

2-2019

feb2 2019

Robert Kelly

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**Nobody awake.
Big soft cloud
northwest
all my own.**

9 February 2019

=====

**Brain
is rain enough
to grow
all my wheat
the dream sound
loud enough
to wake me.**

9 February 2019

=====

Reconnoitering
look around the premises
find the predominant
dea, the permission
of river, the faith
of neon lights.
Thou art mountain
you travel far.
The poem
divests itself,
feathers fall from the air.

9 February 2019

=====

I have to ask these questions.
My grandfather was a detective,
his father built churches.
What am I to do?

It's no use asking for sympathy—
it's the hard stuff
that has to come out—

who is your real mother?
Who wounded the sea?

9 February 2019

=====

Doing what we can
for spring.
Bulbs of red tulips
the feel of silver
grown warm in your fingers,
sunlight on patches of snow.

9 February 2019

EXHORTATION TO REEVES AND SENESCHALS

Keep your poets happy
send wild deer
to browse their scrappy lawns

send waterspouts
to charm their summer beaches
and once or twice let them hear

not far off a lion roar.

9 February 2019
Sosnoff

=====

**Sunlight
hidden in cloud
our words
are still there,
the always.**

(old scrap transcribed 9.II.19)

=====

Less to say
more to sing—

I saw a fox
red as sunset
stood in the core
of the road ahead

I bowed, it stood
and there was someone
in the trees
so dense on all sides.

10 February 2019

=====

Punctuation
is the thief
of ambiguity,

commas
like sickles
slicing
confusions away—

o be like Apollinaire
and leave them all out.

I want my maybes.

10 February 2019

== ==

**Woe to the land
when religion becomes
a uniform or a flag
and its little inside
flame gies out.**

10 February 2019

=====

I want to go back to church
and not just any one,
a special one, Good
Shepherd on Avenue S

and kneel at the altar rail
again and offer all I manage
to bring with me, Buddha,
Dharma, Sangha, song—

offer everything to everything,
offer quietly and come away.

10 February 2019

OFFERTORY HYMN

**All we ever
can bring
is what we are.**

10.II.19

=====

**Bruckner's Third
at 2 A.M.
a sudden miracle.
His word-free opera
where he is Tristan
and God is Isolde.**

10 February 2019

=====

**I don't have to
but sometimes it feels
delicious to tell
the ordinary truth.**

10 February 2019

A DANCE

Four dancers in different parts of the dance floor. Their hips are steadily rocking, gyrating, not all at the same speed. Their feet are going up and down, like people crossing a stream on stepping stones. There is no stream, The dancers move at different speeds, in different directions, never facing one another.

Why should they? They are more like rubber tires, four strong wheels in search of a car. A thing for them to roll, a car that would unify their muscular efforts into a single direction or even, blessed thought, allow them to stand still. There is no car. Not yet.

A car may be coming. It may be in the divine machinery of the world that their efforts will summon a car, the car will come. I think as I watch them that I hear it already,

coming, coming. It has a sound like a dark wind, or like Brahms' Haydn Variations, a deep sound, soon even the dancers will hear it. The sound will grow louder, they will begin to come closer to each other, begin to shape their steps into symmetries, even now they begin to face in the same direction. From where I sit, they seem to be looking at us, the audience, as if we are somehow the vehicle for the sake of which they dance so vigorously, indefatigably. Or are they looking angrily at us because we are in the way, blocking the path of the inconceivable vehicle that all their lives are meant to create?

10 February 2019

=====

Knowledge is half
of something else—what?

Labrys was cross,
was Thor's hammer.

Inside a castle
there are no seasons.

Almond tree only love
leads out of time

into the purity of space—
touch me.

10 February 2019
Bito

=====

Look down. Egg white
a little sheet of newsprint
rafting down the Seine,
I can even understand
a word or two, the bakers
are on strike, no bread.
I am on the old bridge,
the one called new. Above
the stars, a few of them,
are bright enough to pierce the light.

10 February 2019, Bito

=====

**But why Paris?
I have never
lived anywhere else,**

**city after city
pressed on my knees
because I go.**

**A woman in a black kniy dress
so long ago, the child runs,
policeman smiles.**

Here is my heart.

19 February 2019, Bito

=====

Shadows
make sound too

I heard it fall
beneath the tree

a flock of soldiers
in formation
passes fast

the streets are empty now
a little light lingers
in the eyes of a few

people in doorways
looking out at me.
Walking means remembering.

10 February 2019, Bito

=====

To go through the gate
again and again,
always in the same direction,
always in—
 the gate keeps pace
with us who enter it
till any place is everywhere again.

10 February 2019, Bito

[The Bito pieces were composed in and around a recital where Lera Auerbach played Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and her own *Labyrinths*.]

IODIZED SALT

1.

**Losing sight of the base line
the music wanders.**

**Trucks pulled over by police—
just checking ,just checking.**

And all the ice has melted from the stream.

2.

**They called this swing
when I came in.**

**Everybody needs a hat
in this climate of history,
nibble on stars, frisbees
in the night sky, little bird
of love, dear rusty satellite.**

3.

