

9-2021

**sep2021**

Robert Kelly

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=====

Rescued from dream  
by rain. Everything falls,  
those danger steps  
with no banister,  
the brown river, the red car,  
o my God.

But in the dream  
there's always someone  
wiser than I am,  
have you noticed that too,  
about you?

Yet the dream leaves  
fingerprints smeared  
all over the day.  
I look at my own hands  
and they seem strange.

1 September 2021

=====

**Enough about dream.  
Cold coffee  
takes away the fear,  
some of it,  
swirl on the surface,  
clean in the throat  
and little by little  
it becomes today.  
Sometimes the body  
saves us from the mind.**

**1 September 2021**

=====

**In the Mayan calendar  
after the day Knife  
the day Rain  
washes the blood away.**

**1.IX.21**

=====

The trees seem to be  
talking less these days.  
They must sense  
the falling of the leaf  
and be gathering strength,  
images to store up for winter.  
But they are still generous,  
spare a little conversation  
because they hear us too,  
and know how much strength  
we borrow from their beauty.

**1 September 2021**

=====

**How dare they,  
how dare they  
drive a white car  
down an avenue of trees?**

**1.IX.21**

=====

**The Empathy  
or maybe sunlight  
slivers of something  
through the trees,  
morning noises notwithstanding,  
a head in the clouds  
safe from Actaeon's hounds.  
Be wise. Theologize.  
Feel the feelings of all things  
feeling their way along,  
a breath of wind, gleam  
on a wet leaf. Understand?  
It's nit all in you. Not all in me  
is the motto, taste it,  
fresh air, feeling everywhere.**

**1 September 2021**

=====

**Watching  
or is it waiting  
for the rain  
to fall or stop,  
water in the kettle  
to come to a boil  
or cool down—  
the vigilance  
is what counts,  
the long slow  
song of patience.  
Let us watch together,  
waiting for each other.**

**1 September 2021  
Rhinebeck**



=====

**Close enough to care  
far enough to strive  
against the mournful  
distances.**

**We wait  
in weather and wonder  
who we really are.**

**1 September 2021  
Rhinebeck**

=====

**All the little airplanes  
zooming around  
umping Americans  
all over the world  
a few hundred at a time,  
and most of them come home,  
someday, improved  
by sheer otherness  
and wait their turn  
to be tossed somewhere else again.**

*(dream piece, 2.IX.21)*

== = == =

**What religion are you  
said the blue sky to the tree.  
I am oak and stand alone--  
what about you? Oh me,  
I am all the colors you can name--  
I think we need each other  
just to go on being true.**

**2.IX.21**

=====

**Seven in the morning,  
after all that rain  
the sky is blue. The storm  
has passed, bending  
northeast away from land.  
Rivers are ripe, headlights  
are still on. the trees are full.**

**2.IX.21**

## **CAUTION**

**At the first sign of waking  
hurry out of bed  
before the dregs of dream  
claim you, stain you.  
Now you know what light is for.**

**2.IX.21**

=====

I look at the woman  
and think about rock,  
the great rock wall  
on the highway north,  
sheets of shale, I think,  
dark, ill-clad in boscage.  
On your right as you go north--  
direction is important.

2.

In this religion  
woman represents center.  
doesn't have to go anywhere.  
The sun is rising,  
does all her travel for her.  
Follow her shadow  
to find where to go.

**3.**

**But this is just religion,  
not geology. The stone  
knows better than we do,  
has time the way we have hands,  
uses it to learn the way of things,  
and its own constant shadow  
is church enough for it.**

**4.**

**Our sad gender politics...  
and yet there is a difference  
somewhere in the song,  
soprano, basso, quivering  
clarity, Queen of the Night.**

**5.**

**Dangerous ground.  
Sunlight, internet back on--  
things have gender too.**

**Safer to know nothing,  
least of all know what I know.**

**6.**

**Salient, the hand outstretched  
from the castle. Gore, the unowned  
land between parcels.  
Law is dangerous too,  
no clouds in the sky,  
nowhere to hide.**

**7.**

**I thought I was a castle  
just by myself,  
I read the picture on my shield  
and took it as instruction:  
this must I be.  
But I'm a man, not even stone,  
let alone woman,  
I have to go, and castles**



are poor at travel.  
When I was young  
I saw a road sign said NORTH  
and I believed it,  
I'm still stumbling on the way.

8.

So you see why that woman  
made me think of that outcrop  
on the way to Saugerties.  
She stood there and I passed by,  
she gave no sign that I was there,  
conferred on me that blessed  
invisibility we feel before a rock.  
Looking at stone sets me free to go.

**2 September 2021**

## **ROOM**

**Blue-sky'd sleep  
and pale ceiled waking--  
the room, always the room.  
We contract all space  
around us and call it room.  
Then we shrink it further  
and call it sleep.**

**2.**

**My hair's wet from a quick wash,  
a water drop falls past my eye,  
reminds me I am an animal again,  
not whatever that thing  
or population I was in sleep.**

**3.**

**Much to be said  
for being an animal.  
They have anima, soul,**

**inside them or that they  
are inside, who can tell  
the letter the envelope?**

**4.**

**Suppose then  
that I am written.  
That sleep is a scribe  
who scribbles fast  
what is to come,  
become of me. Script  
in the dark, so hard  
to read, we need  
all the eyes we can find,  
trees, birds, streets,  
predestined passersby.**

5.

