

2-2020

feb2020

Robert Kelly

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**The is
is continuous,**

**the is
is.**

*

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to
the Holy Ghost as it was in the beginning, is
now, and ever shall be, world without end,
Amen.**

*

***I woke up saying those things, in order—from
what dream I can't know. My only ontology?***

1 February 2020

= = = = =

**Rain on weekends,
there's a reason why,
smokestacks and industry,
carbon walking in the sky.**

(Nursery rhymes are all we need.)

1 February 2020

= = = = =

**Gey something written down
then pit the quill
back on the bird,
let it fly its own message now,
glory plumage, eloquent song.**

1 February 2020

= = = = =

**On the back lawn
a giant S
formed from the last
unmelted drifts
of last month's snow.
How honest of it
to sign its initial
at the end of all
its write and went away.**

1 February 2020

= = = = =

**If you don't bring the news who will?
The calculation is intimate,
embarrassing, sound
of a kiss in the dark.**

**Empty road, precocious daylight
so they in trees it looks like mist.
Knock on the door, pretend
to have a bible in your hands,**

**a new one. with new words, lords,
laws. Try to explain them
to the woman who opens the door
or man or child or just the door itself**

**if it stays closed. doors understand
these things, doors are made
of ancient laws. Do stand there
on the threshold and declare.**

1 February 2020 S

=====

There I am in my double-breasted grey sharkskin suit going down the subway steps Euclid Avenue on my way to school, CCNY, an hour and some minutes away, north.

It is 1951
in the Common Era. Inside there is worry: calculus, clean underwear? but also a sense of getting somewhere: Book VI of the Aeneid, Rilke's Elegies auf deutsch.

Strange to think
I have to go downstairs
to know the world, or not so
strange, Virgil had to,
and Dante,

**and that's what stairs
are for, to let us know again
the place or time we come from.**

**Does anyone still wear such clothes?
Is there still some brighter way to school?**

1 February 2020

= = = =

**Dry lips kiss open.
The way is dark,
hippo clouds
above the barely legible—
a child drew this day.**

2 February 2020

====

**Waiting as usual
for the right one.
No schedule!
A day with nothing on its mind**

**(so light the lights
as Stein makes Faust
lead us by the hand again
whither we would not go)**

**there are plenty of white
cars on the road, the phone
has lots of messages,
pick one for your own**

**and answer me. Yes me
for once. Gold sunlight
silver selves. I mean winter
after all.**

**How can I kiss
your shadow? Tell me,
that is all I want, the wait,
the taste of after, the wise
kings back on their camels
and everything the same again.
Only the taste has changed.**

2 February 2020

CANDLEMAS

Light the candle
this day is for.
Used to kneel
at the altar rail,
the priest would come along
with long candles crossed
to bless our throats.

In the days of winter
the letters of the alphabet
come inside and bless us too,

we sight through the arches of m
vistas meant only for me,
and in the cup of u immerse
our chill selves in that warm
answer water the mind lets flow.

2 February 2020

=====

**Awake there are problems still—
we taste the night
like a sharp shrill leaf of basil
afloat in my warm soup,
ribolino I think the waitress said.
I suck the leaf dry, lay it aside.**

2 February 2020

=====

**Some lessons stay learned.
An equilateral triangle
always points up, can't help it.
Be like that too.
Don't listen to the wrong jazz
and if you write an opera
make sure that everybody sings.**

2 February 2020

= = = = =

**Birds after all
are all about.**

**This is what
the sun means
by saying so.**

**Don't turn
against me.
rest on my roof.**

2 February 2020

====

**Proper posture
for sleep eludes
his bones. Night
drones on.**

**The clock says dawn
but has no eyes
to contradict itself.
Dark, so dark
as if it meant something
more than just no.**

**He thought:
But that's
what dreams are
for, to transition us
from consciousness
to consciousness across
this dark condition.**

**But then his conscience
said Transition**

**is not a verb, there is no
word for what you want,
no boat for that sea.**

**That was some help
at least--a boat
is always good
to think about, and sea
will never fail. Think:
you are a pirate now
or commodore or cabin boy--
what happens now?
Isn't this the same as sleep?**

3 February 2020

= = = = =

**Bone on a pillow
bird on a branch
no difference.
Way east no trace.**

3 February 2020

=====

Lock the shutters on the chicken coop
the birds are restless, they hear
outside in rustling grass
the fox of night.

Dark scares
everybody, you don't have to be
a frightened child like me.
Some kinds of terror never
go away

they change their shape,
get bronzed by time, smooth
maybe but then they shiver
on your skin some night
and you are five years old again.

3 February 2020

=====

If I could tear the nap open
and see where you were born,
where the sacred body sprang
out of nowhere to be you.

Sacred from *sacer*, out-of-bounds,
other side of what is normal,
holy, unholy: something else.

That's what flags and nations hide,
the other side of anybody
different everywhere.
I lick the foreign
language off your skin.

3 February 2020

FEBRUARY 2020 20

= = = = =

**Cruise ship
sad birthday cake afloat
crowded with nervous
celebrants of this
strange ritual, the sea.
Come home safe,
the sea will come with you,
you will never be alone.**

3 February 2020

=====

Worry keeps the wound at bay
it says all by itself on a pink
piece of paper, my handwriting,
I pick up from the floor, my floor.

I wonder what wound I meant,
I wonder if I've said this before,
wonder if I've wondered it before,
wonder lingers, words last

but what do they mean? Or was I
quoting a dream? I think I think
worrying about something keeps
the thing from happening, maybe.

Sonnets were invented to work out stuff
like this. Could this be on of those?

