LATE OCTOBER

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Sky depth and
the moon –
the grass world here below
rainy and wet
night misting chill on the pond

and the lens of the air all around misting –
a frosty steam near the moon’s whited face

see amethyst webs
in a pine tree’s moonlit weft,
see the still half laden boughs of leaves and fruit
on crab apple trees in the field,
the prayer-beaded and rain-pocked oak clusters
hanging still,
feel frost-browned grass now chill and hollow-stiff
and wet underfoot

See up into the night-well, deep,
looking up into it so high –
dark leaves fringe the walls that are barreled around my gaze,
the leaves’ swaying pulse in breezes
of the storm yet coming,
and there will be winds –
though still only breezes as yet –
the cold autumn storms
felt all around preparing
The Early Thaw

Ice encrusted on the branch of the apple tree
melting in the sun

first thaw of late winter,
earliest edge of spring

thaw-steam in sun mist
in the distance,
and the trees are wreathed in a fine film of light

Early this morning still dark
as I left to walk out,
a flaking skin of ice skimmed up from the porch’s wooden steps
as I walk down them

the hollow sound of my steps
Two Summer Afternoons, Warm and Still

When you descended
through the leaves
active bright stirring
and bright silence

something suddenly known

a ginger ale cloud of light floss
in the still warmth
in the steeped air
in the tilted cube of sunlight
athwart the empty space in the yard
near the corner
spiral points floating
abundance
so empty
fathomless depth of light

Above all, sky depth
blue, still, filled with
a more, a different light

Depths of memory
of a day so far in the past
when I was a child

watching, listening
Early Morning Rain and Wind

Bronze light above of the black cleft of the hill,
   green outline through the mountain’s fissure,
   wind so steady through the oncoming rain –
weighted grass that drags at my boot as I step through
   walking toward the sun

   where is the sun? and why not yet?

Leaves gold and burnt orange dull and ragged,
   trees slashed through with pitchforks of the
   heavy rain last night
   still dripping, the wind-dented and
   raked-through tree tops,
still leaves hanging, eaten through with the cold –

the rain pouring down the window all night long,
the wind pushing hard against the window pane
   shaking the tree limbs down,
and I found them scattered across the driveway in
   the morning as I stepped out
   pulling my collar up around my neck,
   pulling my cap down

Sun earliest edge within clouds like the dim light in
   embers,
clouds of charcoal
   and the black tree limbs are stiff in the wind

sun struggling, parting its wings of light through the
   coal bright smolder dust of dark clouds
morning wind, I am watching
morning wind, with rain slash
    rain not yet over
more rain graining the new light breaking through
air all around wet bright,
    chill wind, rain morning storm
all through the air, all through my eyes,
    my seeing, my face
By the Roadside at the Edge of Town

A splinter is there
  inside the green of the hill,
  and the blue day
light shard for the eye, and the soul is
  up above somewhere
around in the brightness, the warm waver of air,
  benzene fumes of light

We are here watching looking seeing –
  I have somehow been drawn forth by this,
  but where are we, and what? –

blade of light through the day
  makes a cut through time

And the road runs on
  through the fields,
past the burning globes of the green hills,
  the rippling wheat of the green corn showered through
  with sun

And the road is nearly white, so dry –
  above, the cirrus clouds so thin and high seem to flake off
  the belled depths of the sky –

and here at my foot no shadow can be seen,
  gray dusty hot pebbles and green
dandelion sprays,
  and off a ways there
  the slight blue shine of the road tar
A river of warm dry air flows through the gulley –
the bushes scarcely show it,
but inside the day’s silent burn and rustle of heat
there is something still and there is something moving
The Old Park in Late October

