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Songs & Idylls

SONGS for Singers

Characteristic Frequencies

Light, to begin, as though it were the dawn,
And whispered voices breathed themselves awake,
And sentience would rise and fall and make
A storm, turn faint again, scarce moving on—
On lyric waves these messages were sent,
Foretelling danger and the pangs of grief,
Then, gentler, sing of comfort and relief,
Follow each graceful passage where it went—
This, while the song comes lapping up at me,
Comes pulling like the most insistent tide,
Whether the sound grows deep or thin and wide,
Draws me on deeper in this sonic sea—
Seek me no more, but let me run aground,
My soul sunk in these waves, and listening, drowned.

While There Is Breath

While there is breath to tell the tale,
let me sing—let me begin each day
as though it were my first
and everything new and wild
and brilliant in it—I know that bleak
dark death and suffering
will bring their force
to bruise and bend whatever
they can hope to break, but I
should much prefer
a glorious defiance of
that dire absolute,
the absolution found
in using every breath I have
for singing endlessly—

The Song Remains

Ella needs no elegy
Because her hallelujahs sang
Across the country, over sea,
Until the heavens shone and rang
In concert with her silver voice,
Whose echoes make us still rejoice

La Chanteuse

This melody that lilts, lifts us to light
Like incense rising, or like hope aloft,
Like spring's sweet perfume and like down-soft
New blooms, the lovely song eclipses night–
Brings sun and starlight and a shining flame
To paint the darkness into blazing day,
To chase all sorrow and all gloom away
Or give them luster as the marks of Fame–
The singing sinuous and smooth as glass,
As stillest water or a spotless sky,
And yet the singer never stops to sigh
Except when breathing lets a moment pass–
Because the music brings such passion, clear
Expressive, infinite and full of grace,
Poured out in rivulets and with a trace
Of magic only those with love can hear–
One aria can change the flow of time
And raise us all from simple to sublime

All our Loves

All our friends are singing
In the chorus on a Saturday
And though I know they will be fine
And sing it well, I have to say
That hearing all our friends ring out
In chorus is more complex still
Than polyphonic harmonies
And counterpoint, and what we will
Be loving best and savoring
On the occasion, likely, is
The sheer delight of soaking in
That all these loves are mine and his

Laudate

In a room with bright light and bright sound
It's as though all the birds in the wide world have set

Their hearts on singing out the highest praise
Of sun and stars and moon, of life and light and love,
And of being wingèd things up in the broad green roof
Of the springtime world—and yet this song,
Sung in truth by mortals mere, by trebles in
The spring of their own lives, can only hint
At the brilliant sweetness of having been born to sing.

Elixir

They all were young and fair who sat
Under the rustling summer trees,
The copper beeches, lindens; these
Broad green allées of hazel that
Gave shade and silver glints of sun
In rhythm with their part-songs, airs,
And with their sweet dallied affairs
While laughing brooks made haste to run
Away, as time is wont to do,
And youth, but these stayed young and fair
Forever in their summer air
Because their songs of love rang true

Sing Now and Always

To celebrate at breaking of the dawn
Or close of evening, or the stroke of noon,
There is no sweeter pleasure than a tune
Well sung by everyone, an antiphon
To peace, to sorrow, or to happiness;
No matter what the poetry or text,
It truly matters most that what is next
Is choral concord to renew, redress,
Resound through all the unseen years ahead,
A clarion, an anthem or motet
Grander than any ear has heard as yet,
And run to distant history, a thread
Of melody and harmony so strong
That no one can resist joining in song

The Mute Would Sing

Open that silent mouth whose tongue would sound
And like a bell's announcing song would sing
With gladness praises to our God and King
That every ear could hear the song abound

I Dream the World

I dream the world will learn to sing 'Til joy suffuses everything—
When peace and happiness abound, I dream a song will be the sound
Most widely heard by every ear Around the globe that longs to hear
A note of kindness, care; of grace, When melody wraps its embrace
Around us like an angel's wing—*I dream the world will learn to sing!*

I dream the world will learn to sing And make earth's darkest corners ring,
Will throw aside all warring ways, Mend brokenness, take up the phrase
That calls to harmony all souls The way a carillon bell tolls,
First, lone and softly, then a pair Joins in, and more, and then the air
Is filled with song, like bells a-swing—*I dream the world will learn to sing!*

