

5-2022

May2022

Robert Kelly

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MAY DAY

There was no night, no bonfires,
no old devils witched away.

Just now. The sun
rolled us out.

No Europe, no liturgy.

America. Just now.

Labor Day around the world,
not here. Sunday.

The way the bones of the head
feel in the hand, sunshine
cold. What is to be done?

The birds on the lawn
repeat Lenin's question,
the farmer shouts to scare
a woodchuck away from his mulch.

There's one

church open in town still,
Episcopal, named for a rabb
got into bad trouble with Rome.
Then. Not now. Not now.
The woodchuck runs
but will come back. Marmota.
Saint Paul said Do not conform
your mind to the system,
transform, seek the new mind.
Just now. Sky as blue
as a word being spoken,
so fresh, never heard before,
just like yesterday. Just now.
Walk by the little river,
wade in the light. Your hands.

1 May 2022

=====

**Aperture
lets outside in.
Eye or window,
hole in wall.
Lens. Digital
images?
Tell me what
the numbers saw.
Be literal
just for once
and let me see.**

1.V.22

LET THE LADDER DECIDE

which cloud you reach,
or which steps the angel
chooses to come down.
To you, Or you go up.
Let the stairs decide
how far to go and who
you are when you get there
and whom you meet,
waiting in the marble hall.
Sometimes it's easier
to go down, but dangerous,
more likely to fall
than in the rigors of ascent.
Let the steps decide—
things have more time to think.

1 May 2022

=====

**Warblers passing
through, arriving,
you saw one yesterday.
Astonishing that we
are still part of what goes on,
comes and goes, sings and flies away.**

1.V.22

=====

he light when I woke
had that eight o'clock look
flooding in from the woods,
blinking my eyes for me
padding uop the hall.
House NNW. Window SSE.
Latitude 42 north. Earth.
Here. Go back to bed
and be in Venice, in front
of that whitechurch on the water,
you beside me, still staring east.

1 May 2022

=====

**Build me a miracle
brick by brick.
Call it a week
and let every day of it
explain itself in music,
humming on its way towards
to say what's really on its mind.**

1 May 2022

= = = = =

**Have a child
or be one.
No other choice.**

1.V.22

THE TRANSMISSION

**On this day sixty-two years ago
on the southeast corner
of Macdougall and Bleeker
I first met Robert Duncan.
A man came along in a fawn
suit, brown tie, smiled, said to me
“You must be Robert Kelly!”
and I have tried to be ever since.**

2 May 2022

TAIN 1

Miracle of rain

imagine lying naked on the roof in
steady late spring time rain
you are a lion on the veldt

imagine the rain washing you washing
you back
washing your face
soft toes of your feet

what is it that rain is washing away
where does it go, this scurf
of sadness, sheer experience
this fresh water wipes
off your skin, off your soul and sends
down want to be ever-forgiving Earth?

**On miracle of rain miracle of water of
which we are made,
that knows us, tells us the truth.**

2 May 2022

RAIN 2

**Rain in your pocket,
dip in it, feel it,
take your fingers out
and sprinkle the altar
with what you touched,
the altar is everything you see.**

2 May 2022

RAIN 3

**Look to the living
my raindrop said to me,
mine by virtue of my
breaking its fall,
interrupting its pilgrimage to earth
so it could roll
voluptuously on my wrist.
Look to the living, it said,
we all tell you this.**

3 May 2022

= = = = =

**Windshield wipers
the sun comes out
the service workers
drive to work, teachers
come an hour later
after Buildings & Grounds make
the land ready for language.
Shovel snow (I did in dream)
mow the lawn, drag all yesterday
to the dump hidden in the trees,
getting the place fit for nouns,
lots of adjectives, damn few verbs.**

3 May 2022

=====

**7 A.M., spring morning.
Why did I dream of snow?
And so much of it, my arms
wordless, weary of shovel.**

3 May 2022

(LUNE)

**Slow foot nimble wit
I hope so
but who;s listening?**

, 3.V.22

=====

**While I spilled
a week indoors
the big beech tree
has put on its leaves.
And lets me read again
the summer syllabus to come.
I feel welcomed back into the real.**

3 May 2022

=====

**Mountain under knees
feet over the cliff**

I slept.

