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Three Passages from "Umbra" (from *The Gardens of Flora Baum*)

Shade the word shade beneath the rusting beech
Whose shade is gold. Shadow the silver word,
Shadow, not mirror. And silver the word
Silver, not the page, not gray living skin,
Chryselephantasize in fall, in spring
Read the bronze promises of rustling truth,
Troth of reality's expansiveness.

Imagine Darwin striding across the pampas,
Paradise Lost in his pocket. In Darwin's garden
Grew worms and flowers. Plants moved. These adumbrations
Move across our rest. Motion and rest,
Said Newton, are the same; at least he said
They differ only in the way you look
At them. Across the grass the shadows show
The sun moving. At noon, at night, you rest,
Virgilian flocks, if you eschew, escape,
Ignore the Roman Revolution. Shade
The shade. Or face the music. Music plays
Under the broody summer of the beech.

The virgilias this year have lambled but lightly
Above the silver staves; below, however,
An emerald rest in emerald shade is still
June's, noon's, prerogative. A shadowy
Confusion is the negative assessment
Of undeniable dappling undenied,
A mediator of the sun's perfection,
That rare perfection of Lowellian June
Sifting through Cambridge, Massachusetts, rippling
Above green Elmwood, into its green grounds,
About the yellow clapboard mansion, through

The tree that stands on the green lawn before
 The house, one of the trees, virgilia
 Or yellowwood, the tree, silver or gold
 In the vocabulary of rarity
 And either/or. But the virgilians
 (Or yellowwoods) are rarer, living, swept
 Into white frenzies one year or the next,
 Pure frenzies, sweet and calm, just luxury.
 James Russell Lowell, when Charles Darwin died,
 Was pallbearer in Westminster Abbey.
 When Lowell died Henry James took a walk
 To gaze at Elmwood. Flora took a walk
 To gaze at Elmwood on a day in June.

In some respects shadow first falls in autumn,
 Our best season, the clear, the sharp, the brilliant.
 In some respects shade commences in April
 When, as you walk, the first few raindrops halt
 In maples' green bouquets. You walk in love
 With mere Aprility. Dappling is sweet.
 The shadowy, the shady — what are they?
 The question is too pointed, much too clear.
 Do not take umbrage at my clarity.
 This measure forces this sententiousness.

Dark, dark, descends upon mine eyes. Despair
 Debouches sloshing into the wide sea,
 The empty ocean of my mind. Despair
 Spews darkly from my sagging mouth. Lightning
 Cracks the green tree. The images are wrong.
 Our sea, our central sea, lies to the south.
 Heat, not the dark, threatens our blessed shade.

That is, the opposite of shade is heat.
 That is, an enemy smiles from the sky
 And slips the shirt of Nessus on our shoulders,
 Making our walk a Herculean labor
 In which we zig to shade and zag to shadow,
 In which we zip to bushes, zap to buildings,
 Hope for alleviation from each pole

Between us and the unturned tropical
 Torridity in heaven, whose repercussion
 Assails us from the concrete hell below.

Then know, before catalpas' major shades,
 The mountain laurels' white umbrellulas.
 And greater fall from the high mountains shadows.
 I sat at table, eating and talking.
 The mountain rose before me. It was time.
 The mountain has already been traversed —
 If it will be. Kismet. There is no God
 But the eternal. Shadows of abstraction
 Fall from highmindedness. The dancing shadows
 Dance through the dazzling days of June, the days
 Of timelessness. These are the days of sweet
 William, Japanese lilac, honeysuckle,
 Lindens, tiger lilies, and bittersweet
 Nightshade. So there is night. Beyond the lengths
 Of sunlight lying like columns across the grass,
 Beyond the perfect yellow rose, beyond
 The subtle sunsets sung by the subtle thrush —
 Snapdragon sunsets which the woodthrush sang —
 I cannot match heartbreaking subtlety
 In silence, song — beyond all these night fell.
 In other days I could have said fell night.

Yet, if the center is meridional,
 How is it that one has a northern mind,
 How is it that one finds oneself among
 The long, long shadows of the long, long days,
 Swifts screeching after supper in the skies
 Of afternoon, of afternoons that merge
 With midnights and the merle's finales, where,
 Above stone walls, the roses dream? Blackbirds
 Are thrushes here. My subject is not black
 Or white or red or rose or colorcast
 Or colorfast or chromatology
 Or Merope, who hid her face because
 She blushed at humanness. Meropia
 Is human. There is too much shade for shadow

Only sometimes, only sometimes sun
 Itself is shadowy, roses of shadow
 As good a subject as the roses' shade.

Isn't it best without a subject, with,
 Alternatively, only itself as subject,
 With, in fact, no only, no without,
 No (shall I declare it?) with, no fact,
 No declaration, no alternative?
 Isn't it best without its questioning,
 Its questions, its red question? Will the swans,
 White, smite the atmosphere of green and blue,
 Strike, white and purposeful, the mellow green,
 The hazy, lazy blue, or, smooth and slow,
 Guard their white shadows?

*

As though

A hemlock shouldered candor now, the beech,
 Grand in its goldenness, was shadowed now
 By white.

But shade the word.

To you,

Tityrus, under umbrous beech, I think
 I must get down; of you, resting,
 at rest,
 Under the umbrous summer beech I think;
 With you, singing at ease, I — do I? — sing.

Remember and remember how and how —
 In study how we whirled the year around,
 Around, and singing set the sun.

And how,

Forget, we fell in dim streets, stiff with hours
 Of listlessnesses, mindlessnesses, blinded

By unenlightened days, sickening, sick
 To death of weeks whipped out of tune, of months
 Drummed down, of all the unmelodious years.

Forget the decades of forgetfulness.
 Forget today. The night has come, when light's
 Dark orphans work, whose labor is their play,
 Shade their illumination, shadow rest
 Beside Permessus, eddying with excitement.

With the paternal Jove shall I begin,
 Wondrous, thundrous, thumping, bumping, dumping,
 Heightening, brightening, lightening, frightening, rightening,
 Grounding, hounding, pounding, pondering, pensive,
 Serene, the bluest blue, the whitest white
 Behind the blue, the white fire of the sky,
 Jupiter through and through, true blue, tried white,
 Who carried Europe on his wide, white back,
 Tracing a culture's track, who also spake,
 Nature's Homer, or with the civic prince,
 The youth and sister's daughter's son and son
 And father of the fatherland and name
 August and patronage imperial,
 Or with the famous daughters, Julias,
 Or with the daughters that give fame?

O Muse,

Late is my beginning, late is the year,
 Late the month, cold this November, dark
 This Thursday night, silent witchy midnight,
 Its rumbling distant, although the building quivers.
 I quiver, Muse.

Thalia, how you came
 I will not explicate, nor how I went
 Into your ruddy cave. How, now, you come,
 How, now, authoritative, you slip in,
 How you are here . . . Crass, cruel sleep enfolds . . .
 Enfolds . . . A shade . . . I cannot go on with . . .

With the word with commences then this text
 Of which the first line tells the verity.
 And truly truth is what this text desires
 In secret and its texture what it works
 Its words to wind. Its window secretly
 Opens, the curtains blow, their texture thin
 Enough for wind and thick enough for shade —
 Shadow or mirror of the encompassing cave.

And when a shade is raised, a window shut,
 A light left on, a curtain twitched away,

One stands out there, clasping a grayish book.
 The brightest lamp obscures a whitish lamb.

The only sun that enters is reflection,
 And even that, under a cloak of black

Or gray or white, whatever positive
 Covers this negative, must exit if

The bending and rebounding binding in
 And out are not become irrelevant,

Just as the risk of glass is not alone
 The stone thrown but the seeing being seen.

What silversmith hath made the silver bowl
 Turned over us in an old-fashioned way,

Filled with the milk of sixty million ewes?
 Out there the lambs, untarnished, dream, in the black.

One sees out there, beneath a roof of white,
 White bridal clusters, late gold, but nées green,

Out there one sees, beneath a vault of gray,
 The juniper's grave shade beside the lamp,

Out there one glimpses, twitching a cloak of blue,
Milton risen at evening from the lawn,

Darwin reading Milton in Argentina,
Darwin in London reading Adam Smith,

And one has sat beneath a sky of blue
That curves beneath a sky of gray that rolls

Beneath a sky of blue; there one has perched
With Marx and claimed the famous azured room

And, gazing from the blotter to the dome
Of blue, seemed to have worked, seemed to have thought.

Return, Thalia. Silent is my night.
The white that glittered gracefully all day
Subdues the evening. Let the arboreal snow
Curl up in sleep. Let the ice be content
To dwell outside, where it is right at home.
Why, if the door is locked, is ice within?
The door is locked. Return, soon, with a key
And pines and gushing brooks. All day the pines
Were gleaming whiter than their names. Return
With fire. Shadows will ripple from the core.