3 February 2020

= = = = =

The cat walks up her back.
It knows what it knows—
cats are like that. It pretends
to be her lover's hands,
but not too much, doesn't want
to make her sad, the lover's
far away, in the next room,
moving around, so far away.
But the cat is here. A cat (it thinks)
is what it means to be here,
nobody is here-er than a cat.
It curls between her shoulders
to make its meaning clear to her.
Even in her sleep she knows
someone very dear is very here.

3 February 2020

= = = = =

**Castigate the inner
clock? Never.**

**It knows
when I forget.**

**Sleep right
means wake later,
the legislator
is not in the room.**

**I stand with Trakl in a field of poppies
knowing there is no mystery but sleep.**

4 February 2020

= = = = =

**How can I tell
how far to go
until I get there?
Every footstep
a destination, each
a different vista,
angle, glimpse
of sun through
cloud. We
are not adrift.**

4 February 2020

=====

**When you reach the middle
of the story, stop right then.
Life is all about beginnings—
start again. Leave the endings
to bourgeois novelists—
you know the kind of music
you get when the band plays on.**

4 February 2020

=====

**Caught out of the air
the taste of someone far.**

**Clouds carry such information,
messages from no one**

**right to me. To you.
Look out any window and see me.**

4 February 2020

me or something better...

= = = = =

**There is a smile
hidden in the heart of things,
a mist in each mistake
through which comes riding
a knight to your rescue
or a monk to cure your sins,
a beautiful person to know?
Or is it you, a pale shadow
loving towards me after all?**

4 February 2020

=====

**Answer me and far away
a ruby fallen on a marble floor,**

**answer me and blackbirds
circle overhead, O god
how I aim to be heard—**

**answer me and the sea rushes in,
some things will never stop,**

**pick up the stone and put it on,
I will never stop asking.**

4 February 2020

= = = = =

Am I here or is it there
the world beyond the curtain
the wolf of self?
There were too many
waiting in the dark,
one I knew from years ago,
saw me from twenty yards ahead,
looked twice and turned away.
Monster me I must be seeming.
But enough of myth.
The cauldron where the milk
curdles into cheese
must be stirred from time to time.
This is the role of dream.

2.

I never touched her,
never loved her.
She had husbands
who were my friends.
That must have been my crime.

3.

**How to outlive a dream--
open the window
drink the tepid cup
laid out the night before,
rub your hands together,
promise to be good
to someone somehow
when the day comes home.
Show up early for work,
hope that someone will be there,
that lovely, myth of someone else.**

5 February 2020

=====

**At least it's not about waiting.
The beauty part of windows
is to be right now. it could be
Bushwick fifty years ago
for all I know, so cast
the curtain of repentance
and see the light. Or dark.
It doesn't matter. Just
as long as it's there. Here.
No waiting. The actual.**

5 February 2020

=====

Don't go yet
the doctor said

the dream one
who lives in my head
usually mute
the real Authority.

Don't go yet,
something is waiting
to be said

It always is
I answered

Don't be so smart
it said
just wait, you'll see,
when did I ever lie to you?

**Abashed, I quieted.
That play has been running
so many years,
The Word in Edgewise
I think is me.**

5 February 2020

=====

**Im walk down the gulley
and call our your name—
dawn or shivering after.
There is a spring there,
small, I bend to drink,
it bubble up from mossy
stone, soft, soft, a name
whispered over and over
so even I will understand.**

5 February 2020

=====

1.
Sometimes I turn
away from music
to another thing.
A thing I cannot name
or has no name
it is quiet there
but has much movement
lines and limits
shaped of light.
And no one's there!
For once I am alone
the way music
never lets us be.
Alone in light
as if for this one
moment I am
nothing but I am.

2.

But who would remember
such separations?

The cloud parts, necomes more
or ,amy, and the sun speaks.

Such happenings remember me.

It was a child on a bus
on his way to the movies.

It was a boy in the dark
front row waiting for the screen
to light up. Giant faces,
weird places, just
what he had come to see.

3.

School came later,
the great antipathy.

It was not hard
except to be in a room
where nothing happened
but it was very loud.

Far away the blackboard
had magic names on it.

**I think the chalk dust
was psychedelic, it took me,
took me into that bright
place where the words are.**

5 February 2020

=====

**The cost of things
close to the heart
hides in the dark**

**In an old sedan
we try to find country
but there are houses
everywhere.**

**That's where
the heart lives, she says.
And she knows best.
She came down from heaven
to teach us this.**

**Now turn
off the engine and go to sleep.**

6 February 2020

=====

**Wait long enough
and the others will be there
singing opera outside the window
speaking Frisian to confuse the Dutch—**

**you know how I am,
how long I too have waited
to be on the right raft
on the right canal**

**with all my silly love songs
floating in the air
like dust, or is it snow—
how could a man like me tell?**

6 February 2020

====

But who was the Matilda
the swagman waltzed?
The song dissolves into dawn,
decades since I heard it sung,
I sang it too, sang it
without authority—
remember the ocarina?
Remember the old alkies
who sold paper poppies
under the El station
when there still was time?

2.

Scandalous, this memory machine.
So many teeth in so many gears,
saxophones, isotopes—

that's what I mean. Moment
by moment the sky grows lighter.
Soon I'll be able to forget.

6 February 2020

=====

I stood in a field
after a war,
green things
began to grow.
A man stood with me
I vaguely knew.
In silent hope
we watched the light
sleep across the meadow,
we had nothing to say
but the very day.

6 February 2020

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**Invariant appetite
as of the horizon.
Roads glisten
with what might
have been rain.
The chemicals
we play with
play with us too.
We are children
together. And we
may not be orphans
after all.**

6 February 2020

=====

The conquistadors are sly,
they come as birds,
bring chocolate to the kids,
slide down banishers, perch
on the broad steps of public
buildings, sleep on bridges,
stand on corners trying
to sell us breaths of air
disguised as music. Fools
they seem but they win out,
at the end of the day it is they
who own the night, when we
are too frightened to go out
they monopolize the dark.
They extract from shadows
wealth we can't imagine—
watch them carefully next day
when you're hurrying to work
watch how they smile at you
as kings smile at peasants, gently,
half-pitying, half-goading you on.