**Autumn**

bones of trees

and closing roots in earth

hands

few hands, but

many fingers

the open secret of rain, the rain

dark brown the earth,

light brown the woods

and with rained-on gold

Gray clouds in the windy sky

Sudden blue then –

the clearing and then pouring sun right through

all at once slightly warm

but then cold again

Thin bright sun of autumn in the cold basin of rain water

with forsythia yellow leaves, red and amber leaves,

and gold leaves

with green blushes along their stems

Cold water so clear

the open secrets of rain

water never quite still with wind across it and the sun in a corner

and reflections –

a hand here and there a face
Spring Day

Sun

branch

watching the loud wind-light

    mid-day light river of steady air currents,
    the trees’ bend and tension

    the uppermost branches just leaved with green
    twisting as they lean

    and it is early spring

    bright agitation, here and now

    no memory of anything at all

only this air and light, this being taken up into it
    if only in feeling, breathing, sight –

    and yet why say only, why suggest merely? –

maple trees with their light green twirling seeds
    spiraling in handfuls out across the street

and there a white-haired lady, our neighbor,
    steps out the side door of her house
    and waves cheerfully
    before disappearing into her back yard
To the Lake in the Evening

Leaf-silence and rain drip –
leaf-breath, tiny movements held in,
the woods holding quiet and still,
unfolding after a rain

The air’s scent is cool on my skin,
I breathe the damp taste of earth
I shiver,
and my scrotum contracts with the chill

There is dampness and growing dark
at the edge of the trees,
then the yellow, mercurochrome bars of the sunset
fall slanting downward through leaves afloat in the streams of dust-glare

that choir through the still twilight woods – magnetized particles spin

In the forest of yellow light-smoke,
in radiant quivers the strands of light
smolder through forms, streaming onward,
golden floss adrift, burning

Then the sunset’s blood clot of light erupts through the silence –
it sounds from beneath the charred outline of hills,
shaking and shaking the world

Then gradually, quickly, the light becomes silent with sundown

Through the unsettled agitation of leaves the breeze rises, then stops,
reawakens, subsides
The night is the darkness now, here and now,
    the dark falls and falls through itself in the tense striations

What is expected?

The night is a network of points – of points falling and falling
    and falling – points of time where space rushes to enter,
    points of space out of which time is blaring,
    a burning annunciation, a fire, a drumming from far down below
    like the pounding of blood in my ear

Over the dark planes of space,
    through the ripples of time, drunk
    with the poppy of deep recollection,
I, listening, move outward to witness –

Over the lustrous oil of the starry night pond, adrift over the face
    of the moon,
    hearing the lunar voice of the sister,

The loved one, the lost and her children
Allurements

Unbearable spring

awakening restless
discordant
the mind

closing up the earthen the subterranean
passages
the ear listening
for another word

but there are only whispering suggestions
sparks struck off through the leaves
in the luminous aftermath of the rain

with a sharply painful breeze almost building to a wind
a storm coming and yet not quite

and I spread my light green jacket wide to catch more of it,
wind breaker the light jacket was always called –

gathering some of the breezes the jacket lifting a bit
and I am born along

I am 13 years old

Lightning in the late storm sky that night
lightning, and more lightning, that I could not understand –
empty the pages of the missal in the darkness of stone arches
and the blank page like dim sand at the bottom of a stream
something huge and yet intangible, and yet escaping farther
leaving then a mere fragment of the dark
of the night itself, like a piece broken off

And then in the morning the bright breeze once again cool
so very tangible all around me
as I walked back from school

real and newly born these things finite infinite

in motion

and I, amid the allurements
On the Road Late

Autumn night of storm
so full of wind

the rain not yet

metal cages of the bare tree crowns
crevice-like against illuminated sky,
an ash blue slate

black branches reaching beetle legs
through the white face of the moon

past it, the obscure configurations of stars

the streaming graphite of rolling clouds to the east

In the depths of the street
are houses, bright windows,
baled-up hedges now bare –
   closer they are tossing wicker baskets and waving
      mandibles

blue gray sidewalk puddled with late rain
more cold rain not yet falling, but soon

and so I must hurry
Return

Patchwork of the fallen leaves

    half-rotted tapestries
of the trees       the image still visible
darkness, and light-stippled shadow

    yet a light-crumbage
steps its fingers through,
    touches the floors of memory

and the sun lies buried far underneath,
    it is asleep there
so certain of itself it can lie disguised as darkness