The radiator hisses. There is ice
Within. How do I know this? If I stand
Without how do I know? If I just lay
A hand over my heart I know all day
I felt the pines' stiff gloved and mittened fingers.

The silver eddies of the river slowed,
Froze. Oh, so far the Alps stand from, ah, sweet
Aonia. So far the Rhine, so far
The Charles runs, lumbers cumbrous, numbs from, ah,
The argent source. One was undone here, stunned,
Stunted, and stumped. Yet one had seen, had sung,
Sun and spun shadow whence the song had sprung.

The edgy, tense land of the pluperfect.
 All the exuberant leaves had blown away.
 Their blown shadows also had departed.
 I stood beside the bronze tree on the bank.
 I saw myself like Cyclops in the ice.
 I was the shadow. That was my wide eye.
 The blown blossoms, pink puffs on blue, had been.

And then the great shade almost supervened:
 December. Only Thanksgiving prevents
 Surrender to that apparition creeping
 Over our horizon even when the
 Noon moon is puffs of shades of white and gray
 Adrift in azure. Only adventitious
 Bits of glisten outlive the near-fictitious
 Witchhazels' bits of gilding living on
 Into the ultimatum of the sun
 That stonewalls most reporters' questions, if
 It can be called the sun's, given the distance,
 Given the intimation of a will
 To pathos.

I, Tityra, am a slave,
 But we don't mention that. It's not a part
 Or parcel of the genre. Nor do we speak
 About a gendered subalternity.
 That's not a part. For Thestylis must cook
 At noon, when each and every one except
 The madman and the lover and the cicada
 Rests in the rustling shade by rivers' merry
 Mirroring tuneful waters. Thestylis
 Stands at the stove.

The Muse sits in the shade.

Primus ego, he said, in patriam . . .
 Prima — it does not scan — into a land —
 My land — of fathers I will dance among

The daughters dancing from Aonia —
 If I can live . . . I have already lived
 Longer than he who first to Mantua
 Led the indomitable Muses.

Rome,
 How many have you dominated?

War
 Is not a way. Fathers, into your land
 I bring your children — will, if I can live
 A lifetime, will, if they can live a life,
 Bring them.

See the many daughters dancing
 Through the dappled gardens, over the hills,
 Into the mountains, high above the trees,
 The snows, into illimitable skies.

Shade the skies gold. The sun gleams. Golden fruits
 Glow from the boughs of the Hesperides.

Only fruits may be grown, the bill declared.
 Who legislated flowers from the world?

The golden apples of Hesperides
 Grow from white blossoms flecked with hints of gold.

Fleck the boughs gold. The boughs are silver, gray.
 Make their shade gold. Shadow the silver word,

Shadow, or mirror. Or silver the word
 Silver, or the page, or gray living skin.

Blue Proteus at noon in shaded sleep
 Nestled his sea-blue body deep in a nook
 Of the gray cave. Slinking among the seals
 I sought to shake his sky-blue mind, I thought

To grasp his thought. This was not violence.
 This was but metaphor carrying me
 Beyond intangibilities of sight.

Descend to blue. Arise to blue. The west
 Holds the gold sun. Hesperia is yet
 The land of Saturn, happy Sabbath land,
 Though the Carpathian Sea is purpled black.

The sky was gray when Flora took a walk
 To gaze at yellow Elmwood in December.
 The spruce was green, the grass was green, the wreath
 On the gray door was green, the yellowwood
 Was the dark silver of virgilies
 After a night of rain. Another night
 Silvered the purple layers of the sky.

This is my thesis, Julia. Why must you
 Keep interrupting with inction?
 Playing pentameter may be a game
 For you, but this is serious for me.
 Can you not be content with your assigned
 Role as third reader, after Mr. Lane
 And Mr. Stevens? Why must your shadow lie
 Across my page, where mine alone should fly
 Before my pen's pursuit? The light is where
 It ought to be. Why is your shadow there?

It is a matter of language, she replied.
 Umbriferous authority has waned,
 Authorship vanished. Contexts last, texts last,
 Letters advance, and writing waxes great.
 There are no authors.

Then what language is it?
 American? or Ada? or a Latin
 Branchlet of English? spindly ramification?
 Or a sere silken English, nitid, slick,
 Liquescent and lentescent? dull or grave
 With dulcet mellifluities? or heavy

With the molasses of the Latinate?
 Long slack weighty words? verbs turning nounward?
 Verbalizations now denominated?
 Cucumber- or most-porcine-sausage-words?
 Legends as leguminous as lentils,
 Plain as potatoes, various as soup?
 Thick chewy or thick tender steaks of speech?
 Or reruminated ruminations?
 The streetcar storming up the empty street?
 The earthquake shaking us out of a sleep?
 Fat maximal packed within paragraphs?
 A bit of minimal slipped in between?

Since Hesperus came later in the west
 I sailed into the blackness of the sky,
 Evading the great shade of waste December,
 The terrors of untaxied afternoons,
 Arthrosclerosis in the city's limbs,
 The blue-and-gold-starred farewells of the ground,
 The golden constellations of far earth,
 My gaze from space beside the sky's one star.
 The golden liquid in the plastic cup
 Danced, as streams dance like fire upon the banks
 Of rock, upon the seat back. Then I met
 The gold and silver stellules of near earth.

Doves cooed and roses bloomed. Oranges adorned
 Their trees like Christmas trees although the day,
 Like the October hours of August in
 Midlothian among sweet bees and sheep
 And lime trees sweet as lindens sweet with June,
 Was an October day of breeze and sun
 And blue above and green below and red
 Leaves on the sweet-gum boughs. And could this be
 December? Palms and pines and pepper trees,
 A creamy plane tree, an extravagant
 Live oak, aged, alive, enormous, strong,
 Vigorous, balanced, bonny, host to a host
 Of bees, shading at noon the walker drained
 By the solstitial sun, grateful to see

Green baubles rise and fall under the blue
 Burning ocean of sky beyond the birch,
 Cactus, cedar, cypress, oleander,
 And bottlebrush — all stood about, all hale
 And heartening.

Once the Hesperides
 Dwelt in Arcadia, and now they live
 Beside the golden gate, where Heracles
 Posits extremities of west and peace.
 The seals slip from their rocks into the vast
 Lunging Pacific. Rising above the tides,
 A bright, a painted land cheers the depressed
 Visitor from the east. It was a visit.

If you sit to the south, high over snow,
 You must adjust the shade against the sun,
 But shadows give the definitions, brown
 Cuneiform from Colorado spreads
 The message, puffs of white with blue depressions
 Signal South Bend, Indiana, golden
 Sacklets of honey-roasted peanuts pass
 Along the cabin. By the portholes passed
 The sugar-coated pills, white atoms, massed,
 And rushing in their horizontal flow.
 This was reentry. Why did we return
 From rushing for Arcadia's umbration?

How will we reach the shade beneath the beech?
 Hear pipes at noon? sing to the noontide flute?
 Listen to Pan? How will we ever see
 The god at midday under the central tree
 That makes the shade that plays about the root
 Of song, of sight, of silent thought, of speech?
 Where is that vision? Why do I repeat
 My sheepish tale, my overshadowed bleat?

The trees, those lovely brides of long ago,
 Wear blossoms that are white as — that are — snow.

I am a bride, snow-gowned and veiled in ice.
 The shadow of my bridegroom keeps me cold.
 That is a lie. This white is whitest fire.
 The shadow is a mirror of my flame.
 This is a fiction. Light pours from the sun
 And trickles through the foliated shade.
 Here is the tree under whose shadowy
 Leafage I garner things sung and things seen.
 Twirled in the turmoil, I return to clasp
 The bole, the pole, the pipe, the telescope,
 Earnestly playing, suddenly played upon,
 Earnestly looking, suddenly looked upon
 By my own eyes, suddenly looked into
 By the spouse, other, player, mirror, shade,
 Shadowy sun, dark double, bright delight,
 Mild January, blue-breeze-cool July.

Confusion is the negative assessment.

Who is the one that rests beneath the tree?
 Who is the one that plays beside the stream?
 Who is the one for whom the lawns grow green,
 For whom the hills turn blue, for whom the leaves
 Lap the hovering skies, for whom the breeze
 Carries responses to soliloquies?

We go most wrong in that which we deny.
 Shall I deny that Virgil is my theme
 As he induces blossoms from the dew
 And sprinkles shade about the sleep-soft grass,
 As he seats Tityrus beneath the beech,
 As he sits shadowed by millennia,
 Inflections, botanies, philosophies,
 Shadowed by latitudes, by lexica,
 By empires, imitators, breezes, jests,
 Colors, theologizing, spices, notes,
 Under Lycaeus, by the Mincius?

