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Robert Kelly

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=====

**The statue lingers
after its thought is gone,
an idea
frozen into space.
We belong
to each other by
the act of seeing.
I may be someone's
statue too.**

10 January 2018

GROCERY LIST

Mantagna.

Beethoven.

Olive Mountain

Sanhedrin

Styrofoam.

Salamander.

Portulaca.

Semaphore.

Mandelshatm.

Lydia Sigourney.

11 January 2018

=====

***Ketubah* comes to mind
or marrying mind to mind
the verbal agreement
sealed in neurology,
ours, hello,**

**“standing at the altar of one’s better self
pledge to take this meaning as your spouse”
as old Swanage counseled,**

or as we say

Come home and think with me.

Marriage engages eternity

**These are the words
that toppled Jericho,
and these are the children
who mocked Elijah
or was it Elisha, or Noah,
these are the children
who mock everything
that makes us proud,
music or muscles or message,
some mission from on high,**

pride is a terrible ailment,
a crack in our geology,
a cancellation notice for the soul,
and children, we still call them
holy terrors, thy cure us,
try to at least, of the terrible
sin of being proud of being me.

Yes, but where
is the contract in all this,
the rabbi drinking ink,
doves perched on the bride's
pale shoulders, the groom
barefoot with embarrassment
dancing on the unbroken glass,
words fly around the room,
the temple trembles, the in-laws weep?

We need the paper, nothing works
without the words, doesn't
matter what they say,
could be in Gaelic, just write
something down and sign it fast,
hide it in your bedroom closet,
hang it proudly on the parlor wall,
call it a poem or a manifesto,
a letter from the Pope, a diploma
from medical school, doesn't matter,
sign it, show it or hide it,

**and does anybody *have*
parlors anymore,
a room that means
we sit there and talk?**

**And in holy wedlock
Words are our truest children.**

12 January 2018

=====

Not too far
a train
along the river,
freight
from the length
of its rumble.
The night.
Going somewhere,
bringing things
there or back.
Quiet now,
all that single
traffic stilled.
Nothing moves.
Dark,coughing,
a man.

11/12 January 2018

RHOMBIC GESTURE*for Charles Stein*

**Rain sky
snow melt face.
I thought your say-so
was a sign.
Libra, for example,
struggling to balance
cardboard cartons
I'm carrying downstairs.
The cellar. The undercroft.
The trouble with me
is I see all equations
as images, all relations
as relationships.
The trouble with me
is I love cellars.
To be under the house!
Like a line among lines—
snug on the page!
The trouble with me is images,
sensory input, childish
habits of hand and mind.
My idea of understanding
something is telling a story.
It seems to me it makes me
a bad friend, appropriating
your science into my comic book,**

**without any pictures in it
even. So looking at your images,
Doctor Stein, I know
what's wrong with me.
I think I owe you
for the diagnosis.
But it's 52 degrees in January
and mist is coming down Cedar Hill.**

12 January 2018

=====

**Blue sky happening back
cantilever cloud**

**everything wants
to be a bird**

**sunshine especially
fluttering shadows**

**sudden sheen on ice roads
cold but cheerful**

**O weather you witch
you wife.**

13 January 2018

=====

**I have to walk
a different way,
widdershins round the temple
trampling the grass down
a beaten path
sprinkled with mantra breath
dazzled with thinking.**

**2.
It's when it's written
down the danger comes,
weather swoop, dreams
of children suddenly
all around us, nothing
on earth bigger
than what children dream,
science, all of science,
is a desperate effort to
capture and understand them.**

**3.
So I keep walking,
keep trying to say
this thing I do,
this thing we are.**

13 January 2018

=====

**We are not ready
for each other yet.**

**There needs to be a flower
hybrid of all thoughts
some precious gardener
coaxes from genesis.**

**When the flower opens
and the alchemist bees
come visiting, dining,**

**then our hours will sound
loud from the bell tower**

**of the empty brick church
around the corner, up the road.**

13 January 2018

=====

**Hoar frost
probing gold nib
of sunlight spiking
here and there
letters on the grass,**

***Dove la rugiada
pugna col sole***

**it's all a message
by no messenger delivered,
a message from no one
we have to read.**

13 January 2018

=====

If it were only
a matter of animal—
catch my breath
catch a glimpse
of its sleek danger
slipping between trees
this way, my way,
so I can almost feel
its fur already
its claws soon after

I could arm again
somehow or take
shelter, is there
such a place, or time,
to hide from all
that is coming

when it is not an animal,
no lustrous pelt,
no panther grace,
no shape at all, pure
menace from nowhere.