Powers of the building structures, the gatherings

    these the without-precedent
prepare their return
A Clear Day with Some Memories

A field in the North Country in September
    and the air is warm still, light glinting
    through the tree crowns

cabbage whites tumble as they rise
    in a spill of sunlight, with mullein near

    farther in the distance
the grass is yellow brown, light green,
    and rolls in gradual waves
    toward the border line

the sun is straight above, still almost hot

Hereabouts crevices of rock are cut through by the highway,
    making canyons of thirty and forty feet
    on either side the lanes

    but here on the top wave of the great crest of the plateau,
you can see straight through to the horizon

The St. Lawrence lies beyond,
    and the ancient battle grounds, burial grounds

Queen Anne’s lace and dandelion near the sill of a rising slope

at the curbside there is crab grass and timothy
    in the ditch by the hacked fence post
Summer Storm

Lightning rips down through the night’s dress

soft hill breasts revealed –
   a flickering bright moment

another eye-blink

and the light bulb filament of lightning sparks
   wriggling down
   at the core of the sky’s bulb

then the bulb bursting –
   sudden exploding loud

and the air’s ice is cracking open,
   ice avalanche
the whole ice tray of heaven dropped to the sky’s floor –

rushing ice shards of the sudden rain sound,
   and then rain

and hail
   like dented white marbles

A sudden wind from the night held in cold storage behind this one
floods in and around

and we have to run inside,
   although we try to take bits of it with us
By the Small Creek

Noon of a bright silence –
   listen for
       what is beyond
       yet here

   water braiding sand
   weavings
under shadow-spotted gold –
one place sun-threaded
   near the bottom

of an elusive location
   there
   not there

Sleep then wake listen for

   what is inside the day
   what is outside the day –
many, many the days
   yet only one now

Well of attention to the stream’s surface
   a depthless well, and yet of all depth

   single the moment,
       however many
Current like a steady wind
   blowing the water’s ragged raying sunflower –
   light-seeds streaming along its surface

swift and twisted boughs: the apple tree of glare

   and filaments pulled toward the stream’s edges
   are like high bright grass in a wind

The blue spring day is a profusion of sun and clouds –

   soon the new grain, the wheat, the apples, tomatoes
   wicker baskets of peas, pears, and grapes:
   the fields, the gardens opening without limit –

yet it’s already shining here, near the bottom of amber, the sand dust

   some like a grained dark linen,
   the ancient text woven
   of light sparkle

Noon of a bright silence, and yet clamor – therefore

   see what is here
   yet beyond
New Power

Morning light washes the white wall with flakes of gold

There’s a spackle of ice crystals
  on the white-framed windowpane,
  and I draw the drapes back wider to look outside

The sky is brightening from its deep lilac
  and there are still a few points of stars

Dark blue rags of snow clouds float in a wash of copper
  and green tints,
  on the opposite street below
  the rows of bare trees are dark brown, like burlap,
  and somewhat burnt-looking

The street is the color of tin, at the intersection
  car exhaust is like dry ice vapor

Some children are in a clump at the cross walk,
  waiting on the crossing guard
  who stands in her dark blue uniform in the middle of the street,
  one arm stretched toward them, the other pointing at the waiting cars

And now as though of a sudden it is a cold and very clear morning
  full of steam and frost clouds
  and a blue tinted mist
  that lingers in the recessed hollows of the open fields
to the west
And at the very vanishing point of the scene beyond
the sun is a yoke of orange light amid a white haze
that also webs the limbs of nearby trees
along the rows of buildings to the east – a public grade school
with its still empty playground
and next to that some green and dark brown wooden frame houses

There are platters of ice glare in the parking lot below my window,
a mist the color of lint drifts over the tire-scarred sandy mud
of the road that curves up into it

And now, suddenly, the white three-decker apartment house across
the street is startlingly bright

Now the vanishing point that leads past the horizon is really
the point of an arrival,
as the sun with its brighter and clear light is streaming
into everything

and there is awakening, and the city is revealed, and there is
new activity, and beauty
Cold Winter Day, Long Winter Night