He stands, twitches his toga, climbs the steps
 Of Widener, finds me waiting by the door.

Speech they call silver, but his words are gold,
 As gold as silences, as melodies,
 As gods in marble temples, as the first
 Small crocuses, the last chrysanthemums,
 The golden letters of the manuscript,
 The golden ginkgo's growing golden shade,
 The gray beech shadowy in gray November.
 His words are shadowy.

You, Tityrus . . .

What made his golden words, in my heart gold,
 Silver on my gray lips, on my page gray?
 His platanine, robust, fagutal shade
 Extends for centuries, magnificent
 And gentle. What penumbra covers me?

You, Tityrus, at rest where the beech spreads
 Its tegument protectively above,
 Ponder, compose, practice aloud the song
 Whose subtleties the wild, wood-haunting Muse,
 The mild, mood-haunted Muse, first formulates.
 Inklings of barbarism, hints of war,
 Mingle with inkhorn otiosity.
 But the half-shadow falls here, not the shade.

And Sunday morning's study summoned not
 Pan's playing, as I waited, not the long
 Roll of Virgilian drums, the mountainous
 Virgilian sweep, ascent, declivity
 As, funneled to my over-opened ears,
 His fluting, fraught with grand geographies
 In tenous enreedments, filtered through
 My gaping cave, not these, but, physical,
 Material, shocking to my intense
 Vacuity, an actual sound, too loud
 For the attunement of my magnified
 Reception. Dread. A duo that would fill
 My quiet cavernous abeyancy
 For hours. The instant held the hours of loss.

I jumped up, jerked back my chair with a bang.
 Silence. Remorse. A friendship banged. The flute
 Played by my friend for moments probably,
 Not by the two who would rehearse through noon.
 Pan vanished long before his apparition,
 Virgil unheard. The radiator sizzled.
 A chill breeze filtered in from sills of snow.

Urbanity, how will you countervail,
 Facing shady pastoral blandishment?
 Civility, how will you sit at peace?
 Neighborly noise again. Desist and cease,
 Intrusions, musacs, rantings, harassment.
 Peace be to all, the doughty and the frail.

Babbage's battles with the fluted scale
 Of pavement organists: embarrassment.

The heroism of the poetic life —
 A critic's phrase, praise of a hero — stirred
 An unheroic heart to restiveness,
 Dim listings, definite endeavors, quick
 Impassioned strict envisionings, the smart
 The critic would consider quite quixotic,
 The valor of the dauntless scholar's art
 In one the critic would dub idiotic.

The snows shone cold. The shadows took their part.
 The mirror smashed. And ice stuck in that heart.

It was a fetish, harsher critics cried.
 But what idea, what ideal, is not
 A fetish if it burns brilliant and hot
 Along the shining filaments of mind
 And feeling, and, if scrutinized and tried
 And innocent, is not a golden find?

This measure forces forth a measured thought.

The Japanese sheen — truth — upon the wall,
 Shone bold, black, balanced, brave, and beautiful,
 The character, shod, hatted, multiple,
 Composed, contained, content, collected, sole.

This measure measures out a silver rule.

The sun was silver in the silver sky.
 The silver stream was silver with its ice.
 The silver was not gray; it was the white
 Of January's shade of argentine,
 Foiling and mirroring white unto white,
 Light that seems shadow, shadow that seems like
 Reflection, like the moon, the idle light
 Of waning, with a shade of an excite-
 Ment, an incredible élan, a bright-
 Ening, the post-solstitial solar height.

The snow stuck to the northern verticals
 For days. One was a northerner. To one
 A whiteness stuck, a blankness, a veneer
 Of innocence, of purity, which cold
 Causes to cling to coldness, to inert
 Surd surfaces unseen by southern shade,
 To the huge superficiality
 Unwed by depth, unnurtured by a third
 Dimension. That blanched flat abstraction shadowed
 A whole exposure, one's entire direction.

Yet, though immobile, one rose through the snow
 Towards a white sky and tended towards a root
 Whose food minute flakes could be or assist.
 Assisted by the parable one laughed
 Shadowily, abstractedly, and fast.

The flakes fell fast. The maple was awhirl
 With still, round, revolutionary beauty.

She was returning from the seminar:
 Feminist, Deconstructionist, new Marx-
 Ist views, reviews, revisionings of art.

Virgil, that maple, plane tree, beech, bold oak,
 Shaded her squinting, dripping, blistered gaze
 From the cold glare, the snow, the page.

The poem

Groped its way toward the tree. The essay slid
 Across the ice. The thesis skated off,
 Revolved, resolved, leapt, landed, tramped, tracked, slipped.
 The grandeur and the freshness of the tree
 Mingled. The leaves were hoary, bronze, gold, green,
 Pink, as the breezes, rendered zephyrous
 On contact, apochromatic though they were
 Themselves, created coloring and shade
 For a too anxious and too scrupulous
 Attention. How her sentences, that meant
 Caresses given by her mind, could blow
 With such gruff bluster, how could her mind know?
 Her mind was summer's, but her wintry gush
 Of speech was snow, its lying, grayish slush.

Virgil, the shadowy, is never gray.
 The overwhelming blizzard of his lines,
 Piled up at dawn, he, like a sun, all day
 Heats, shades, shapes, shifts, reduces, lights, refines.

Cicero wrote to Atticus in June
 Of 44 B.C. — June twenty-eighth —
 That he had settled to the treatises,
 Which, though, he wrote, I fear will need the mark
 Of your red wax in many places. Times
 Were bad, distracting, hampering. He wrote
 November fifth, now gratified and glad
 That Atticus had liked his work, had quoted
 The gems, brightening them by his approval
 In their creator's eyes. I was, he wrote,
 Terribly afraid of those red wax marks.

Criticism, she admits at lunch
 With five writers, is, I find, no use
 To me at all. This makes her blush. Perhaps
 The consequences are embarrassing.
 Yet if the Muse speaks what can one . . .

But if

Pan or Silenus speaks to us or sings
To us, his countenance is smeared
With elderberry or with cinnabar.

How necessary miniation is
For manuscripts and gods, most foul, most fair,
Most red-faced, most red-penciled, most red-gold.

Tityrus, you . . .

Shadow the shadow, Muse.

What can the Muse do?

Lie or tell the truth,
Silver the gray word, gild the silver, show
The gold as golden, ice as icy, glass
As silvered into mirroring, a word
As shadow, as reflection, as relief,
As cool opaqueness, shade, not luminous,
Not hot, not vision, dim frigidity,
A silver chilled and tarnished, sloughing off
Of sunbeams' squamous summer chains, rebuff
To sunlight's long oppressive tyranny,
Rebuttal of the tough meridian
That kills with sunshine, wars on us with warmth.

O Muse, cool the word cool.

You in the shade . . .

Virgil, a mortal man, became a shade.
A mortal man — let me not be obscure —
Can never be the spouse undying, skied,
Divine, not so much skied — let me be clear —
As sky, light's light, heat's heat, cold's cold, obscure
Obscurity's profoundest obscuration,
High clarity's most highest altitude,
The god, the grand idea, the ideal,

The heroism, not the hero's gest,
 Singing itself and not the singer's song
 And not the singer singing in the shade
 And not the easy shade. Shade difficult,
 Simple, and infinitely implicated
 May be divinity, and implication
 With and within the umbral depth without
 End or commencing, if the nuptials must
 Be consummated, such a consummation.

My subject is a spacious ancient shade,
 Ageless, new, cooling, with delimitation.

Must that theme's negative be the rebuffed
 Tyrannical oppression of the sun?

The Grynean grove is Apollo's. Its beeches, oaks,
 And laurels shade an oracle. Its full
 Or flimsy shadows seem the messages
 Of a god of scholarship, a divinity
 Of erudition. It seems like a museum,
 A library, an academy, a school
 Where leisure is life's work. Its marble trees
 Gleam. The glint of ivory and gold
 Signifies the god. The greens are fresh
 With the fresh breaths that circulate among
 The living leaves and leaflets. Shadowy
 Peace spreads, rustles above the rivulets
 That rush, arisen, sprung from depths, toward breadths
 Of sea.

I, Judith the obscure, observed,
 I, pious Flora, from the edge observed
 The evidence: foil, flowering, and fruit,
 And the fall's aureation of the shade.

I saw that poets walked there. Virgil walked
 Among the shadows, sat among the shades.
 The shades were living there, the shadows green,
 The umbratile red-blooded. Virgil was
 Alive there.

I was ghostly, marginal.

Virgil was alive in Arcady.
Was that a lost paradise for me,
Or a walled garden of which I could share
Only the wall? And yet who met me there,
Opened the gate, and took me by the hand?
If I admit it, who will understand?

Who will, though understanding, not avow:
We've heard all that before?

Before, not now.