I dream the world will learn to sing And this, the message it will bring:
We must not wait in silent nights, Unsung 'til happiness alights,
'Til care and kindness, sweetness, peace, Miraculously buy release
And save us from our voiceless state: If we don't sing, it is too late,
So let our song rise up and ring—*I dream the world will learn to sing!*

I Sing for Love

I sing for love of singing, For music, sweet and strong
That carries me from joy to joy, Amending every wrong—
To hear clear voices ringing Across the dawn of day
Makes purest gold, without alloy, My every waking way—
As day approaches evening, A lullaby, at last,
Gives night delight, believing As I do that in the vast—
Infinite—constellation Of voices in the night,
I will find deep communion With the song that sets me right—
I sing for love of singing, For in the choir's heart
Is all the song of blessing That I longed for from the start.

Angels in the Aviary

Of winged and wondrous beings shall I tell,
Whose incandescence fills the deepest wood,
With brilliance, dazzling, pretty as it's good,
And singing lays clear as a silver bell—
Take wing, you also, soaring wide abroad,
To sing elated tales of what is seen
From over oceans, forests rich with green
And storied mountains—palisades of God—
Let each take flight, to race the sands of time;
To see along the universe's rim
All future iterations growing dim,
As at such speeds our eyes glaze up with rime—

Of angels such as these I tell my tale
And bid you join their swiftest ranks to fly
Above the oceans, forest, land and sky
To loveliness beside which all falls pale—
And cry, sweet birds, for happiness that we
Are joined in such angelic company.

O Salutaris Hostia (*de Pierre de la Rue*)

That moment of least confidence—
That time when all I am and ought
To do or be, the competence
And hope I'd with each act besought—
I want to fold full inward, to
Hide what I fear I cannot be,
When from the dark an echo true
To angels' voices lights on me
As though their paeon, their salute,
Raised me from darkest depths so high
That all my terrors must fall mute
Or join to lift me to that sky
Where praised saints and holy ones
Have banished fear through angel choir
And sung as though a thousand suns
Make hearts anew with wild desire.

Hours into Seasons

There's a sweetness in the morning when the sun has yet to rise
And the blooms lie, still unopened, under sleeping butterflies;
When the stars still wink and glimmer, while the frogs yet softly sing—
There's a sweetness in the morning that is like the breath of Spring.
There's a graciousness at midday when, amid the racing streams,
All arise and put in motion yesterday's profoundest dreams;
When the past its chains has loosened on the race of all alive,
That in joyful forward motion we, like Summer, grow and thrive.
There's a calm amid the evening when the birds come to the trees'
Respite from the day of flying, echoed by our evening ease;
When the cares of noon have lessened as the dusk swept into place—
There's a calm amid the evening, peaceful as the Autumn's grace.
There's a beauty to the nighttime, glorious and peaceful bliss,
Treasured for the kind renewal of the souls that rest in this
Cradling darkness and this languor, in this place of mending rest
That, like Winter's dormant healing, lets us wake refreshed and blessed.
I would take these hours' presents as my guide through seasons long,
Through a lifelong path that's pleasant as a choir's finest song;

I would be a seasoned traveler, happy above everything,
If my song could last forever,
Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring.

A Song of Farewell

Ends Only the Beginning

A fond farewell should only end the start
Of what emerged from nothing to become
Much greater than its origins, a home
For all that's good and gracious in the heart—
What had begun in silence has grown deep
And richer than imagining could guess,
A tapestry of joy and tenderness,
A score of blended notes that time will keep—
Whose voices came together first in this
True confluence of sound and sweet accord
Cannot again move aught but closer toward
Such harmony as, now it's found, is bliss—
For in love's benedictory refrain
Awakens what all hearts must sing again.

When I can Sing No More

When I am weary, worn beyond all reckoning,
My breath is gone and voice has ceased to sound,
The darkness draws me in, its silence beckoning
And luring me to lie down on the ground—
To fall asleep; perhaps to melt there into death,
Because I can no longer coax my throat
To speak of joy, or yet to longer draw a breath,
To sing a song as long as one fine note—
Beloved Friend, how sweet if you will stand for me
And draw the air that lifts the lark to wing
Its way across the sky—if you will kindly be
My voice, and raise your own aloft and sing—
For in my silent darkness I shall never die
Long as your voice goes on and in your song I lie.