6 February 2020

= = = = =

**More milk than tilth
the burden irks.
That we have
and must, please
though it might.
the continuity
of appetite appals.
Sustain by being,
feed on the self
itself! Be sky
a while and see
how to live
by feeling alone.
If you must eat
dine on the sight
of the other, the others.**

7 February 2020

= = = = =

**Add to the obvious
every day--
in that way pyramids are built
and from the unknown country
the Nile flows into the inland sea.**

7 February 2020

====

**Sudden hunger invades the day--
was I an animal after all
no better than a mouse or mastodon,
need, need, need?
I will consult the lady
and see what she says
and maybe be the thing
she recommends, thing or beast
or back to the beginning,
one cloud per island,
one sun per cloud.**

7 February 2020

=====

Left in between
a dream and a touch
a morning—
 bask
in grey light,
dear sister Meaning,
who is your brother?

I have not seen
this whole half-hour
a single bird
and wonder why.

7 February 2020

====

**Always I hope
something left to do.
Finished Proust,
who comes next?**

**Washed the dishes
swept the deck,
time to triangulate
how tall the linden,**

**learn cuneiform
so I can write new
love letters to you
in the deepest past.**

7 February 2020

=====

Asking again
that sign on the door
you said means the sky

open open
let it come out
that curious bird
white as seafoam
its high shrill sweet call
annihilating history

You said it was no door
it was a book you said
instead, its binding stiff
with no one's reading,

I ask how I can open it
you offer me your hand
instead, pale, clean,

**unreadable inscription
in ancient lines on your fresh skin.**

**No book, no door, no word.
I take your hand and sort of pray**

.

8 February 2020

=====

**In the Tauric Chersonese
there was a war, an afterward,
a column of weary men
finding their way home.**

**Now name for me
a place where so such misery
ever stalked the land.
Now write the name of that place
in the middle of the air
without moving your hands.**

**The war is everywhere,
not all the men have
reached home even yet.**

8 February 2020

= = = = =

**Birds fly around my head
all kinds of birds.
Fly close
but do not touch me.**

**I walk inside
a canopy of birds,

they walk me where I am going.**

9 February 2020

A FOREST IS ITS OWN DESCRIPTION.

**(It *was* a sheen of snow
I saw last night,
persuaded myself it was just moonlight,
light of the full moon.)**

9 February 2020

=====

**Runner up the road
athlete alone with his body
jogs through a few flakes of snow—
more coming? he keeps going
out of sight over the hill.
Things fall from the sky
I think they run to be alone,
alone as they can ever be.**

9 February 2020

====

**Snow. Is that
enough to say
about the day,**

**one word
carries it all away
from what we mean**

**and leaves us only
what we must?**

2.

**I think of the poor guy
who drives the plow
pulled from his bed at 3 AM
to startke me from mine at 4,**

**the roar goes by,
he rubs his eyes,
scouring the road,
leaves mounds behind
dangerous and pale,**

white whale,
Clean roadway
for the sleepless us.

3.
Figure it out—
keep the lines short
winter math
is all adding,
subtracting, easy,
hard. Not yet
the glorious calculus
of summer, even
the golden trig
of spring sunshine
measuring bare trees.
winter is just more
and less. The snow
will go, the way
a choir finally
stops barking
and the Mass goes on.

10 February 2020

=====

**I'd finally gotten to sleep
an hour later the roar
of the snow plow woke me,
Bad news, you Democrat,
bad commute and everything
difficult, ha-ha
is what the plow blade shrieked
going NW fast, right through
my lamentable consciousness.**

10 February 2020

= = = = =

**(I'm not complaining.
It could be raining,
turning to ice
in one degree.)**

10.II.20

=====

**We saw a clip of Phoenix Park
antlered deer all over the place.
The deer they tell us came from Wales
there are mornings everywhere, though
—not just cities, grasslands, seas.
The mystery resumes the minute you wake.
Even before you switch on the TV.**

10 February 2020

=====

**I keep filling my pen
from this empty bottle
and it still seems to work,
it seems to write.**

**But maybe later the words
will lose their meaning,
blankness leak in from the sky
and there'll only be the sound**

**of what my lips said for you
to say again with yours.
If even the sound is left.
If you pick me up and read.**

10 February 2020

=====

**So strange that right
means correct, but left
means what is left behind—
trash, triumph, turd, temple?
How well our words know us,
our confusions, our few
everlasting instruments.**

10 February 2020

= = = = =

**Someday soon
I'll understand.**

**But to whom
will I explain
myself at last?**

**Free admission
in this dome—
come with naked ears.**

10 February 2020

= = = = =

**What I said to culture
when it stared me in the face:
I love your language,
your opera, your paved streets,
boulevards and arches,
I love your benches in the park,
your flower gardens for no one
in particular, streetlights,
road signs, bridges,
the seacoast you leave magically alone.**

10 February 2020

=====

This day of grace

**gratuitous grasslands
gone in waking**

**g, w,
the same difference**

**(the war *la guerre*
Guadalquivir < *Wadi al-Kabir* = the big river)**

Wait at the gate

**you have won.
You have gone.**

11 February 2020

THE REMEDY

**Are, not am—
for te, porary relief of me.**

**Plurality
is a cure for self.**

11 February 2020

YOGA NOVA

**Sit still. Rigid.
Tight as you can.
No move at all.**

**Slowly all the rest
of things, the world,
will move around you,**

**slow at first, then
fast, fast. This
is the dance.**

**this is what
you came into this
world to be part of.**

11 February 2020

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

**This used to be a holiday.
But then again
this used to be America,
Roman Empire, Babylon,
clay streets of Mohenjo-Daro,
this used to be the moon
of that bright hot wanderer
our every-young mother the Sun.**

**2.
Everything contradicts us.
It makes us strong.
The Civil War never ended,
never ends.
Divided selves, divided peoples.
Tussle mild or struggle fierce,
then the furlough called dying.**

12 February 2020

= = = = =

We begin of course
where it ends.
No need
to live the same day
twice. The cup
is full again—
the dog barked
a lot in the night
then ran away.
It's raining isn't it?