Now Tityrus is sitting in the shade.
Now the book spreads its words like a repast
Shadowed, like a picnic beside a stream,
Beside a patulous sea, beside an ocean
Awaiting fathoming as letters patent
Expect perusal, as more belletristic
Texts expect a plunge, as the Permessus
Expects a sip. With the Permessus, then —
By the Permessus, then — must I begin
My climb to song — by the word by begin?

*

Under the beech I lay still wondering
Whether to watch my image in the pool
Or rise and follow where no shadow waits
My coming but I am myself the shadow,
Where I embrace no unsubstantial shade
But am the very shade that is embraced,
Whether to be the image and reflection,
However beautiful, of more than beauty
And multiply the image of myself
Which is the image of another or
Plunge like Arethusa through the pool
And rise a fountain, break into the glass

And live with Alice on the other side.
 A shade may be no shadow but a tree,
 The tree itself, branching in Vallombrosa
 Like Daphne in the Vale of Tempe, neither
 She nor he but it at last, like Virgil,
 Uncertain omo or uncertain ombra
 But certain well-leaved book, whether or not
 The bookish age is ending or has ended,
 Whether or not the forests echo still
 With spirits that are neither he nor she
 But angels, each sole member of its species
 If matter is, as sapients have taught,
 The principle of individuation.
 The earthly paradise, whether the center
 Of universal matter or a speck
 Of green upon a cog in the computer
 So huge and ruthless even Newton used
 It awkwardly, is the well-authorized,
 Self-authorized, as sapients have thought,
 Deme, doom, dominion of one species and
 One gender, still erect if fallen, man.

Gibbon himself, no longer merely man,
 Became a book, became the fall of Rome.
 Milton himself became the fall of man.
 Is paradise refound within, in here,
 The garden of the existential self,
 The structured subject, the positioned agent,
 Or is it there, way out there on the page
 Or what will be the sequel to the page?

April is paradise here in Kentucky.
 Purples glint everywhere, from redbuds budding
 To one transfixing full-fleshed spiritual
 Magnolia blossom, while across the gulch
 The golden glory of forsythia
 Gleams and azaleas glisten in the rain
 And weeping cherries smile through purple tears
 (I am no fool; it is the first of April)
 And the viburnums are the ultimate

In sweetness. In the learned journals, in
 The gatherings of scholars and professors,
 Penultimate is more than ultimate.
 Perhaps viburnums are penultimate
 In sweetness if, past April, there is May.
 The first of May is white with locust blossoms.
 Here in Kentucky May is paradise.

Was Milton's vision paradise or fall,
 Milton's blind vision, myth-historical?

Is Gibbon's vision myth or history?
 It is today the anniversary
 Of the last preface, which he dates May first.
 Twelve years of leisure, health, and perseverance
 Wished and required in 1776
 Brought him to May first, 1788,
 And to the choice of new work or new leisure,
 The freedom and variety of study,
 Or writing, which confines but animates
 The daily application of the Author.
 Flora, on May first, 1988,
 Can contemplate this preface to the final
 Three volumes of his magnum opus. Did
 Gibbon sit contemplating Rome's great fall
 October fifteenth, 1764?
 Was his great vision history or myth?
 The year the famous *Wealth* of Adam Smith
 Was published, the first volume of his own
 Famous *Decline and Fall* was published, bone
 Of his bone, flesh of his flesh. The famous year
 Was 1776. The revolution —
 A revolution which will ever be
 Remembered, Gibbon said, and is still felt —
 To Gibbon was a Roman turn, presented
 In the first paragraph of chapter one.
 His history was quickly called a classic.
 His history was later called an epic.

The labored revolution of the days,
 The leisured revolution of the week
 Seem speedy. It is Sunday now again.

Now it is May eighth, 1988.
 And it was May eighth, 1788,
 When the last volumes were officially
 Published. May eighth was also Gibbon's birthday,
 His fifty-first, in 1788,
 Although he had been born the twenty-seventh
 Of April, anno 1737.
 At fifteen, while a student, undirected
 By tutor or professor, though at Oxford,
 Already well-versed in chronologies,
 Sir John Marsham's or Sir Isaac Newton's,
 He planned to write a book during the long
 Summer vacation, dating the life and reign
 Of great Sesostris. To his great surprize,
 He later wrote, the summer, the vacation,
 The months of August and September were
 Curtailed, eleven days of recess dropped,
 Days chopped away, the season lopped, time stopped.
 This was the alteration of the style.
 He turned fifteen on April twenty-seventh
 In 1752, turned fifty-one
 The eighth of May in 1788
 And was confirmed in his identity.
 He was historian, was history,
 He was the Roman Empire, was its book.
 Gaze at the pages, gaze in the glass, look, look
 Upon the image true in the glassy brook.

The brook is watery and green and clear.
 The trees gaze down and see their greens appear
 Where once their dry reds lay on that dry bier.
 It is the eighth of May. That was October.
 It is the eighth of May. The honeysuckles
 In the fleet eastern and sweet southern sun
 By the back windows bloom big buzzing bees
 And blossom beaming ivory and gold
 Sweetness succeeding sweetness of viburnums
 Yielding the season as all rule together

There, white or green, as little birds, all song,
 Keep issuing big song from little bodies
 And cardinals keep conversing in big clicks
 There as the irises bloom by the paths
 And clematises on the trellises
 And locusts by the sidewalks and laburnums
 Across the lawns. On one green lawn the leaves
 Of little beeches, light, young, fresh, light green,
 Keep leafing, and beside the old gray barn
 Where once the maple glinted gold the dogwood
 Gleams Parian across the pastures where
 The white cow glistens and the bobwhite greets
 Flora, who listens from beside the fence
 And underneath the hedge of juniper.
 And there the rooster crows and crows once more,
 And over here and here shade trees give shade,
 And here virgilias stand on the verge,
 echoing distant places, different days,
 Of lavishly, of recklessly revealing
 All of their clustered pearls. Venus pearls bright.
 Venus and the nighthawk draw the night.
 Flora keeps walking. Locusts sweetly sigh.
 Orion has walked clear across the sky.

They had a chearful litterary dinner
 To celebrate the double festival,
 His birthday and the publication of
 The last three volumes of *Decline and Fall*
 On May eighth, 1788. He seemed
 To blush while they read, following the meal,
 The compliment in verse from Mr. Hayley
 In honor of his talent and his toil.
 O Genii of England and of Rome,
 You have now raised on high this English name,
 For like a star above his English home
 History's Newton shines with Roman fame.

Thirty-two years before, from Switzerland,
 Exiled by his own father to Lausanne,
 The nineteen-year-old student sent a letter,

Written, no doubt, in French, to Crevier,
 The editor of Livy and professor
 Of rhetoric in Paris at the College
 Then called Beauvais, suggesting a correction
 Which, by the simple change of d to t,
 Would make sense of the speech of Hannibal,
 Emending odio to otio,
 Hatred to leisure, peace, tranquility.
 Gibbon's letter is lost, but Crevier's
 Of August seventh, 1756,
 Praises the conjecture and accepts it.
 Do not believe, said Livy's Hannibal,
 The Romans cared about your peace and comfort.
 Do not believe the Romans had in mind,
 Said Livy's Hannibal, your otium.

P. S., wrote Gibbon for his preface, dating
 The postscript March first, 1781,
 When Rome's fall was accomplished in the West,
 Perhaps [the Public's] favourable opinion
 May encourage me to prosecute a work,
 Which, however laborious it may seem, is the most
 Agreeable occupation of my leisure hours.
 P. S., wrote Gibbon for the final preface,
 Dated May first, 1788,
 As often as I use the definitions . . .
Beyond the Alps, the Rhine, . . . &c.,
 I generally suppose myself at Rome. . . .

In 1760, some time, it may be,
 Between two styles of anniversary,
 As Gibbon seems to indicate when he
 Says he is twenty-two or twenty-three,
 He wrote to ask his father to agree
 (They lived together, but he felt more free
 To use a letter to express his plea)
 To let him make the trip to Italy,
 A country which every Scholar must long to see.

Milton longed to go to Italy.
 In 1638 he crossed the sea.

Three hundred fifty years have crossed the skies.
 We must endure our fears when old time flies.
 We must endure our tears when time goes slow.
 How can we study history when we know
 It is impossible, we ask ourselves
 In 1988, if we have selves.

