to travel some place new, and when there so hard to remember what it was like before leaving. What makes the old ground so special? In the morning we would peek in and out of stones and try to feel what it was like when real people lived there. Cold sand under the feet, blue rain, soft shells on an abandoned grey shore. Afternoons it was wander through valleys and read some of the old poets aloud while getting drunk on the local wine. This made us feel even better while sipping thick coffee and milk the next morning on the wooden steps of a farmer who kept his goats fat. Feeds them poetry books he told us: especially the classics — more filling. He asked why we had come, and what we wanted to pay, before we disappeared down a dark green road. The evening took its time and we burnt some daydreams to keep warm in the winter sun. Later, we would walk to the sea, and under the stars, spend a night without paradox, forgetting the next day where there would be no disasters under the Matisse blue sky.

## Evening

What was life like on a tired brown evening?  
The ticking of a winter clock. New roads  
covering old bones. Fields where people  
used to dance. Dead fires warming children  
huddled under cardboard tents in the rain.

A new world, women's hair, lazy  
movements in the twilight. Other lives,  
covered over with flowered wallpaper.  
Neon and backfire accompany memories  
of tambours, lutes, and the poets  
waking up with new lovers. A young troubadour  
sits still, tired, nothing to sing. He laughs  
sadly at those who speak golden lines, yawns,  
and sleeps. People dance,  
a dog sniffs a traveler's foot,  
in the old quarter. Other people  
settle in for the night  
under the cold city fountain.

In another part of town, friends  
move their feet, someone else turns a new  
page, another bites her boyfriend's shoulder.  
She jumps onto his back and they fly  
to another country, and live  
in a Persian temple near sacred water.

And further south, nights become longer  
and remain warm as perspectives stretch  
to the outer limits. Somewhere in this night  
we climb a white ladder up a crumbling wall,  
slip and grasp some jasmine and make it  
over the top.

Inside we tumble  
and finally reach the fruit gardens,  
play in the fields awhile,  
and forget.

The morning is far away, the  
night continues to rise in  
the dark green light.



## Starlight

It's quiet in the Pasha's tent tonight.  
Outside the camels sleep while young  
princes drink honeyed wine under the  
warm moon. Misty bells echo through  
cold fields of yellow wheat. Caravans  
of food and jewels arrive in the dust.  
At least we'll go to bed with our bellies  
full tonight. The guests arrive one by  
one while I sing with my lyre of the  
clear springs and silver stars.

## First Steps

yes, blossoms flourish in the shade too  
the dripping white petals  
bloom disconsolate  
as we walk in the early morning  
and a vine covered branch  
hangs its drooping life to the west

past a dying log  
full of winter lice  
it crumbles at a kick  
never to be firewood  
scattered in a dark meadow  
quivering in the sun  
perfume of fire  
under the lovely trees

pain is often undefinable  
overcast lines of forgetfulness

what is wanted from the moon  
is the constellation of brightness  
wine and swollen ashes  
tasting of melancholy  
sprawling in the wet fruit  
the gourds rotten with evening's bruises  
in the violet mists of dawn

we remain under the cliffs  
panting in your frothy hair  
and the delightful sparks  
of the Italian sea.

**6 a.m.**

A dedication:  
for life is only like this  
in the cool green morning.

The poets are breathing quietly  
the stars are still  
brighter than the sun.

## Classics of the Pure Landscape

### I

Early morning shadows and watch the sun playing  
with smoke over the French meadows. Descending  
the hills of Provence and cooking fish in a cave near  
the frozen puddles of St. Tropez. And the water.  
And the vertigo of grey red turquoise green.  
And the December birds. Dead castles, and the wind,  
and the sad peace. And the water. Deserted cafés  
in Nice. Swollen dusk. Coffee and milk at a dark table.  
Thin streaks in the worn sky.

#### IV

Moving on the endless circle of European trains.  
Reflections of fortresses in the black evening glass.  
Large eyes of tired travelers awaking to shake  
the latest dream. Where are Europe's children tonight?  
The orange sun plays with the Italian sea.  
The blue electric sea. This and some small  
volume to pass the night. In the morning  
we'll awake and build a sand castle in the rain,  
thinking no one will notice.

## IX

Today I saw you walking in a white robe on the Palatine.  
Cold hands, damp breasts and graceful feet. You saw  
a rose growing from a stone. We drank Roman water  
together and climbed the hills. It was the day before  
the festival of light when the people leave candles  
and dolls on neighbors' doorsteps. The streets  
old and silent, the crisp pagan air biting its way into  
our lives. Will there be time to do the things  
we so desire? A fountain goes off in my head.  
Then in the golden smoke we hear children waking  
and stretching in blue leather slippers.

## XII

The thin sun drips a certain gleam. We watch it thrive, then die. The heavy willows to the west. Running across a wide field to dig for rubies in the black soil. Unmentioned clouds, the cool grass, and skylarks. From green to brown, the noises die down and we recite some poems, repeat our names, and learn new ones. Near the fire, the dark rain cuts through the smoke as we curl up on piles of small leaves near some horses. The smell of animals, love, and pine. We drink cold water in the morning, rustle our clothes, and live.