SONGS for Voices & Other Instruments

Incipient Sonority

The ambient music in the air
Before musicians put it there
Compels and fills us with its surge

So when potentials meet and merge
We feel a singing in our bones
Harmonic with the music's tones

Sound Space

This fine rhapsodic polygon
Of sound wherein I float
Has strength and gentleness alike
In every bar and note
Has calming and has energizing
Sleep and waking song
And makes me glad I fell into
The tune that came along

Rhapsodic

The flashing silver singing sounds that pierce the foot-lit gloom
When he sits at the keyboard to escape the practice room
And sparkle without audience, and play without restraint
Or hope, or fear of the applause, a momentary saint,
A superhuman, music's muse, a minor god, ideal—
Then leaves the darkened hall again—now, what of it is real?

I can Hear It from Miles Away

(For Miles Davis)

The cool and languid drift of sound
That laps the corner, wraps around
The crevice of an open door,
Suspends, and then is heard no more—
The melancholic notes so sweet
Through open window, down the street,
Transcend the most insightful words,
The songs of the most tuneful birds,
The darkest depth of starless night,
Surpasses joy's most brilliant light,
Breathes lyric passion out, and then
Falls coolly silent once again...

Sounding

In the hands of a master
The melody played so sweetly runs
Like a playful rivulet down the hall
Spilling an invitation to
Light-footed dancing, to
Birds chattering along, to light

Flickering between the window blinds
To call all of us down the passage
To bathe in its clean music

Rectitude

Our old piano has
Serious legs,
An etched
Receptive face
Marred
Only slightly by
That underbite,
Those
Gorgeous silly teeth
That let
An aging,
Dear, familiar
Voice
Spill out,
Sometimes
In chattering,
Gallivanting songs
That would belie
Those straight and
Sober legs.

Ingrained

The salt and oil of his hand
are torment and life's-blood both
to the volutes of the instrument
and to
the curving, sinuous surfaces of that
deep-burnished ancient bass—its sigh
at the mindful, guiding touch
of the hand
steady with certainty, knowing
the way from note to note,
from phrase to
singing phrase, without
reference anymore
to intent because
the thought, the meaning, the joy
and the intensity are all
as deep as heartwood in

the ancient tree that was
the bass's former self.
Those days,
no bird
set in the boughs of the
grandfather tree
had sweeter voice
than the breezes piping softly
through its leaves, no, even than
the tiny song
humming through
the tree's own heart, minute
and pale yet, sub-sonically, a hint
—a whisper—in
the lyric capillary rise
of tree's-elixir every spring
of the string-bass sound
far-off, unborn,
lying cradled
until called out
by generations, 'til,
goaded with salt,
soothed with oil,
called
to speak again as its
nature insists,
under a musician's hand.

Fanfare

With trumpets blazing bright as stars
The grand procession moves apace
To urge us from a darker place
Into the light no shadow mars
Nor chill cuts in; no drop of gloom
Can enter when this day springs forth
And blossoms cross the secret north
And leave no sorrow any room—
Let each take up the pageant's pace
To follow at the trumpets' call
And sing their joy to one and all
In this extremity of space

Thought Becomes Deed

Improvisations in the gold-lit nave, where I sat as of old,

Among the candle flames and greens, the paraments and carven screens
And incense-laden night, these scenes of ceremony were the means
Offsetting those surprising, bold improvisations that you told
The sanctuary's lofty lair, and all of us who huddled there
So mesmerized by new-made tunes, to which our souls were not immune,
Since you were writing down the runes
—as you have done these many moons—
You marked this newness down with care, though improvised out of the air;

I bent to listen to the way that old pipe-organ seemed to say
Something, in whispers, of a time—long past, I thought—in which sublime
Rhythms and patterns like your chiming play of *Tierce en Taille*, were, I'm
Quite sure, shaped as a different lay, wherein another love did play,
A love now gone to other stations of the Cross than these relations,
Playing something sweet and deep across the borderlands of sleep,
Across your grand recital; sweeping through the memories I keep:
Those evening organ-conflagrations, candlelit improvisations.