Burning bright snow on the icy rooftops

of the hospital buildings across the way

pale white blue sky above and going on so high, so far,

no clouds at all –

there are the cars small in the distance

along the tin strip of road beyond –

the highway at the edge of town,

small sequins-like bits of metal passing,

a wind shield flashing occasionally

as I watch from my third story window

Dense chimney smoke slightly blue

from a sand-colored smokestack to the east

floating still in the air, suspended, motionless

The sun is high above,

there seem auras of finer harder light around it

that stream or shatter out through the sky, the entire day,

like sight lines through an ice cube

and the edges of my window are clouded like the center of an ice cube

There’s a sharpness to the grey limbs of the bare trees

snow-crusted

along this side of the street

they are still

in the still and frozen afternoon
Open the window now –
breathe the air, exhale your breath in vapor up into the sky

so high, so high, so dizzyingly high – where does it ever end?

How can it be that I ever will? you wonder

Already the cold is stinging your face and hands,
reaching powerfully into the room;
the cat is looking at you, blinking its eyes, and
quickly leaves

Close the window then, and draw the dark green drapes;
how still the room seems to become – quiet, warm, and dim,
maybe make coffee or tea

Later in the long winter night as you sleep
there will be another light with its own fire inside of you

shining, burning

burning on and on
Here on the garden path after a night of rain
it is early summer and the mid-June grass
    has just lately gotten so thick and green,
    a dark fir needle green in the early morning light
The sky still violet
with orange sparkling through the tree line
    past the still quiet houses and the several blocks of
garden plots,
there is no one else around as yet

There’s a web-like steamy mist in the wave-troughs of the lawn
down near the stand of apple trees,
already some heavy clusters of small apples in their spreading and
    leaf-frothy boughs
    lichen colored with frost –
some the early light lights a dim gold,
and yet some upward twisting boughs are shown in a moted
    and pink light
    that cuts across them

There’s smoky white dew paint-streaked on the long grass near
    the garage
over in the far corner in deep shade

Clouds of carbon purple with sun rays spacing them, streaming –
and the birds loud and rickety-noisy
   fluttering in wet leaves,
some squirrels running through the bough darkness
   of the maple tree
that canopies over the entire house

The dirt of the garden is very black –
   grainy-muddy to the touch,
almost as cold as the rain water in this pail where I rinse my
   fingers off,

   a couple of thin brown twigs floating in it, and two green leaves
Distance

A bright sun over the field,
so strong the afternoon is heavy with the heat
it fills the air with an intense perfume –
grass and wild flowers,
the ground itself seems to breathe
there’s a slight breeze in the distance near the hills
that lie vague in a webby haze –

insect hum – hoppers, cicadas –
opening its own space inside the silence

bright afternoon, intense sun at one o’clock

the day as though somehow of another time

In the distance there is a green farmhouse,
out beside a red barn –
a silver silo flashes in the light

There are two maple trees in the house’s yard where it opens on the road
that arcs past –
in the light the road looks made of chalk

And now there are two young boys walking the dust shoulder –
the taller one pauses to look inside the red painted mail box
before they disappear running into the house’s
screened-in porch
The grass is heavy and thick in the field with timothy, crab, and mullein in troughs
beside the narrow dirt path

It will be a while before I get there –

there are a few small cumuli sun-burning, motionless, in the bright blue sky
The Clothesline in the Back Yard

Clothes drying on the clothes line are blown in the wind like sails –
and white cumuli in the sky
    piled high
    drift all in one direction

The sun is over all –
    the shingles of the house next door glitter in the brightness,
the cars parked in the driveway near the yard gleam –
    their bright windshields, and their chrome

Two small children and their mother run out from behind the garage –
    they had been out there seeing about the blackberries
    that grow along the back fence there,
not ripe yet but they are likely turning red already,
    a pale raspberry red and green-tinged still and hard
    as buttons