First loved as books, the books turned into men.
 And then one knew that men turned into books.
 One wanted shades then, wanted Elysiums,
 Wanted to stride across the asphodel.
 And yet one had the better part. The books
 Were better and their beauties better far
 Than manly grace. Was this not wisdom? If
 The books were shadows, if the beautiful
 Was shadowy, if beauty's books were dim
 Images, if the beauty of the books
 Shifted as the wind whipped through the leaves,
 The leaves still glittered, glittered the more, were still
 Read when autumnal, more to be read, as gold.
 One turned to vitae and biographies,
 But these were not the beauty or the books.
 One turned to letters and to photographs.
 Those lacked the substance of the shadows made
 By the perfection of the struggling tree
 That rises consubstantial with the tree
 At ease expanding, spreading facilely
 In easiest descents of dangling held
 By eldest strengths and ever tipped with new
 Beauties. Such were the shadows' substances,
 The ultimates stuffed in those images
 Before dim endings to outshine dim ends.
 Yes, it makes sense, the book almost makes sense,
 It is the penintelligible poem,
 Not the penumbra, not penultimate,
 But the last shadow and the final shade,
 Ancient each morning, new each breathless noon,
 Golden each evening, stellar every night.
 I have pulled out the plum, eaten the peach,
 Wrapped the trash, and carted out the garbage.

The first star, birds' last silver songs, soft bats,
 The soft gray cat's gray silvered by the moon
 Receive me and the searching cat's gold eyes.
 Ave atque vale, for I never knew
 Beauty or truth. Yet I have read the books.
 The books are day's shades and night's brazen stars.

Besides, if margins wide enough and pages
 Blank enough and interumbral spaces
 Bright enough and interstellar shadows
 Black enough beckoned as being empty,
 I stuffed the silence with excelsior.

Excelsior exists no longer. Now
 Plastic exists. Now there is styrofoam.
 Now there are dry white snowflakes, crumbs of hail,
 That gloam within our packages, escaping,
 A trail not leading home yet not devoured
 By birds or dogs, not leading higher, out,
 Away, nor yet reentering the cycle,
 But stuffing all our turkeys evermore.
 Yet I design to dance upon the moon.
 Yet I desire to sing among the stars.
 Yet I must get to Rome. If I forget
 What I will find in Rome, then Parthia
 Will find herself at home in Germany.

Akkadia has roamed to Germany,
 For silver is an Asiatic word
 Expressing ancient industry and leisure,
 Smelting, refinement, and urbanity.
 Akkad's silver seems so civilized.
 The sylvan silvers roam nomadically.
 The silver maple is American,
 The silver linden from Eurasia, and
 The silver beech a native of New Zealand
 And therefore not a beech at all. The word
 Silver bestows a name on Argentina.
 The argentometer, effective though
 It may be as a tool, is surely less

Elegant as a term, confusing as
 It does the Greek and Latin languages.
 Would you not rather be convicted of
 Argyrophilia than rudely called
 Argentophile? German may be confused
 With Babylonian, Germanic with
 Babble, the English in America
 With babelism, or the Anglo-Saxon
 Of Roman Britain with barbarian
 Enunciation and vocabulary.
 The forked tongue may not be satanic. May
 A triple tongue not be an epic one?
 Ennius said he had three hearts because
 He spoke three languages. My heart is true
 To my three tongues and thus my triple tongue
 Is faithful to my heart. The triple fork
 Found in the mouth may be as precious as
 The silver spoon with which others are born.
 The dragon with the silver tongue may free
 The golden apples from the silver tree
 Not as the fruit of sin and death and woe
 But as maturity, in which we know
 What brassy yes may antidote negations,
 What brazen mess bloom with illuminations,
 What golden guess may sow verifications,
 What silverness branch into constellations.

What knowledge burst, in 1945,
 Upon us from the heavens and showed us hell
 Descending to the earth on those alive
 Below those constellations as they fell?

The serpent said to Eve, Look up and see
 How good this is, for you will know and be
 A god or like a god. If you were she
 What would you think as you stood by that tree?

All by herself and still beside herself,
 Flora was gazing down into the stream
 Of consciousness. Flora was cogitating.

Three sentences were heard. I cannot think.
 I am not. If I am I am not I.
 Therefore she crept into another hell,
 Reptant like Proserpine from realm to realm,
 And hence she leapt into another self.
 In Latin I am ego, I am nos,
 Even without a pronoun I can be,
 Even without a pronoun cogito
 Or cogitamus, ergo possumus.
 And therefore, while I write in English, I
 Will think and be and be myself in Latin.
 Echo then reexpressed herself in Greek:
 'Ηχώ, ἐγώ, χῶ, γῶ, ὦ, ὦ, oh, oh.
 And soon the Muse chimed in. You must remember
 That you are merely passing through Book Three
 Hoping for shade and for a Roman vision.
 Book Five will be the place for theory,
 Epistemology and metaphysics.
 Now you must merely read, must only know.
 Then you will reason whether you can do so.

Eve cared for knowledge, Adam cared for Eve,
 Said Milton, and the snake cared for himself.
 My care is threefold, Flora said: to rest
 Under the tree, sing in the shade, and make
 My pilgrimage to Rome.

Milton in Rome

Called on a cardinal, dined with Jesuits,
 Visited the Vatican to see
 A scholar, was received there by the scholar
 With, as he said, the greatest kindness. Then,
 Admitted graciously without delay
 Into the library, he was permitted
 To look at the incredible collection
 Of books and, in addition to the books,
 At the large number of Greek authors there
 In manuscript, equipped with lucubrations
 By the same scholar who had welcomed him.
 Of the Greek authors there in manuscript,

Some, not yet seen in our age, so he put it,
 As if in readiness for action, seemed,
 Much like those souls in Virgil deep enclosed
 In a green valley and about to go
 Up to the world above, to need only
 The unimpeded hands of printers and
 Delivery, while others, even now
 Brought into the world by publication
 Through his host's efforts, were being snatched up
 Eagerly by scholars everywhere.

Thus Milton wrote from Florence to the scholar,
 Lucas Holstenius, at home in Rome,
 In 1639, dating the letter
 The twenty-ninth of March, as it was there
 In Rome and Florence, though at home in England
 It was the nineteenth still. Milton went on
 To mention that Holstenius sent him forth
 Enriched by the twofold gift of one of the books
 Edited and published by the scholar
 From among the manuscripts in the library.

The manuscript of Milton's letter to
 Holstenius was found in the library
 In 1952 by Joseph Bottkol.
 The letter had been seen in our age, though,
 Published by Milton in 1674,
 Dated March thirtieth, 1639.
 Arripiuntur in the printed version
 Is given as accipiuntur, snatched
 Read as received. The lines from Virgil still,
 In the text discovered in 1952,
 Have limen, and not lumen, which we read
 In Virgil, threshold, and not light, above.

The commentators quote from Virgil's lines.
 Milton has threshold here for Virgil's light.
 This is the way the commentators cite
 Poets in conflict, seeking anodynes.

The souls enclosed deep in a green valley,
 About to go up to the world above,
 As I translate evasively above —
 And inattentively for Virgil, too,
 Since his souls are not quite about to go,
 For some will not go for a thousand years
 And thus the future active participle
 For them is better rendered going to go
 Or, with a relative, who were to go —
 Those souls enclosed deep in a green valley
 For Milton go ad limen, not ad lumen,
 Go to the threshold, not the light, above.

What lines, pray, lie from pedantry to vision,
 Go to the threshold, to the light, above?

When Milton writes of meeting Galileo
 He does not say the scientist was blind.

The editors of Milton's letters for
 The Yale edition of the prose works note:
 It is impossible to say (I quote)
 Whether Milton's "limen" is a misprint
 Or a misquotation. Volume One
 Appeared in 1953, before
 The editors had time to scrutinize
 The holograph, to which they do refer
 But which they do not use, for on its page
 Limen is very clear in Milton's hand.
 Must Milton's memory thus be mistaken?
 Are there not other possibilities?

The recent texts of Virgil do not print
 Limen as a variant for lumen,
 But looking at much earlier editions
 One learns that limen had appeared already
 In manuscripts consulted for those texts.
 Can one with ease assume deficiency
 In Milton's muse-protected memory?

Do I know all the bibliography
 Come to the light since 1953?
 Have I refound what someone else has found?
 Have I resaid what has been better said?
 What is the poem? What is the dissertation?
 What is the image? What is the great idea?
 What does the artist, what does the scholar, do?
 To Milton Galileo was an artist.
 Scientist was not yet an English word.
 Milton is not my field — not that fair field.
 Not there is my research. And still I search
 Out everywhere that τοῦ καλοῦ ἰδέαν,
 That image of the beautiful.

That field

On Peach Bloom Hill was green and beautiful.
 Whispers of shades existed, as shades did,
 At intervals. I heard but did not listen,
 Listened but did not hear, though it was May,
 The sky was blue. I saw but did not look,
 Looked and could see the green, the blue, yet not
 The beautiful, though it was everywhere,
 It oozed from blue and grew in green and slanted
 Across the backs of cows and smoothed the rough
 Slat of the barn. It pattered from the sun,
 Patting the hand that grasped the fence beyond
 The junipers. It rested in the shadows.
 It blued the bluish buds on tulip trees.
 It dripped from the virgilies, distilling
 Itself in silvers similar to whites,
 The whites of silver similes. It dropped,
 Not falling, from laburnums in their golds,
 Their golden metaphors. It was no likeness.
 It was the image that was the idea.

