

## ***A Leper May Be Near***

Last night I heard you again  
breathing steadily while you slept.  
Yesterday we spoke of lemon trees  
you are raising from seeds. They need  
more space. Today we will get barrel  
planters to hold them.

You are preparing to sew face masks.  
Delilah cut Samson's hair, shorn of strength  
he wears a mask. Sheltering in place is our lot  
in life. Heard Jim retreated to his home  
on a creek where once a heron nested.  
We all need nests, even two hawks near us.

Spring is lovely. Just don't touch your face.  
Keep your distance. Can't gather in church.  
Peace signs absent. Restrictions on communion.  
Never read *Love In The Time of Cholera*.  
It is time. Take comfort in lichens and mosses,  
when plague wipes out birdsong.

Is that a train whistle? Time to get on.  
Listen for the sound of a bell, a warning,  
a leper may be near;  
or, is it a call to prayer?

## *Hurricane*

In good weather people flock to seacoasts. Paradise is what they seek. Hurricane in multicolors crawls across the weather channel screen. Comes a surprise:

Wilmington now underwater. Pig farms pay a price, nuclear reactors shut down, pollution awash, stalls in rising runoff, paradise lost in coffee color; Visualize

the colors, muddy rivers flood, trees uproot, paralyze rescuers who search for families in toxic streams. Dreams fall victim to calamity, a priest on dry ground tries to vocalize

mercy for stones, stains, lost souls. Time to organize charity. At what cost? Priceless. Evil is mire, but more, recall the Buddhist Abbott who torments nuns in a temple. Scandal.

Like bad priests. Crawl to atone. Winds and rain no paradise even on dry earth. Victor Hugo painted a brown wave, tall, falling down. He saw it as his destiny. Augusta hosts Art crawls.

Let beauty be. Time to pick up pieces of paradise after the storm beats down basil, chives, begonias. Gardens thrive, bloom again. Read Proust to find lost memories. Lemon seeds rise, fragile in egg shells. Hope for color is belief in life. Then comes fall.

## ***Praying In The New Year***

Glacial beginning, early January.  
I found my red coral rosary  
in a coat pocket. I used to carry

the beads, when I travel I'm wary.  
I travel less now. I bury the obituary,  
the loss. I explore an estuary—

where river meets tides. A sanctuary.  
I remember a heron in a marsh, wary.  
Today, I dream of the imaginary,

supernatural, for new year. Focus on prayer.  
I look at a bright monstrance on the altar.  
Seeing red votive candles, I stare.

I kneel in the chapel of St. Claire,  
meditate on the Magi. They do not falter  
in freezing weather. Nor does my lover,

who cooks lentil soup. Bluebirds in January  
find sanctuary. Church bells peacefully  
peal, freight train tracks blues: Epiphany.  
Dead leaf scuttles like a crab seeking sanctuary.

## ***Scriptoria In Longmont***

Road trip. Black coffee in Longmont.  
I scribble in a coffee bar, Ziggi's.  
A mother with two sons wears ink;  
her left arm is ornate calligraphy.  
My dead wife visits me. Heart sinks.  
See retriever like her Mindy. No font,

no laptop. Art on skin is a stain.  
Barbed Wire bookstore. I walk on,  
look back at the couple with their dog.  
Light changes like time. Train whistles, gone.  
Mosaic on a brick store wall, a log  
carved into totem; Tibetans train

Buddhists. Metal globe of bolts, screws, nails,  
sculpture garden, public art; a fountain.  
An Indian woman squats in bronze,  
poor figure, head down, ponders peaks—mountain  
marginalia—open to alms, like the bronze  
friar at a Tucson church; Franciscan tales.

New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado.  
Visions of travel with Louise—missing.  
Here again near Boulder loom Flat Irons.  
Devoted parishioners kneel praying  
rosaries after early Mass, psalms, frowns.  
The Baptist in the desert goes solo.

Anvil cloud. Church of John the Baptist:  
a ribbon of blue links Bible stories  
in the frosted glass: Feast of Cana, Holy Ghost  
informs tongues; scripture dons tattoos; worries  
for a son; reliquary: bones glassed;  
holy book on altar priest-kissed.

## ***Dragonfly***

They fly on four wings toward shiny surfaces.  
Yesterday, I saw a squadron in the art museum  
parking lot. They must be attracted to windshields.  
Bright, clear surfaces lure them as to water,

water, is where they lay their eggs. They mate  
during flight, just as they prey on mosquitoes.  
He clasps her head, she curls into his pecker.  
They resemble a heart when they lock together.

This is their season, they seem to be everywhere.  
Late August, early September. In Japanese haiku  
they appear in autumn reds. They become art  
on Zuni pottery, Hopi rock art. In poetry Tennyson

wrote of them breaking out of shells in a pond  
to dry translucent wings like sapphires, skimming  
with double wings, drawn to polished tombstones.  
They may live three months or survive a year.

They are brutal hunters, taking prey out of the air.  
The Greeks named them for their serrated teeth.  
Some swarms migrate across the Indian Ocean.  
Found in fossils, they leave huge monster imprints.

Dragonflies are mostly eyes. Hence they symbolize  
deep meaning, self realization, going beyond what's  
on the surface. They move with elegance and grace,  
uninhibited vision. Iridescent wings, souls in space.