Only now
three steps down
in the ode
xan I admit
I'm scared.
Morning. Being
me again
after a blessed
congregation
of dreamless sleep.

4.

Hearing t
the animal
reviewing the budget
late to a meeting,
sore eyes from reading
love letters by firelight
you never wrote
I always answered.

5.

I throw myself on the mercy of the couch,
a nap is as good as Napoleon—
conquer the vast marches of the day,
the little beer-saloon behind the moon
like McSorley's in the old days, no girls allowed.

6.

How can I run faster
with this piano on my back,
Mussorgsky's Pictures,
Auerbach's Labyrinths.
I wake empowered
by what I hear. And
the pale sky helps too.

7.

I have lived before.
But then again

11 February 2019

=====

I stood
at the wind,
I let
it start
me open
and I knew.

2.
And what I knew
was always you.

12 February 2019

=====

**Do animals
have holidays?**

**Other than us,
I mean. The crow,
the beaver?**

**Maybe sleep
counts, three
months for bears,
eight hours for us.
Subtly, the question
has changed:
what *is* consciousness?**

12 February 2019

=====

**The beauty
of what happens
can be terror too.
Snow covers
everything the same.**

12 February 2019

=====

Accordion player
at our table
in Vienna,
I pretended
to speak Romani,
denounced him
in fake-Romani
for not understanding
my imaginary Gypsy.
He went away,
coinless, frowning
but still playing.
What was I thinking?
I shiver with shame.

12 February 2019

=====

The weather wonders.
The waltz
once begun
never ends.
The Pope is saddened
but his white
caftan is whirling too.

12 February 2019

=====

**suppose we really were able
to follow the course of rivers
at their own speed, source
to destiny, raftless, mere
creatures, just as we are?**

(10.II.19)

12 February 2019

=====

To make new things
happen to matter
the mind takes hold,
New Tools, new roads
through new forests
of never-known trees.

2.

After a while
a man becomes
a tree of sorts.
Stands there
wanting, watching,
shivering, shedding,
comes to life again
every now and then,
not going anywhere.

3.

I tried to be simple he said
so folks who read the Bible
will understand what it really says,
pin your hopes on the rose,
your girlfriend's shadow on the garden wall,

your boyfriend's shoulder,
the hug, hand held,
water in the cistern,
a bird on the roof he said
that is religion—
all the rest is old clothes,
dusty, not even a smell on them.

4.

Hard to answer liberty,
stare space in the eye
and claim to be happy
where I happen to be.
So I will fly to Neptune
and sit on the lap
of Cassiopeia, I'll let
the Dipper pour me back
to earth with my report.
You'll know it's me
by my inarticulate babbling
that strangely moves you
anyhow. Don't cry,
or just a little, as you go
straight to your heart's desire.

5.

Then he was quiet,
I thought he was done.
But syntax has a way
of going on, wire
twanging from
a bird springing off.
Or hadows trying
to make sense
of the solid bodies
from which they fell.

12 February 2019

=====

after John Wieners

Trapped things
walk in circles.
Does this sound
familiar to you,
o Moon? Poor boy,
will she ever
let you go?

“But would I
even want her to?
You call it trap
I call *it life*
in relation,
we move together,
the space of distance
our long embrace.”

13 February 2019

THE IMPRESARIO'S LAMENT

If it's Baroque
we can fix it.
If it's Romantic
we can calm it down.
But what can we do
with the new?

13 February 2019

(MIRIAM)

**It was you I saw
coming up from the fountain
your arms wrapped around
that big terra cotta urn
full of fresh water.
You passed me by
without a word or glance
but I have never been thirsty again.**

13 February 2019

=====

But was I even trying?
Jericho Turnpike turkey dinner
gay boys cuddling in a '50 Dodge
the wounds of sex, gum of a peach tree
oozing Brooklyn summer,
tailor shop, damaged man
wth no-nail fingertips working old
Singer sewing machine, eating
dry Cheerios with his free hand,
Auschwitz survivor in the coffee shop,
we gasped at his blue tattoo
sound of a pink rubber ball
bounced off the neighbor's stoop,
on a ski tow but dragging our feet,
o God I need a broom to sweep the sky.

13 February 2019

BE MY VALENTINE

So after all these years
you write me a Valentine

a little essay on my work
an editor suggested

and it's when we write
about the other
the self is most revealed

the you of you

and you have given you to me
ever and ever
and now again and here
to precise and light and loving

all our history in a breath.

So why do I say "after
all these years?"

Because I know
the number of our years

together, but that's
kist arithmetic

and we feel, it feels,
always feels, new

you are so new

you are so ypu

we have just met
we still are getting started
is how it feels to me,
hard to imagine
ancient history,
time before you,

our days together,

this cruise ship full of language,
this island of oysters and otters,
this prairie enfranchised with lavender,
this ocean brimming with meaning all round us –

this is you

what you have given

everything
all these years

ceci n'est pas un poème

years, years

I am all you let me be.