13 February 2020

FLAUBERT'S COMMA

I need Flaubert's comma
the one he took a weekend
to decide. I need to know
where the pause goes, I mean
where the breath stops
for an instant, holds itself
in its own arms then goes on.
The pause is how the music knows
and how sense is made.
His friends went hunting
left him alone at his desk
chasing the pause through all
the flourishing forest of his prose.
I think he found it—
but later set it free and left it out.

13 February 2020

DOCUMENTS NEEDED FOR THIS VOYAGE

Receipt from delivery of reality

Consent Form (signed) for the weather

License for Bi-pedal Motion

Visa for Seeing Past Arms; Length

**Medical Certificate Permitting Tactile
Sensation ('Touch')**

**This List is Incomplete, and other Documents
may be required in certain situations. Consult
the nearest Authority if in Doubt.**

13 February 2020

A LETTER HOME

Here I am in Topia
a little town on the way
to nowhere. Not there yet.
Mist over the big parking lot
crowded with grey cars.
Whose? More wheels than
feet in this sort of place.
Cold but noit freezing,
day but not much light.
Complaint is natural—
complain about nature
itself next. All that dying.
Hands in my pocket
I slouch towards supper.
Pizza? No appetite. Stand
in front of Walmart's
and count the pigeons.
Maybe Mexican food. Maybe
try the next town before dark.

13 February 2020

FOR CHARLOTTE, ON A SAINT'S DAY

**The heart can only hold so much.
Something overflows, rushes
north to fill the mind, pours out
east and west down the arms
to find the hands, the same ones
that touch you, try to touch
or pick up pen or chisel to declare
what the heart itself can't say.**

**Yes, this is the day of hearts, hope
of spring and blossoms and all that,
all that I think about when you,
you come to mind, the fantastic
structures of your wise love,
all your wisdoms. work, words
articulate as birds in air, simple,
your simple complexity, your love
and let, that you let me love you—
that's the most amazing thing,
that you let me call you my Valentine.**

13 February 2020

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Say it longer, citizen.
The music wants you,
sticks to your lips,
not like the kiss
of a maiden aunt but maybe so,
who knows
what animal's pulse so wild
inside the softest fur?
Have you ever been a mountain?
Slide down yourself and see.
We're talking Gravity here,
the balance act,
the Justice card in the Tarot,
when the wind drops and there you are.
Sound familiar?
You heard it on the radio
before you were born.
If I stop telling you
what's on my mind
will you open at least the first door,
the one with the peep-hole—
you know enough about me already,

you have always known—
you gave it to me.
But I digress.

2.
Comfortable afterthought—
an alphabet
made of bees.
I mean beads.
I mean prayers
strung together
to make sense
sound by sound—
you find them
in the flowers
somewhere some
time from now.

3.
As the sun
licks the lawn
what happens?
The deer step down
the glacial ridge,

**the wife rejoices.
This is the card called The Sun—
have you ever been the Sun?
Aren't you the living center of the system?
Name the system.
How else do you cast shadows,
the words we read,
I mean the words we breathe,
sorry, I'll get it right,
the words that breathe us.**

14 February 2020

=====

**If you must write about zebras
put them on the azimuth,
let them run like astronauts
over the red deserts of human speech—
I was there, I have seen, flew once
over the Hadramawt, I saw
the silence from which language comes,
We are not God's zoo, but for all we know
we might be God's kindly kindergarten.**

14 February 2020

=====

**And then I heard
the (even!) horses sing—
the empty sky
brings language on.**

14 February 2020

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Something not
what I'm looking at
something else
it talks to me
outside not inside
not near not far—
something there,
right *there*.
It woke me
with its telling,
I know what it's saying
without hearing a word.

15 February 2020

ONE STOPS ANOTHER IN THE STREET

There you are--we have use for you.

Who are you?

**We are the Secret College--you've been
waiting for us all your life and you know it.**

**I know it but how do I know you are it or of it
or from it or what?**

**You can only know what I tell you and it rings
true inside.**

What if I have no inside?

**Then you are one of us already--to be in the
Secret College means to exist for the other.
to be the water in their glass and a glass
for their water, words for their mouths
and you know the rest, don't you?**

I think I do.

**Then write it down to make sure--writing is a
clean kind of thinking.**

[*writes:*] I am for the other.

**Now you are one of us--in a little while you
will be me--I have been you for a long time
now, old friend, hello.**

15 February 2020

====

for Tamas

1.

**Buy a yellow school bus
park it in the woods.**

**Keep it mostly empty,
sit inside in daylight hours.**

This is your school.

**These are the subjects
you will finally be tested on:**

Distinguishing Inside from Outside.

**All the ways metal is different from wood
(the textbook calls it Hyllic Ontology
but who knows what that means).**

**The Gifts of the Gods—
subjective and objective genitives.**

Leaf shapes and what they mean.

**Zoological Affinity: animals who approach
you vs. animals who leave you alone.**

The twelve kinds of silence.

2.