The children run up near the driveway and into the back yard
    flapping their hands and yelling,
    one girl of about five and her slightly younger brother
    and their mother comes up after them
    waving her arms, as though treading water – playful, herding them

Ignoring her, they start to snatch and bat at the towels
    hanging white and pale yellow and pastel green in the sun

and then they jump up and, getting a running start, charge into
    the bigger ones head first
and then pick out a still wet bed sheet and pretend to be two ghosts,
their mother laughing as they yell and make ghost gestures at her
    pushing their way through it –
    two slightly dark gray shapes, like wet stains come to life,
their small arms reaching through like anemones
as they get a bit tangled up in it,
and she comes around to get them free of the wet folds wrapped
around them

She has a light blue house dress on and she wipes her hands on
the front of it
and chases them around the sheet’s other side,
clapping her hands at them as though to say
quick quick quick
and the three of them run laughing and disappear up the green
painted wooden steps
of the screened-in back porch next door,
and the wood frame door slams behind them with a clack

The breeze picks up again and the clothes all bob slightly and sway
and the white sheet
billows out again in a sudden strong gust –

towels and wash cloths, white briefs and pink slips, and white
and crème color bras,
black and brown socks,
and a couple of white and light green button-down shirts waving
empty sleeves

And the sun, beginning to get hot now, shines down
up past the white and high-piled clouds
Winter Afternoon, Intense Cold Sun

The sun over the snow fields blinds you if you try to look at it

the fields down slope are a vague bright haze

off where the ice-black river turns and twists on itself
its links of onyx and waxen gray
sun sparks struck in it, there
  and there –

I can’t see farther
  the terrible cold has erased the light itself,
  if light is something to see by

The afternoon is aching to be brought into the eye,
  the eye aches in itself

  in its opening, gaping, quickly narrowed and defensive squint

  vision will not come forth to meet the winter afternoon

  the valley frozen in its ice haze cannot rise out of the light
  to take on palpable clear outline,
  it burns to the touch of the sensitive attempt at sight

As the tongue tasting the shovel’s metal
  is torn and bleeds.
  my eyes bleeds its longing for vision out into the fields,
    the white horizon, the not blue sky

The day recedes unseen behind the sun’s freezing auras
Sunny Afternoon in the Field

With my eyes closed I lie in the hot sun
all afternoon

there is a slightest breeze through the grass
just now and then, yet fairly often

and I feel it on my face and through my hair
and across the back of my right hand –
my left is inside my pocket
where I can feel how the sun is heating even the fabric of my jeans,
and with eyes closed I see the sun –

bright hot dark, a kind of tiny seething of the eye itself, eye and eyelid
and my face as well,
as though all three were one
and they were baking, drying, hovered over,
and growing slightly separate from the rest of me –
the sun is taking up my eyes and my face into itself
yet leaving my body behind here

here where
turning and opening my eyes –
as though for a kind of first time,
like peeling a bandage off a wound

I see the shreds and shreds of grass blades matted, yet flickering,
in the heavy grassy ground-musty air
yellow with sunlight around them,

and I reach my fingers through them and I feel how
waxy cold they are
An Invitation, with Rain

If you come out to meet me
where the backyard and the garden and even the grape arbor
we have out here
are all full of the after-rain –
   with ground mist too,
   so veil-like wet
   it almost seems a kind of dew up from the ground itself –
which is not just the water dripping from the bean vines
or trapped in the pea flowers’ translucent mauve-veined white,
or in the central furrow of the zucchini leaf with its sequins
   beads of rain,
the tomato leaf ragged-edged and fringed with
   pinhead sized droplets
the walkway’s grass slippery with a rain curtain
that mats it down and seems to make it a darker green still
   so chill and wet to the touch –
although the dog will love to roll in it, wriggling on his back
   and flexing,
   seeming to smile in his playfulness before he gets up
   and runs in loopy half-circles
a faint rain-mist all around him –

If you come out to see me where I’ve been sitting on the wet
   wooden bench
painted green, hacked-up a bit, the blond under-wood
   showing through,
but there are no initials carved
and there’s still the drip of the rain
held in the serrated edges of the grape vine leaves over it,
the grapes themselves small and pale mist-green
with tough cane-like ruddy stems snaking in and through them –