I'm not sure  
it ever is enough.  
A life is filled  
with unread books.

6.

So let the music take over,  
come down the street  
like a Sicilian parade,  
music draws a crowd  
and that's all it has to do,  
I lose myself on the sidewalk  
among the tee-shirts,  
the rayon blouses, keep my eyes  
fixed on the traveling trombones.  
I can hear them now in this quiet room.

**7. Too quiet.**

**That tree  
is laughing at me,  
but in the kindest way.  
It knows  
how hard it is  
to read the new day  
and helps me all it can.**

**8.**

**I will not tell  
what I dreamt about,  
just the blue sky  
at the very end  
and the pale ceiling when I woke.  
That has to be enough  
to wake some meaning  
as it woke me. All life  
compact in any single image--  
doesn't love tell us that**

*September 2021* **21**

**on the way to art, isn't  
one room enough for all of us?**

**3 September 2021**

=====

**I follow the word,  
follow like a private  
detective, the kind  
they used to call flatfoot  
from his plodding along.  
I plod, I plod, and sometimes  
round some corner  
a burst of music comes  
or flash of skin--  
and who knows what happens then?**

**3 September 2021**

=====

**We are haunted  
by our own names,  
the almond tree  
by the chapel,  
the grace of living  
where identity is clear  
and men are strong enough  
to bear the light.**

**3 September 2021**



=====

**Don't let your religion  
be built of prohibitions.  
Let it be made day by day  
by deeds of kindness,  
compassion, telling the truth.  
If you must pray, pray  
for one another. If you need  
a sacrament, let it be  
the next thing you give away.**

**3 September 2021**

=====

**She studied the geology of love,  
worked her fingers  
into the crevices  
between the strata of the days,  
sheer stratification of time,  
the metamorphosis of feelings under twists of  
time, chemicals  
of desire and despair,  
rough eroded surfaces of neglect, deep  
igneous deposits from the start,  
the heart, gazed with joy  
at how the common becomes diamond  
under the immense  
pressure of closeness alone.**

**3 September 2021**

=====

**Sometimes it's enough to wonder,  
look away, close your eyes.  
The miracle depends on us—  
want it, wait for it, then look away.**

**Inside the body the future is ripening,  
whoever they are, hey give  
you time enough to let it out.  
Then you are the one you're meant to be.**

**Wonder. Pregnancy takes so many forms.**

**3 September 2021**

## **THE PORTION**

**1.**

**Whichever way  
the portion was begun  
you had to sing along with it,  
that's what truth is for,  
a city thing, hanging  
out with the trees.**

**2.**

**The Jews have a name for it,  
the piece of truth you need  
to hum or nod your head to  
for the given day.  
It is a scarp of fabric  
that still clothes the whole of you.  
But absent religion,  
what's a mind to do,**

**seize the nearest  
and try to sing with it  
all the way to afternoon?**

**3.**

**This is morning stuff,  
morningland, everybody's orient.  
When you see the sky  
divorce the earth  
and let light in,  
take hold. This  
is your portion.**

**4 September 2021**

=====

Once when I was English  
I slept on rock,  
woke up and I was me again,  
went over to France  
but they spoke to me in German,  
no wonder that I came home  
where I could stand on two legs  
and sleep sitting up  
in that long lazy motel called school.

4 September 2021

***ARS POETICA IX/21***

**Write the testimonial.  
endorse the tree  
just as it validates you  
in sheer beholding.  
Write it, sign it,  
send it to the world  
just like this, Someone'  
collects these documents.**

**4 September 2021**

=====

By seven the trucks  
poke their noses out  
round here. Makes it  
harder but more appealing  
to go back to sleep.  
They snout their way north  
as if some gasoline Cathay  
drew them by magic.  
I seldom even notice them  
though when they come home,  
so I know less about  
the *id* of such machines.

4.IX.21



=====

**Can I sleep now  
on the other side of the word  
where the meaning's  
cool and fresh,  
unsullied by my thinking,  
soft on my tired cheek?**

**4 September 2021**

## **SHRINE**

**The simple shrine,  
Buddha seated  
at the foot of the tree  
up the little hill  
not far from the fence  
and a chipmunk  
lives underneath,  
burrows under,  
each thing holy as can be  
and the meaning  
keeps spreading  
under the lawn and through  
the trees and reaches out  
and never stops,  
no place that is not part of it.**

**4 September 2021**

**SEPTEMBER 1838**

**Barney Flaherty  
cried Paper Paper  
Read *The Sun*  
read all about it.  
No wonder. Irish  
are always crying,  
about something,  
or nothing, the wind  
makes the words,  
cry louder, kid, sing,  
music is the only news.**

**4 September 2021**

=====

**The severity of the situation  
is linked to the late flowers,  
Autumn impending, sleep.  
Reveille they used to call it,  
wake-up call, your car is waiting,  
holiday traffic at pause, most  
people are where they want  
or at least planned to be.  
The sky is bright but casts no shade,  
yesterday was Bruckner's birthday,  
I hear him now, his gorgeous  
grumpiness woven through with birds.**

**2.**

**But anything you hear  
is already in the past,  
took its time to reach  
your ear and even then**

the mind is busy nibbling  
its own now--the mind  
is always now. The Sunday  
of the nervous system,  
sermons before breakfast,  
to find me something  
that I can't think about,  
a mute upanishad,  
a sleeping child. Because  
we both live in weather  
and around it all at once,  
grainy bread and water  
from a well up in the sky.  
Yes, it looks like love  
again today, I hear the leaves  
listening to the very slight breeze.