Just A Little Jazz-ma-Tazz

When you feel yer feet a-tappin' and your hands just get a-clappin'
Somethin' grand's about to happen:
Just a little jazz-ma-tazz—
If the week was long an' weary and your eyes are gettin' bleary,
Time to let it go, ma dearie,
With a little jazz-ma-tazz—
Take a sip o' somethin' chilly, knock yer elbows willy-nilly
And don't worry if it's silly,
'Cause it's only jazz-ma-tazz—
There'll be time enough tomorrow for ol' tiredness an' sorrow;
If you're empty you can borrow
Joy from jumpin' jazz-ma-tazz—
So get up an' quit yer waitin' and yer heavy hesitatin'
And begin the celebratin'
With a little jazz-ma-tazz—
Get yer sleepy feet a-tappin' and your hands awake an' clappin'—
Somethin' grand's about to happen:
Spark a little jazz-ma-tazz!

SONGS for the Carillon

Ringin' Twelve

As the midday bells are sounding,
Morning light sharpens to blue,
Quiet moments find their grounding;

Thought needs no more things to do
To resolve all unsolved queries,
Weary, troubled, trying times—
Now thoughts rise to higher aeries
In the bell tower, where chimes
Ring new peace, and calm awaken,
Where new joy can sweep away
All the old thoughts, now forsaken,
At the bright noon of the day.

What is this Song?

First the carillon, and then,
Voices of children, women, men,
The organ sounds, lute, harp and lyre,
And as the song grows clearer, higher,
Sweeter and more joyful still,
Ring out the notes from hill to hill,
Across the night, straight on to day,
The melody flies out, away!
What is this potent symphony?
It's love, my Love, that sets us free.

On the Hour

I hear a distant clamoring, that clear and golden hammering,
the calling so enamoring me of this hour of day,
That chorus of the chiming bells change-ringing, as their music swells
until no other parallels the news they swing to say,
'Til every other sound should cease as swiftly as the bells increase,
work stop, hopes rise, hearts fill with peace; the ringing calls that soon
The echo of its chimes will fall where it sang out from wall to wall
in waves of life over us all to tell us it is noon—
No wonder, in this ringing sphere of tonal loveliness I hear,
I sense a sweetness drawing near and beckoning to me
To join the clangor of the song, to strike at every chime and gong
and bell, that each must sing along and set the midday free—
Ring every bronze and silver note, ring brass and gold, and keep afloat
all of earth's joy—the antidote to death is in this tune—
Ring happiness, ring love and peace; ring out the hour of sweet release;
ring the refrain of this caprice until *another* noon!

Ringin' In

Every time I hear them, I remember that first morning,
That moment in a narrow street when brightly, without warning,
The bells loosened their tongues to sing and raised their clarion voices

In that wild hymnody of joy at which my heart rejoices,
And now, wherever I may be, whatever is the weather
Or the occasion driving me, those voices joined together
Stop me, and make me raise my eyes while all the bells are ringing,
And search the gladness of the skies where Carillon is singing.

Carillon

Dawn
dawn, dawn, dawn
draws light crepuscule; a fawn
grazes lightfoot on the lawn,
steals campanula, and is gone...

soon
soon, soon, soon
the shallow shadows cede to noon
and on the lake a laughing loon
tunes his whistle, spies the moon...

dim
dim, dim, dim;
the wide horizon touching him
curves along the earth to skim
and catch it on night's western rim...

there
there, there, there
like a watch hung in midair,
hourglass to this affair;
bells are tolling everywhere...

tone
tone, tone, tone:
grief or ecstasy, the moan
and the clangor widely flown
sing the rolling antiphon...

pray
pray, pray, pray
for the dawn, another day
when the carillon will say
in this ringing roundelay
how the hours have slipped away...

IDYLLS for Idle Times

Idylls & Idealism

A lake as cool as fishes' silver flanks
and ruffled less by wind than lily leaves,
where children roll their pant legs up, and sleeves,
to shepherd pollywogs along the banks,
Right where the river empties in its pool,
sending out eddies limned in leafy green
and damselflies all hover on the scene
as shadow changes sun to shady, cool,
Pale reminiscent ghosts of yesterdays
that elders at their picnics on the shore
remember by their scent, if little more,
and are transported thus into a haze,
For idling lakeside, childlike, it seems,
inspires sweet, idealistic dreams...

Recognition

How the calm of evening simmers,
As a mist engulfs the lake...
Stars flick on, the city glimmers...
Walking, I am wide-awake...

In my heart, there leaps the knowing
Recognition, as I roam,
That this scintillating, glowing
Place is welcoming me home.