14 January 2018

=====

**I have walked over the earth
dozens of times and come
always to this place —**

**sleep is a mighty master,
djinn in a brass lamp,
a bottle full of tomorrow.**

**Always the same place
the silent waking
on a spinning earth**

**think how many stars
have witnessed your sleep,
how well the world knows you!**

Every living thing calls your name.

14 January 2018

=c = = = = =

**Bad kings
bring bad weather:
that's all I have
to say bout this
Washington winter.**

14.I.18

=====

**They're waiting
on the other side of now —
the waiting room of the universe,**

**I am the doctor and the patient.
the busy nurse, the anxious parent:
it is my turn to be now.**

14 January 2018

=====

**Is a dream the opposite
of paying attention?
Houses turn into trees,
Sutch people come along
dragging canals behind them
through the patient earth,
a rook lands on the roof
and calls: *You don't
belong here — wake !***

14 January 2018

=====

**Somebody will give you permission —
yake it and run with it
until poor green Daphne turns
back into a girl again**

**and trees learn how to talk
not just think their ways to you—
wake everything up,
everything is possible again.**

14 January 2018

=====

**Jogger in yellow
jersey, sunshine
bare trees, empty
road, nothing more—**

**chronicle of a day
joyous with space,
the manifold of time—
this word the key.**

14 January 2018

=====

**Close your eyes
and remember the light.
It's not easy.
It's like a song
you heard years ago
in some other city,
you rec all the feel of it
but not the words,
not even the tune.**

14 January 2018

=====

Something knows the air
all the way into our lungs,
We hardly know we're breathing,
can sleep and do it fine, mostly,
but sometimes at night
one wakes and sees the cracks
in the ceiling above the bed,
how can I be seeing them
in the dark room, how can I
go on breathing when I'm not.
But we always are. Maybe the dead
go on breathing too, alternate
atmosphere, spirit channels.
Or not. Stretch marks on
a bad idea. Everything is body—
it's bot me, it's my tinnitus
talking. And you hear it too.

14 January 2018
to Schumann's 2nd, 1st mvt.

=====

for Sherry

**Light has shoulders too
colors you can feel
like a woolen sweater
under your fingertips
when you're just looking
not even touching,
color touches for you,
you reach up to the sky,
don't be ashamed, we all
do that sometimes,
and sky comes tumbling
down into your open arms
I mean your open eyes, you
never look away, you see it
down into our shared world,
you never look away.**

14 January 2018

=====

**Then it said nothing
so I waited patiently
like a child on line
for the confessional
counting up my faults
deciding which ones
to confess when my
turn comes, and which
to keep silent, sacred,**

**And still it said nothing,
I felt like black smoke
from a snuffed candle,
speaking of churches,
drifting, soon diffused.**

**But when I was gone
it finally spoke,
told me to tell
to all my mothers
but didn't say what
because I was not gone
enough for it to say.**

15 January 2018

=====

**Listen to the runner's feet
or water down the rapids
or even wind shimmering
in the loose window screen —
these are songs of going.
leaving, kissing goodbye.**

15 January 2018

=====

**People are people early in the country,
time tastes different wherethere are no streets.
hard to get a handle on dawn, but courage!
noon will let even someone from the city touch.**

15 January 2018

=====

**Barracudas of the local mind
swim fast, eat thoughts
almost as fast as you can think them
Stick a warning poster up on he shore:
Keep safe — write faster than you think.**

15 January 2018

=====

**I blink my eyes for you.
This is a signal of some feeling
that has no proper name.
I look at you and blink.
What does that make you think?
Whatever that is, that's what I feel.**

15 January 2018

=====

Morris dancers used to come
along our street, and Gypsy
workmen to fix dented fenders,
horses pulled the milkman's cart,
and amazing size the blocks of ice
the iceman carried on his shoulder
in wet burlap, and sky-blue hydrangea
dew-drenched in the little garden,
I'm not so sure about the dancers—
it may have been a patriot parade
or firemen showing off their brand-new
hook and ladder, polished crimson
fire engine, friendly blue policemen
on brown horses they call chestnut,
trolley-car clang two blocks west—
the air will carry all of us away too.

15 January 2018

=====

Snow. The sympathy.

**Everything touches,
it touches everything.**

**Connects.
Is that what it means,**

**the *blanket* of snow?
And when it melts
who loves us then?**

16 January 2018

=====

**Almost time
to be
someone else.**

**Stop me
before I tell
who you
are too.**

16 January 2018

=====

Cubits they used to say
elbow to fingertip
of a man lifting a stone
into place

here it is, the pyramid,
the loaf of bread in the desert
that never stales,

the words
fall around his shoulders.
a pallium,
white wool
sent from Rome

making him himself.