5 September 2021

=====

**Sun at zenith  
hides in haze.  
Noonish. New  
fish in the paper.  
Admit that we too  
are an invasive species.  
Look what we've scribbled  
on the naked map!**

**5 September 2021**

=====

**The land on te horizon  
is always illusion.  
Built of cloud, wave,  
shadow, reflection  
it is still worth sailing to,  
praying to, naming  
on your tattered parchment  
sea chart of reality.  
Someday I will meet you there  
and if you let me take your hand.**

**5 September 2021**

## **HOKUSAI**

**said a sea  
but what about me?  
If words are waves,  
then maybe..  
I have longed  
for the long, the deep,  
yes, but the quick, the wet.  
Sometimes it's too  
bright to see.**

**2.**

**Not exactly Atlantic.  
One yearns for the same  
made different,  
random nymphs and archipelagoes,  
home safe under full sail.  
Because one has stood**



**on the sand and understood  
and prayed to the sea itself  
that one might overstand.**

**3.**

**His famous wave  
brought the land to the sea,  
knew what color could.  
Hurry to meet  
what comes to meet us  
and be glad.**

**4.**

**I will not be a shepherd  
doubting his sheep.  
Trust what you are charged with  
the sky once said,  
all you can do is what you can do  
even if you can't.**

5.

So if the dream is true  
the sea is blue  
and now is all there is,  
a curve of wave  
that never altogether falls.

6 September 2021

## **LABOR DAY MORNING**

**Six A.M. but not to fear,  
no mail delivery today,  
words are safe asleep in books  
and just don't answer to the phone.  
Today is a holiday to labor in,  
count the leaves on the trees  
like Bruckner, walk  
across the bridge with Kant  
and call it thinking,  
wisdom is an anecdote  
where you forget the details  
and only recall  
the rivers that you cross,  
vague and wet as water, you.**

**6 September 2021**

=====

**I sent love letters  
to the multitude  
and why not, I had  
plenty of time on my hands  
and a million words to play with  
and some I used more than once,  
I wonder if my lovers guessed--  
you, for instance, did you feel  
my hands had touched  
someone else before you?**

**6 September 2021**

=====

**Voracious answers  
to timid questions,  
they take a whole night  
to explain the simplest stuff,  
like Why was I born here  
or When does now really start.  
You wake up in another language  
and then it's too late.  
Breathe through the nose  
until the mouth wakes up.**

**6 September 2021**

=====

**On the train to Philadelphia  
I met a woman once,  
we talked all through Jersey  
and I forget what happened then.  
But that is what distances are for,  
far is for, remember that,  
to meet and greet and soon forget  
but all that travel keeps  
remembering itself in you,  
man, woman, silo, tree,  
the outskirts of meaning  
where the train slows down.**

**6 September 2021**

=====

**The sky goes light.  
One more dawn  
embraced. he day  
is safe, no I can sleep.**

**6.IX.21**

=====

**Boardwalk littered with gulls  
and people wearing white  
as if the sky's  
not bright enough.  
But they have wings  
and we shuffle along  
the gentle old smooth wood  
barefoot or flip-flops  
while I in tight-laced shoes  
have come only to inspect the sea.**

**6 September 2021**



=====

**What is not to be seen  
somehow stronger  
voiced than what we see.  
The cloud behind the tree,  
the fairy-tale maiden  
living down in the well,  
the town crier mute 200 years.  
Man, I'm talking politics,  
politics and desire  
and how little I know  
of what makes me go.**

**2.**

**A city is a wall built on fear.  
Then in time the wall comes down  
and we live in meshes,  
blocks, we say, like the toys  
children play with to learn**

**the alphabets of architecture.  
No wall. Just number and fear.  
Sea wall at New Bedford.  
The coast of rain.**

**6 September 2021**

=====

**Come back for the key  
you can have the whole door  
only a Pharaoh  
dares seal up an empty room,  
perfectly empty stone by stone  
and the years pass along  
a story that keeps changing.  
Here, open it yourself  
and sing me a song  
of what you find,  
a little song,  
so long have I been waiting.**

**6 September 2021**

## LAWFUL

I wish I could tell a story about it, how the tiger only seemed to be in his cage, but when he pounced he only seemed to bite the passing antelope, who was the wrong kind anyhow to be in that part of the forest, no, it was a zoo so it could, could if it wanted to, come by the tiger's cage and tempt or be tempted. But none of this actually happened—how could it? Once we think about something, it's gone forever. There is a law here at work, the law the ancients called *Unicitas*—things can only

**happen once, in the city or in the head. Or have**

**I said all this before?**

**6 September 2021**

=====

What I want to tell you  
if I had the words—  
but the pages  
have all flown back  
to their trees  
and the words  
blow off them,  
turn into fluff  
dappling the wind  
across the pale sky.  
So all I mean to tell you  
hides itself in the actual.