I’ve been sitting here a while,
while most of the shower was caught by the thick vines
of the arbor over me,
but not all of it so that my old green work shirt is somewhat wet
and the front of my jeans along the thighs
and there are some water droplets on the back of my forearm
and wrist
and on the side of my face too,
but now I’ve wiped them off –

I am trying to make myself presentable to you –
when will you come to see me?
-- to meet me in the wet grass,
in the back yard near the garden that is growing now so thick
and dense and strong –
to see me, to meet me in the cool chill shade – but not too chill –
of the grape arbor,
and to sit on the bench, even if it is a little wet and hacked-up
and old,
to sit beside me here –

how long will it be before you come and before
I can see you?
Unquiet Summer, the Late Evening

Unquiet of the summer evening
   full of the many scents of the garden’s earth
   and the dark red roses near it
   the deepest flower

   long shadows from the edge of the garage
   and the house roofs along the street are dark slate
   in the last flood of orange bronze
   the long slow sunset

   the chimney’s black
       of the boarding house half a block away

to think of being an old man there alone in a small rented room,
       an old woman alone

A moth now in the humid shade near the garage side
   and another humming near the plum tree
   the street between the houses
   the empty street, no traffic here nor any passers by

The house is silent, there is no one around,
   the windows are all dark –
   one window curtain, yellow, with some designs on it
       I can no longer see in the twilight

   blows dented inward slightly in the breeze

At some point I will have to go inside and go to bed

   after it’s completely dark and the white moon is shining
Indian Summer

Wasps at the window
in the early fall
warm still air this afternoon,
a different light than summer –

champagne left in a glass overnight
warm, less active
stilled
but fragrant, sticky rich

windfalls litter the ground around the apple trees,
even the crabs are sweet now

in the later afternoon
bleary filaments of sunlight web the gold
and the red leaves of maple trees

Wasps hovering wavering around the open window,
here two stories up –
red amber bodies weaving in and through a tilted shelf of sunlight

As the light gets deeper, the fields beyond tinted, browning,
the sky shading toward violet
the cooler evening coming in,

they’re gone
Fields and Road at the Edge of Town

The hot day in the field with no breeze at all
and the sun is a center point of dense streaming light
its white rays reaching through the sky in faint cracks and streaks

the heat bearing down so heavy through the field,
the steady stifling heat of the air
like a kind of baking

but also like an increasing of the sky itself somehow, of the day itself,
and the thing which is somehow under the sky –
shall it be called the earth, and what is that? –

looking up into the sky I suddenly feel the ground underneath my step –
dusty, flat, steady, still –
what is another word for creation? is there any?

To the right a few hundred feet off, the slates are so blue
of the rooftops
of the apartment house by the bend in the road
and then too of the Christian meeting house across the street from it
– a luminous dark violet in the flashing froth of sunlight
that ripples across the waves of shingles –

for in the heat, objects in the distance seem
to waver and float
and to be washed with a kind of vertical grain –
cicadas are burning in their secret hiding spots, covert, invisible

Fields flow down before me split through with bright zinc
of the long road
that goes downhill then up a steep grade at
the valley’s other edge
The grass is a deep green, and pale yellow brown strips frame it with narrower rectangles leading in their burning stillness toward the horizon and its rising green hills, far hills starkly sunlit with black knife marks in them which are the scatterings of trees Above that, near the white hem of sky, in the farthest distance straight ahead, above the mustard yellow of the burning bare hill crests there are a few faint, still, loose brushings of white cumuli
Walking through the Sunset into the Night

Stepping stones of clouds
  burnt on their undersides
  press forward through the sky’s streams
  the wind is pushing them
and the sun to the west is an open porthole
  through which rough seas of gold are flooding in
  slowly the burning deck is sinking
  beneath waves of the distant hills

shipwreck of twilight earth
  burnt off masts of trees still held up
  in midst of a steady deepening
  the final inclination into the astronomical,
    its onyx and diamond world