That's how the animal begins,
papyrus, harp strings,
fish in a basket,

you can hear him
all over the mountains
whispering his tender commandments

straight into your heart

**as it is presumptuous of me to mention,
having as I do
no purchase on your identity**

**and no heart of my own
to test the verity of these sandstone acoustics**

just the words, sand, words, winds.

16 January 2018

=====

**Walk closer
to the river
than the water
even,**

**a bird
above me
higher than the sky.**

**16 January 2018
Kingston**

=====

**Courses of inaction
missionary men—
we had religion
before the priests came
with funny names
for what we knew,
and funny smells,**

**purveying preending
an old bible
their own god
had transcended —
as if summertime
talked endlessly of snow
and tried to frighten
lovers from the glen.**

**What was it we had
yhey gave their names to?
What did we know
that slept three hundred
years into our day?
And can we wake
and wake it still?
The sunflower knows it
and the courting bee.**

17 January 2018

=====

**Ink spill
black snow
on my cold fingers**

**I'll have to write
to read what it says.**

17 January 2018

=====

But why are we here?

The touch of your skin?

**Touch sand instead,
rocks on the shore.**

**There are only
three real things**

stone and trees and sea

**all the rest is us
still waiting
to learn what we
at least are supposed to do.**

17 January 2018

=====

**There is a mind
that knows us here**

**find the mind
the waves know where.**

17 January 2018

=====

**Google Louvre.
Venus with no Seine.
Gioconda with no crowds.**

**But what if the pictures
are really for the sake of the building,**

**what if the house
matters more than the people in it
and we are just custodians of space,
curators of enclosure**

**and what really matters is shadow
shaping dark places
to hide from her all-seeing light?**

17 January 2018

=====

**What of the middle,
Pound's wobble-not
pivot, that by being
motionless collects
a kingdom round it?**

**This breath of air
is the center of the world.
When you exhale
it all has to start again,
Genesis and Exodus
and then Apocalypse,**

**the you breathe in again.
This world we know
is nothing but a human breathing.**

17 January 2018

=====

The sky
has a way
of getting here first

You sent
your disappointment
not by a letter

just a sense
of it arched
through the sky

the catenary path
of human feelings,
I grieved at your grief.

17 January 2018

=====

**Area of low turbulence
kid on a scooter
fro-yo stand closed for the season,
a red car blanketed
under two days' snow.**

**Here you can wander, watching
every branch an arabesque in white,
every vista
scribbled all over by snow.**

**Read it to catch aglimpse
of the sould of the child
it all is.**

17 January 2018

= = = = =

for Kimberly

The years let me know you.
And years are like slow ants
moving around our toes,
not specially touching,
no tickling. The ants
sometimes scurry, sometimes
stand so still you think
they've gone to sleep.
The years sleep. They change
their clothes, their colors,
their Chinese names. We
though, we don't change.
The you I knew, we say,
or when I was the one
who knew you — but really
it's the same. We are skin
and breath and love
and interesting anxieties.
We go to church in the weather.
We say mass in every word.

17 January 2018

=====

**Resist again.
Go for the first time
always.**

**A canal
is not a river,
the lovers
who walk along it
are copying themselves..**

**Like me, writing
one word after another
instead of just writing
the first word of all.**

17 / 18 January 2018

NOT JUST THE APPLE

Everything was forbidden.

We were spirits
and we wanted

wanted experience
so we ate.

Eating means engulfing living beings
—the still kind, like vegetation,
or the moving kind, like animals —
and destroying their lives
into our own.

To take in substance
we must be substance too
and so we made bodies
and hid inside them.

And here we are still
trying to make sense
of what it was we
happened to ourselves.

18 January 2018

=====

**We came on an asteroid
we will leave on the air
itself —
 we came here
only to tell you something
we all too soon forgot.**

18 January 2018

=====

**Divided by anybody else
this love affair of theirs
would equal the number
of spirals in the golden
head of a sunflower
where all those Fibonacci
seeds march round and round.
I mean eventually they
would come to each other
again, or at least be on
the same spiral pathway
leading to the maze middle
where maybe one day
both of them can drink
from the mysterious fountain
at the center of everything.**

18 January 2018

=====

Lens work,
the truth of Mars
chilly up there
so far from sun—
frozen seas and we
between the two
planets praying
for home. Venus
in warm mist —
that sort of thing,
woman of cosmos
mother kind. Maybe.
We saw the sun
rise on the horizon
big as a nickel, yellow
only a little. The image
freezes the thought
of those who see it —
just like an image, you'd
say. And for once I agree.

