

Five for SIXFOLD

In March

we wait. my love and I
We wait in the wind, we
walk by ponds in Northeast
grasses: reed canary, bullrush,
bitter panic grass (now endangered)
yellow still, and yet not still
in the wind that dances the oak and
sycamore white, bare branches and
we know, we smell the grassy air,
We wait, we anticipate.

By ponds, streams and lakes
it is the anticipating-- for me at
least-- the longing for things
things improbable that will come:
Your face eyes heart your Self
feels this With me, it is the
anticipating the not-yetness of it
but soon we know the swamp milkweed
purple stemmed aster marsh marigold
will be with us with the first robins,
juncos, green-headed male mallards—these
will join the spring peepers who
savor shellbark hickory and all maples
and we will join them, be— alongside them,

Toussaint Louverture, Breda Plantation, 1791

Your *Ayiti*, Toussaint, your Haiti,
blazes now from the northern Cap to Tiburon,
the fragrant fires of sugar cane
and white plantation bodies
blaze now in Jeremie, Jacmel,
and Port-au-Prince blood dries
on the black backs of four hundred thousand
slaves now-- your Legionnaires who carry torches
in the black nights slaves refusing to be slaves
brandish torches down sandy paths to verandas
and smoke-houses of the Blancs—Mulattoes, too.
Slaves who light, identify, and burn, light and burn.
The French rise too in Paris, Orleans, Marseilles and
all the *paysage*, Normandie to *Pyrene Department*,
and young Napoleon grows restless with his fellow troops
aching for order and for breath, Toussaint, he reads
of you, Toussaint, in his barracks, but does not
sweat your sweat,
Yet.

Toussaint Explains, Fort de Joux, France, 1803

Forgive me if I say first an emphatic
“*je ne regrette rien.*” I lie here in this prison,
in the cold crags of Jura. *Merci*, Monsieur Napoleon,
Merci --for your treachery.

You had me kidnapped through your odious brother in law,
LeClerc, now dead in *Ayiti* of yellow fever and heat fatigue while
I huddle here in your mountain “hotel”
reserved for dignitaries, such as myself, who

inconvenience you with my slave uprising and humiliated you and
the toad Leclerc, may he roast in hell. Leclerc with his reinforced
army of 80,000 *Blancs*, sent to hunt down my black brothers,
sisters and children who had the effrontery,

Honorable M. Bonaparte, to rise up all across our island,
led by my lieutenants, to disembowel, then set on fire, your blood sucking
plantation masters, so now the whipped become the whippers
and the maroon skies hover above scenes of men

surrounded in pockets by our battalions of liberated slaves. We pin your bluecoats
down, cordon them in our Ekmani palm and magnolia thickets
fragranced with Tomzanonia orchids,
the last sweet smell your poor mercenaries will savor.

And as spring and summer come, the livers of the survivors
will have to do combat with our *fièvre jaune*, turning them a nice shade
of oily yellow and set them to vomiting on the sides of trails,
where your sweet slave-drivers once led my African

father and his people to their lives of sweat and anguish. I think you will not succeed Monsieur
Bonaparte. It is you who will sweat--sweat like LeClerc.

Did You Ever

see the black cherry tree guarding an
ancient family graveyard beside the
road to Watkins Glen from Ithaca along
Route 79? And

touch the once electric barbed wire fence rigged
up years ago to protect the tombstones marker
from lives lived in the Finger Lakes in the time
of the early Republic, Monroe, Jackson those
aching decades of working the rocky land.

Who were they—Henry Sayre, Hannah Sayre, young Daisy? what
are they doing now in those white oak and knotty pine coffins with
the orange sugar maples burning above them in October and the
green flames of hell burning below? I like to picture Hannah in her
blue calico dress

arms folded at her boney chest, skeletal fingers
still holding a lock of her daughter's hair Daisy,
1819-1823, lying under the rocky loam Three feet
away, smaller stone.

BAD OCTOBER: 2016

When I tell you
this October alone has
seen Syrian sisters
and their brothers die
cyanic blue under
chunks of concrete ripped
from the very walls around them
by their very own State
-sponsored bombs and sure
plenty of Russian rockets too
well you tell me life's not fair.

These hoods look to us
in America so they say
inspired by how easy
it was for us to crush
young bones not on
purpose but as a distasteful
side-effect, a 'collateral' of
The Mission—say Vietnam
1968 and
1972-- October
was especially bad those years. There.

This October, 2016,
also--six hundred children
(give or take)--
Haiti saw erased: choked
battered by boards from
their own treasonous houses
tree and water-rocked:
Hurricane Matthew dumb,
relentless—mothers wail
and dead is dead. Whom
do we put on trial
for all this autumnal
not- fairness?.

SUMMER IS A COMIN' IN

About Spring the East coasters were never
Wrong. It is the shortest of the seasons.

Summer with the radio tunes
we always seem to remember best
with its smells, fragrant and not—
its katydids and fireflies, these

will be with us soon after the last red
tulip has shriveled, the dandelions have
turned from errant suns to white dwarf stars
and June will spill a last week across overcast

Belmont Stakes chill-tempt and then the global
warming conversations will resume. And beach
lure, ancient Coppertone whiffs, Cambrian
horseshoe crabs, vapor mountains of cumulus,

we escape to what coolness is to be had from
the ancient Appalachians from the north
of Alabama to the Whites of New Hampshire. Why
remember most of all the season that gives us

mosquitos, ninety handsome “weeds”—you know,
like Queen Anne’s lace, foxglove clover,
sand flies, muggy air that makes us admire
powdered wig squires and Victorian ladies who

moved slowly, bathed often
if they could afford it?