Deep night and
now of a sudden the street is in thrall to the night’s myth
  lustrous the flute harmonics, although nearly silent –
    tambor and tapping and soft rasps of the un-silent wood
  the trees themselves,
  gateway upon gateway to a beyond and a within,
    custodial darkness of lore and obsession

  branch shadows are darkened blood vessels,
    crazed wind-throbbing
  inside the mirror tain of the moon’s sidewalk
Autumn Morning, Bright Thaw

The apple branch coated with bright ice
melting now in thaw –
the icy sleeve breaks away in scales
as I grasp it
and it numbs my hand
sharp in wet crumbling –
cool drops trickling down the heel of my palm and wrist

and I let the branch spring back

Smell the rotting windfalls
mashed down in long grass –
pulpy brown in an ice-coated shininess –

a quick note of fermenting, a cold cellar smell,
a kind of sweetish manure scent –
acrid earth must, and a hay sharpness
in bright freezing fresh cold morning air

breathe it in deeply now, and then breathe in still more –
taste the air, the wet ground, the rotted windfalls, the whole day

Tree trunk
so strong rough and twisting
up out of the paper-brown wild grass swirl
stiffened over on itself in crystalized frost

The air steams with chill
and the light is cold
and the sky is blue and radiant and wide
and a white sun shines far up high
A Direction

Take up the rain
    and take the sun

take up the soil
    from the depths of earth
take up the leaves and flowers
    and their hidden seeds

take up the golden hay the bright green corn
    the grass so blue the sky so green
    with yellow sunlight
with the charred sunset
the brighter yellow of the dandelion
    white web and doily of the Queen Anne’s lace
    that floats like foam within the green field’s waves

take up the shards of leaves burnt stained with frost
    and dried flaking stiff
take up the ice skin filming the dark street’s puddle
    in an early and cold morning of frost steam

take up the street
    fresh with a cold spring rain
spring blossoms littered on it from the sudden storm
    take up the storm
and take the night through which it blows

    layers of the night folded on themselves
    a deeply woven rose

the crevices of its petals elusive to the touch
A Tree

Light contained in the netting
    of the tree’s dark
    branches spreading
    green and woven
all around the crowded space, the inner pathways
branching
and water too, and deeply
    from the sky, sun-traversed
    and from the depth
    of captured earth, searching through the root systems,
    the blind rumors

In spring the shearings of bright rain
    and the arriving light,
in summer the siphoned tangent products
    of a fierce geometric sun

How many forests
    breaking upward in the wave
    of a single tree?
chaotic and bright, the manifold of shore
    singular uncountable currents
infinite tide
Dreaming

Night burns with paper dreams
inside the furnace sleep

shivering fire crowding the alembic
luminous flakes
hand prints soot blackened

touchings, testings –

within or without? –
    thick flames of color
gather limbs once dark, burnt stick remnants lying now

glittering
fire ash of
    web-like constellations display
the talismans that guard the inner room
    in its dense luminous infinity,
that map the outer vacancy –
    amid wide night drafts

    – draftings –
cold, rumored
Assessment

Something is moving through the trees
  in the night outside –
  is it the wind? is it something?
  nothing?
And above in the spreading branches
  fringed with black leaves –
  what is it in the night’s
  silent disturbance
  that the ear, the mind, the heart receives?

The bright September moon shines through.
  (What am I doing here, what will I ever do?)

Down in the street below the truck for the dumpster
  is just getting through
  hauling away the trash;
  traffic jars past on the busy street off a ways.
I remember so little, yet so much,
  of my early, middle and later nights and days.
I have only bad memories.
  And though frequently laughed at, and with,
  I was never loved.
Assessment II