I have wandered many places,
Lived and loved in many lands
Where a hundred thousand faces,
Hospitable, gracious hands,

Generous, inspiring people's
Invitations, and the rest,
Filled the land, from vales to steeples,
With the joys that please me best...

Yet, for all the sweet emotions
I have known in every spot,
I'd traverse the widest oceans
To return to where I've got

Such connection, deep and healing,
Such belonging, in my soul,
Recognition so revealing
That it's Home that makes me whole.

Blood Grass

Short bursts of breeze in the long leaves,
the slightest of eddies as though
their pulse were pumping actual red cells
through the tall margins of the field—
Likelier that their real nature as flammable,
short-lived bursts of vigorous and
violent life, destined to flame
up, out, leap to cosmic oblivion, and die—
Are these our guides, or are
they mirrors of the flimsy, volatile existence
that we share? Only there, in
the margins of the field, do the flames
and shadows of our being have
a moment's sway, for better or for worse,
of honesty out in the sun. Only there,
where the grass grows tall and yet
has not the strength or
depth of root to thrive, do we
see how little of the energy
with which we'd credited ourselves
really shines for longer than
a short, weedy season, bending
this way, bending that, and sparking
into sudden flares of incandescent
death
before returning to earth,
extinguished without
having distinguished ourselves, yet still
flying a bold red flag as if
we were something more.

Precious Things

Stars, sun, comets, moon and planets; rain and lightning, clouds and mist;
Birds and butterflies and rainbows; dragonflies by morning kissed:
What a sparkling declaration of the minutes passing by,
What a joy, this constellation of sweet treasures in the sky!
Though I hunger in the silence of shut-in days, sleeping, blind,

I keep constantly the radiance of these jewels in my mind,
Hoping, dreaming, moving, soaring—real, or the internal, eye
Loves the beauties so alluring of sweet treasures in the sky!
Copper in the morning hours and deep gold at peak of noon,
Sparkling like a thousand-thousand gems until the silver moon
Highlights these my constellations of wild diamonds in the sky—
No one has a richer treasury than Nature has—and I.

Snowing Amethysts

At evening, summertime holds breathless sway
When even crickets wait before they'll sing,
And birds to roost go silent; everything
Takes pause because the lengthy heat of day
Has drawn a shawl of stillness down to lawn
And flowerbed and hedges, 'til a breath—
So shallow it could scarcely ward off death—
Is difficult to breathe 'til the break's gone,
Until the night resumes its stealthy crawl,
Exhaling with a stirring wind that flies
Up, stirring blossoms upward to the skies,
Their petals dropping, ash-like, down the wall,
Crape-myrtle petals drifting down below
In waves of amethyst, a summer snow.

Treasury

Click and clatter,
chuckle, chatter,
in the attic,
nascent natter
tells a tale of
bits and bobbins,
delicate as
little robins'
eggs and feathers,
soft as heather,
sings of history
and hidden
secrets dusty
and ghost-ridden,
'mid the bones
and bolts and buckles,
be they sweet as
honeysuckle's
scent remembered,

or the laughter
in the rafters
heard hereafter,
recollections
of old treasure,
holding motes of
passing pleasure—
sneeze, and all the
atoms scatter
to the corners,
click
and
clatter.

Tremolo

If butterflies could be said to dance, their dancing should have sound as well; it
ought to sound like violins,
That fineness sure and gossamer that leaps as bright and arrow-sharp and clean
And with such force as bold impulses of electricity but lands *en pointe* effortlessly
all the same,
That draws us with it as if sucked into vortices of fairytale and all as though the
silent
Pantomime of butterflies had lovely voices after all

Fantastic Phenomena

Rare as hens' teeth, so they say,
the bird I saw the other day;
barely known, less often, seen,
and in the spaces in between,
not found but once, then flown away—
But rarer still, and here's the thing:
that I should see it on the wing
and landing, perching in a *tree*
that most folk living never see,
abloom in Fall, as it were Spring—
For what I've learned is that this kind
of special magic that I find
can only happen if the heart
is open to the sort of art
where things are made so *in my mind*.

Winter Afternoon

In the back room, a falling note
Of soft laughter and the

Slow waft of winter spices
Remind me that the snow
Knotted up out by the curb
Has not had the last word.