Let me be
your valentine too.

*for Charlotte
14 February 2019*

=====

Cask of spirit
topples, gushes,
we watch in a movie
the spill of sense,
the fish are jealous
of us for the wave
sounds we listen to
they can't exactly hear.

-- Don't be too sure,
there are other ways
of hearing than just ears.

O Ear
I answered
great heart
of our knowing,
curling with blood
of our being,
you alone know
where all the rivers go.

15 February 2019

PECCATRIX

Sun on my shoulder
hand on hip
wait for the weather.

I have no sin
except being.
Sein. From this sense
of being, this breast
that nurtures me
and you, I am not free.

I knead my dough,
I breathe into it,
my breath flows
through the flour,
dough swells, rises
a new body, a new
part of me.

Hand on hip,
other hand shielding
my eyes now
I stare out the window
into the interesting
distances out there,
in here. Here,
eat my bread.
We are healed
by what happens.

15 February 2019

= = = = =

How dark
we walk
along snow.
Someone else
wrote us
on another sheet
and we are what
seeped through
onto the page
below, specks
of being, lost
in blankness.
Yet breath
curls out and up
from their mouths,
these two dark
figures on the road,
people, this
sacred accident.

15 February 2019

=====

**Everything changes
but can it change
with me, in me,
change me out of myself
and let me go?**

15 February 2019

HALF A CENTURY LATER THE LADY ISABELLA

Lady o Lady
I don't know
how to be old,
it's such a strange
dialect,
weirder than Russian,
so many case-endings
exceptions I stumble
through on my way
just to the ordinary
thingliness of time,
a day, a day, *and o*
the nights, another
story, sad as streets
just before dawn.
So long it's been.
Almost fifty years
since we first met,
last talked, last
touched. And we did
touch, even love
a little, but I told
no one of such things,

our caresses
were nobody's business,
not even our own.
"We are weather
and we happen
to each other"
you said, make
light of it, light
will always show you
more than ourselves.
So I said nothing
except for that
profound oration
called memory
where I have held
you ever since.
Do you remember me?
How once I laid
my hand lightly
on your waist and you
seized it with yours
and pressed my hand
firmly to your hip
and said "What you do,
do it all the way."
And so I wrote

the story of our union
as a story of our long
conversation one
afternoon long ago
on the seacoast pf somewhere
I had no right to be.
You see why it's so hard
to be old? You
are older than I and always
were, and always are
but you are not old.
Teach me one last time
your ocen tricks.
It's hard to be old,
I haven't learned
how to accept it,
age takes away
not just beauty and vigor
but personhood itself,
so I can stand
at a checkout counter
and the clerk's clear eyes
go right through me,
I'm just a shape
with a credit card,
no man. No person more.

But if I speak
suddenly I'm there,
she sees me
through my voice
because I speak
she knows me,
my words
let her see,
no, not my words,
your words
because most all
of what I know
you gave me.
So it is you
(always it is you)
who gives me
my person back.
Do you understand?
You who live
unchangingly
in the mind's
sundrenched spa,
you who hear
music always
because you are?
Can even you

forgive me
for being old?
I don't know how
to be as old as I am,
I never did, always
a prodigy of awkwardness,
miscue, out of sync.

(Lady Isabella answers 😊)

“Easy, easy, little man
who once was so big
and now just average,
easy, easy, you have won
a great privilege
from the years,
you have become
anybody at last,
smooth and natural
who once were crooked—
be glad. Once
we could not be
together, I wasn't
me yet for you,,
I was just some pretty
anima, a random girl

you could tell yourself to,
sell yourself to,
and never listened
to what I was or am or need.
For I am need itself,
and all men come to me
demanding harbor
in my castle or cabana.
And you were no different—
but maybe now you are?
Maybe what you call old
is just being anybody
again, nothing special,
not what you think about
but what you do? Es posible,
penquño. Maybe you
have come to manhood
at last. And still don't have
the sense to ask, really
ask, about me. I am all
you never thought. But
also I am all you must
do, I am what you have to tell—
not about you anymore,
just about me, a poem,
a poem is never about

the poet, always about
what the language
wants to say. Listen to me
at last, old, young,
no matter, no complaining.
Listen to me, I am
language, learn
what I have and want and am,
I am language
and that's why you call me
and call me beautiful."

15 February 2019

FLOWER

(from Billie's V-card)

Ran and call us?
What do we say
when the flower
pokes up its scarlet
face and says:
“Name me, Name me
or perish in unknowing,
you people with all
your names and things,
do you dare to name us?
You're just ashamed
because we have
more lips than you have,
we take up less of the world's
precious time to do our work—
can you even guess
the work of a flower?
Look into my eye
and breathe me in,
you will never be the same.
But you will never know my name.”

15 February 2019

=====

A man is no wiser than his wife.