The woodthrush said its name, said, τὸ καλόν,
 The bobwhite asked, καλόν; καλόν; I, asking
 The robin for elucidation, heard
 καλὸν καλὸν καλὸν καλὸν καλόν.
 The mockingbird was more insistent. Then

The woodthrush spoke, explaining, Beautiful,
 And paused and said, O beautiful, and waited,
 And said decisively, The beautiful.
 I listened, did not hear, heard, did not listen.

It was blue May, blue, white, green, silver, gold.
 Blooms in the grass, the robins on the lawn,
 Cows in the meadows, sunlight on the fields,
 Leaves on the trees, shadows in the pastures,
 Were beauty on my mind and in my heart
 If I could understand. The irises
 Smiled standing in the garden, understood.
 It was blue May. It had been brown November.
 Leaves on the lawn lay in the sunset. Who
 Can think of May in November? The gardener
 On Peach Bloom Hill. I listened and I looked.
 I heard May promised, saw May as it came.
 Soon I will comprehend May come. The leaves
 Of little beeches light green on the trees
 And leaves of light lie on the shadowed grass.

This is a Friday, this is the thirteenth day
 Of May. It is not June. It is not summer.
 It is not summer. It is just Kentucky.
 To Ovid it is summer, and to me
 A real June day, a real Massachusetts
 Day in a Massachusetts June. To Ovid
 Undoubted authors and authorities
 Affirm that this date is the vernal end,
 End of the tepid, and the aestival
 Beginning. You will see the Pleiades,
 He says, together, all the sisters there.
 And on small beeches all the leaves are green,
 The promised leaves expanded, explicated,
 Summoned into light and unto shade.
 The locusts, slowly leafing, slowly leaving,
 Relinquish their white scents to yellowwoods,
 Lending their pendent pensiveness, their lambent
 Lusters to yellowwoods and to laburnums.
 The yellowwoods (virgilias) are white,

Are silver, the laburnums yellow, gold,
 All rich and rare and plenteous and perfect
 In the luxuriance, the lavishness,
 In the extravagance of magic May.
 The branches are the wands of this magician.

Virgil I only saw. I heard Propertius,
 Macer and Horace, Ponticus and Bassus.
 Vergilium vidi tantum, Ovid said.
 Virgil I only saw.

Milton I heard

High in those pastures, musing among those shades.
 Ovid he knew, Spenser he meditated,
 He listened to Theocritus and Virgil
 At dawn. He sang at noon. All, all I heard
 Enchanting as the sun, sunk in the west,
 Set on the occident. What is the best,
 To strive, to love, to question, or to rest?

Listen. An answer dawns. Listen to me.
 The student loves the known. This is Book Three.
 The good, around the world, will find the door
 Of home. This will be clearer in Book Four.
 The wise are never exiles. They will thrive
 Throughout the universe. Consult Book Five.

What students know, wherever they may roam,
 Is their own room, will be their only home.
 What students see depends on Argus eyes
 Surveying earth and shades and blazing skies.
 And what a student hears depends on years
 Through which, despite sharp fears, gods touch dull ears.

Green beech leaves trembled in the golden breeze.
 Soft were the leaves upon the little boughs.
 Soft were the shadows on the lawn and soft
 The lawn and on the lawn the leaves of light.

Beauty is light, is thought, is joy alone.
 The locust blossoms are just joy, joy, joy,
 Just joy, just joyous joy, the first of May
 Thoughtless and unreflective, justest joy
 Unjustified, unjustifiable,
 Justification, joy, just joy, joy, joy.

I have referred, though, to a pensiveness.
 Locusts are pensive when virgilies,
 Joy, too, but stranger, more solemnity
 Than celebration, take our gaze, take on
 The praise, take up the hymn. The locusts are
 The nuptials, the virgilies coronation.

Beauty is light. Beauty lies in the shade.

The shadows shortened as the shade increased.

I have not overused or overstated
 Of overshadowed any word or thing.
 All has been true, all balanced, all related,
 All known, all part of beauty's Roman ring.

Beauty is, has been, is about to be,
 Is going to be, if bronze buds, little lights,
 Long little lights, all winter, are the green
 Lampshades of summer, if the twenty-seventh
 Of April is the eighth of May, the eighth
 The thirteenth or the twenty-third, if May
 Is, as Urania in Ovid feels,
 The month of the maiores, of the elders,
 And June that of the youths, the iuvenes,
 Or whether, as Calliope affirms,
 May is the month of the most beautiful
 Of all the Pleiades, whom Jupiter
 Loved, and a son was born to him and her,
 And when the exile from Arcadia,
 Evander, came and saw the grass, the tree,
 The sheep, where Rome, capital of the world,
 Is now, the son of Maia came along

With him, was worshipped there, and gave the name
 Of his mother to the month and seven strings,
 The number of the sisters, to the lyre.

Evander went by ship to what would be
 The city and took with him Mercury,
 A god of thieves and lies and poetry.
 Milton by ship went on his way to Rome,
 Carried off volumes, carried away hell's dome.
 He crossed the Alps only on his way home.

Now no more, icy jingles, and no more,
 Prosings of snow. My power lines are iced,
 My tracks are slippery, obliterated,
 Or obviated by the Saint Bernards.
 No more now, shadeless sun. My vestiges
 Are obvious. Be grateful, travelers.
 Express your gratitude. Now I plant shades.

The shades grow green. And then the shades grow gold.
 The gold turns bronze. And did the gold turn silver?
 When did the gold turn gray? The golden hair
 Was gray quickly. The face was gray. The gray
 Skin was not silver. And the shock of hair,
 Gray and not silver, shocked. What of the eyes?

Gray city windows, silvered mirrors, bronze
 Blanks for jewels glowing in the temple,
 Golden apples growing in the desert.

Perhaps the robins never left. They often
 Winter in northern states, though unobserved
 By most observers, being more remote,
 More unobservable. If they are not
 Observed, it is still winter. If they are
 Seen on a January afternoon
 Or in a burst of March, that January
 Moment, however cold, is spring, that March
 Onrush the flush most delicate, the flash
 Most sweet, the hush most promising of spring.

The thrush is designated, specified,
 As migratory. Will the honored names
 Of robin, migrant, spring all be deceptive,
 Deceiving even these observers, whom
 The thrush misleads no longer, not deceiving?

I tell the truth but cannot tell the whole.

On what Holstenius told Heinsius,
 On Heinsius re Milton's Latin poems,
 On Heinsius re limen in the passage
 From Virgil, or on Henry James's Rome,
 On Freud and Rome, on Freud and Hannibal,
 I will not shed a light or cast a shadow.

I must not stray in Latin pastures late.

In Milton's Latin epitaph for Damon
 Daphnis is praised, Damon must reach the shades,
 Under the elm Thyrsis must sit and mourn,
 Among the branchy shadows in the valleys
 And, led by error, over airy Alps
 And down to see — for what great cause to see? —
 A Rome once visited by Tityrus
 And now in sepulture, near violets
 And myrtles, near Italian streams, among
 Italian beeches that have learned his name
 From men renowned for scholarship and song,
 Thyrsis must pass. Damon must pass to shadows
 Of palms, a gleaming diadem, the splendors
 Of virgins, to the wildness of the lyre,
 Ecstatic dances, hymeneal hymns
 Bacchic of everlasting sanctity.

From Daphnis I must pass to Eclogue Six.
 No umbra hovers there explicitly,
 And yet because the song the laurels learned
 Carried from pulsing valleys to struck stars

Vesper processed against Olympian will,
 Evening proceeded while Olympus wished
 It would not call the sheep and stop the song.

The student hears. Despite some trembling tears
 Olympus clears before the face that peers.

Daphnis, shade, and shadows all return
 In Eclogue Seven. Umbra comes three times,
 Once in the speech of Daphnis in line ten,
 Once in a song by Corydon in line
 Forty-six, and once when Thyrsis sings,
 In fifty-eight, the arid lack of shadows.
 Umbra is ablative and singular
 In ten and forty-six. In fifty-eight
 Umbras is plural and accusative.
 In all three lines shadows and shade are good.

Quickly come here, Daphnis urged Meliboeus.
 If you can stop a while, rest under the shade
 Beside the green-fringed stream and bee-voiced oak.

Mossy fountains, lawn softer than dream,
 Strawberry tree's spaced (later checkered) shade,
 Corydon sang, protect the flock from summer.

Dry are the fields, dying the thirsty grass,
 Diseased the air, begrudged vines' shadows (shade)
 By Bacchus to the hills, lamented Thyrsis.