## XIV

Where a day seemed like seven years.  
Petrarca, I saw Laura riding by on her  
motorbike. Buying a sweater, eating soup,  
writing a long letter in the steam of coffee.  
Firenze with its sky and tough-boned paintings  
of sacred women. A Madonna touched  
my face, a peasant turned around and looked,  
other women combed their hair in the  
cool moonlight, and then went out. The men  
read newspapers, and then went out. Cats  
and saints wandered around the fountains  
sniffing for salvation. Softest winter,  
then a statue, a breath.



## XVIII

In the rain I can smell the bones of Christian  
martyrs. In the unknown you establish  
your identity and continue down a cold gray road.  
The mouth of truth leaves my hand intact, and  
you say I am very, very lucky. I see you waving  
from an umbrella underneath an open window.  
In the evening we sit and look at pictures  
of the catacombs. You rub an eyelid and  
somewhere south of here arms scratch their way  
to a new existence.

XXI

The sound of heels on purple stones  
complements the sounds of your whispering.  
Somewhere on a hill we sit by a fire  
and wait. It is cold on the Palatine tonight  
as oranges rot on dull green trees.  
In the streets below the children beg  
for money and candy. In a dream you walk  
through your past and do things a bit  
differently. Now it's tomorrow, we sit  
on the stones and listen.

## XXIV

The morning in renaissance palaces,  
the afternoon in a fountain, and evening  
in Jesus' mind. A nun's heart explodes on  
the piazza, a shop girl dreams of gold, a fruit  
vendor wakes up. His daughter cuts bread  
with sleepy hands. From a hillside: the orange  
domes. Yellow and green bridges. A red slipper  
floats by in the grey water. Naked feet walk  
somewhere into the future. Laughter in a convent.  
Then, there is no noise. Hot dreams in cold  
museums. A woman sleeping in a night train.  
Postcards written in the dull twilight.

XXXI

On Sundays there is a tradition here in Rome.  
People sell their past for a price. Look, now we see:  
a grandmother's locket, a general's brandy glass,  
a soldier's earnings, a merchant's laundry. All  
bargained for in the cold sun and chestnut smoke.  
In the streets girls smooth their lips while boys  
think about how they will go about kissing them.  
The fountains are turned off, and gypsies with  
their crippled children settle in for a day of begging.  
Long tables start to glisten, bells begin to ring,  
cold thoughts wander in the sublime air.

XXXV

Out where the purple fields meet the winter sky, I saw you  
walking in velvet slippers. You were dreaming of chiaroscuro.  
The morning sun exploded in the old white room,  
and the southern winds wouldn't let us go. The Spanish  
sea appeared and sand poured from your dreams.  
Then, on a hilltop, we huddled alone, coaxing the fire,  
and feeling the bite of rain. The next day, walking through  
the thick ivy, trying to put old words to new music.  
A flame caught in your throat, and the pale stars were  
gliding by, as the train moved further on down the coast.

## Where Sunspots Fall

### I.

It had been another long day. She had never wanted to live in the south with its dark gravity. Family in Boston. Drove here after college. And now, life happened in the blue shadows of the front porch as she watched the end of day become the beginning of one somewhere else. Brushing the full honeysuckle vine that clung to the rotted wooden railing, descending and waiting in silence, and for a long time, hearing nothing. This is the way it was most evenings. The squirrels were coming out to eat; there would be trouble in the yard soon: moist dogs with firm hearts and slim black noses. Sitting on the porch made it easier to forget. This is where they had left each other, at the same time of day, when she last touched a shoulder and cursed the blackbirds circling in the swelling clouds of dusk. She felt warm about such symbolic import and then more secure in her isolation. The sun was leaving its traces between the equidistant elms where the white tee shirt was last seen disappearing down the old road. Now the light was little more than a frightened glow. Mixing metaphors with thin fingers squeezing the worn edges of the railing's peeling history. Climbing inside the brown screens, sitting in a rocker near a grey cat with pale green eyes.

## II.

Now she can be heard coming into the kitchen through the side door, not looking at the clock, not thinking about supper. From a corner of the hallway, she can be seen smiling, pulling threads from a sleeve, remembering those northern Octobers. Waves clashing under Neptune's lightning, silver wind piercing breast and soul. She missed traveling and writing letters from countries where she could hardly speak the language. Rubbing a smooth elbow. There is a half opened letter on the yellow tablecloth. Then she sleeps in the folds of her mother's quilt. Plenty of time later for those poems and letters. Awake, staring at the empty fireplace. A new dream, now a thought, and it wouldn't stop melting. Miles away from herself. Spiritual reality and earthly ideal. Where? Her feet were cold, there was no more wood money until the end of the month. Thinking abstract foolishness as she sat curled on the woven rug hugging her knees. She would try later to work on that bit of potential. Time to warm the self in smooth water.

### III.

Another morning. She slept in the smaller room now: the one with old photographs (since the nights were getting shorter). But this room too contained sentences of wet history. Rose wallpaper and dusty Latin books. Green bottles of drowned shells from the Aegean Sea. Can't miss a thing. In another life she had painted in this room. Evocations of bathers in forests perfumed with mysteries, Magdalenean warriors thrusting spears into the throbbing necks of bison, old feet of young women aching on the cold medieval floors of Spain. But images lose potency after their ritual. What were last night's dreams like? Some cold water on the face. Light the candles. Coffee, cream, and blue fruit on the back steps.