**11111Not well, not long,
but still.**

````No pain

except dull thought

wanting to think even less.

**Perious geology of human time—
or is that just sleepiness?**

3 May 2022

=====

**Weltering in wonder
the child wakes.**

**He's grown up now
and the world about him
ripens alongside.**

**The conductor raises his baton,
the gesture is ancient,
pretentious, ridiculous,
powerful and then the Mahler
begins, for example,**

**the paintings shimmer on the wall,
shiny cars slip past in rain.**

**And you thought it was just a dream!
Read the script again,
it's probably still stuffed
in your hip pocket
along with the map of Oahu
with the life insurance
agent's business card.**

4 May 2022

=====

**Yes, rain. But why not?
Trees love it,
they're wiser than you.**

4.V.22

= = = = =

**Wincing at the thought
he looks up,
plans to think no more.**

4.V.22

AGRONOMY

Teach me to grow
up out of my own dirt
into the light world
I sometimes hear
the wild sweet wind of outside.
Teach me to grow
out of myself into
that bright world and be
what I can be,
a beech tree, a dandelion,
a blade of grass.

4 May 2022

=====

*Now the girls of the countryside
are at their best*

 he said,
*running from shadow to shadow
and owning each one,
them running on...*

 he said
then lapsed into reverie.
I wanted to shake him,
wanted him to shake
me out of the vision
his words had drowned me in,
I, who live in shadow all the time.

4 May 2022

=====

The skull is not just
one bone, you know—
it speaks in jaws and teeth
and plates that have their own desires.
Brain has to hold
all this together,
plus smile and wink the eyes.
Every human being is
a small town in the desert,
a few are cities
and one or two, thank
God, are rivers.

5 May 2022
)from late April)

=====

Lente lente currite
cars of the morning—
leave the day alone
to begin its own music.

5 May 2022
(from late April)

=====

**Intermediate algebra
or how long it takes an ant
to skitter across a page
without touching the letter x.
Something like that.
Or a steam among apple trees
(though they're usually
planted on hillsides around here
but you never know)
into which brown apple leaves
some autumns significantly fall.
That one was me. Or in winter
(remember?) sometimes
warm one's hands on the hoof
of the family car, after you finished
shoveling snow and you**

and the car are waiting
for the rest of the family,
the rest of you. Or the distance
between the toe of Cassiopeia
and the top of the linden tree.
I have poor eyesight,
so I'm not so good at math.

5 May 2022

= = = ==

**I want to be a subway
I want to go right under you
to go where I go
so you'll be there when I get there.**

That's how a city starts.

5 May 2022

ON THE ILIAD

Go read the old chants
that Homer picked and chose
his way through to a simple
kill the city before it kills you,
Read them out loud in your head
how N\Baltic savages delight
in tearing down walls, killing
cit dwellers, rescuing women
against their will, then later,
o those farmers of Sparta,
those pretenders to the warm sea,
paid their ;little Hebrew scribe
for his beautiful language to hide
in poetry what they had done.

5 May

2022OBLIVISCOR

stands at the gate
where the dream
sets you free
and says This
you may remember,
all this you forget,
right now, and wipe
their shadows off,
bust on the pillow.

y job is to see that you
only remember
the important things.

You make my job hard for me,

**you only want to keep
the pretty things. Let them go—
I know what you need.**

6 May 2022

=====

**Governing the state
is like dreaming
or a long, long meal
in a fancy restaurant.
any emperor will tell you that,
all you really do is sign the bill.**

6 May 2022

=====

**Watching the words
like little pink newborn mice
squirming gently in their nest.
watching over them,
mothering them until
they grow vigorous and storing,
start running around
then I can follow them
as they lead me all the way
to what I didn't know I meant.**

6 May 2022

=====

**Cold enough to see my breath
this May evening**

**the breath settles down as words
to tell you what I saw**

**gentle billowing of a pale mist
toppling up out of my mouth,**

**so quickly did I become one part
of what I and you are part of,**

**this breathing world,
inhaling the ancient wine of God.**

6 May 2022

MEETING THE TEACHER

remembering Lama Norlha Rinpoche

I first saw him moving quickly
in a huge crowded hall.
He moved from one person
to the next, spotting each one
as if they were alone in the crowd,
found them fully, then saying
or doing what needed to be.
And as I watched I understood
that this man knew, deeply knew
the person to whom he spoke,
knew him maybe even now,
at this first meeting,
knew him the way we know

I was going to say a pine tree
in a grove of leafy trees.

That's wrong. He seemed to know
each not by type or class but who
they really are, knew and cared,
so in the seconds of their meeting
he had made or strengthened
connection on which that person
if they had good sense or luck
could build a *knowing*
that stretched between them,
on which the person known
could travel to the real,
could know their own mind.

I had never seen anyone like him
before. I asked his name,

didn't recognize it among all the famous monks and teachers gathered for a ritual and teachings in this Uptown solemn secular hall.

Who was he? A few weeks later I drove to a monastery upstate, less than an hour from my house, must have gotten the time wrong, drove into the empty parking lot, stopped the car, wondered, opened the door, climbed out, and there he was, the same monk, right at my elbow, Come drink tea he said. And I was known.

2.

I have told this story before,

**forgive me, if I offend
the demons of Once is Enough.
I tell it because it was my evidence,
certain, never questioned
that this man I slowly came to know
knew me better than I knew myself.
Not the names and numbers