**King Solomon,
he was so wise
because he had
so many wives.**

**Wise enough to make them wives
not harem girls or concubines,
but wives,
a thousand wives!**

**So Solomon was a thousand
times wiser than I
though I am very wise.**

16 February 2019

=====

**Glamorous indolence
in the shade.
I have seen them
put down their tools,
skills, conferences,
and saunter
with fading dignity
towards that fairytale
retirement, stepping
softly into the dim.**

16 February 2019

=====

Turn the page
and shame the devil,
a new leaf
is the same as Genesis.
Blue sunshine
in wise weather.
That's why paper
comes with nothing on it,
millions of reams
waiting for what you say.

16 February 2019

NIGHT OVEN

Who bakes the bread
we eat in dream?
Ransack Babylon for its stone answers
or glue your ear we used to say
to the purling of the Nile, high tide
in the synagogue, sleek wet tile
pressed to the swimmer's flank,
shadow shredded by Venetian blinds,
castaway oyster shells, remember, remember?
You were coastal to, a coy beach.
a serenade too soon forgotten—
and yet it nourishes, it smiles;
your skin teaches you that,
the academy of do-not-touch,
showcase jewelry
stifled by bright light,
I suffer all the absences,
you endure the presences,
steam drifts from the oven
the bread is breathing,
get back to your sonata,
your census of bright things,
everything is for sale

if you can find
the right kind of money,
listen up, that soprano
is waiting at the altar
you woke beside this morning,
leave out the punctuation and decide,
music has a way of getting longer,
is the oven still on, check the flame,
you stoked your fire and called it light,
you smell the bread now,
what can it be that so intrigues
against the government of the mind,
in the ad soft song of nation state?
I hear her calling,
it must be true,
I hear her calling
is that loaf ready yet,
and what is dream
without a spoon
to gouge the soft stuff up
and swallow it,
even before the bread cools down
enough for the knife to know it,
and what is sleep without a knife?

16 February 2019

=====

Heaven-sent admixture
cars on roads.
Their movement
stirs the mind
even on these indolent exurbs.
Cars are good for the land
too, keep moving, keep
moving, that's the only
thoughtful way of sitting still.

16 February 2019

=====

Let it be lapis
the shape I give
shorn from the sky
and on the middle finger
worn, to set the matter
straight, the world
upright, firm, turns
around our promises
to it and us too,
the sky the sky

17 February 2019

=====

When it was waiting
beside the river poised
a century or so
atop a cliff but
why there no one
could remember, its
gates invisible
but open, open,
from the petty south
weighed down with half-
conscious passages,
upside down its reflection
swift beside it
busying up the river,
the train came on.

17 February 2019

=====

Cantilever a word I love
but can it lift me,
carry me over the river,
even a narrow one
like the Harlem at Highbridge
from cliff to cliff?
Or catenary, the soft
loop of forwardness,
can I hand over hand
depend on it to cross
even a mild ravine?
O dear dear words
carry me home!

17 February 2019

=====

Words scattered over audience
restless in their seats—
some catch, some stick,
some float past the ushers
out into the freedom.
We are trapped in hearing.
Each of us misses a word
now and then, not the same word,
probably most of them get missed
until all that talk
there is nothing said
and silence is allowed to begin—
music, that is, the closest
we can ever get to real silence.

17 February 2019

= = = = =

Nothing in mind
sense of relief
cloud medicine
taut tendon
loosed, agreeable
alternative.
Hammertoes
and human clothes,
this is going
somewhere sure.
Radical implant—
dreams are *sent*,
received, de-
coded or not.
Philistine morning,
dreamless sleep.

18 February 2019

=====

Between in and out
nothing stands
except the breath.
I swallow me,
you swallow we
and still we breathe.
Eppur, si muove
like the man said—
keep silent safe
what we believe—
there are wolves in the stacks.

18 February 2019

= = = = =

Monday moonday
silver opportunity
somebody loves me
eels in the channel
sky for breakfast
Lent never ends
folklore though is
always beginning.
Please understand
a single sentence
with a million verbs,
this little village
bodiced in snow.
The baker breathes
secrets into her bread,
already the snow
plow grates and grinds,
obedient, the sky
brightens. Day
is a strange song,
faintly familiar,
merry words
to a sad tune.

2.

O I aspire

says the blue fire
under the saucepan

O I desire

says the husband
waiting to plunge
the teabag in.

3.

Go back to bed and wait—
eventually your vocabulary
will wake up,
stretch its syllables
and you will be magister again,
an ambassador from pastness,
you think of Schumann,
Wittgenstein, and cross
yourself tentatively—
endless churchyard
of the documented earth—
and all the words you never heard.

18 February 2019

=====

Let sleep stand for Sweden.
Let verb stand for me.
What do I do?
I visit a channel
I have never crossed,
I screw a lightbulb
into a new socket,
I tremble with fear.
Or is it shame.
Is there really a difference
and can I tell it?
Sometimes a snowplow
is the only thing that makes sense.

18 February 2019

=====

Soft grey sky
don't wake me up.
I need my Z's
before I bird out
tweeting my
imaginary news.