18 January 2018

=====

**A baxter is a baker
a webster is a weaver**

**feminine endings
like sister**

**not master not monster
not holster**

**but it holds something
something cold and angry**

***oleum mortis*
smelling of death.**

18 January 2018

=====

**Clarity not charity
he said, smiling,
giving all his bread
away, his money
most of it to the poor.
I know what I need
he said, all the rest
is dross, turns to gold
when it's given away
with clear-mind love,
river that never stops flowing.**

18 January 2018

=====

**Number the weddings,
rainbow. You have been,
seen them all.**

**2.
A person is a triptych
on a window ledge,
wide open, all three panels,
yet so bright the day
beyond them no one
can actually make out
the clear images displayed.
Did you know that?**

**3.
Of course the rainbow
did and does.
What is made of
what happens to light
always remembers,
but even she can't
see in the dark.**

4.

Each one of us a triptych
of measureless beauty and worth —

take it one faith.

Or on my word.

I who once or twice
was brave enough
to approach someone
with my candle uplifted
and in its flicker
suddenly saw.

19 January 2018

=====

*Isn't everything
too good to be true?*

**I did what the sky
told me to,
I found a city
small enough to hold
between my knees
in a single afternoon.**

**I built a tower there
using no hands,
left the scaffolding in place
so children could clamber
all round the structure
and come up to the sky
to learn what they
in their turn would
be told to do.**

19 January 2018

=====

**The animal of it
at work.**

**Muscles remember
more than mind**

**or is mind another
muscle, by muscle**

**moving, build
everything else?**

**19 January 2018
Wappingers Falls**

=====

**Lathering the earth with music
those principals of the invisible
orchestra, virtue-owning, noisy
in their elegance (*simplex munditis*)
pour straightforward unforgettable
melody rushing between the levees
of our imperfect attention, blur
of memory always a wrong note,
this clean music is now, only
now and you'd better believe it.**

20 January 2018

=====

Space
is continuous,

continues us,
its major work
is like our own —

to connect by separation.

20 January 2018

=====

**This blue
dream
shaped like an apple
a little lopsided
tumbling
all these years
through space,
still falling
from the branch
of the no tree ever,
we are most with it
when we sleep,
wet with its
secret ocean.**

20 January 2018

THREE TRUE LOVE SONGS CONTRARY TO FACT

**If I were a blacksmith
your horses would love me
a little but be nervous
near me, just like you.**

**If I were a poltergeist
I wouldn't make a sound,
just keep my ears cocked
to hear your heartbeat.**

**If I were an angel
I would have no memory,
be mindful only of my
message, only of you.**

20 January 2018

=====

**listen to the land
all night long**

**stand on your hands
to know what trees know**

**then tell me
before I wake so**

**I can pretend it
was only a dream.**

**20 January 2018
*for Nicole***

=====

**Then my new purple Lamy pen
spoke words you don't need to hear
to set your mind dancing already
its own way, its own tunes, its own
dance floor polished by all your loves.**

20 January 2018

=====

**The summoning
also listens.
That is how
we are, folk
between effect
and cause, giants
on a tiny earth —
how it seems.**

20 January 2018

=====

Then came a day
didn't know a thing —
looked at the sky
tried to remember.
Those are cars
passing by, most
of them black
like childhood
again. See,
something is
knowing instead.
Colors remember,
that's their function
in life, why Iris
is a god back
then and always,
her rainbow.

Sun brighter
on snow now,
see, remembering
is happening.
But is happening
only remembering?
A deer steps across
the empty road.

**Is there no now,
is it all then
come back again?
What should a day
know or be or tell
or even answer
what breathless
question that
nobody asks?**

21 January 2018

EXHIBIT A

**The boiler room
mighty turbines
like a Swiss ferry
here stilled
in urban shade.
What is this place
that has such a vast
room, empty except
for quiet machines?
You don't really
want to know, just
want to be polite
to it, let yourself be
awed by its strangeness.**

**21 January 2018
(The Lace Factory,
Kingston)**

=====

**It is right to be
polite to be
polite to places.
They are the only
people there.**

21 January 2018

=====

**Simulacrum
from Srinagar
never before.
A dictionary
(that drunken
circus) spills
joyous improbables
all over the mind.**

21 January 2018

ON THE NILE

**Can we open
the crocodile's mouth
from the distance,
catch his hot breath
across the water
and know thereby
what we are like
with all our lusts,
our gluttony for lives
not our own? Sobek
god of repentance,
god of learning to
forgive even ourselves.**

21 January 2018

S C E N A

**—I don't belong to you
I belong
to wanting you**

**—Want me less
and be me more**

**—how can I be
more than am?**

**—am is empty
be runs free
can anywhere**

—its flight my choice?

