

1.

Something this foggy day, a something which  
Is neither of this fog nor of today,  
Has set me dreaming of the winds that play  
Past certain cliffs, along one certain beach,  
And turn the topmost edge of waves to spray:  
Ah pleasant pebbly strand so far away,  
So out of reach while quite within my reach,  
As out of reach as India or Cathay!  
I am sick of where I am and where I am not,  
I am sick of foresight and of memory,  
I am sick of all I have and all I see,  
I am sick of self, and there is nothing new;  
Oh weary impatient patience of my lot!—  
Thus with myself: how fares it, Friends, with you?

2.

That is the way God made you.  
And what is wrong with it? Why, Nothing.  
Except that you are cold and cannot cook.

Merdice can cook. Merdice  
of Murdered heart and docked sarcastic soul.  
Merdice  
the bolted Nomad, on a winter noon  
cook guts; and sits in gas. (She has no shawl, her landlord has no coal.)

You out beyond the shellac of her look  
and of her sill!  
She envies you your fury  
buffoonery  
that enfolds your silver skill  
She thinks you are a mountain and a star, unbaffleable;  
with sentient twitch and scurry.

3.

There is a singer everyone has heard,  
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,  
Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.  
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers  
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.  
He says the early petal-fall is past  
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers  
On sunny days a moment overcast;  
And comes that other fall we name the fall.  
He says the highway dust is over all.  
The bird would cease and be as other birds  
But that he knows in singing not to sing.  
The question that he frames in all but words  
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

4.

MORE than most fair, full of the living fire  
Kindled above unto the maker near:  
No eyes buy joys, in which all powers conspire,  
That to the world naught else be counted dear.  
Through your bright beams doth not the blinded guest,  
Shoot out his darts to base affections wound;  
But Angels come to lead frail mind to rest  
In chaste desires on heavenly beauty bound.  
You frame my thoughts and fashion me within,  
You stop my tongue, and teach my hart to speak,  
You calm the storm that passion did begin,  
Strong through your cause, but by your virtue weak.  
Dark is the world, where your light shined never;  
Well is he borne that may behold you ever.

5.

“No water so still as the  
dead fountains of Versailles.” No swan,  
with swart blind look askance  
and gondoliering legs, so fine  
as the chinz china one with fawn-  
brown eyes and toothed gold  
collar on to show whose bird it was.

Lodged in the Louis Fifteenth  
candelabrum-tree of cockscomb-  
tinted buttons, dahlias,  
sea-urchins, and everlastings,  
it perches on the branching foam  
of polished sculptured  
flowers—at ease and tall. The king is dead.

6.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;  
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells  
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's  
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;  
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,  
Crying What I dó is me: for that I came.

I say móre: the just man justices;  
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;  
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —  
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

7.

I lock you in an American sonnet that is part prison,  
Part panic closet, a little room in a house set aflame.  
I lock you in a form that is part music box, part meat  
Grinder to separate the song of the bird from the bone.  
I lock your persona in a dream-inducing sleeper hold  
While your better selves watch from the bleachers.  
I make you both gym & crow here. As the crow  
You undergo a beautiful catharsis trapped one night  
In the shadows of the gym. As the gym, the feel of crow-  
Shit dropping to your floors is not unlike the stars  
Falling from the pep rally posters on your walls.  
I make you a box of darkness with a bird in its heart.  
Volts of acoustics, instinct & metaphor. It is not enough  
To love you. It is not enough to want you destroyed.

8.

Caught — the bubble  
in the spirit level,  
a creature divided;  
and the compass needle  
wobbling and wavering,  
undecided.  
Freed — the broken  
thermometer's mercury  
running away;  
and the rainbow-bird  
from the narrow bevel  
of the empty mirror,  
flying wherever  
it feels like, gay!

9.

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,  
But as for me, hélas, I may no more.  
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,  
I am of them that farthest cometh behind.  
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind  
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore  
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,  
Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.  
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,  
As well as I may spend his time in vain.  
And graven with diamonds in letters plain  
There is written, her fair neck round about:  
Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,  
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

10.

You who desired so much—in vain to ask—  
Yet fed you hunger like an endless task,  
Dared dignify the labor, bless the quest—  
Achieved that stillness ultimately best,

Being, of all, least sought for: Emily, hear!  
O sweet, dead Silencer, most suddenly clear  
When singing that Eternity possessed  
And plundered momentarily in every breast;

—Truly no flower yet withers in your hand.  
The harvest you descried and understand  
Needs more than wit to gather, love to bind.  
Some reconciliation of remotest mind—

Leaves Ormus rubyless, and Ophir chill.  
Else tears heap all within one clay-cold hill.

11.

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,  
God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth  
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,  
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
The six-days world transposing in an hour,  
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;  
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,  
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,  
Heaven in ordinary, man well dressed,  
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,  
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,  
The land of spices; something understood.

12.

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—  
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—  
And Winter slumbering in the open air,  
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!  
And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,  
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,  
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.  
Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,  
For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!  
With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll:  
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?  
Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,  
And Hope without an object cannot live.

13.

Headless girl so ill at ease on the bed,  
I know, if you could, what you're thinking of:  
nothing. I used to think that, too,  
whenever I sat down to a full plate  
or unwittingly stepped on an ant.  
When I ran to my mother, waiting radiant  
as a cornstalk at the edge of the field,  
nothing else mattered: the world stood still.  
Tonight men stride like elegant scissors across the lawn  
to the women arrayed there, petals waiting to loosen.  
When I step out, disguised in your blushing skin,  
they will nudge each other to get a peek  
and I will smile, all the while wishing them dead.  
Mother's calling. Stand up: it will be our secret.

14.

Not marble nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,  
But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.  
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn  
The living record of your memory.  
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room  
Even in the eyes of all posterity  
That wear this world out to the ending doom.  
So, till the Judgement that yourself arise,  
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

Bonus sonnet: how did this come about?

"Oh, We Be Few, Oh, We Be Few," She Huffed

Go softly to the Disneyland Hotel,  
Its simulacral threshold grown sublime:  
The bedrooms all emit that new car smell,  
Like nothing else in bourgie Anaheim.  
Where leftist brownies get our mothers high,  
Humanity is poorly led, forsooth—  
In Eisenhower's shadow lies the lie;  
In Soviet-run brothels lies the truth.  
Henceforth let odorous intensities  
Of talkativeness, torture, filth, and death  
Stiffly arouse posh, gilded melodies  
Beethoven might have come up with on meth.  
The tawdry footsteps of a bawdy Goth  
Are footsteps washed in washed-up Oshkosh broth.