

A Few Givens

What I have been given is a mouth
to proclaim, to proclaim
Artifice that produces miraculous whole eggs from sleeves.

What I have been given is pain
Quick sharpness of stubbed tow
I tilt my head to heaven, open my maw.

What I have been given are two twisty discs on my head –
Ears, to catch the accent, the shriek and babble
to catch the humming poem of a room.

What I have been given is one man
But to shut my mind around him
is to fist, choke, and come to hate him.

And what I have been given is a small book
For the subway wait, to inhale, exhale
and swim in word.

What has been given to me
moves through the book, sound, pain, man,
and rings! What has not been given to me?

Title: Subway Songs

Air

Lookee, I say, and point to earth.
tomato I've grown, fire I've stoked,
carpet I've laid.

It must be good in me that has done it,
must have been.

Somebody listened to my lookee first –
You haven't seen her; my mother,
young and red-haired, kind as grass

Somebody built up the good feeling
a pile of glass pebbles in a baby soul

And there's time that helped
who knows the long blue time
of wind over void

Or the child's tuneless singing
doing one thing again and again

We stare, us humans, fecund behind faces
behind consciousness like a clattering movie
work is done, zings of nerve chat.

And wonder, too, in small quantities –
utterly unlooked for!
We have the cliff, the rock, the squelch, the ripple,
twang of note on radio, bakesmell
flit-memory, and breath.

The good came from somewhere
in this world of filigree,
weft and branching

the each moment, turn
to another, breeze, no breath the same

Air given, returned in twitter clang
murmur bark blare sing
a rushing, a calm,
the wanted, and the greatly feared,
the one word, spoken.

What Do They Say?

Ah-hey! sing the raindrops
falling down to earth
helter-skelter, pell-to-mell
exploding each in mirth.

Oh-roo sing the wolf pack
Each one to the other
layer sound and lope on out
with father, sister, brother.

Tiddle-bomp go grains of sand
pushed by tide and flow
each on each – let's make a beach
when tumble-shift they go.

Kee-ray call all the gulls
beating air beneath them
up and hover, sharp lookout
for what the sea bequeaths them

Thorra-shay say red blood cells
bumping through a vein
come back from finger, thumb, and wrist
up arm, then out again!

Fah-thee, whisper little flames
along the firewood's side
mingle and sneak, propelled by heat
they swell and dance and die.

Title: Subway Songs

Still

I yell at myself.
I shift continually in my own skin.
I snack.

Yet there is a little person inside me
who is two weeks outside of Christmas.
She's taken out this decoration,
holding it.
The wood and tinsel of it
are part of her,
Unwrapped.

Title: Subway Songs

Getting There

The boy in glasses is delighted as he looks at the subway system map

“We get off at Foggy **BOTTOM?**”

The lady on her phone

arranges, convinces or informs

in an up-and-down language I don't know. She has a headscarf.

We race a Honda on 66.

First we win, then he wins.

Nobody else sees him scratch his hand.

Behind me are two women,

excellent weaves and bracelets

discussing something with sober compassion

all decorum, their husbands would be proud.

Floor to ceiling, next to the door,

Emirates Air wants me to fly Emirates Air.

Are the two lean men, both in plaid,

going to walk out together?

One is white, the other Asian.

They have the same bookish look.

Nobody pays a whit of attention to me

The headscarf lady is now texting.

We're going to the capital!

We're going to that capital!

Come on, attractive people.

Come on, everyone.

You can't tell me to stop looking.

You can't tell me to stop being wounded

and tickled by your gaping faces

You can't tell the late August sun to stop slanting

on the carpet, pole, pantleg.

We can't keep from swaying together.