18 February 2019

=====

Hortus conclusus
virgin mind
you heard the time
clanging through the trees,
reach me you commanded
and the images assembled,
moving forward, always toward
the waiting in your head.
O wall that lines my garden
and it yawned wide
so sudden you were thinking.
I could hear you from my sleep.

19 February 2019

=====

**Abash me with luxury
I said to the night
and the dream began.
It brought me a glass of water.
Spoke to me of rivers
by name: Alleghany, and cities,
Cincinnati, the Germans
used to call it City of Pigs
thanks to the feed lots and slaughterhouses.
Then the dream stopped
and Germany began again in me,
I walked up Warschauerstrasse
blessing the trolley cars, looking
overtly into ordinary windows
and for once the sea was nowhere.
Could this be me,
no people on the street,
Ohio? Later a café,
black coffee at famous table.
I should go to church**

but there are no churches anymore.

We are shadows.

Shadows of something move,
the ocean comes in again,
and Berlin has the biggest sky of all,
bigger than Babylon,
and the high, high sky
is made from gleaming tile
occasional rain.

Here we get our wishes

I look down and see what I have written
on the napkin,
I see the knuckles of my hand
reflected in the glass.
It makes me feel complete.

19 February 2019

=====

Bare-faced flower
blooms by night.
I woke to time [?] it early
but it was dawn—
where had the middle gone,
the dark spot,
night cave, womb waiting,
born again, relief
of shepherdesses
modestly tending their flocks.
All sheep are mine.

19 February 2019

=====

I try to tell
the deep tumult
of dreamless sleep,

the fierce campaign
of what isn't happening.

19 February 2019

=====

**Cast a long shadow across the snow
a line of suppliants coming to the hidden king
and I have heard all their petitions
I was a bird above them, a blade of ice
beneath their feet, touch knows everything,
touch tells, I was a shadow in their shadow,
I blended with their misery, I begged for them
before the unseen throne. Now you know.
Now I have no secrets anymore, no gleam,
no feathers to distract you, I am a stone
alone on the island shore—after you've heard
every single one you end up unspeakably alone.**

19 February 2019

=====

Not sure of the direction
the predilection
the music on thje tuner
while he shines his shoes—

fact, we are America still,
the flag unfurls our peasant dreams
and makes each lad a king, each
lass a housewife in Beverly Hills.

sometime like that. Fame
os our favorite breakfast, and art
soothes our walls enough to sleep
despite the plumbing and the mortgage

or am I dreaming. Yet again, doubt
is my midnight snack. I did too much
and not enough, fill in the blanks.
A moth settles on my lampshade—

graceful, more meaningful, bigger than I.

19 February 2019

=====

Leave it to the Sanhedrin,
don't worry, don't dread
the Wiki folk, the secret courts
that rule the way we think
and what we think about.
The words will keep us safe,
their roots and shallow semblances,
rimes and assonances, sense
evading sound, song
grown from speech but all
the words invisible therein,
opera arias, vast choruses,
grow from the words, the words
outgrow themselves, the song heals.

20 February 2019

=====

**Names are flowers
in winter. Not
just Laura, Daisy, Rose.
Brass is flower too,
and Jones and Artemis,
her arms outspread,
warmth of her breast
will keep us till spring.**

20 February 2019

=====

Filter the evidence
till you come upon
a stone the size
of the knuckle on your
father's pinky finger
and the color of the sky—
any sky, blue, grey,
white, black, sunset,
as long as it's your sky.
Bring it to your jeweler
to be polished gently
and set in silver—don't
let him sell you gold—
and wear it as you choose,
necklace, ring, tiepin,
earring. This is thinking,
this is how you know.
And everything you know
should be just like this.

20 February 2019

=====

Spiny things
so intimate—
a bird
perched in your back
suddenly takes off.
Spirit humming,
old mandolin—
I tried to be America
but it failed me.
Flunking out of reality—
that's where pain [Pan?] comes in,
awful [?] teacher, but a teacher.

20 February 2019

EXPERIENTIA DOCET

1.

**The academy of it
taste it
tumbledown liberty
sex in the museum
chunks of concrete
from Roman times
bones in the berm.**

2.

**south of France
particulate matter in the broth
taste it
evidence of ownership
aftermath of venison
heart of the slain**

3.

**or road to Spain
uncentered policy
dreadnaughts in the estuary**

time to reconsider Gibraltar
shelter in caverns
primates one and all
met with the daughters of
and then aloft
scaffold build to repair tower
granite granted
footsteps of the priest

4.
road clear but icy
over the frontier
along the chilly Etsch
into pure climate
foretaste of Venice
why do they need such things
pretend to ,look away
taste it
run out of dirty clothes to wash
the sea comes in clean

5.
but no on home
to do so

repopulate the evidence
shred the atlas
bare trees shred sunlight too
is that the same
no it is a glass of wine
untasted spilled
a libation to the gods of it

6
answers on the table
equations made of ordinary light
the ordinary evidence
taste it
passengers alight
from the corniche a vista of the other country
a cup of tea in the Customs shed
tattered phrasebook
huddle back in the warm vehicle
the reading circle chooses a new novel
actual words not just semaphore
why is there smoke over the vegetable market
empty envelope barely legible address.