6 September 2021

## **MEMBERING**

**In the fairy tale of dream, identities are fickle. I looked around the room--more chairs than people. Safe. Room to rest in thinking. As a group we performed a reference pomegranate, using real seeds,**

**We had come to be enrolled in a new science, the young man with the clipboard not sure what to call it. Eighteen or so neighbors we didn't know, but here we are. Here we are.**

**The sun was rising, so this was morning business. Strange coins to play with but not pay-- Babylonian? Did they even have them? Who invented money? Maybe in this session**

**we would find out. Whenever neighbors are gathered together, it's always about money, about property values, dreams of damages. So I began to wonder, not wrong, science is built on such. After all, confusion has fusion in it. So, as I said, we are safe here.**

**The fruit is distributed, the doors shut, the young man slowly takes down our banes and addresses as we speak them clearly. I don't recognize the streets they say, let alone their names, but they seem neighbors, neighbors.**

**Hours later, as we walked home, we were in mild disagreement about what we had witnessed, or even been part of, or had**



enrolled in. I assume that is true of any even vaguely cultural event two people take part in together. Everything is a sort of opera, I like one aria, you like another, we both are bored by the chorus but argue about why. And so it is, all the way home.

**7 September 2021**

=====

So much to tell you  
it's all about silence  
and the shape of time.  
A line runs through it  
and the mind rides the line,  
sound carries images,  
wind in the leaves.

**7.IX.21**

=====

**Listen harder  
when in doubt,  
listen harder  
and it will speak,  
listen harder  
till what it says  
slips from your lips.**

**7.IX.21**

=====

**Which of us  
has touched the new moon,  
and this one so special,  
start of the year,  
who has touched the year.  
They whirl around us,  
whirl us around  
and we can never seem  
to get our hands on them.  
We count them and remember  
and call it history,  
but look at me, my empty hands.**

**7 September 2021**

= = = = ==

**Why is it snowing in September,  
grey flakes under Brooklyn El,  
driving vaguely west  
to get northeast, trains  
grinding overhead?  
Fulton Street is just the way it was  
so little choice of where we are  
but the car is moving,  
traf fic moderate, sidewalks  
empty, all the little stores  
(you call them shops) are closed.  
How much sleep do we need  
to get home? Rum raisin ice dream  
if we could find any place open.  
Slowly uncertainty develops  
about what we mean  
when we say going home.  
Can't home ever be where we are?**

**7 September 2021**

**SEE**

**See?**

**See says**

**seen,**

**says say**

**what you see**

**till seen**

**is said,**

**see?**

**See in**

**see out,**

**but say,**

**just say**

**till see**

**is said**

**then breathe**

**free.**

**8.IX.21**

## AMONG LOST THINGS

Piano  
in the middle room  
so had to go  
round it to go anywhere.  
Or the path to  
where we wanted to go,  
wanted to be,  
led through music.

\*

Mahogany piano  
in the middle room,  
Bob Tipps would come  
by and play it now and then,  
Satie, because he  
was in the air in those days,  
*Gnossiens* on the radio,  
Bob playing for us  
as he had played once

for Robert Duncan  
(all of us Roberts  
in the thrall of music)  
the *fanfares of the Rosy+Cross*,  
anthems of Sar Peladan.

\*

Cambridge, near the river.  
Sometimes I touched it too,  
trying to remember what the nuns  
tried to teach me when I was ten,  
where the fingers go  
to make the music happen.  
All I could manage  
was the make sounds—  
are sounds the same as music?

\*

I woke this morning  
thinking calmly  
not sadly



about lost things  
and recalled he mahogany piano.  
See, I know more about  
the wood than the tuning  
though I love it when in Strauss  
the voice goes up a ninth  
and lovers swoon.

\*

A piano by the river,  
Upstairs Harvard's  
assistant professor of skiing,  
don't ask me why,  
Bus at the corner,  
pretty girls next door  
from Portugal, my heart sore  
because I could not bring  
music of my own  
from this great brown machine  
in a room of its own  
between two doors.

\*

Is that enough  
of the lost?  
But how can I call them lost  
when they were there,  
right here,  
this morning as I woke,  
sun gleam on the polished wood,  
Bob's ardent wicked Texas smile,  
Robert Lee Tipps, that is,  
who gave us music,  
and thus let us win  
a game we couldn't even play.

