Elizabeth Bishop, Song for the Rainy Season (1960)

Hidden, oh hidden
in the high fog
the house we live in,
beneath the magnetic rock,
rain-, rainbow-ridden,
where blood-black
bromelias, lichens,
owls, and the lint
of the waterfalls cling,
familiar, unbidden.

In a dim age
of water
the brook sings loud
from a rib cage
of giant fern; vapor
climbs up the thick growth
effortlessly, turns back,
holding them both,
house and rock,
in a private cloud.

At night, on the roof,
blind drops crawl
and the ordinary brown
owl gives us proof
he can count:
five times – always five –
he stamps and takes off
after the fat frogs that, shrilling for love,
clamber and mount.

House, open house
to the white dew
and the milk-white sunrise
kind to the eyes,
to membership
of silver fish, mouse,
bookworms,
big moths; with a wall
for the mildew’s ignorant map,
darkened and tarnished by the warm touch of the warm breath, maculate, cherished, rejoice! For a later era will differ. (O difference that kills, or intimidates, much of all our small shadowy life!) Without water

the great rock will stare unmagnetized, bare, no longer wearing rainbows or rain, the forgiving air and the high fog gone; the owls will move on and the several waterfalls shrivel in the steady sun.
Frank O’Hara, ‘A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island’ (1958)

The Sun woke me this morning loud and clear, saying ‘Hey! I’ve been trying to wake you up for fifteen minutes. Don’t be so rude, you are only the second poet I’ve ever chosen to speak to personally

so why aren’t you more attentive? If I could burn you through the window I would to wake you up. I can’t hang around here all day.’

‘Sorry, Sun, I stayed up late last night talking to Hal.’

‘When I woke up Mayakovsky he was a lot more prompt’ the Sun said petulantly. ‘Most people are up already waiting to see if I’m going to put in an appearance.’

I tried to apologize ‘I missed you yesterday.’ ‘That’s better’ he said. ‘I didn’t know you’d come out.’ ‘You may be wondering why I’ve come so close?’ ‘Yes’ I said beginning to feel hot wondering if maybe he wasn’t burning me anyway.

‘Frankly I wanted to tell you I like your poetry. I see a lot on my rounds and you’re okay. You may not be the greatest thing on earth, but you’re different. Now, I’ve heard some say you’re crazy, they being excessively calm themselves to my mind, and other crazy poets think that you’re a boring reactionary. Not me.

Just keep on like I do and pay no attention. You’ll find that people always will complain about the atmosphere, either too hot or too cold too bright or too dark, days too short or too long.

If you don’t appear at all one day they think you’re lazy or dead. Just keep right on, I like it.

And don’t worry about your lineage poetic or natural. The Sun shines on the jungle, you know, on the tundra
the sea, the ghetto. Where you were
I knew it and saw you moving. I was waiting
for you to get to work.

And now that you
are making your own days, so to speak,
even if no one reads you but me
you won’t be depressed. Not
everyone can look up, even at me. It
hurts their eyes.’

‘Oh Sun, I’m so grateful to you!’

‘Thanks and remember I’m watching. It’s
easier for me to speak to you out
here. I don’t have to slide down
between buildings to get your ear.
I know you love Manhattan, but
you ought to look up more often.

And
always embrace things, people earth
sky stars, as I do, freely and with
the appropriate sense of space. That
is your inclination, known in the heavens
and you should follow it to hell, if
necessary, which I doubt.

Maybe we’ll
speak again in Africa, of which I too
am specially fond. Go back to sleep now
Frank, and I may leave a tiny poem
in that brain of yours as my farewell.’

‘Sun, don’t go!’ I was awake
at last. ‘No, go I must, they’re calling
me.’

‘Who are they?’

Rising he said ‘Some
day you’ll know. They’re calling to you
too.’ Darkly he rose, and then I slept.