**—it chooses
what you think**

**—then want
chooses me?**

**—not so; the rafters
of your house
are free
you have windows
choose to see.**

22 January 2018

=====

**A little after Strauss but not yet now
you get a little tune in your head
and there goes sleep. Music
always feels like morning light,
kitchen door, corn field, crows,
sumptuous mezzos at the well.**

22 January 2018

WALKING ALONE

1.

Just trying to know
how it begins.
A rising major ninth,
cat on window ledge
reddish, people
speaking Dutch who
switch to your native
language when you
come close, grammar
better than yours.
Gull lans on canal.
Just like your birthplace
this used to be sea.

2.

Is this clear enough
or can anything be?
Open the ledger
look for your name —
see the date? It's
today, that's all
a day ever is, a little
dreamless sleep
between two dreams.

**3.
Answer them in French,
they'll look away
and let you pass by
along their wet stones,
the benches are wet too,
it must be raining,
nothing more. But how
can a city ever be sure?**

22 January 2018

THIS

**This is a painting
of a room I've never
entered, never seen
though I have been
inside it many a time.**

**Outside sky, and everything
under it all the same no-color
but the room crackles with color—
this is a painting of a room
you can only hear, however many
times you go in and come out of it
it looks a little like the face
of the woman you saw in the Bardo
before you saw the one who would be
your mother. Call it The Room
of the Other Mother, every painter
tries to show it, sometimes it has
a human face, sometimes no face at all—
geometry is just a childish trick,
abstract modesty, too shy to show
her actual face, so it's safe to hang
this picture on the wall, the colors
won't let you wander or get lost inside,
you're safe out here with me.
Don't listen if it calls you by name.**

22 January 2018

=====

**Things that catch
sight of me
that I don't see —
hmmm.**

**The old
one-way street
enigma.**

**Maybe
it's better this way,
if it does anything
at least it will be
a surprise. Every
child I am likes that.**

22 January 2018

IN THE DOLOMITES

I wonder worried
the way Rome fretted
at the clean uplifted
peaks of so many
beings, huge people
who held the north,
jagged hoirzons,
stone gardens wet
with purple sunsets
and I am so small,
yet I dare to hold
their names in my mouth
and say *mountain,*
mountain, teach me God.

22 January 2018

=====

**Seeing it the first time
one says: a mountain,
asks no questions.
The sky knows everything
anyhow.**

**But later
there is marvel at the mass.
How could anything be
so big and the earth still fly?**

22 January 2018

=====

**Self-mockery
is as suspect
as self-praise.**

**Be silent.
Let them think
what they want.**

23 January 2018

=====

**I gave my words away
the birds came back**

**their shadows
quick over the snow**

told me what I really meant.

23 January 2018

=====

I thought a sphere

**it rolled towards me
as if I had tossed it
up a gentle slope**

**it came close and stopped
looked up at me
the way an animal does
a little curious,
a little scared.**

**I know we all are hungry,
always, and said so.
The sphere received my
opinion neutrally, that special
privilege of having no
corners, no edges,
no sides. Slowly I'm trying
to learn its lesson.**

23 January 2018

=====

**Can anything
be over?**

**The mind now
has no then—**

**the calligraphy
of memory**

**always beautiful,
hard to read.**

23 January 2018

MEANING

**Meaning is oblique
a flag in the wind
on a ship out there
near the horizon,
flapping free,
impossible to read.**

23 January 2018

=====

**Something
almost worth saying
I wrote down instead.**

**Up to you
always to decide.**

**Sense is always
waiting to be made**

**but maybe there's
something
better to do with it.**

23 January 2018

=====

**Yesterday the sky
was down here with us.
Today it's back in heaven
blue even, parts of it,
the rest white, risen from us
our yestermist reborn as
cloud, fleecy as you please,
American as lakes and hills.**

24 January 2018

=====

**Some days it's right
to be literal,
take the sunshine
at its word
and try not to be afraid.**

**Remember, we're still close
to the beginning, our morals
those of rats in mazes,
our faith exiguous, frail
as a dry old rubber band.**

24 January 2018

=====

for Lori A.M.

**Miraculous photos in your book,
the print too faint for me to read.
So I have to make up my own libretto
for the music the pictures make me hear.**

24 January 2018

=====

**Bring me to the glass of water
and let it swallow me
for a change, I'm really small,
I'll fit inside, and water
will finally find out
what it's like to drink.**

24 January 2018

MORE

Isn't that what children say
I want more. So I want
more too,
 the child I was
or think I was.

 So little
is known for sure, the dark
mauve modernist iced-
water pitcher, so generous
on every table, at Toffenetti's
on Times Square — I'm sure
of that, yellow leaves along
the sidewalk of Batchelder St.,
my sister's first communion
all in white, the stone lion
I fed grass to west of Nostrand.
Water, woman, god and animal —
who needs more than that? And
always and always the names
themselves of things and places.