**8 September 2021**

**N= = = = =**

**ot a word  
not even a wind  
woke him.  
He was dark inside  
like a tree at dawn.  
Everyone can see me  
he thought,  
but not who I am.**

**2.**

**Days are desires  
the night fulfils--  
that's how the story  
usually runs.  
He knew that much  
but wished he could be  
a sailor, always busy elsewhere,  
in daylight, the wind  
like a drunken friend.**

**3.**

**But wishes don't walk,  
let alone sail.  
At least count the pages  
of what I am  
and tell me where I end.**

**4.**

**Asking for help is hard  
especially when non one's there.  
It helps to cry out  
like some king in a tragedy,  
helps. but not much.  
He is left alone with the morning.**

**5.**

**As usual in doubt  
he consulted  
the oracle of the window.  
Pale sky, motionless trees,**

**sleek wet street. Good omens  
but for whom?**

**Can we ever really live up  
to the full potential  
of the roles we are assigned,  
aren't we always  
forgetting our lines,  
coming through the door  
at the wrong time.  
missing the cue?**

**Or are our blunders  
really what we're for,  
the play of chance  
to enlighten the play?**

**6.**

**See how much windows know!  
~He is always surprised  
by the wisdom of things,  
how much they tell him  
when he dares to ask.**

Or when he learns  
that he can ask, can pile  
all he knows on top  
of one another and reach,  
reach what, it gets vague here,  
still no cloud in the sky  
to show the way.

7.

When he was young  
there were people called  
existentialists. Nice quiet folk,  
like a cross between  
Greta Garbo and Santa Claus,  
generous with their words,  
trying to talk their way  
safe into silence.  
He wants that now  
but can't find the words.

9 September 2021

=====

**The crow called me  
back to work,  
write before reading.  
A word is a headlight  
when you drive through dark woods.  
(Later if you want:  
Black Forest. The Clove  
in the Catskills. Read  
Hölderlin to find the way.)**

**9.IX.21**

=====

Last night the dream  
strolled me on the boardwalk  
with a small group of friends,  
all shorts and shouts and bare feet  
and I wondered why  
we didn't step down onto the sand  
and offer at least  
our toes to the sea--  
the sea is the reason  
all of us were there,  
are here, the sea is the reason.

9.IX.21



=====

**Let me always remember  
the words you say to me  
even when you're not here  
and they come, as if by themselves,  
through the atmosphere of mind,  
clear as if I could still see  
you speaking them.  
Let me go on hearing them,  
one word enough for a day.**

**9 September 2021**

=====

**I wrote a poem  
to your knees  
because they're soft and smooth,  
I wrote a poem to your  
rich tangled hair  
that lets me run my fingers through.  
I wrote a poem to your heart  
I sometimes hear  
clearer than you do,  
the tune of your love humming  
while you're busy doing something else.**

**9 September 2021**

## **OFFICE**

**The office used to mean  
A work, a place too  
Where one does the work of the day.  
Where are we now,  
Masked figure in an airy room  
Waiting for a change  
In the world's weather.  
Come join me, hide  
Your face with mine.**

**2,  
We're good at complaining,  
Goes with the job.  
The office. No watercooler.  
Unisex bathroom  
With even a tub.  
Call that complaining?  
Bring me my bar of chocolate,  
My little brown bible**

To nibble all the afternoon.  
No candy in the tin  
But if there were it would  
Be safe from mice.  
Lots of mice. You smell them  
Sometimes when you come in,  
Pungent through the black  
Mold reek of the basement.  
Maybe masks are a good idea.

3.

No, there was chocolate in the tin  
After all, senile a little, pale,  
But just right in the mouth.  
And I look up from it and see  
The graceful native drum,  
Its skin of zebra-hide,  
That Harvey Bialy brought me  
From Cameroon so long ago.  
Harvey! I dreamt of him last night,  
He's only been dead a few years

**And he saw me as he walked  
With his new colleagues at the college.  
Turned back towards me, I jumped up  
And ran to him, traffic,  
So many people, watch out  
For the busses, the big pink truck,  
The photographers were waiting  
Trying to get the moment  
Of our reunion, smiles, handshakes,  
Comradely stuff but we  
Somehow couldn't find  
Each other in the crowds,  
The reporters desperate,  
More and more people filling  
This familiar street I'd  
Never seen before.  
So I'd better get up right now  
And beat the drum.**

**9 September 2021**

== == ==

**What one tries to do  
Is open the door,  
Keep it open.  
Don't give the wolf  
A hard time,  
Let him in, it takes  
Him by surprise,  
He sttles down  
Between your slippers  
And the fireplace.  
In this way dogs became  
And gave us new things  
To worry about, new fangs  
Outside the ever-open gate.  
And still the wind comes in  
Carrying the news we need.**

**9 September 2021**

=====

**I sometimes wonder  
If the parrot on the pirate  
Knew more about the ocean  
Than a tree bird should.  
I myself have flown  
Over the mountains of Anatolia,  
Red sands of South Arabia,  
Witnessed more than  
My body was supposed to see.  
So why shouldn't Polly  
Know Poseidon? Maybe  
It whispers accurate longitude  
Into the pirate's gold-studded ear.**

**9 September 2021**

## THE DICTION

The word went before me  
and I followed as best I could.  
I had an old language with me,  
one my London grandmother spoke.

2.

