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### ***Train of Thought***

a poem's a locomotive.  
immediately you have made  
the decision you are picked up  
still moving. Inside you are still  
while the machinery carries  
along, louder without than within.  
you all know what it looks like, fast  
and linked and black, and all the same  
because of speed. Correct, too, and  
invisible, since from outside  
it might be the same one each time,  
and from the windows outside looks  
like inside, so blurred, except when  
reflections false the distant hills.  
you're carried along, wondering  
what you are, and free to, since

the rhythms and the vehicle  
go on, and just when you've thought it  
all out, knowing somewhere the time  
is almost up, destination  
almost stopped, the desert field stands  
in front, beside, the decision  
has come to an end. then, lightened,  
you descend, greet the friends who look  
nearly the same, and in their light  
intrepid exciting new place  
almost forget that you travel.

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*light and dark alone are waste.*

snow drifts through all the parted streets  
where in the cloudshine atoms meet  
and whirl along a pearly space

your hands are in the parallel  
of separated beams that lie  
falling upon the dusk, the light  
of streetlamps, falling where snow falls.

and we live in the play of dark  
fastening cold to circling cold  
that no sun's light embrace could hold  
or fuse in any brilliant spark

and in this whirling of our fears  
the beam within the fall of snow  
and all the dark around still grow  
luminous with the salt of tears.

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*Seattle*

rhododendron  
is a tree here.  
stand like a leaf.  
back yards plummet  
to Italy  
and domestic  
waters reflect  
Swiss precision  
in blue Cascades.  
cedars drop nine

o'clock sunlight  
Pacific time.  
dim outlandish  
Isles rise. facets  
Of the Watcher  
Appear, moon-mapped.  
stand like coastal  
latitude. Fall  
into the Sound  
that is silent.  
desire comes here  
like night ferries,  
gold in wet black;  
art is brusque as  
Olympic grass.

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### *The Uselessness of the Common or Garden Variety of Experience*

One doesn't look at the rose,  
however restrained, to show  
how the violet should be seen.  
however vegetable-like,  
the peony. Sun will strike  
the gnarled, uneven string bean  
before one is prepared, glow  
in the mind before one knows.  
There is no onomato-  
peony among growing  
things. Each is its own cabbage-  
rose, its own duality.  
Sometimes the pollen will see  
or seem to, one's own courage  
standing still before going  
wind-borne toward the tomato.

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### *Feeling is touching*

Knowledge, thoughts, and dreams  
come through our fingers. Hands that ever  
reach  
see all, strong, bitter as bark, dark in the rocks.  
Joy is an arc, and constant happiness  
tangible horns high in the summer air.  
Manipulate, control, encircle, hold,  
see change, learn truth through what our hands

enclose.

Ever most precious, stillness is ecstasy  
under our fingers. Silent minds to touch  
yearn their lives long. We but approach this trust  
as, motionless and concentrate, we strive  
to touch with lips like hands the bidden fruit.

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***Sometimes I hardly know which one of us I am.***

Do I awake at eight? Have you nothing to do?  
Does one of us smoke? Who writes the poems?  
Sometimes I think we're here to play this game.  
Sometimes you're us both and I just make the forms.  
Most of the time I stitch overhand into you.

The rainy trellises, the sun through ferns, are  
threads  
Cutting us into each other, nourishing the joint.  
Skies are broad roads on which we meet in grace.  
Heads, blond, dark, love, anxiety — heads.  
And sometimes I am just a little space  
allowing you room. Or I'm my own heart's poison  
point.

What times we have! Is it glorious, this impossible  
balance?  
But we are quick on our feet, and if we trip, or  
grow  
Too fast, I'll write it out for us. A poem without  
moment,  
without an overture, no occasional dance,  
something the trees knew, something the sunset sent  
without a title. — How that sounds like you!

Sometimes, like today, I think you're the whole  
thing,  
I'm a scribe asleep in the bright Egyptian sun  
copying inspiration in effortless feathery curves.  
This is a new way of loving to sing.  
You are the poems my form and background serve.  
And one of us is the tears that keep us one.

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***Cassandra***

When you know no one is within call,

when the fire you caught with such glad rage is old,  
when wind in the scatternested chimneys whispers,  
Fall,  
Take down these lines, and weep for what I told.

O weep, for when I sang or painted Spring  
Winter was halfway halted in his tread,  
and when I spoke of tempests, birds that sing  
in morning sunlight were my muse of dread.

I always loved you. I cannot foresee  
whether this truth to your farseeing eyes  
shall shine a beacon or a mystery  
hidden within the truth of my words' spies.

But I am tired. You are the rain tonight,  
you, who have taught me birds and Springs are fair,  
Winters and tempests wracking to their height  
only because of Helen's golden hair.

I am no one. All the future and the past  
sift through me. Yet I love, and bear no curse  
for blinding prophesies that hold me fast  
you have borne out already in my verse.

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***love me occasionally***

not in euphoria  
only the heart  
remembers at all  
heroes are killed  
each day in Pretoria  
we stand beside them  
we watch them fall  
touch me kindly  
not in euphoria  
only the flesh  
remembers at all

touch me kindly  
not in euphoria  
the sick are dying  
or getting well  
Rockefeller's in  
the Waldorf Astoria  
we're in Vietnam  
and Vietnam is hell  
love me occasionally

not in euphoria  
only the flesh  
remembers who fell

only the heart  
remembers the bitterness  
only the flesh  
remembers the pain  
love me occasionally  
not in euphoria  
touch me kindly  
and touch me again  
heroes are killed  
for less than this kindness  
in Haiphong harbor  
the mines are rain

teach me occasionally  
over and over  
how to love  
and how not to die  
to remember and  
how to remember  
how to ask why and  
to ask why  
teach me over  
the noise of the bombers  
that blacken out  
the clear blue sky

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### *A Leaf for Sarajevo*

Sorrow city, Sarajevo  
thus your history is traced,  
your museums laid in rubble  
and your life almost erased,  
this destruction, Sarajevo,  
for which the whole world is braced.