The sunlight sears. Each burning stallion rears
 Before the charioteers. Hope disappears.

The chilly shade of night had barely left
 The sky when Damon, heavy on his staff,
 Began the song of desperation. This
 Is Eclogue Eight and this its only shade,
 This umbra of the fourteenth line, the subject,
 Nominative and singular, but shadows
 Less literal play over the whole poem,

And there is Hesperus, the evening star,
 In Damon's song, and there is nocti, night,
 A dative, in a simile about
 The love the woman longs to have from Daphnis
 As sung by answering Alpheisiboeus.

The icy leers, the jeers, the snowy sneers
 Will turn to cheers if the whole poem coheres.

The thesis reaches the penultimate
 Eclogue, the ninth. The poem, marvelous,
 Inducts the springs with umbra, ablative
 And singular, appearing in line twenty,
 With umbra viridi (What can one say,
 Belated and belated?), with a green shade.
 The implication made by Lycidas
 Is that Menalcas, through his saving song,
 Can, with green shadow, canopy the fountains.
 Trees by suggestion or by implication
 Or by deduction or by inference
 Shade springs. A tree, a poplar, overhangs
 The cave. This tree is white. And this tree shines.
 The cave is shaded by the pliant vines.
 Explicitness is shifting in such lines
 As twenty, forty-one, and forty-two.
 Line forty-two opens umbracula,
 Plural, accusative, diminutive,
 Shadelets which slow vines weave and Moeris sings
 Slowly, remembering nobility
 Of song. Who is the you who sang alone
 In the pure night, pura solum sub nocte?
 Who speaks line forty-four? Who is addressed?
 Who sang of Caesar's star? Who sang of pears
 Grafted by Daphnis? Why are the songs forgotten?
 The boy could sing long suns until they set,
 Mourned Moeris. Let us quickly sit and sing,
 Lycidas suggested, for this is
 The middle of our road. There is the tomb.

We'll reach the city. Here the foliage
Is dense. Or if we fear the drizzling night
Let us go on and sing on as we go.

The farmers strip the thick leaves from the elms.

The hated shears must not lop off our years
Before, through spheres and spheres, the vision nears.

The last labor is at hand. Now, Arethusa,
Grant it to me. Umbra occurs three times
In Eclogue Ten, once in line seventy-five,
The antepenultimate line, twice in the next
Line, line seventy-six. And in both lines
Umbra is nominative and is the subject,
But it is umbra, singular, the first
Two times, once at the end of seventy-five
And once again in the middle of seventy-six,
And it is umbrae, plural, at the end
Of seventy-six, the line before the end.
Moreover, in the next line, seventy-seven,
This Eclogue's last, the last of all the *Eclogues*,
Hesperus, the evening star, is coming.

The shade and shadows, then, must be of evening.
The shadow of the juniper is bad
For singers and for singing. One must rise
From underneath the juniper and go,
As the goats, too, must go, must all go home.

Shadow is bad for singers, Virgil says,
The shadow of the juniper is bad,
Shadows cause harm. Or shall I say he claims
That shade is dangerous or that the shade
Is dangerous and that the shadows harm?
The use of *solet* in line seventy-five
Suggests that I should generalize the shade
Or shadow in the English way, omitting
The article, against the evidence,
Perhaps, of all the good shade in the poems.

Is good shade day's, bad shadow night's, the shade
 Of every tree except the juniper
 Good for farm and pasture, good for song?

I have collected shadows from *Selections*,
 From *Pastorals*, not from the books on farming,
 Not from the epic deaths. Selected shades
 And shadows are examined in this chapter.
 The singer's shade is chiefly studied here.

I sang in shadow.

And what of Elias?
 The shadow of the juniper is his.
 The juniper is his as well as Virgil's.

But Virgil is my subject, and the shadow
 Of Virgil's juniper is my concern.
 The shadow, bad or good, of Virgil's tree,
 His beech, his elm, his oak, his strawberry tree,
 His overhanging poplar, or his grave
 Juniper is my study. Two small beeches
 Were round but not round, domed and yet not domed
 Because small though American and full.
 My subject is a bigger, better beech,
 That paramour so sparkling in the heart.
 The true meaning of Rome is what I teach,
 Of freedom, grandeur, godhead, leisure, art.
 There is a hero in all that I preach.
 I do not preach at all. I guess at part.

To know Rome is my subject, to know knowing.
 A subject can be an infinitive.

Isn't it really best without a subject?
 In the curriculum an incoherence
 Is not so bad. I wish that everyone
 Could study Virgil. Unpolitical
 Though it may be, my class is democratic.
 My affirmation is democracy,

If I have not denied all affirmation
 And all denial. Or have I distinguished
 The classroom and the thesis and the poem?
 Is there not something which I have affirmed?
 Yes, in denial we most go astray.
 The parts of beauty are the beautiful.
 The whole of truth is not my subject, but
 Novanticistic tendencies as well
 As neopositivistic inclinations
 May be detected in my thought and work.
 My work is brazen play. My thought is silver,
 If tarnished, yet forever polishable.
 My speech is lifted from the golden rivers
 And sifted from beech-shadowed streams of gold.
 If Gold be foliated, Newton said,
 And held between your Eye and the Light, the Light
 Looks blue. If eyes be stars, one sees both art
 And knowledge there. I go on through the night,
 Tripping between the bronze or silver stars
 And golden eyes that shine out of the shadow
 That is the cat. Next door the eight-year-old
 Lucius is playing on his violin.
 The little Lucius plays, and Flora smiles.
 Hearing, she sees the sparkle of big dark
 Eyes in a little face, sees little fingers
 Press with delicacy the chosen strings
 (They slipped into the mitt this afternoon),
 And sees the little arm crook to the bow
 (This afternoon it wound up for the pitch).
 She listens. Eyes are twinkling. Little Lucius
 Is playing Twinkle, twinkle, little star.
 The little Lucius plays, and Flora laughs.
 She hears the shadow of Letitia's drum
 And laughs. Shadows are bad. Shadows are good.
 There comes in darkness, just as shadows come,
 Light on, from the light of, Letitia's drum.
 Once we sang Mica, mica, parva stella.
 We laughed and sang above the world so high.
 The star that twinkles is the light above.
 The light above in Ennius, Lucretius,

And Cicero's translation of Aratus
 Gives an example of what Virgil knew
 Of light above in Latin poetry
 Or could have known and thus knew, one assumes,
 Since for the learned Virgil one assumes
 The knowledge of all that he could have known.
 The poem of Aratus was a version,
 Still extant and once very popular,
 Of scientific prose by an important
 Scientist, Eudoxus. Virgil could,
 Of course, have known the Greek originals.
 The scientist Hipparchus wrote an extant
 Commentary on the books of both
 Eudoxus and Aratus. This work, too,
 Virgil could have known. What do I know?
 What of a shadow universe? What dark,
 Far more than night, exists, is what exists?
 Is shadow lack of night or light the absence
 Of shadow? Thus was freedom understood
 Where there were slaves? Tityrus was a slave
 And had to go to Rome to gain his freedom.
 Fee came to teach freedom in Kentucky.
 Must someone, something, free us from the evil
 Thing or one? The people of Berea
 Received the word. The pastures here were free.
 The university is pastoral.
 The university must be a pasture.
 One must be loath to take the literal
 And to disfigure it into a figure,
 To mingle subtleties with obvious
 And blatant evil, good, truth, error, beauty,
 And ugliness, to mingle work with play,
 Confuse the beneficial and the noxious
 Umbrageousnesses and umbrosities.
 The university is far away,
 Among fruits everlastingly delicious,
 Far from one's bovine mooed monstrosities,
 Off in the shadows. Motion must be rest.
 Knowledge must wait for one among shades blessed.

Does not Thalia in the cave preside
Over a knowing, as, in the grove, Apollo?

There had been Corydon and Thyrsis. Now
There is just Corydon and Corydon.

Song is of noon's shade. Damon sings at dawn
To the departure of the shade of night.

Someone can sing at night or under night
As some could sing all day and down the sun.

Do, Arethusa, when at last the sun
Goes down, shadows and junipers preside?

Such are the questions asked, such the conclusions
Glimpsed as I contemplate those shady pages,
The last half of the book. Shall I arise?
Shall I declare an end to questioning?
Shall I imagine ends to shadowing?
Is shadow good for pastoral and bad
For epic, good in pastoral and bad
In epic? In didactic poetry
What place is there for sun and what for shade?
I sat in shadow working on my thesis.
I think I will see light by chapter five
In an old grove or in an ancient glade
Or in an unimagined space, a time
Utterly new, unknown to prose or rhyme
And inaccessible to both, a Rome
Never to look like or to sound like home,
A university or universe
Which neither words nor music can rehearse.

She heard first hounds, then sirens, and then silence.