I never knew her  
or any other  
of those we call grand,  
was born too late,  
too late to be now?

But my mother and father  
were great enough  
for any possible me.



3.

It's a matter of sympathy,  
a shared pathology,  
the books I used to read  
spoke that language too.  
But now I only read  
what we all do, endless  
emails, edicts from the emperor.

4.

I found myself using  
an old turn of phrase,  
obsolete but there it was,  
right out of my mouth  
onto the page. And that  
brought all this on,  
this boast in the form of apology—  
but *apo* plus *logia* means  
taking the word away.

5.

**Forget Greek.**

**In the Brooklyn alley**

**I stgood alone**

**with the pussy-willow.**

**A collie-dog came by**

**leading his lame master.**

**I saw right then**

**how langage works—**

**here, it's yours now too.**

**9 September 2021**

## **HAPPY ENDING**

**the goat ate the letter  
ill-advisedly written  
by the other lover,  
the silken drapes flourished  
in the window, nice day,  
the camel passed by the gate,  
didn't stop, the princess  
looked up from her embroidery  
and saw a big bird, eagle maybe,  
come perch on the tower,  
she knew then  
that he would come back  
so she hummed her little aria,  
her signature tune,  
softly as the curtain falls.**

**10 September 2021**

=====

Haydn? Sikh?  
So many languages  
we don't understand.

Because everything sounds  
like something else,  
even music knows  
how to break our hearts  
with silence alone.

Pause. Paws.  
We are at the mercy of *merci*,  
we live to give thanks,  
walk through so many  
religions to find the right word.

10 September 2021

=====

1.

The idea of your wandering  
on the road to [     ]  
to learn the name of the day—  
listen, as earth twists  
the place will come clear,  
the place will come to you,  
sandstone of the temple,  
leaf shadows of the grove.

2.

Then we will begin to know—  
you have to help me here,  
no one can do it alone,  
to wake up on the right

side of the night.

3.

Calico priestesses,  
bishops in fur—  
we find, alas,  
only what we're looking for.

4.

That's why I need  
to ask your help,  
candle flame, cigarette,  
shadows on the boardwalk,  
subway to the sun,  
hear the wind blowing,  
the tunnel is speaking,  
hurrying or standing still

**we'll all arrive.**

**5.**

**So this is the place at last.**

**Lie down on the grass**

**and listen while you sleep.**

**Gentle hillside, autumn weather**

**always sun still in Virgo**

**though, don't set your watch**

**by what I see.**

**6.**

**Wake now**

**and tell me what you heard**

**from all that ground beneath you.**

**Lawn and birdsong,**

dew and breeze,  
tell me what this place  
really is,  
tell me who I am.

**11 September 2021**



=====

**If the gate were open  
what would we feel  
about going through?  
Do we sense what comes in  
when we go out?  
Most of our languages have lost  
the old Indo-European optative mood  
that said out loud what we  
wanted to be so.  
Albanian still preserves it  
but the Adriatic coast is so far away.  
But then again, everything is far  
if you don't have a verb.**

**2.**

**Nouns are space,  
verbs move them or cancel space.  
So a verb has time  
and wish and will**

**and do I mean it when I say  
or do?**

**That;s why we are so strange,  
animals all of us, nouns  
who move through space,  
go out and come in again.  
May it ever be so.**

**11 September 2021**

=====

**Nine/eleven  
but I don't want  
to remember  
eleven September  
treason and plot,  
yes, I saw the second  
plane crash into the tower  
the explosion burst  
from the other side,  
I still don't understand,,  
you know all about that,  
more than I do,  
my business is with the tree  
and with thee  
and all the nymphs  
of language and of mind  
who cheered the first responders on.  
who console us or try to,  
with their songs of bravery**

**and never again.**

**Trees, I say,  
the trees they are ashamed of us,  
not just or savage lumberjacks,  
but that so many of us seem  
to live to hurt and love to do so.  
If I had a sermon for this day  
it would be as hard as this:  
hurt no one, help everyone.  
But you have heard all that before.**

**11 September 2021**

=====

**Nothing to be said  
about the now.  
The now speaks for itself—  
time for me to do likewise—  
that's what I and you are for.**

**11.IX.21**

|= = = = =

Noisy pillow  
testament of love  
is it your breath or mine  
that little oboe squeal  
when breath comes out,  
my breath or yours,  
are we sleeping,  
clear the nostrils  
clear the throat,  
clear the heart,  
breath holds us together,  
unites us, unties us  
from our separate selves,  
share the pillow,  
share the thought,  
please wake with me.

**12 September 2021**

=====

**Self-absorption of the pure Vrgo,  
late summertime,  
stand by the Rondout,  
watch the river tide  
push the creek back up the hills,  
sometimes all we see  
is disguised astrology.**

**12,UX.21**

=====

**Not dawn yet  
but I need a bite  
of something ,  
something that tastes  
like food, but food  
is not given in the night,  
except what feeds the dream.  
But I'm awake now  
or is it?**

**12,IX.21**



=====

Being here long enough  
waiting till the answer comes--  
that's a man's job  
or a woman's,  
we come to a river  
and watch it go,  
we settle by its banks,  
we are littoral creatures,  
we need to be  
at the edge of the sea or some  
part of it hidden  
in the hills that flows by,  
right now, I can hear it  
from my window  
making its way cleanly  
clearly to what it is.