Don't stay in the bus
when the weather's too hot or too cold.
It's up to you. But notice
that you're happy as you can be
when you are in your bus.
And you can bring a nice friend
or two in with you sometimes.
But *doucement, doucement*—
don't scare the woods.

15 February 2020

= = = = =

**If blue is sky
and green is tree
we pray the red
we never see,
it stays inside
and makes us be.
And when evening comes
all colors are gone
and what we see
is only what we are.
Does night set us free?**

15 February 2020

====

The birds of us
busy the sky.
haunt sky.

Polis

a pillow for the god's head
sleeps us our deed.

Do. That's all,
city, do and be done.

When the goid wakes we sleep.
I have never told you enough.

16 February 2020

PURCHASE ORDER

**Think of the window
as a monitor, a mirage,--
what you see is pure assumption
or pantomime, a *program*
they boldly call it, they admit
that's what you're seeing.
Guarded (guided) by these
thoughts ('reflections'), dare
to look away. This rain-spotted
monitor, this busywindow
is one you bought or rented,
came with your house wall.
Study the wall instead.**

16 February 2020

= = = = =

**We know who she is.
She lives in the city
and comes up to see
whoever we are, swim
in our lakes, grow close
with our trees. You
know her as well as I do
and not one of us will
ever know her better.
She only seems to be here,
she's a shadow on vacation
and we are shadows to her too.
She smiles at us as she goes.,
the way you'd smile at a tree.**

16 February 2020

= = = = =

**Cheezits for breakfast—
that sort of day,
the tower of Babel
still to be climbed,
I'm somewhere between
V and U, on the way,
mixed three kinds of coffee
and it didn't work, that
sort of day. some sunshine
for a while and not too cold,
so many people to talk to
and where is that noise
coming from—sounds like
music but you never know,
that sort of day, salty Sunday,
crows bold on the lawn,
wsh I had such dark wings.**

16 February 2020

SEMBLANCE

Winter people in the woods
look like deer walking
on hind legs. There is a pun
hiding here, dense dead leaves,
spring five weeks away, thrp
of something ;ole sorrow in the throat.
I saw one walking at the edge
of the road. We pretend to be
human, to be going somewhere,
to be on the way. But the only way
we go is, the way trees go, strong
through all the springtimes to come.
Fast as we run we stand there still.

17 February 2020

=====

**Did you ever get tired
of trying to be good
and just sat there
watching the ocean
roll itself in and itself out?**

**Among the activists
it's hard to hear the waves.
But sprawled alone there
just being bad, you hear
the non-stop gospel of the sea.
Good sweeps in, bad sweeps out,
all thought of them dispelled.
This is what there always is—
let it be you for a little while.**

17 February 2020

INK

**He writes the bottle dry
and people wonder why—
aren't there enough songs
already?**

**Not at all, he said,
I want there to be so many
songs that every person
will have one of their own
and another one to spare
in case they get tired of the first,
I want them able to sing out loud
even when no one's listening—
so bring me a new bottle, please.**

17 February 2020

=====

**Why do we sit down to write?
Shouldn't such *going* be
gone by striding or at least
tottering towards the spoken,
the absolute consequence,
the word?**

**It's the middle
of the night--when else
could such answers call
softly to our questions?**

18 February 2020

====

**Imperious midnight
to last till almost dawn!
How weak our numbers are
to tame your whirlpool dark.**

18.II.20

=====

**Legs meant for walking
lie too long a-bed. Wake,
wander, walk! I tell them,
show everyone out there
how fast you can be gone.**

18,II.20

= = = = =

**I think those monks
of ancient cities
shaped stone with their hands--
no chisels, no hammers,
just pressed warm palms
and rhythming fingers
on the rock till shape appeared,
beasts and faces, images
of what they desired, they feared.
And there the statues stood,
or walls in high relief, or columns
to hold the house up by images alone!
Tools came later, when men forgot
the intensity of original desire.**

18 February 2020

=====

**Things sing
in the middle
of the night
things sing
sometimes the sound
of a word lasts
the whole dark
so dawn itself
seems an echo of it.**

18.II.20

= = = = =

Clutch the table
with the chair
I am a folk-tale
need to be told,
snuff the candle
but leave the light,
put down that luminous
mandolin your uncles
brought home from Istria,
put the lion to sleep
by the cold fireplace, warm
enough inside the mind
for all the beasts of africa--
I have a cup full of the Nile,
I tell, I tell, now tell me,
tell me before I doze again
in that harsh cathedral
of dreamless sleeo. Tell me now--
all any now ever is is telling.

18 February 2020
5 A.M.

= = = = =

Vertumnus
comes to mind--
could that be
the spring side of autumn,
the mirror, the opposite,
the self over there?
Every thing needs me
but who are you
whose name says
all by itself in my mind?
I have so many friends--
I read once in an old book
A man has as many sins
as he has bristles on his chin
and I believed. each sin
a friend, each friend a reaching
out from inside me to the light.

18 February 2020

A LITTLE SPA MUSIC

There was a chance.
disguised as daylight it was
strong black Irish tea as such
would trot a mouse we say

from country to city came
strange land of sidewalks
big windows showing only in
people in tight clothes
uncomfortably ambling by

yes, tea, especially with milk
and sweet, even with dull music
on the audio like mayonnaise,

yes, everything is now again
little city little creel, life itself
is an ambassador from afar
from something else that has
a message for us, did I say light?

18 February 2020, Kingsto

= = = = =

**And if I sang with my hands
would the world hear me?
Quivk footsteps of a woman
passing. How g eels make music
How music passes. Passes.**

**18 February 2020
Kingston**

NIGHT SKY OVER GULU IN UGANDA



**There are constellations
seen nowhere else.**

**Right above our heads we see
the *Spinning Sisters*
who weave the city
with what they've spun.**

**The *Old Man Good at Math*
who teaches children to count
and multiply but then forget,
he's up there at top right.**

▪
The *Box with No Inside*
is close to the Spinners,,
and the *River Along the Edge of Everything*
holds the whole eastern horizon.
The *Milk Jug* is bright in the rainy season
when the milk of heaven flows
only the wisest drink from its waters.