21 February 2019

=====

Last word of Prometheus: *paskho*,
'I suffer.'

Let any play you write
begin with that.

Or do i
really mean religion?

21 February 2019

ITE, MISSA EST

Go, she has been sent
is how the Mass ends.
She is Wisdom,
she has been sent to us
after we have sent
ourselves to her, *ecclesia*,
feminine noun,
the congregation, all of us.
The sacred exchange is complete.

21 February 2019

PASAI TEKHNAI BROTOISIN EK PROMETHEU
ALL SKILLS OF MORTALS ARE FROM PROMETHEUS

But what about what are not *tekhne*,
not art or craft?

Where does the wisdom comes from
that needs no tools and no materials?

There is a god behind the god
or is that someone born inside us
who learns from watching
all human suffering, and slowly knows?

21 / 22 February 2019

= = = = =

This taste in mouth
but what is it
not to know, some tree
south but hillside

the ends of the earth
fall in upon us
candle fluttering in wind?
knowing so very much

we know so little.

22 February 2019

=====

A sidewalk is a civil thing
a sympathy beneath,
a sidewalk is a long permission,

think of it, *they knew*
you would be here one day
would walk this way

safe from mud and precipice,
they came before you
and knew you would follow,

a filial path, brotherly destinations.

22 February 2019

CUI BONO?

To whose benefit
the soft sky
almost blue above
but vague enough
at tree top?

*Am I entitled
to all this*
he asks, I give
it to him
gladly, having
a sky of my own.

22 February 2019

=====

What child is this
we carol to the rising sun,
to love the world
is close to loving God,
isn't it, mother and child,
all theology just
a little family quarrel.

22 February 2019

AT THE NOTHWEST WINDOW

**If you do all your writing in a chapel
the words will tend to smell of organ music
or do I mean sound like frankincense?**

22 February 2019

=====

If I can't keep all
how much of me should I throw away?
I've got to save at least the alphabet
and a love of Bach's chaconne—
someday I may know what music means.

22 February 2019

=====

Scandalous living
a cup in the sink
who's that on the stairs?
can I touch a shadow?

22 February 2019

(...and know the place for the first time)

1.

**a cornfield
a jogger on the hill
the soil of some fields
drinks the snow faster—
earth here and there,
grass and come again.**

2.

**Nobody uses scarecrows anymore.
Why? Red ribbon on your package.
Why is snow anyway?
And when the summer comes
what wine is this
and still remember?**

3.

**Catena, a chain of references
Te amo whittled in a walking stick
as dancers stomp across the silences
build down the stone of heaven
a loop of never-fallen light.**

4.

Pale failures huddled in their habits
so many ways a thing has meaning
portrait of the founder never found
the *Normandie* half-sunk
on her side beside the dock
all through the war.
they told a child
a man in wooden shoes
can sink a ship

5.

But good children believe what they are told
the world runs smoother so
oyster shell brought back from the sea
love is the usual middleman
board from the stage of The Globe
precious relics of resonance
you hold it to your ear
and hear his voice the way
a shell repeats the sea

6.

Remember five scenes from folklore
get them in the right order
and out of the forest the Green Man comes
bringing your long-lost darling back
wife or child or darling friend
all lost things are the same gender
in the same key (d minor)
and the crows leap up and shout Amen

7.

Impoverished swordsmen beneath the gallows wait
they teach each other languages to kill the time—
a dozen tongues around a pool of sea
Hansa was the first university
education comes from commerce first
Baltic pirates walk after they're beheaded

8.

But it's not all funeral, funereal,
just real of a sort
(who drinks that wine these days?)
sliver of the True Cross

let's go to church with her
and be witnesses of her transformation,
kindred, travelers,
words cut out of newspapers
paste t them back together
fake news brings us to our knees

9.

Who is brave enough to be continuous?
Music wants it
stompless unbaroque keepgoin' song
my father gave everything for thee
you knew God was on his mind
when he started singing
the thorn tree
tune is the only thing worth believing

10.

Back to the cornfield back to the crows
not much to eat in winter
but life lives on life
a black wing sheltering my eyes.

23 February 2019

=====

Nobody wants to know
how hard it is to be me.
I thought of Pound in Venice
saying only one word
the whole meal through.
But I have to talk to everyone—
as if the Muse
gave me the warning the gave H.D.
“write, write or die.”
Languages gives me life.

23 February 2019

=====

**Give me the truth of the matter
as it lies, crosswise on the chart
that shows the geology of where I tread.**

**Tell me it's right to be where I am.
Tell me the walled-off garden
still is full of fruits and vines**

**and there is no winter there.
Tell me what I can believe
to ease the sadness**

**ofn sunlight on pale wood,
a snowfield glazed from icy rain,
old cassette of midnight conversations.**

23 February 2019

HYSTERON PROTERON

That's not you
it's just anybody
at the door

the whip
the windmill
and the open lips

the satisfactions
of grief
old hillside boulder

rock of resistance
childhood of the moon
we know your name!