The virgilians were invigilating still.
The Latin teacher handed in her grades.
The catalpas were passing all their examinations,
Going slowly, gradually, not too fast,

From O's to A's, from openings to all
 That one could ask of nestled plenitude,
 Of elegant particular perfection,
 Of total excellence. Commencement saw
 Catalpas' caps of candid verity,
 Gowns lined with gold and purple pulchritude.
 May is at length ending. The cows are gleaming.
 The cows are leaving their gleam. They feel for shade
 Beneath the catalpas. Catalpas are still gleaming.
 The cattle and the catalpas have doubled the dappled
 Shadows. Catalpas bubbled, then bloomed, then shadowed
 Cows with sweet gleaming clouds, clouds of albed incense.
 Such white clouds can lay such black shades along
 The mountains and such mountainous cows can gleam
 White, gleam black, shade pastures underneath
 The mountains, for such difference is such
 Sameness, white's gleam so accurately black's,
 Fire's shadow so like water's light. Catalpas
 Differ from dogwoods, locusts, and virgilias,
 From opening magnolias isolating
 White islands over evergreen green seas,
 Differ from clouds, differ from stars, from suns,
 Gleam like all. All gleam. Many are sweet.
 They all are sweet. Sweet gleam yields to sweet shade.
 The cattle have sat in the catalpas' shade.
 Leaning luxuriously against the tree,
 The shaded singer sweetly sings sweet shade.
 Sweetnessess differ, sweetness is the same.
 The song will live, the singer never lie.
 The beautiful is truer than the true.
 Catalpas bloomed in spring and not in summer
 Unless we call it summer, June, July,
 When May observes catalpas following
 Close on virgilias and tulip trees.
 The buds of May are summer's in our tongue,
 Upon our tongues, but not upon our soil,
 Not in our country, not upon our land,
 Not in our land. Catalpas gleam like alps.
 Bubbles become bunches of bloom, bouquets
 Of blossom, bubbles become clusters and clouds,

Catalpas in majestic cloud, their own,
 Catalpas dearer than a summer's day,
 Elegant in expansiveness, frank, free,
 Fearless in frivolity and frill,
 Catalpas grand, unguarded, guarding gold.
 These are the abc's inscribed in purple
 And gold within catalpan chalices,
 Imprinted on ascending, branching, circling
 Catalpan altitudes and architectures
 And attitudes. Unstinting is the wine
 Poured in those palaces from that largess.
 Such alpine atmospheres, such palatine
 Graciousness and imperiousness poured forth
 A heady message to harsh Hannibal,
 Wilfrid considering the calendar,
 Gibbon continuing from Switzerland,
 Tityrus, if cisalpine, distant still,
 Me, distant still, that we must go to Rome.
 The woodthrush sang. We had gone. We would go.
 Who are we, the woodthrush wondered. Then,
 Think who we are, he said. Then, Sing who we are,
 Was the exemplified injunction. Yet,
 Sweet, oh sweet, the woodthrush added. And,
 Bitterly sweet, he clarified. And then,
 Better than sweet, became the closure. Still,
 From the green wood the green song, ever fresh,
 Never did end. We have gone. We will go.
 The woodthrush measures restlessness and rest.
 The woodthrush sings the sweetness and the ache.
 Windows and doors open upon the south,
 The lawn, the little wood, the woodthrush singing.
 I wake to the song, I breakfast to the song,
 Lunch, dine, walk, wander to those melodies.
 I con the words as some have done before
 And comprehend them as none yet has done.
 Truth has more beauty than the beautiful.
 The suite was beauty pouring from the tree
 Continually and shedding everywhere
 Movements of music, rests of meditation,
 Golden speeches, silver silences,

Green palpability, elusive blue.
 Nature does nothing, so they say, in vain.
 Nature herself asserts that more is more.
 The rabbit danced on the lawn in the shade of the morning.
 The bounds of the rabbit leap to the bounds of the hills,
 The boundaries of the mountains. I climbed one hill
 Beyond the silver maple, muscular,
 Elegant, and sublime, passed poppies, passed
 Snapdragons and catalpas, trudged to where
 The sole shade was a hedge of trees, the only
 Shadows the juniper trees edging the pastures.
 I stood in the shade of a juniper at noon.
 May was as rare, as beautiful, as June,
 As perfect. This is a real Kentucky May,
 The woman from Tennessee had said from her garden
 As I climbed up by the catalpas. Now I could rest
 Under the juniper hedge and meditate
 Green meadowlands, green hills, the green-blue mountains,
 The blue-blue sky. The junipers were green,
 Their berries blue as mountains, blue like sky.
 Into those greens and blues the bobwhite's bright
 Fire sizzled white much as the orange flames
 Zigzag across the blue-green of the petals
 Upon the tulips of the tulip tree.
 The bird's fire was a bell as bright as day.
 The day's hawk hovered silently like night
 Through the blue noon. The meadow's yellow flowers
 Were constellations to sharp scrutiny.
 To contemplation bits of shade must hover
 Under each ray. Shade is sharp on grass,
 Soft on a lawn, subtle and tenuous
 Across a pasture at meridian.
 But I stood in the pastureland's penumbra.
 To be a mockingbird became my call.
 Heat, roses, honeysuckle, peonies,
 Swifts, whizzes, twitter, glitter, clarities,
 Bees, buzzes, butterflies, cries, distances,
 Heat, breezes, breaths, scents, songs, and silences
 Commingled with sun's touch and shade's embrace.
 Now all was silent. All is still. Now only

The sun king and the umbra queen exist
 Beyond the sun-stroked, shade-soaked consciousness.
 As burning is majestic, dreaded, red,
 And photosynthesis green, gracious, power,
 So solar potency is not unknown
 To Flora when she must deliberate
 The saving grace of staying in the shade,
 The dangers of remaining in the shade.

A breeze blew over the pastures. O the sea!
 O sweet sea breeze that seeps, that sweeps, from the ocean.
 There was no saltiness. There was no ocean.
 She called it Rome, but it was Cyzicus.

A red sun disappears. A cloudless blue
 Assumes a rose. A rising moon appears.
 Tonight the moon is orange, and tomorrow
 It will be blue. We leave sweet moony gleams
 On the magnolias, we leave the little beech
 With its grand foils, long leaves each ruled for script.
 Figuratively, orange will be blue.
 Literally, the little will be big.
 We pass the silver maple's energetic
 Ascent, exalted silveriness, and mighty
 Strenuous delicacy. We climb the hill.
 Beyond the catalpas, where the junipers
 Show dark, the moon shines bright upon the pastures,
 Not waters, Wabash or Atlantic, for
 The landswell is not oceanic, is
 Moonscape of mound, a foreground to gray mountains.
 The fireflies echo the stars. The moon says, Oh.
 Transformations happen in the sky.
 Orange is gold, gold cream, cream silver. While
 Natures are altered, kingdoms overthrown,
 Peace perdures. The moon is a gazing moon,
 And peace gleams in that eye, beams from that brow,
 To illustrate my ultimate lustration
 Out from the junipers' long lunar shadows.

It was an evening when he found his theme.
 He found his theme and finished in the evening.

Imagine Gibbon carried across the Alps,
 Well armed as Hannibal. In Gibbon's garden
 The last fruit fell. It rolled across the lawn,
 Skittered along the lake, and skimmed the mountains,
 Revolved the revolutions of the orb
 Called Roman, spun in London, brightened Britain
 With the great glowing of the luminous
 Page. With the flowing of voluminous
 Pages it floated on across the ocean
 To revolutionized America,
 Not revolted by those English colors,
 So truly Latin were the banners flown.
 Well armed by study, Gibbon crossed the Alps
 At twenty-six, saw Rome at twenty-seven,
 Finished at fifty that last page, that final
 Line, of the work conceived that autumn evening,
 He said, upon the Capitol. The most
 Beautiful sun, he said, gilded the Alps
 And gave the scene a somber coloring.
 Now it was almost midnight. He arose,
 Walked through the garden under the acacias,
 Watched the reflection of the silver orb
 Gleam from the lake. He had transcended mountains,
 Had sat beside the waters of Leman,
 Sat in the temple as the shadows fell.

Can one reliteralize the figural,
 Replant the overplanted littoral?

Can I explain shade, explicate the shadows?
 I must still find the fire of chapter two.
 I must still run the road of chapter three.
 I must still try the tree of chapter four.
 I must gaze on the god of chapter five.
 Now I must leave the shadows in the shadows.

A small beech tree arises in Kentucky.
 I did not place a jar beneath that tree.
 But did I jar that tree? Or could I sing
 Beneath it? Could that beech tree sing to me?

One night, twitching your skirt, you will arise,
One day you will escape the easy shade,
Though it is hard to read the beech's shade
And greater falls from the great Virgil shadow.