19 February 2020

THE MOUNTAIN YEATS CALLED BEN BULBEN

The trees are stone
the myths monogamous
will not leave this place
that wedded them,
worded them

I want to see a picture of this place
carved in ivory
photo on facebook
selfie of a mountain

not a mountain.
Something more,
a fox runs through the shade,
some brownish leaves
still brave the cold

up there, up there,

I passed by once
no hat on my head

no thought in my brain
but there it was anyhow,

that glorious thing
the something not me.

2.

Of course it is famous,
why else would the name of it
pull me from sleep.

I knew the famous part--
but I didn't know it.

And nobody knows what any name means,
we just keep saying them
like kisses on the empty air.

3.

Am I home yet
I asked the wizard
Go back to sleep
the bed will sail you there
no ocean needed,

sleep is what you mean
the downward mountain at the heart of life

But how could I believe such things,
I had driven past the place
obedient to the road
that teasing thing that shows
you what you cannot touch,
cannot walk on -- no wonder
he talks up the advantages of sleep.
Because in sleep you can touch anything
and the stone trees of Sligo
suddenly bear apples and hazelnuts and
pears.

20 February 2020

== == == == ==

**When Christ came to Annandale
and walked in our woods
he wanted the place to be peace
and asked the local tribes
to keep the place as quiet as they could,
meet here for parley or for feast
but no fighting. My body
he said will bear wounds enough
so leave this land alone.
He sat on a boulder the glacier had left,
same stone the Buddha sat on
a few hundred years before--
not many people here back then
so he didn't stay on, just left
his blessing tangled in the trees.
Christ knew about that,
knew that all the Generous Ones
would come here, right here,
these ridges, meadows, delves,
they all would come and leave**

**their message here where we,
even we, can find it if we look.
And when I say right here
I do mean everywhere.**

20 February 2020

ANGEL TALK

**Wanna write a million poems
or earn a million bucks?
I'll take the poems, sir.
Good choice, kid,
I'll give you both.**

20.II.2020

= = = = =

I'm near the tree
where it began
and so are you,
the organ shatters
the solemn difference
that keeps the church
inside itself, the sound
propels us to the world
where that tree stands.
And we stand under it
our hands if we're lucky
holding one another
for dear life as we used to say
when we were all alone
in the endless city.

20 February 2020

= = = =

**They worry a lot
about what's under the floor
who's that at the door
strange noises in the sink.**

**They are people
they live on earth
a hundred thousand years
and still keep fretting.
Who built the floor?
Who opened the door?**

20 February 2020

=====

**Words to begin with
words to beg
in with**

**please
let me in
I need to live**

**inside the *order*
of your intelligence
(beauty)**

**it is winter
where I am alone.**

20 February 2020

=====

I see what my father saw
when he was very old.
He sat on this same porch
watching this road
the few cars, fewer people
walking or jogging past,
his eyes were avid,
a man reading the latest news.

Now I am here
not much younger
and there it is again
or still or always,
the whole world passing by.

20 February 2020

CHRITIAN HABENICHTS

Christian Habenichts, pilgrim, mystic, in late 18th Century wandered through northern Europe, from Frisian west to the borders of Russia. His avowal was beautiful:

Wherever men and women unders tand my words, that's where I belong. So he traveled endlessly, wherever German was spoken in some form or other, or could be more or less understood. *The road is my home*, he used to say when asked.

He called the Baltic Sea the real Mare Nostrum (*unsres echte Mare Nostrum*); a man of some education, he gave the names of plasces in the Mediterranean to places somehow topologically equivalent on or by the Baltic. So Spain was Norway, and Bornholm was Sicily, Sweden was Italy, and Jerusalem was Saint Petersburg. Naturally then he called Germany Africa, and called himself *der Afrikaner*.

Most of what we know of him comes from references in letters and journals of the time,

but there are two little pamphlets that bear his name. “What the Goose Thinks About while His Wing Heals” is dated 1791, published by Ankermann in Kiel;

“I Dug a Star Up from the Ground” came seven years later, no publisher stated, just the town, Wismar.

He must have had a patron, or perhaps some family we know nothing about, to have secured publication of even such slender volumes.

Nothing is known of his date of death, and his birthplace is controversial. Novalis called him that wanderer from Stettin, but Kleist quotes a joke about Habenichts he heard in Berlin, that made the wanderer a native of Travemünde, on the sea near Hamburg. And his very name is surely assumed: a *Christian who has nothing*, who wanders through the world, everywhere and nowhere his home.

I dreamt this man, 21 February 2020, 3 A.M.

=====

**Did you know that every
time you go into the water
sea or river, lake or even
swimming pool you come out
changed? Not the same one
who went in, even though hardly
anybody notices what's happened
and even you don't know
now you are a new self. Who are you?
that's you have to find out.
Every time it's different,
the touch of water does this
every time. My mother
taught me this when I was little,
she knew more about the sea
than any book. Sometimes
I forget to tell people this
as they scamper down to the waves
and later I have to study them
changed. Are they still my friends?**

21 February 2020

=====

The night wants its dinner now
wales me to feed it.
Wheat field in the Ukraine—
I must stand there in autumn moonlight
to gather its food. No moon here,
end of winter, very cold.
No matter. I have to be there,
stare through the field.
Something has to happen. A fox?
Lonely woman counting sheaves of wheat?
I kneel down and touch the dirt
and something not too far begins to sing.