Too Early to be Called Springtime

Leaning back into the shade
Next to a mirror foxed with age but
Gleaming still with that low glint,
Mercurial, that holds onto its ghosts—those
Pale vapors that have passed
Through the pavilion and its garden greens,
Have dreamed while leaning in
This selfsame shade
Of fading memory and of
Incipient bloom, in this
Just-waking secret garden—
Here I will stay at rest, a shade myself
In the pale green gloaming

Spring Pastures

Far back among the rolling hills, Where prairie grasses sweep and bow
And the sweet wildflower spills Pour down the slope, the Angus cow
Set farthest back along the line Draws up her calf to join the herd,
Slow-swaying, toward a stand of pine; The rancher there, without a word,
Appears to bring an evening feed, And all the cattle on the clock
That balances content with need, Some time before, began this walk . . .
The faintest glint of sidelong rays Begins to tint the brush with gold
The way late Spring colors her days, As if instead of growing old
She's only burnishing her tone The more to show her graciousness,
Inviting birds that fly alone To join a choir whose notes confess
A radiant love of living things, Of all that's sweet and warm and new,
Of leggy calves, of seed that brings That grass now banking up the slough . . .
The cattle walk, now, in their line, Their black flanks shaded in the dusk
With blue-tinged shadows, as a fine Light scent arises like a musk
From all their footsteps tapped in clay, Veils of the thinnest dust laid low
Between the sorghum rows' array And that tall hayfield yet to mow,
And not one calf among them all Drifts off the center of the trail,
Because they sense their supper-call As sure as seasons never fail . . .

Summer's Rest

The willow on the riverbank
The reeds along the lee
The scissortail and swallow gliding

Just above the tree
And swooping after butterflies
Of sulphur-color, green,
And white as stars in broad midday
If they could yet be seen
The river rolling in its banks
The sighing of the breeze—
Oh I could love a thousand years
Of afternoons like these

Autumnal

Faint as the smoke from a fir-branch fire
far off on the foggy shore,
Where salt-stung sea choruses a choir
as the tide rolls more and more
Of the oyster shells in its back-and-forth,
tumbling them to pearly dust,
I can hear the birds winging from the north
as each Fall they surely must,
And I watch as they darken the silver skies
in a wave of shivering black,
Sailing south toward warmth with their anguished cries,
to bid the sweet Summer back

Gleaming Afternoon

While I would soar, would gladly fly
Wide, in an arc across the sky
Whose dome of hotly burnished brass
Encompasses at every pass
The great wild height of atmosphere
That would engage to hold me here,
I can, eyes shut and spirit wide,
Pierce heaven to the great Outside.

Memorable

Bring me a windy day of blue,
A shimmering sky and a rippling lake,
Where cottony clouds sail into view
And to lie indoors is a dire mistake:
I'll remember my youth
And the swell of spring,
The spell of renewal on everything,
The perfumed shore and its pearly hue,
And I'll dream like I've never been so awake.

Well Seasoned

Green are the groves of heart's desire,
Blue-black the nighttime sky afire
With glinting stars to light the way
From late, until rose dawns the day;
Sweet is the chanting overhead
Of starlings, finches, and the red-
Winged blackbird's whistle, and the long,
Cool notes of robins' warbling song;
Light is my heart, my hope, my eye,
As the brilliance of a summer sky
Gives way to autumn, winter, spring,
And in the cycle, everything
Renews, refreshes, and gives birth
To further joys of life on earth.

Color Infusions

Velour of the lawn is deep, deep green,
sun breaking sideways grey
or silvery-white, like the moon of night
pulled over the edge of day–
The mirroring water Caribbean blue
on the patio table and chair
to reflect the sky or the azure eye
of a hoverer in the air–
So winter to spring is giving ground
by violet margins and rose,
to erase from sight the black and white
of the season's reticent clothes.

Flying Colors

On the horizon I spotted a kite
That swung in the wind to the left and the right
And splashed all its colors, exuberant paint
To swirl in the sky with a dip and a feint
Toward the grass, toward the sun, to a hill, to a tree,
A brilliant kaleidoscope there just for me
And the child whose hand guided the string of the kite
As it painted our world with new colors and light

Ocean-front Property

A stroll along the esplanade, sun-worship on the beach,
Dining on oysters, clams or cod, there's pleasure fit for each

And every taste, along the shore, delights enough at sea,
That, whether you are rich or poor, seaside's the place to be!