24 January 2018

=====

**The dragon roars
to remind us.
We think
it's just the wind
from the mountain.
But at least we're thinking.**

24 January 2018

=====

**The green blade of the amaryllis
bends back from the window.
Busoni listens to the Bach chaconne
and remembers it into the piano.
No clouds near the sun. No words
in the way. Snow quilting the lawn.**

24 January 2018

C A E D M O N

We know the story. The illiterate neatherd is asleep in the hay, snug in the barn with the monastery's cows it's his job to take care of. A voice wakes him, invisible, an angel cries *Caedmon, sing me something!* The sleeper half-wakes, complains, I don't know how to, and sleeps again. But a second time the voice summons him:

***Caedmon, sing me something!* Roused again, the sleeper tries to explain, he can't even read, knows no verse to sing, he's just a farm hand, then he shuts his eyes and snuggled down again. Yet again he hears it: *Caedmon, sing me something!* This time Caedmon is mad, gets up to his knees to berate the angel, opens his mouth and instead of what he intends to say, out comes**

Now shall we praise heaven-kingdom's lord

and all the rest of it. Caedmon's Hymn they call it now, and Bede tells us that it was the first English poem. How

true the story is: Inspiration (what else is an angel?) is wasted on those who are lettered and secure in what they think they know, inspiration comes to those who are humble and uncertain of their skill. And it is not what we want to say or some self we want to express that comes out as poetry but the strange, the marked, the stuff you don't know you know, the story you never heard, the things that shock you as they emerge, word by word, as if you were speaking.

25 January 2018

=====

—The lights come back
to tell us something.

—O you're always telling us
everything tells.

—It does. Just listen
what you're thinking right now
is what the daylight
pours into your head.

—Have I no private,
separate, consciousness?

—Do you so want to be alone?
Don't you want to be part
of the company of light?

—But there is darkness too...

—and that too tells.

25 January 2018

OF CORMORANTS, FOR P.J.

**You wrote the bird
right out of the sky.
But still the snaky
neck arising
almost bodiless
from calm water
teases me as if
there's always
more to be said
before we fly away.**

25 January 2018

AGAINST DIACRITICALS

**O Byzantium
was it you who set
your Massoretes
to work on the letters,
made birds and butterflies
and bats to perch
on my clean alphabet?**

25 January 2018

=====

**Suppose the numbers stopped.
Left town. Changed
their address. didn't
answer when you tried
to count bananas or
divide to divide
a pizza into equal slices,
how many heartbeats
in a minute, you'll
never know. Number
is an elusive concept,
let it slip away once
and it's gone forever.**

25 January 2018

DAWN

Pale blue sauce on grey earth,
The day comes back.
We are monkeys chattering at the sun,
ur-ur-ur became *aurora* said the ancients.
Say it or lose it
the wise one cries,
so we shout into the sky
and it sounds like this.

25 January 2018

=====

Nostril cvigarette remembrance
Waterloo Bridge the bus uphill
lost in Hampstead a father's trace
his grace pervades the alphabet
he taught so well the horses even
know it, just ask a chestnut, yes
yes, even the kind policeman
randomizer alert embankment
how far art has come since we
let go, dropped the lease, let
art show what nobody saw so
there the river goes again so
slow upcountry as if the sea
had somewhere else to go, no
sound will take you there, green
as you pretend your eyes (my
eyes) were once upon no time
when seeing meant a thorn hedge
around a house nobody lived in.

25 January 2018

=====

We see better by the ears —
the fields, as in late
autumn the unreaped corn
tells about the absent landlord
sick farmer, all the children
waste their time in school. Listen,
the bus is yellow because
the orn was too. Buses
and trucks, in the farmer's fever
every house is a demand
made on him he can't satisfy.
Gloom of a sick man's sunshine,
bring me home and teach me to dance
he thinks. In fever there are women,
rivers, priests, acolytes, candle wax
everything dusty as a Persian carpet
spattered with colors, sand, blood,
moss, stone, corn, the sky itself
is always dark, towards evening.
I was sick once and met him
in the meadow, his face like mine,
knew he had so many things to do
but what and why he can't remember.