22 February 2020

=====

**In another country
there is a tallish tree
people call
by half a dozen names,
depends on what they want from it—
leaves or sap or fruit or timber.
The tree responds to all their names
but has one of its own it never tells
and no one knows but me
and I only know it because
one time a while ago I was the tree.**

22 February 2020

=====

**Going by
you've said enough
the songbird said,
it's my turn now
to crack the egg
of morning open
and see what the day
will sing for itself—
shut up already
what's on your mind.
What's outside
will come to rescue
you and be both.**

22 February 2020

=====

**Listen to the spider
stretching her web
over the mouth of the well.**

**It is not always
good to go down
is what she means**

**not always good
to drink
even from the purest source.**

**Sometimes you have to be
just where you are,
just being there alone.**

22 February 2020

=====

<i>for Amy L.</i>
A cat
on the chair
on the chair.

23 February 2020
dremt as such

=====

**Coughed awake
bones ache
little boxes
frame our knmowing.z**

**Uf the headache goes away
qill the head stay?
Or does it belong
to all it esperiences?
The pain is mine—
but am I its?**

23 February 2020

=====

It's not sleep
coming and going,
it's the geometry of sickness
lines to be folded
angles turned
the more or less elegant
sensations suddenly
crushed awake by a cough.

Being sick
is all about interruption.
Can't sleep can't read can't think
I walk around blundering
in a dark house
only some of it outside.
Forgive me, I'm describing.
Go back to the Bible—
the Bible never describes.

24 February 2020

=====

**When Cicero denounced Catiline
the Sennate marveled more
at his eloquence than at the baseness
of the coinspjrator. *Quousque*, etc.
Four of them survive, kids
have to learn them in hgh school.
at least I did. Froim which we learn
the gleam lasts longer than the gold.**

24 February 2020

=====

**We drove through Yeats country
climbed his little tower
Thoor Ballilee. A seal came
up yo bless us out of Galway Bay.
We visited Lady Gregory's
but history was noit home.
What more could we do to show
our lovbe for the man's language?
Brown eyes of the seal, hrass on the hill.**

24 February 2020

= = = = =

**Aesthetic
means how you feel
when you see
something
looking back at you.
You study each other
until you know.
The way you know me now.**

24 February 2020

CONTRADANCE

**A cow's splayed hoof
all that weight
a ship on the sea
bringing you here
for the first time**

**but dances are always
and always about again
one move makes the next
and the field fills up
cattle come before cities**

**and there you are, milk
in your mouth and the street
filled with foreigners
the foreigners we all are
the ship will never get here.**

24 February 2020

=====

**Majesty of mother
beginning of all—
what the Virgin
held in her womb
was all of us.**

**There is no one on this planet
who is not the child of a mother
who was virgin once. Think on this.
Understand the majesty
we take so casually,
the blue sky her robe.**

24 February 2020

=====

**Nada. Morning.
Getting better.
Nada looking out the window
nada, nada is nice.
Grey sky nada, no rain,
not cold, 50 degrees February,
not bad, nada is nice,
nada to do, nada is nice,
is nicer than nice,
nada is getting better,
nada is now.**

25 February 2020

=====

**They know I'm here
but do they know I'm me?
That's what every fugitive
has to figure out--by stars,
statistics, signatures of things.
If they're not sure, I'm almost safe.
I'm the one who offended the system
by being myself. Or am I just
fooling myself out here, self-
important in the empty trees?**

25 February 2020

=====

**Strange how much effort
is needed for simple things,
unscrewing a bottle,
slicing a loaf of bread.
But better that way than
the food they offer in dreams
on pale saucers slices of meat
as if they were delicacies
and we have to eat them or
at least accept them and set them
in front of us and grieve
for all the beasts in the world.
Not in my mouth their deaths.**

25 February 2020

=====

The little bit that's left to tell
is enough to spin another planet
round our Mother Sun. What's left
to tell will fill the sky over Moscow,
Pittsburgh, even some places where I live.
The little bit that's left to tell
will take us all on, merry lives to sing.
Or speak or mumble or scribble or just
breathe out on some old stone wall—
stone remembers.

(19 February 2020)
25 February 2020

=====

**Things to catch up with
things on my side.
I see her a block or two ahead,
if I hurry I will be
soon enough where she will have been.
Her traces will be left there,
hints, haunts, evidences,
remembrances. Then we will both go on.**

25 February 2020

=====

The part
lasts longer
than the whole.
Yeats' poems
scatter
through the world
each one
complete.
The he
in hero,
the her
in hero
lead us home,
the her
in here.

26 February 2020

= = = = =

**Rescue the rare
revere
the ordinary.
This is felicity
you have known
her all your life.**

26 February 2020

=====

**Suppose it was a word I could read
by chance in Russian or Hebrew,
suppose it spoke to my condition
(do I have one? would I know if I did?)
suppose the page it's written on
came into my hands on paper
or parchment or some glowing screen
would I grasp at it at last, inhaling
deep the fresh air of another language
and do what it tells me to do
or know or dread or sleep again?**

26 February 2020

=====

Day's light
day's right
walk the field
in baby steps
Winchester Cathedral
is very tall
look straight up the spire
and see how it points
to the very spot you,
just you, have to understand
in all the sky. Fact.
This is astronomy
before numbers got in the way.
This was pure knowing
of what the sky says.
Now cross the ocean again
and stand by my bed
your silhouette against the window
morning is all the news I need.