The flower falters
the island remembers
the first shall come last

rebuke my marksmanship
dim room base of tower
meager foliage enough enough

**live in the valley of reversals
abandoned schoolhouse
girls practicing sacred dances by the well**

**bring me bible home
one calls on the phone
Star Cluster moonless eventide**

**Vesper supper
they lie together
only for a little while.**

23 February 2019

=====

Lacking the energy to sin
he turns to repentance—

is that how it is?

Is that how the opera ends?

24 February 2019

=====

Be longer, like the rain
the long lines of it
seeking us out from above,
each drop a syllable
in that huge quick text—
be more like rain.

24 February 2019

=====

Comfortable imprecisions,
logic's easy chair,
soft, soft, be like mist
in winter, windless,
no sharp edge anywhere
unless a crow sails by.

24 February 2019

=====

close enough to smell it
the hunters stewing venison in the words
out of season, illegal meat,
and young men eat the heart of what they kill.
Winter dangers. Walk with care,
fear is made of timber, shadow, smoke—
I wish I had not heard them in the trees.

24 February 2019

=====

A guilt ago
I roused a dreamer
who punished me by going
on dreaming in my head,

in what I thought my own life
but dream was everywhere by then
and people looked at me oddly
to see if I was really there

but couldn't tell, and I
couldn't help them to be sure.
Dream is contagious, dangerous,
insidious, colonial and waking is no cure

24 February 2019

=====

The rain comes after me
visible as mist a hundred yards away
flourishing in the trees
here visible as tiny gleaming gems
of water briefly separate
until they reach
the sodden platform of our skins,
our things, our clothes, our sins.

24 February 2019

=====

Or wrong all the time
like weather
or night all the time
like climate—

who can tell?
Ask the heart you have
and ask your pulse
to analyze your guilt.

Kneel in the dark of mind
and go to confession to the heart,
you know it's there to hear you,
can hear it something like breathing.

24 February 2019

=====

He takes the weather
as a personal reproach.
No wonder the muffler
the overcoat, the hat
pulled down to the brows.
Sensible shoes, they say,
but what do they sense,
the sneer of puddles?
Look on the fallen water rather
and see blue sky, godly sun,
everything that is always,
that isn't about you.

24 February 2019

MERLIN WAKES

I am Merlin
risen from the ground,
I have my magic still
but now that's just tricks
because all my wisdom's gone.
It leached out from me
and soaked into the earth.
as I slept. Wise earth,
So now I do not know
why people do the things they do
or want the things they want—
and such knowledge is
what wisdom means.
I don't remember who it was
who laid me down to sleep
and tucked the wise soil over me,
roots and branches, leaves and years.
smothering me. Mothering me.
It must have been a woman
I slept so well. Maybe it's
her voice wakes me now.

24 February 2019

MELCHIZEDEKGABE

**Gift of Melchizedek
coffee urn
seemed at first
not to work
but it was I think
the socket's fault
a fuse had blown
somewhere far away
down below.
Now repair the distance
and the virtuous
sturdy thing will
help your doings.
Things always work
if only we let them.**

25 February 2019

=====

**Ne are from so
far away
to be here
and never
asked why.
Never ask why.**

23 February 2019

AFTER DANTE

**When lust is gone
what's left is fear.
Turn fear into desire
and leap across the stream.**

25.II.19

=====

**All this stuff just about me—
no business nothing you with it.
You are the sacred gender of the other,
the fertile kingdom of the other side.**

**you are what the words really mean,
clean, stripped of my intentions,
swept free of the cobwebs of my dream.**

**Out there! Out is where the action is,
truth and poetry and the living body
whose shadow polices my dark mind.**

25 February 2019

=====

Cast a line
across the stream
and find your home.

Everywhere
was a city once,
the streets still beneath it;
stones full of those busy dreams
that make a city throb,

the dreams of those who built it,
dwelt it, lost it

into the future

gladly,

for safety's sake turned
their thoughts into trees

and went away
to build another

and here we are.

25 February 2019

EPITHALAMION

for Htebazile

I am the wind
that brushed your left elbow
on your way to school,
o am the swimming pool
you watched so carefully
before you learned to swim.
I am all sorts of forgotten things
and now you're married!

Someone told me someone took you
by the hand, said things, signed things,
meant things so true in his heart
he hardly would dare to say them
but I can hear, that is my busybody business,
to say what the heart says, every heart,
because it may be that every heart
is trhe same heart, and only our silly eyes
and fingerprints are different.

And you know too what he was thinking,
is thinking now, thoughts clear as diamond;
Your man is too shy to sing them clear,

but our lucky world has you in it, power
of your language, ardent stretch
of your music—you can set them free
to please us all. Blessed shyness!
So you have to come and let us glimpse
the hem of such love you share.

Yes, the power
that comes from giving
all you are
to someone else.

For whatever I was or am
I'm married
and so I understand
the doctrine that the priests
(those poor wifeless boys)
preach, saying *unun caro*,
one single flesh the two become,
a married pair must be.