26 January 2018

=====

**I tell what I know
in plain weekday language
leave the music
for your ears to find
in all the interruptions,
cars going by.**

26 January 2018

=====

for Michael Ives

**A pen that writes more
than you want it to**

**but skips a word now and again
or just leaves a letter out**

**to change the meaning
of what you thought you meant.**

26 January 2018

=====

**The salt shaker often full,
the soup untested. Tasted.
What did the old man mean
all bent low in a storefront
full of live chickens? I mean
what did it mean, to me, a child
afraid of everything, a war,
an old man with a beard,
coming towards us, with one
wrung-neck chicken in each hand
that later I was supposed to eat?
Childhood is forror and despair.**

**26 January 2018
End of Notebook 409**

=====

**Weighed down by sunlight
five oranges on the kitchen table
waiting for their Chinese painter
to illustrate their radiant
asymmetry. I touch one
and it rolls a little, a liyyle
like the earth I'm standing on.**

26 January 2018

=====

Watching them go by
i was a river
the relationship
is intimate
I could taste each one
distinct as blue
jay feathers on the lawn
after an owl fight,
owl feathers.

what I mirror
in my surface lasts forever
deep inside
this is like seeing you all
over again
or this is called you and I
will never forget.

26 / 27 January 2018

IN CARVE THIS CUNEIFORM

Hard as it is to do this thing
once it's done it's done
mice can shit in the narrow grooves
or ants stroll there in the shade

and the meaning lasts. Gouge
one letter at a time, it stays
ten thousand years, or would
if there were that many years.

But i think the word i breathe out
may last longer than the living air.

26 /27 January 2018

=====

**Shiny roads
me rain.
Too many words
to fit a song so
silence me.
Because and because
and become
like a lantern
still burning
in an empty room.
This place
is always.
Every drop of wet
a gleam says.
Irrelevant dawn.**

26 /27 January 2018

=====

What is a writer's greatest problem?

Autoplagiarism.

Or have I said that already

somewhere else, in better words?

27 January 2018

=====

**That strange sound
a freight train
escorting the river
to the city
to which everything flows.
It persists
in the trees
around me, that too
part of its cargo.**

27 January 2018

=====

**They die away from me
do they die too
away from themselves
or really into their actual
self-less identity, *knowing*,
gradually ceasing to remember?**

**So many gone from me,
someday to build a shrine
to all my sacred dead
or is this maybe it?**

27 January 2018

=====

**And the word
on the other side—
who's speaking?
The world surely
is a telephone,
I hurry from room
to room trying to answer.**

27 January 2018

=====

**And is this too an eagle
a bird of prey gorgeous
white-pated on [?] the river
slow with authority?
Every *this* is.**

27 January 2018

=====

**And the answer?
Raptacious moments
catch us by surprise
beautiful personage
open every door.**

27 January 2018

THE DIFFERENCE

**In a class I do all the work,
you sit and listen.**

**In a workshop
you do all the work
while I just sit there
admiring the view from your minds,
the song of your voices.**

27 January 2018

SCRIPTORIUM

where once a writer sat
copying a text
faithfully as he could

it's that way still,
some ancient scroll
unfolding in my head

I have to figure out,
read clear, spell right.

27 January 2018

=====

**Children worship the sun,
think it is something to eat,
something they could eat
if they could get it out of the sky
that blue mother, who keeps
fruit and cake and sprinkles
out of our hands, children
are always hungry, we are
always hungry, we try to gorge
on music and language,
on touching each other softly
but the hunger lasts, at least
we have colors to play with,
coax them with our red mouths.**

**27 January 2018
for Ashley Garrett**

=====

**Amnesty
in own life,
rubber ball
bounced pink
off stoop steps,
each step
a value. Aim.
Forgive my
imperfections.
Go to church
in my head.
All is forgiven,
unremembered,
lost at sea,
Lost in me.**

28 January 2018

=====

**I almost know
what I'm doing.
That 'almost'
saves me from
disaster, the
catastrophe
of certainty.**

28 January 2018

=====

**Familiar taste
in unfamiliar place.
Pepsi in Paris?
Not quite like that.
More like reading
the *New Yorker* in church
(and it's the only one
some people have).
But it's just me again
in our dining room
writing at the table.
And the Korean War
never ended, did it?**

28 January 2018

=====

Writing with another
in my hand,
a plaster bust
of Josef Haydn
once stood on
my window ledge,

but what do I know?
I have a baton
but no orchestra,
fingers and no jharp.

Gladness and forgiveness—
these mercies last.
At least the window
still show an actual
world outside my thought
but within my reach.

28 January 2018
(with C's yellow pen, gift of LB)

=====

**Shadowing the beaver,
the 'boy in the pond'
they called him, left him
alone. Words are sacred,
names even more so.
The boy moves silently
through the thawing reeds.**

28 January 2018

=====

**Indiscriminate awareness
soft on the sofa
languid as a lily
so many sins so few answers
twisting turning with forgiveness.
O be my anxieties for me
for once, a ball
bouncing down the steps slowly.
The cat is asleep.
I am the unknown.**

28 January 2018

A DRIVE ON SUNDAY

The spirits go on answering
and the trees stand firm.
This should be enough to know.