26 February 2020

=====

**When they come to take my horse
take my camel too, ineed a beast
with wheels on its feet, I weary
of my weight on other people
even if they have four legs,
strong spines, and a lot on their minds
so they don't especially hate it
when I ride. No more of that
for me. Give me a platform
with a fire on it, steam pipes
spiuning wheels, glass cabins,
comfy armchairs, lots of noise
so I can't hear my own fear,
terror of the road, weird going.
I think I will stay home today,
it's a soft grey day, nobody out there
needs me today, do they? Do you?
Are you listening? If you were
I don't think I'd be saying this.**

26 February 2020

=====

**Nobody answers my unsent letters,
something's the matter with my mail.
It shouldn't need to have a stamp
on it or squeeze through the internet
for them to hear me thinking at them,
they should know already
what's on my mind. Isn't love
the natural condition of each being,
Dante says it moves the stars,
it must move me, and you,
and them to answer me, why
so silent, maidens of Florence,
wordy comrades of Cantabriga?
Are you haughtier than the stars?**

26 February 2020

=====

**Th overt animal
aloft. Who was
Saint Cloud anyhow,
I've heard that name?
Who is this holy personage
who hides the sun?
or dies the sun?
Who dares to?
Three dys of cloud
and then the wind came
to sweep open the robes
of him or her who
smiles and lets us see
the sun at last?**

27 February 2020

=====

**Dragons of importunity
mew at cave mouths
all through the city.
they want your custom
that mingled lust and fear
on which the market runs.
They live in big windows
and smile wickedly, sweetly,
they try to make you think
you're still a child reading a book
and they are the book,
Buy me Try me Need me Feed me
they purr through the smoke.
Smile back and hurry past. Save
your cash for the plausible beggar
on the corner—he needs it more.**

27 February 2020

=====

The wolf
is with it.
He passed me once,
the nobility
of his singularity
owned the early night.
We walked a lot in those days
before the last wolf den on our ridge
gave way to a blue tin pole ban,
exeunt wolves.
And that evening he passed us,
trotting the same path, he downhill
we slower up,
the majesty of his indifference!
God send I can face my death
or dread or beast desire
with such calm golden eyes.

28 February 2020

=====

**Always room
for another
onion in the soup
iris in the dooryard
face in the door.
Always more--
that's the religion
that meant us
where we are
and how we can endure
our own simplicity.
Call it the onion,
or the opera
the hungry overture
the aria that never ends.
And that makes us weep too,
sobbing over the cutting board,
one more, one more.**

28 February2020

=====

I thought I heard you laughing
a few hundred miles away,
not heard, exactly, saw
instead in the mind's eye
the toss of your hair,
sprightly glimmer of the eye
that goes with laughter.
But mind's a dark place,
I can't be sure.
I know it was you.
I pray it was laughing.

28 II 20

= = = = =

Sometimes it really is
too far to tell. Cloud
on the mountain--mist or snow?
Movement in the woods.
You know what I mean.
We don't have to know everything,
you tell me, some things
are just things, over there
for their own reasons,
or no reason, leave alone,
just don't know.
But if I'm to live in this world
I have to read its signs,
read and obey,
that's what all the laws
in all the worlds say.
I need to obey that dark
shape on the hillside,
the cloud on the peak is my mother.

28 February 2020

=====

The train of natural intent
coughs across the river
at 3 A.M., wakes me
to cough my own part.
Winter cold. Some nights
louder than others,
train sluggish loud along the water.
We live in a mirror.

2.

Caught. Cough.
A friend
takes up painting,
I think about his images,
his house, this house,
the mountains that mean us,
Heva's garden.
Where is Adam when the Lord needs him?
Where art thou, art?
When the Lady needs him,
the red paint honest in his hands.

3.

If I wanted to be awake
I would begin to think,
think of all the things
it might be bearing to the city,
everything winds up there any way,
thousands of trains and trucks
every day, the natural intent
of going on,, the trick of Babylon.
My blood was issued there
before the war.

4.

One bite at a time. Spider,
the spinner. The skin
is perilous, it too can sleep,
and when it wakes
where is Eden then?
I want to see Eva in the picture,
naked, furry-pubis'd,
her mouth half agape in a smile.
Agape, the love we bear our kind.

5.

Let it pass by,
let it be cold a while
and then not.

Quando ver benit meum?

the Latin poem pleaded,
When does my spring come?
and who makes it mine?

Time rouses the green leaves,
stirs the roots,
sips the sap. I will walk out
and call it mine.

And Eve will laugh me off the lawn.

6.

This is what it made me understand:
when you draw a picture of a house
she is always there, inside, waiting,
not necessarily for you
or anyone you can name,
but she's there, she moves
from room to room,
tapestries, comforters,

**credenzas, cabinets
full of tinkling glass.
The radio is on, internet,
Mahler from Vienna,
the symphony with words in its lap,
she hums them as she goes.**

7.

**That's why you paint the picture
in the first place, of course,
to find her. Location is the first
principle of that branch of mathematics
called love. You know she's there.
You listen at the door you just painted.
You hear the color of her being.
You lay the brush down
and I can sleep again.**

29 February 2020

= = = = =

**Not dawn yet
on a cold Leap Year Day
a train woke me
in the valley
and I thought of you.
Does it make sense
to say so?**

29 February 2020

=====

**This is the last
of that bottle,
lovely violet ink
Waterman's from France,
same kind I bought
in 1954 on the Boul' Mich',
this latest bottle gave
so much of 2019
and two full months of new,
its last fill yesterday,
not a drop in it more,
just enough in the pen
to go on writing this,
and when it stops,
Paris will still be there,
and I'll start writing
in black again, back
to black,
the days'
poem is always a debutante,
anyhow, in basic black,
I can hardly wait.**

But I can wait—
waiting is what writing does best,
this word I give you
you wait to read—
it will be there when you want it,
the way words are.
Imagine the truth—
all this is for you.
The complex machinery
of human language, physiology,
neurology, hope and lust and fear,
all it adds up to
is one more word, here,
for you, this one, this.

29 February 2020