But flesh, sweet as it is,
is just a part of it,
a phase, a lurid conversation,
an ecstasy, a dream—
but there is more.

The giving is the real
fulfilment, the being
for the sake of one another
and thus (swelling roar of organ)
being true to yourself.

I am a man in a red sweater
on a cold night in late winter
listening to a Franck sonata,
the same one that Proust's Swann
so obsessed about, the 'little phrase'
that seemed to say *je t'aime*,
truer than the Bible, just music,
just music, just like love.

25 February 2019

DAILY PUZZLE

1.

The daily puzzle
steams into the harbor,
how to be
again and again.
Roar of wind,
turbine whine,
crunch of hull against
aging wooden dock.
A day
new minted
from the bank.

2.

For you to spend, love,
or hide downstairs in the basement
safe from the impertinent daylight
sleazy with other people.
Being alone is pure being,
isn't it, but what about me?

Barefoot on the tiles of permission
I wait my time
my ship is somehow
still in the channel
on the way in—
nobody needs me.

3.

Not yet.
Too many miracles
have dulled my despair.
I wait my moment,
momentum, my move.
And of course there must
be a bird in it,
gull or crow or such,
otherwise how would I know?

4.

Less to say,
more to forgive.
Moral metaphors,
dusty images.

5.

What *do* I mean?

No, wait, it isn't me,

I'm just doing what I'm told,

the tree doesn't make

its shadow, the sun does that.

All these words are just

my opacity breaking the brilliant silence.

Silence comes first.

Silence knows.

26 February 2019

=====

Come back later
when the ocean sleeps—
that'll be quite a while,
partner, you may
get pretty hungry—
I'll leave something for you
that will not melt—
a kind of tune
you can learn to hum
and stoke he hunger down.

26 February 2019

SUDDEN PANG OF DOUBT

**Maybe living for one another
becomes too easily
living on the other.
Or off the other?**

26.ii.19

=====

**Am I the shadow
or the tree that casts it**

**or that each shadow
imagines
to account for its form?**

**It's good at any age
to be unsure of those things—
Identity is such a mortal trap.**

26 February 2019

CUIDADO

**The world is a great library
but you need a good pair of feet.**

26 February 2019

=====

**Last night the youthful raptures
Saint-Saëns' first symphony,
long lyric wandering in the meadow
then climax on climax piled.
A good cure for midnight—
winning the victory, falling asleep.**

26 February 2019

OF THE SOUL

**Resistance
is like weather
suddenly yielding**

**I wandered
through the morning
greedy for noon**

**and time too
bends in our fingers
and sunlight fades**

26 February 2019

=====

1.

Priceless the heart pump
the valve of you.

I dreamt we met
a corridor in dark
after the loud enactment—

the heart has many stages,
plinths, parapets,
mere pedestals for all its holy books,
a couch for you to lie on
under the comforter.

2.

The coming one.
The in-between.
You mean more
than I can say.
Simple as that,
neat as a sonata.

3.

R's friends are fiends—
I know you think that
but maybe all fiends are,
I mean friends. The family
we once were is broken,
no one comes to fix it—
only painters come
to show us pale virgins
with an Infant at the breast.

27 February 2019

=====

**Wait by the monument
till the shadow of it
reaches your feet.
At that very moment
history will end
and time will begin.
And with it you will
come slowly to understand.
I think that's what the grey
sky told me when I woke.**

27 February 2019

=====

1.

Things coming round
to say so.

Swing sets, seesaws,
we are mild again
safe in not looking.

Raptors from the branch
ravening roadkill.

How to you spell
today, tomorrow?

2.

Soft imperfections
of waking. Come,
let me boil your water,
you have a taste
for heat, itself
the shadow of Another.

3.

Yes, heat is the shadow of someone else—
let your research projects loose on that,

someone to fall in love with, another city,
stories they tell about us never end.

4.

Use a magnifying glass,
turn it till you see your feelings
clear in view. Analyze.
Organize. Focus and forgive.

5.

When everything is far enough away
the music changes. Playlist
of the outer planets. Soon
you'll recognize that melody again,
one you heard as a child,
the ice man whistled it as he carried
ice block wrapped in burlap to your icebox.
Of course it wasn't yours,
just as the song wasn't his.
But here it comes again.

28 February 2019

=====

Ghosts move at different speeds
like blind men through the light.
I heard one calling from across the sea,
dark bedroom, hallway heavy
with the rising sun. I answered
by alertness but heard no more.
I slept my way to the window,
more snow than before. I heard
her voice again, the lost one,
whose feet had stumbled from my path.
Everything is far away.

28 February 2019

Blew his nose
into a yellow handkerchief
painted with a map of China.
What does it all mean?
Our bodies, the alphabet,
carotid throbbing, touch me alive?
I try to decide.
Sunrise helps. And then
the light distracts—
bright things everywhere.
I mean it could be anywhere.
Sometimes I think
we make too much of meaning.

28 February 2019