

*from* Book of My Hunger,  
Book of the Earth · Sarah Appleton

Knock, listen    The harsh fly shines    The beetle rubs  
out of its casing    The brown butterfly with its fringe of  
blue eyes in a halo of purple probing fluttering over the  
fallen yellow maple leaves    The drip of dry leaves before  
my eyes    The trees grown tall remembering the words of  
the authors    The pine red hair falling like new catkins  
on the leafless twigs    The human hand touching everywhere—  
lifts and stirs    like slow wings

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It is this way the work builds  
as if someone had my hand, walked before me, gently drawing me  
the effort, silence

these are the very lines of it

almost as if fleshless  
blank

simple, as if old or very young; I follow simply  
so caught, buoyed by fragility . . . so slight

I lie down in the sun, my back against the dry warm log bridging the stream  
the sun in the stream    lights. Woodpecker, brittle like the paper leaves  
spiralling down, brushing against tree bark

the late thrush fluffed    round

seen only by the life of his eye, then seen all

The balance of these words

falling again and again against and upon the sentence  
barely breathing

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The thrust of life within into the world, gathering the world

Why have the creatures come to our door hungering for bread? Why  
does the amber light in the soul of the dog speak love, when  
he has no words? They come to us

They wait endlessly for us, following our motions, but our  
children run on ahead, or lag in their world, our voices are  
filled with warnings, urgings

Being born with the world

The tensions are here

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Now I see myself making the stars. Within me I hold a vast  
sky stars streaming out as if brushed by the wind from a star  
and I see them more and more and I can count them by their names  
for as many names as I can name to my content, to my  
exhaustion of all my yearning. They do not fall and fall open  
like flowers from a tree—shadows floating, catching light, spinning out—  
or wings that carry seeds, or fluffs that whirl endlessly. These  
stars are the stars of all my desire From their desire,  
from their eyes looking forward to me. My face in theirs,  
my voice, I meet them, here here here

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Where is my body falling, quick, catch it! Shadow like  
the others . . . run, catch it flying on the wind,  
black smudges over snow . . . There, the glints, sun  
motes against the blue . . . No higher, the butterfly beating  
beating in a rare wind; no, there . . . lights broken in the  
face of a stream . . . here; no there, my small daughter  
running to me

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The teachers of my child have forgotten memory  
have already hidden from my child her story

They didn't listen for it  
she did not hear it leave her lips

Seeking, I asked her for it  
She turned away, her mouth sealed

over her deepest desires  
She seizes them with her hands, they work in her strong fingers

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Who has lifted the pen!  
Who has made the mark of the human face upon the page!  
Who has seen here the invisible dictation!  
I, just having taken it up, finding my life . . .

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I stand here. I have arisen — into the dazzling, the different  
as if jumping, each time feeling the hands won't be there

But I am so small. This . . . this calling, this searching, this  
one come again and again to a place drawn here by this thread —

It is utterly difficult  
utterly simple, like a new language

the wings of the old beating, beating  
How can the journey be of words, sentences?

Is that how it is when the universe comes into us, accepting our smallness  
using our eyes     looking at the autumn blue, autumn branch, thickening  
                 pond light

comes into our ears to our darkness

resists our fingers

is that how the universe is content, when we can no longer  
think it

but return to our simple duties, of dishes, of picking up, of being the earth  
as our children lean into us, of being worshipful to a dog who grows thin  
from not running

of coming to you, my dearest, given silent understanding working in the  
terrors to come

working in a love that had no words before this