12 September 2021

=====

The dawn birds  
chitter in the darkness  
chipping away at it  
till the light comes.  
Robins. Wrens. Phoebes,  
you tell me,  
you know their calls,  
those colors we can hear.

**12 September 2021**

## **TREES TELL**

**Trees tell  
tell me  
about all  
manner of things,  
not just tree stuff,  
not just leaves.**

**They have been here so long  
and still keep becoming  
more and more, listening,  
discoursing, as I must do  
if I'm to make  
any kind of sense  
of what little I know.**

**They know history,  
chemistry, astronomy,  
physics, architecture,  
music, compassion,**

**theology. Philosophy  
they leave to us,  
they are too busy knowing  
to have much time for thought.  
And they are generous  
with what they know.**

**12 September 2021**

=====

**When we're kids  
we play at being  
different  
kinds of people.  
Who said we  
ever stop?**

**12,IX.21**

=====

In a dream I had to choose  
between robes of a bishop  
or simple deacon's surplice,  
to both of which I was entitled  
but in two different fairly  
tenuous religions. Exiguous,  
I'd say. I think I told the sacristan  
to bring me either, I'd wear  
whatever role he brought me,  
as we all do, as we all do.  
Then I joined the clergy on the roof.

12.IX.21

=====

**Walking up the modest  
hallway in the dark,  
cave in the Himalayas,  
twenty feet can take an hour,  
all night, all life.  
This place is all places.  
Everything is now,  
I can hear Milarepa  
laughing in the dark.**

**13 September 2021**

## THE ENTOURAGE

They travel with us,  
the gibbering Iliads,  
sutras we have neglected to read,  
half-remembered prophecies,  
Dante leading Virgil through the dark.  
They press close around us  
as we go, hands all over us,  
pressing, some forward,  
some back, they have  
no minds to make up,  
just ours, and when we want  
to linger at the blue sea shore  
and stare in peace  
at some quiet mindless island  
they push us to inhabit it with thought,  
and how could the sea be silent  
even if the chorus finally let go?

13 September 2021



=====

**Why can't I be  
a different island  
every day,  
and make of life  
an archipelago  
stretched across  
what seems.  
a boundless sea.**

**13 September 2021**

=====

**There is another kind of Lent  
that happens in the hollow of the year  
where light is stored, turns  
into a kind of bread  
sustains us in that time,  
bread and dew  
and pray for rain.**

**No calendar discloses it--  
you have to find the days of it  
when your mind turns austere,  
gives up its usual,  
waits for what is on its way,  
the radiant answer  
that comes before  
all our squalid questions.**

**13 September 2021**

=====

Some birds feed in the air  
on smaller customers of atmosphere,  
some love better  
to fly lower,  
feed on seed the earth yields up  
or kind women scatter on the lawn,  
hang a seedy diner from the trees.  
Some birds do more walking,  
wild turkeys strut  
down from the hill.  
I wonder what I would do  
if I had wings.

13.IX.21

=====

To wake the living,  
a Japanese cup,  
pale celadon,  
waiting to be filled.

So many choices!  
And yet the hands  
that made it  
must have had  
something special  
in their far-off mind,  
white tea or black,  
or a broth boiled  
from turmeric,  
yellow as sunset  
in all that green.

13.IX.21

=====

I followed the detective  
over the moor, he searched  
for hoof prints of that stolen stag,  
I searched for clues to what  
he had in mind. No client,  
no crime, just his vision  
of a great antlered beast  
driven or dragged into this  
by now wearisome desolation.

Where had the image come from,  
why did he credit it,  
why did I care? Care enough  
to follow. I stopped and sat down  
on a glacial stone, now at last  
more interested in what I had in mind  
than what he had in his  
Here I am, I thought,  
my homeland on earth,

why do I care  
what someone else is thinking?  
Isn't it enough to be me?

By now my sleuth was far ahead,  
a sweep of tweed cape  
and beyond him the shimmer of the sea.

**14 September 2021**

= = = = == = =

Where the river eases wide  
into the bay the raft was waiting—  
upstream with the engine  
purring like violins, or quietly  
out to sea? We do have choices,  
thanks to the Lady, the one  
who rules all rives, offers them  
to her love, the Ocean Sea.  
We play around the ankles pf the powers,  
our choices their amusements,  
the way we watch raindrops  
race each other down the window.  
I hear them chuckle as I strut about  
waving my bright red atheist flag.

14 September 2021

=====

Sometimes it's enough  
and sometimes it's not.  
Coconuts float island to island,  
ospreys carry fish inland,  
covert banquets on other species.  
I want to be a vegetarian  
then the cheese comes out  
and categories grow confused—  
so chickens give milk? Do clams  
divide the hoof? O it's not old religion,  
its common decency, it's not right  
to eat people, but where do people end  
and some other life begins?  
They all think, feel, mate, beget, linger,  
pass away. I look down at the lone  
tomato on my white plate and wonder.