Tropical Splash

A-chatter in the curling fronds, the wet-leafed canopy, the ponds,
Among the tangled twining root of every vine-choked tree's broad foot,
Wild birds spread out their neon wings in this green palace of such kings,
Shout to a sun that's seldom seen, deep in this hot palace of green,
But bring a blaze that's all their own, as bright as such a place has known.
Take flight! Take wing! Aim for the sun—race with them upward, every one,
Above the canopy, to see whether a sun can really be;
And if it's not, let no bleak night deter a second from our flight:
Upward and forward, light or none, we always ought to seek the sun—
And if not found, our calling is that we must light these palaces.

End of Summer Analogy

The mockingbird tipping its tail at me
And flicking wings so I can see
His pretty stripes of white and dark
As he goes darting through the park
Reminds me most, as summer's gone,
Of sprinklers flicking on the lawn

Swimming in Warm Water

I: Skimming along as if in flight Just under the surface of a lake, I can look up and see through its tinted lens A circular and absurdly distorted universe Of inbent trees examining me in kind, Of ship-sized cumulus zeppelin clouds whizzing by, The pillowed prows of ducks plowing past me And convoluted birds careening In zigzag traffic from shore to shore.

II: Looking down, I see dazzling curtains of kelp Dyeing mottled sunlight as it Cooks the lake like a giant kettle full of fish. Flitting, darting shapes shoot up to nip me Or casually brush by And I exult in floating a subtle touch Toward a parti-colored veil-tailed fish When it fixes me with its dully silver, Unemotional lidless eye.

Amper&and

so much more than what is known
the interstices of a sigh
the sea-deep iris of the eye
the crease where dandelions blown
have flown on time; its passing by
is all-and-nothing to the heart
that muses on the fleeting hours,
the waxing, waning wisdom, powers

of seeing from the very start
how small the buds that burst in flowers,
how faint beginnings can't foretell
the grandness that may lie in store,
outshine the worlds that passed before
and washed away, foamed on the swell
from shore with every print and shell,
taking it all, yet leaving more...

Koi

Slipping through the shallow pond
In winding streaks of light,
Their nacreous scales a vagabond
Reflection, pearly bright,
Of flicking, flashing, flying sparks—
As flexible as eels,
The fish dart coyly, sliding on
The sunlight as it wheels
Its easeful way across the glass
Conservatory sky—
Mottled by leaves at every pass,
The goldfish glimmer by
And sip the orchid-scented mist
That lights upon their pool
As though a tropic angel kissed
Them in the green and cool
Inviting gloom of fig and palm
And breathed a languid sigh,
Ineffable, suffused with calm,
To swimmers gliding by—
The mesmerizing liquid balm
As goldfish shimmer by.

Fantastic Ocean

The sea has calls upon my soul, upon my heart, upon my will,
And if I drowned, I think I'd still rejoice the sea swallowed me whole,
For in my sight and in my dreams, the sea's awash with magic grace
Not known by any other place than in its bottomless extremes,
And fantasy entwines with things that make imagination soar
Like birds and butterflies and more wild creatures than are real, whose wings
Embrace the spirit of the sweep of wave and current, saline skies—
Loveliness dazzling my eyes with all the treasures of the deep.

In Profundum Maris

Deep in the ocean, fathoms far,
Beyond the reach of the brightest star,
In the abyss of the secret sea—
Seemingly past where life could be
Sustained—lies a billowing bed of kelp
That waves in the dark, where sleep, where help,
Where mystical mending music calls
As the tides turn back and the current falls,
As the storms above relent, abate,
Becalm, bring peace—it is not too late
To dive in the depths with delight, embark
On the garden path of the ocean's dark,
Miraculous beauty, unseen, immense,
Suffusing the soul in every sense,
To lie in the rush as the seas roll by
And think it a joy too fine,
To die...

Wonder

Is the sparkle in the sky a glint of dashing rain, an eye
That weeps for sorrow or in pain—is this the cause of sparkling rain?
Or is the gleam of shining sun, where hours' and seasons' dazzling run
Are sparkling bright with radiant laughter, joy both here and all hereafter?
What's so sweet, I cannot say; I only know that sparkling way
The sky looks down, by happenstance, fills me with wonder, and enchants
My thoughts with curiosity at how the sky sparkles at me.