#### IV.

A cool linen dress, arms stretching to infinity. Gazing into the bottom of an empty glass. Marveling at the swirls of green ash that make up the passing of life. She had dreamt of the old summer house on the beach with Mom and Dad. The turquoise room and the waves whispering her to sleep. Drinking Italian wine, cracking red lobster, and walking until the wet sand of low tide was spattered with the reflection of a billion stars. A clear memory that hurt. Her eyes blinked. She had visited their graves under a full moon, kneeling on the dead leaves to pray. She had ignored the tiny caverns of others' perceptions and cultivated the endless pastures behind her eye. She floated over the backyard and landed gently in the forsythias to the waist. She could hear fire and dragons coming up from the cellar. So early in the day? This is a formidable beginning. The cat purrs in the flower bed. Make a choice and no peeking over the shoulder. Yes, fire always conquers. The house creaked again. There were bells traveling somewhere in the cool oxygen. Then there was so much quiet.

V.

She didn't feel like moving. The fireplace seemed colder and blacker than yesterday. She continued to explore unfamiliar realms and discover laws underlying the complex nature of wood grain. So much existence. She couldn't get out of bed. A desperate thread of belief circled in her throat as she thought about broken words. She turned a white cup in her hands and sipped the rose-hip tea. Dropping her head to feel rhythm in the body. Arms bare again. Hands moving toward a pencil. Then leaving abruptly in a small horse carriage with black cushions. Her neck finally bathed in the warm rain as hair stuck to cool mouth and forehead. She closed her eyes and it became dusk again, desire crouching in the evening shadows. She was angry for having pursued this. Strewn copies in the dull fireplace. Light a match and watch the hungry flames smile wider and grin at the thought of their truly creative genius. Art and utility. She sat still, not moving until she absorbed the importance of such discovery. Her eyes were wide. The creature in her hunches and stares at a yellow spider. She raises her neck in anticipation of confrontation, but time seemed to move in a circular path. She remembered the letters home from southern islands where she had rolled in the dry sand under orange trees. In the evening, walking on terraces with joined fingers, astounded by sublime existence.

## VI.

Now she understood that lyricism founded by accident was as far away as a climb up the hall steps, where, although hungry, she could rain like a fountain, art pouring forth like birds, running and laughing through the empty village streets, singing out of breath, speaking things she had never known before. Now it made no difference. She had lived it so many times. And now to record it as true illumination, to think of it, tired her an unusual amount. She started to believe again in work, in love, in sleep.

## VII.

Without thinking another word she arose and went to wash her hands. She hung the thick towel on the white porcelain rack and walked to an old bureau in another room. She felt that she was watching herself in the shapeless darkening. She let her hair down in the mirror. Eyes fell free of emotion and fingers smoothed eyebrows. She reached in a drawer; ideas became blurred in the twilight. Later, sitting in a corner, she smoked: blue curls integrating themselves with the dust before clinging to the moonlight pouring through the Venetian blinds. She had never considered the importance of this word before. Holding a lover in violet alleys, breathing deeply in the golden evenings of an island city. There was the timetable of the total universe sitting on her heart, trying to leave life glowing, but unburned. She restrained herself and walked down the narrow stairs with a book.

## VIII.

For almost a minute she could hear a mouse run from hole to hole beneath the floor. She wanted the caresses of sound to bother her now. She wanted the superstition of sacred impulse to bother her now. It would be easy here. Clean arrays of facts and metaphors. Here she could risk coming into contact with the earth and sky. It would be so simple here, like the relationships of primitives: faces rising in slow motion toward the moon. Breathing quickens to a heavy candor. Fingers merge with hair in geometric motions. Thoughts wandering on the inside of the evening windowpanes. She looked through them for the first time. The rain started to fall outside on the empty garden path. The light of a slick boulevard in a distant country bathed her memory. She would remain like this until the next sun tore through the windows. It took this to reveal the patterns of a white night. Then long noises assured other moments. She could begin again. Hanging through an open window, smelling the midnight atmosphere. Then the sound of her breath engulfs the yard, the house, and the space all around the room.

## Envoi

Small animals crawl in and out  
of your dream, sometimes slipping  
through your slim fingers.

You, someone with a distant name,  
smiled at me in the spring,  
bearing worlds of flowers  
in your words.

Later, you talk to your friends  
in the street, wearing your favorite  
shoes, and fingering  
a silver brace of pistols.

You said you'd like to shoot  
at the stars, watch them fall  
to the bottom of the ocean,  
and glow among the red coral.

But there is too much war,  
you said, while violet rain  
started to fall, clinging  
to the space behind your ear.

In the smooth moonlight, you think  
about walking down a quiet street.  
You think about the cool energy  
in your feet. Then disappear  
into the dark air.

## Coda

The vein  
on the side  
of my son's  
pale temple.

A blue  
river  
of life.