14 September 2021



=====

**So hard to understand  
but how beautiful to see  
what's outside the door  
wonders of human psychology  
lodged in soft shadow trees  
that were weren't there  
when I first lived here,  
how kind they are  
how they came to me  
were they once my friends,  
my relatives, my guides  
who have come to me  
and stand there in the green,  
so many of them, so many.**

**13 / 14 September 2021**

=====

**Watch where the eagle goes  
then go the other way.  
The emperor is asleep,  
the logothete sleuthing by the harem,  
the Hellespont is full of lovers  
swimming bravely boldly  
to prove something  
they've forgotten by midstream,  
dolphins sporting, nameless fish.**

**Fly or float the other way,  
up the river under Leonardo's  
bridge he never built,  
learn a new language,  
there are Northmen in these parts,  
blond bodyguards of the palace,  
they sound like dogs barking.  
Leave all this to the eagle—**

**come upstream with me  
into the quiet land  
ruled only by grassland and the wind,  
nobody cares, nobody's there,  
sit with me beside the well.  
And tell. And tell.**

**14 September 2021**

=====

**What he didn't see  
the tree saw for him.  
The way it is with stone  
too, that waits and waits  
to tell him. Remembers well  
but trees tell more.  
He's being perfectly honest now  
so it's hard for people to believe him.**

**15 September 2021**

=====

*I lifted love like a latch  
when I found the door—  
so sang some troubadour  
before I got around to being,  
but the echo of him lingers.  
I lift love and open the door.  
in those days they had gardens,  
walled in, sealed, safe as crystal—  
what have we? Lift the latch,  
does the gate swing in or out?  
I see the sun shining in there.  
For the ten thousandth time  
I dare myself to go in.*

15 September 2021

=====

**Living by loss  
like trees in fall  
getting ready inside  
for that great green *again*.**

**15.IX.21**

=====

**I don't feel fully qualified  
to confront the day.  
My uniform is tattered,  
my diploma in shreds.  
But the maiden is waiting  
on the rock beside the stream,  
her pale feet guiding, diverting,  
writing the water as it flows by.  
I have to meet her there--that  
is what a day means. All it means,  
going, meeting, and what happens then.**

**15 September 2021**

=====

**All you need to do  
is say some words  
nobody ever said before  
but deeply we all know.**

**15.IX.21**



====

Archaic formality of sleep  
how we enter that dark hall  
almost every night, obey  
almost all the rules. Sometimes  
there comes disorder  
in that ceremony, we wake  
when we shouldn't, the priests  
and priestesses have vanished  
though we hear them whispering  
in other rooms. Or is it rain?  
Alone in the dark with no chaperon,  
we lose our place in the text,  
flounder in thought, breathe out,  
what can we do but wait--  
isn't waiting what the dark is for?

16 September 2021

=====

Trees don't especially care  
what names we call them--  
they are suspicious of,  
a little amused by,  
our meticulous taxonomies.  
"The where-I-am is much  
more important than  
who-my-brother-is," I heard  
one say when I was looking,  
:no who without where--put that  
in your botany." Yes, milord.  
Or is it lady? That distinction too  
keeps them chuckling as we pass.

16 September 2021

=====

**When all the gas stations are gone  
and we have only the sun and the wind  
to move us, where will we go  
to but milk on Sunday morning  
or grab a Coke at midnight?  
Ah, progress, progress,  
I remember when a nickel  
got your on the subway,  
the only place even adults  
were not allowed to smoke.**

**16 September 2021**

=====

*Lord, it is time,*  
Fritz began his prayer,  
*the summer was so huge*  
and he went on saying,  
closer, more beautiful  
than fields of ripe wheat,  
his words true as the wind.  
Our older brother, we follow  
trying to learn his song.

16.IX.21

=====

**Am I cold  
or is it happy  
comes through windows  
right now in daylight  
and my skin knows it  
before my mind, if I have  
another mind than skin.**

**16.IX 21**

====

**“Jever hava cuppa java at was skunky?”  
Pardon? I said, and he asked again, slower, as  
for a person, me, of sluggish apprehension.  
“Did you ever have a cup of coffee that was  
really skunky, I mean smelled like a real skunk  
on a rainy night, coming in the window, did you  
ever taste coffee like that?” I never had,  
though I’ve had some feeble cups of coffee,  
diner coffee, yuk, but no skunks yet. He  
complained, explained that very morning he  
had been given a mug of coffee with that skunk  
smell in it, milk and sugar didn’t help. the smell  
was in the taste, if I knew what he means. I  
commiserated as well as I could, not hard,  
because coffee’s such a sacred beverage for  
me, evil thought to tinge it with skunks. Yet  
their musk is used by perfume makers, yes?  
Somehow the powerful sheer animal essence  
of it, non-verbal, sensual as a squeeze,**

**somehow that smell animates many perfumes women pay lots of euros for. OK, “OK”, he said, “I’m not trying to kill skunks, just keep them out of my coffee, and for the life of me I can’t figure out how it ever got there.” Me neither, I agreed.**

**16 September 2021**

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