Sarajevo, sister city,  
with a sorrow so like mine,  
as I wait and lean and listen  
for an answer or a sign:  
sorrow glistens, Sarajevo,  
like a message or a line.

Sitting shiva, Sarajevo,  
for your temples and your mosques

but the world will not recover  
as it waves from brave kiosks  
knowledge that the worlds has faltered,  
altered. Look, my sister asks.

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*The morning fills me as a running river is filled with sunbeams*

or a room, white curtains blowing, the busyness of  
motes in light,  
and the light is warm, and the motes swarm, never  
leaving the pathway.  
My body is so awake it dreams in the sunshine.  
Remorseless, no darkness.

I will go out and down the river of streets in the  
sun  
changed to a form, a block of blue and black,  
dreaming colors into the room  
where the light is white, and the buildings move  
on a wave, never leaving  
their wakefulness in dreams. These streets will  
become remorse,

my sorrow. I will be young and free, floating on  
the wave of coming and leaving,  
those rooms lapped with my gay tears will cluster  
in blocks of blue light,  
sunlight, a crowd of pathways and strong, quivering  
lights,  
lapped with my darkness, awake. I will touch every  
sensation awake.

The day will be floating and free, and I will be  
lost in the river  
of dark rooms and bright skies, brilliant and still,  
never ceasing, absorbing  
my ecstasy of sorrow and light; or, pointed,  
scenting, awake, my body  
loses color, gains form, mourning this living  
beauty.

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*Spring, the Present*

It's the season when I see what people mean.  
A hemlock branch is catching the caught light



in a jar so clearly full of memories  
it enlarges like a trompe d'oeil or realism  
of oils. The honeysuckle is vandalized too  
from the public road, and wilder because more free.  
When will I stop seeing that I have it  
all your way and you have it all mine?  
And Henry James is as clear as cut glass, books  
where no one knows what anyone else means  
and everyone acts accordingly. I can't  
believe it: one doesn't have to, because it's true.  
I see what people mean in saying, "It's worthwhile  
if you feel you're being enlightened," and I wasn't.  
I see what people meant about the season.  
In spring I never knew I never knew.  
I don't know how the jar's opaque light far side  
Suddenly glows with the minutiae reflected,  
what's next to it, becoming photographic  
like lamplight through a scene on a shade, but  
realer,  
of its own depth, unprojected. You see what I mean.

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### ***Transformations***

Transformations are real.  
We know this because they take time.  
The greater the number of transformations  
occurring in a spoken sentence, the more time  
it takes for the hearer to understand it.  
Good evidence for this comes out of tests  
in which the hearer is asked to term  
a given sentence true, or false.  
An example is the sentence:  
"Canaries are birds," to which the hearer  
responds quite quickly, "That is true,"  
and "Birds are canaries,"  
  
to which the speaker says, more slowly, "False."  
Non-truth statements contain more transformations  
to understand. Amelie says this is intuitively  
true, to her: that she responds more slowly  
to some statements than to others. This is true.  
Good evidence for this is that she told me  
two nights ago at dinner, when she'd called me  
saying, "I feel as though I'm underwater,"  
and I had been afraid all my transgressions  
could not reform themselves by a single statement  
like, "I'm quite capable of listening  
to those who've listened to me," but still had gone

and talked of everything under the sun  
and finally even myself, reduced to normal,  
forgetting Amelie was anything  
but Amelie, and she, being there, and listening,  
as usual, said, "Sometimes it takes more time  
for me to absorb some statements and respond."  
She also said she thought things like this needed  
to be said so that the other speaker  
would understand that she was listening,  
and would respond, but that it took more time.  
An example of a quick response  
to a truth statement is that I replied,  
Of course. I think that people understand that.

In New York this Saturday Natasha  
showed me these tests of time and transformations.  
I had not seen Natasha in four years.  
She has a child now, left psychology  
to learn cognition, as I'm leaving English  
to do linguistics. What she said helps prove  
Chomsky is right, and transformations real.

Yet when I called tonight, and Amelie  
said that these tests confirmed her intuitions,  
I said, though speechless, nothing more confirming  
than, Yes. What all my heart and memory  
confirmed underwater, remained, and was unsaid.  
After,  
I thought of Roy's answering, when I asked,  
after some new, departmental miscalculation,  
"Why is it all so fucked up?" "I don't know,"  
with love and happiness, "but it is," and I  
thought, Then I'm right that all our schedules  
aren't working  
and he turned and walked away, and left me  
suddenly lovingly and happily knowing  
we meant everything, and to each other.  
Can I not say, the next time, tomorrow  
to Amelie, "It's true?" We know a question  
takes many transformations and much time,  
and truth statements and affirmations, little.

I can be more like Roy and more like Amelie  
now that even Natasha, who, remember,  
was in psychology four years ago,  
and had not child, is more like me. That's true,  
Birds are canaries and also other birds.  
For I'd respond more quickly, I laughed to Amelie,  
To the false statement, and I'd say it's true.  
My old psychiatrist once said to me,  
sweat pouring from his metaphorical brow,  
"I could say the moon's made of green cheese

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