Blue green moonlight with its shadow-veins

leaf pages blowing,
leaf hands catching at them

at the corner of the room
near the window so open now

but within the sky’s waters –
which are the wind,
which are the moonlight

there is dream, and the source of dream
floating in the surface, deep in the surface
of the moonlit floor
shadows floating in it like flowers in a bowl

and wind shapes touch mind corners
and mind centers as well –

heart waking, not waking
crying aloud to wake,
asleep

again and again

Dip your face past the deep well,
mirror surface of night

When will you be whole, with the amulet of fire around you,
wipe your face free of the ash? –

burnt pages of the dream
Autumn Night with Heavy Rain and Full Moon

Wind-swirling tree knifed through
with a seething –
slashes of the rain,
collapsing dented tree sails luffing
about to blow –
branches taut stretching and shaking

olive gray undersides of the leaves suddenly luminous,
as they are shed about
and the road is bone white
in the moonlight

Starkly illuminated framework of the tree
gray and recessed
amid lightning’s spotlight

Above the wind,
there are coal smoke pillars
diaphanous violet petal cumuli
of storm clouds

Thrown the switch now –
electric current of denser rain –
lightning phosphorous again
and a flare is lit inside the tree

Ozone scent like gun smoke
of a broken apart world

but there is more wind now,
and a rain curtain veils the scene in grainy granulated sepia
Incantation

**Moon**

earth-tree
branches
    speaking loud the night wind
    leaf
listening whisper past night water

brightened now,
peaceful

anticipating death

The water streams

    yet only one place sleeping waking know
    echoes earth sun moon

Moonflower lichen on rock
    in the blue green light
near the pine tree

There bent over in rain,
    the paper-colored grass

White blue, full of snow,
    swiped feather-clouds
Stones of silver, gold grains of charmed sands,
glints of purple light
waving spirit minnow moon flecks,
moon sun-sparkle
the pool black and still
chained with spots of mercury and gold

cloudless sky, star-figured fires
and our silence

far in the ascending, in anticipation
A Winter Day

Snow scarves loosed to mid day’s freezing light,
(Though all dark bindings and discovered prints
Had steeped in small bright wells their waxes threads)
Lay down new cloaks to earth, papered, starlit.

Yet leaves of the hierophant and pythoness
In rising vortexes of cicadas’ blue
Conceal a discord, manifold yet true,
Stark radiance of waking into brightest plains.

Dim and decisive day – they flee from me,
Theft of the arching timepiece, these possessions:
Streams of these ashen scars, flowing quite free,

Bleed a resplendent graphite from my veins –
Splinters of light held in the bright sun mirror,
There where I greet the shadow’s overture.
Renewal

Cold rain in April –
   my birthday is drawing near;
   I am moving into a new apartment,
   this one already half bare

The clouds so bright in the sky,
   the cold sky of a spring midday:
      deep, deep blue straight up above
      but whiter toward the low edge

Space and light – space, light, and time!
   What is the nature of change?
How much I have undergone, how much has slipped away

Yet I hold it all in myself

I am glad, glad, glad
   to have survived thus far,
   this strenuous arduous life – and many dangers too –
      having passed through

What have I passed into now? –
   an extra realm of blue,
      of clear sky, high and gold and such light-burnished clouds,
      cold clean air – clear, bright

   It is not the cold air of autumn,
      instead it is the air of a very cold spring

There is a scoured freshness to the face of the earth itself

   There is a brightness to everything
Elsewhere

Dark room with the night wind moving secretly through,
somewhere in curtains, just past the sill –
   the moon, the stars

There through the window
   the trees move without cease
going nowhere in the wind

   a sidewalk’s pavement squares
      looking like praline and chalk
in the moon’s autumn light
   in the blue street light

   walkers passing down on the street below
see them as stair steps
leading on somewhere
   to where?

And a face might be suddenly there
   in the leaves,
just as quickly disappear,
   seen but once

How often one thinks, and then thinks again –
   what do I know, where have I been? –
   images of times places
faces that glint quick and small
   in a dark confusion of lights,
bright dim shapes of shadows there on the wall

   where have I been, where am I going?

   elsewhere
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

STEVEN FRATTALI is an American writer living in Taipei and Boston. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry. He is also the author of several critical works, among them Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost (ELS, 2002) and Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism. (Peter Lang, 2005)
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