2.

We saw the sragon
on the hospital lawn,
knew he was one of ours,
makers of our dreams.
But she was she, breathed
more ice than fire
nit smiles her wings wide
trh way they do, rode
away on the wind south
carrying clear weather.

3.

So that was nature.
We stayed in the car
nibbling fruit cup — fresh
chunks of pineapple,
cantaloupe. We're snug.
This is *menskr* as our
Norse ancestors said,
human way in a human world.
Glad insanity of cars in traffic,
strip malls, Parthenons.

4.

The car was safe. Windows
clean, good for snapping through
images of clouds and winter pastures,
sunsets better here than anywhere,
I swear. (See a thousand photographs
ci-joint.)

5.

So many of our friends
have died, are dying. Every word
however trivial silly or wrong
I say is in protest against that.
And we don't even know what it is,
only by absence we know it
if there is even anything to be known.

`29 January 2018

=====

**Suppose the kingdom is at peace,
that Bayeux cloth still unwoven
the boisterous Channel guarded
by strong gods, children of Lir.**

**An island following its own fate,
untouched, island, island, best
of all places to be born
and celebrate the self of living
before the self of dying comes.
O give me my island again.**

29 January 2018

=====

**I wear priestly vestments
as I approach
the altar of the everyday,**

**a colored tee-shirt to honor
each days' deity:
Saturnsday is black
as new-turned soil, black
as Baron Samedi's bowler hat
but Sunday's yellow
and Moonday's white,
red for Marsday, Tuesday's blood and rust,
and Wodensday in orange
for cinnabar, native ore of Mercury
and Thor's Day is Jovesday
is deep blue of the autumn sky he rules,
and green for Venus, her copper,
copper that's been around a while,
and green as my wife's eyes.**

29 January 2018

DICTAMINA

**They land
in our eyes.**

*

**Fewer crows
more prose.**

*

**So many creows in the bare
trees of Poughkeepsie.**

*

**Barefoot riders
on clouds are we.**

*

***Jugendstil* porphyry
carved to resemble
itself more than it should.**

*

**Time can't help—
be quick.**

*

**Acrylic.
I try
to dry
fast what
everyone thought.**

*

**Little non-sequiturs
accumulate
to a great temple,
steps of Pergamon.**

*

**I can say anything I please—
their eyes are so distracted
by the big blue supermoon,
savages awed by a sudden sky.**

*

**Grey sky anything
could happen ever after.**

*

**Roads empty
as reading matter.**

*

**Mercantile
antiquities,
buy a fish
for cash.**

*

**Where do things
come from anyhow?
Wasn't it all there
to begin with
as soon as we looked?**

30 January 2018

=====

Have I tried
your patience
enough before?
A clothesline
between two tenements
can carry love letters,
I learned it
from a magazine,
you need a lover, an other,
a rope, two pulleys,
and the hardest
of all, a will
to commuunicate
over emptiness,
touchless, airy,
far away.

30 January 2018

REMEDIA ALCHEMISTICA

1.

Allow it to churn
in the heart of the cellar
that old fieldstone-walled chamber
oft-flooded behind and a little bit
below the mind. Take it out
and say it once a day. This
is *splendor Solis*, glow reflects off the Sun.

2.

Carry a cashew
into the cupboard
all by yourself.
Lay it flat and let it sing.
Creep in and lie beside it.
What you dream will, when transcribed,
reveal the whereabouts of the White Stone
you swallowed long ago and soon forgot.

3.

**An apple from Annandale,
slice it, feed it to a bluestocking from Boston
and pray for rain. In seven
cases out of ten the streets
will look like silver, the walls
will crumble, fade away and tigers
roam through the orchard,
kindly ones, who kill only when they must.**

30 January 2018

=====

**He opens the window
expecting to see. He sees
but there's nobody there.
Answers the phone and hears
the dial tone. What is wrong
with me, he thinks.
But is asking even thinking?
Is being wrong so frequently
even being? Imagine
a philosophy with answers
instead of boring questions.
He tries to remember
when was there
anyone at the door?
He read a book
but what did it say?
What is a window for?**

31 January 2018

=====

**At the rim
of the camp
the glow
of the fire
barely teaches
someone moves.
Someone is always
there, at the edge
of seeing. Tres
make it even
harder to see
who moves there,
who it might
actually be.
We live all pir days
in guesslight.**

31 January 2018

=====

**Love is a drug
like any other,
so while the oligarchs
waddle in, crushing
civil liberties
we flee into the personal,
lick one inch of
skin at a time
and call it ecstasy.
Or hold my hand
and let me sleep.**

31 January 2018