linked to me but the one I was,
the one I am, He was not
distracted by my lusts and fears,
or those devious swindlers
Preference & Taste. He taught me
the only three laws you need,
Help everyone, hurt no one,
Tame your own mind.
He gave me back my mind.**

3.

**And so much more. But
I want to tell you about him,
not about me, but me
was the mirror he engraved
his image on, so that tonight
forty years after that crowded hall
his words and image, his being
in my mind, in the minds of all
his students who welcomed him,
tried to honor and help him
in our feeble ways. Even now,
a few sad harsh years after his own
paranirvana, we sense him with us still.**

4.

**His voice was fantastic,
a dragon his teachers called him
in Nangchen. To hear him chant
the rituals of Tara, Chenrezi,
or the dark benign protectors
who shield our nights and deeds
was to hear not just a noble human
invoking deities, but the sound
of them answering, guiding,
and most of all reminding.
Lama Norlha Rinpoche—
greatest reMinder I ever met.**

6 May 2022

A TREE I SAW SAID

**Look at me
listen to me move**

**the air is pure
my leaves write through**

**the alphabet you
folk from Phoenicia,
Anatolia, Scythia
just you three**

**know how to read
what I am telling the air**

7 May 2022, Rhinebeck

WHAT A THING SAYS

Someone made me
I think about them all the time—
his clever hands
(I roughed them up a bit,
we're made like that,
can't help it,
we give rough for him to work with
called shaving us smooth—
where was I?
He gave me legs
to stand on firmly
with no pain.
I can go on standing forever.
Now people just like him
come and sit around me,

their soft legs
beside mine, sometimes
too close for their comfort
but I don't mind,
they sit there for hours
sometimes, eating, playing cards,
or take over all my surface
to scribble, only thin paper
between their sharp pen points
and my tender skin or
sometimes they just fiddle
their fingers idly, it tickles
but I don't mind, I stand firm
as ever and hum my little song

*From walnut to Tree
From Tree to Me.*

7 May 2022, Rginececk

NO COMPLAINING

**we are bored with that opera,
the story's poignant
but the music's dull.
We need a charger, a breeder,
a mare that can win races,,
don't make the skeleton
sing baritone, have the fox
leap on the table. In Turkey
they have rocks that sing
better than this. So now
tell a story with no broken wing,
let it flutter like you know
or soar like sacrament,**

**let the story sing itself
radio roaring on an empty beach.**

8 May 2022

NO MORE WAR

**Damascene they called the sword
adorned with its own wounds—
graven metal sparkles in sunlight
but why use it to kill?
Hasn't it been wounded enough
by our designs? Sink all battle
into the weapon, post the weapon
gleaming on the parlor wall.**

8 May 2022

MOTHER'S DAY

Sacred silences
of what she told me
no words spoiled—
a look was enough
and still is, a glance
from the back of my mind
where all the places we lived
still spread, dark, a little dusty
but still there. The room
sparkles clean when I see her in it
and she still guides by silence.
Her forsythia is in flower still.

8May 2022

=====

**Macadam did it
then the railroad
so before we knew it
we could go anywhere.
Add on Cunard and
then the brothers Wright
and all of sudden
elsewhere was the only
place we could be.
No more here. Here
is a childhood memory,
a pleasant dream, empty
as a blue sky, lost
in the leaves of spring.**

9 May 2022

=====

**Eye at the keyhole
ear pressed to wall.
Vigilance. Pay heed.
Ignore nothing.
Everybody has a number,
every moment is a clue.
This alertness is a church,
you will be blessed
and never bored. Handle
things cautiously
though in the dark.**

9 May 2022

=====

**Moral imperatives
drip from my pen.
Who says these things in me?
Yesterday a plump wild turkey
gorgeously mottled plumage
idled on my lawn. Lunging
every now and then for a seed
but slow, slow. I understood
at last that time has nothing to do
with him, with me, with us.
The hour is built into us,
what's in us is what we are.
Morality is a handsome bird
waddling uphill into the trees.**

9 May 2022

=====

**Convection
as if the mind
could hold
and not let go
and swirl
within itself
fierce fresh answers
to antique questions
and know the secret
name of the day
even before sunrise.**

10 May 2022

=====

He knew the meaning
but not the color,
he knew the tune
but couldn't play it,
what do fingers know
he thought, am I
my body or.
Or what.
No wonder
the color
fell off the wall.

10.V.22

=====

The long red dirt road
along the Delaware
all the way to Damascus,
so slippery in rain,
dangerous, but the sight
of those red pigs
rushing joyous through
heavy rain in their corral,
and then the sun,
their bristles gold,
and the river always.
And by always it means
right now, a road
you drove so often,
happy as a pig in rain,

**a road you drove
maybe even once
stays with you, in you,
everlasting Damascus road.**

10 May 2022

AND THEN THEY LOOKED UNDER THE ROCK

**took three men to turn it over
and there the entrance was,
no way of telling by eye
how far that dark shaft sank
or turned or traveled.**

**No scent came out, nothing
to go by, just a vague
idea in their heads
that this was important.**

**After a while they rolled
the stone right back.**

**One said, We will beave
this to our children to explore.**

11 May 2022

=====

**Lilacs! Chinese quince.
Sometimes the names
are pretty as the flower.
And if each new leaf
on all these trees
had a name of its own
as each one has its word to say
chatting all afternoon
the kindness of the world.**

11 May 2022

=====

**Mother = live for another.
Father = Keep going further.
Tugof war: make them follow
or make him come home.**

11.V.22

= = = = =

If this were today
it would have a kind of Roman feel,
a river not too far, a stone
to mark the edge of money.
But how will I ever know
if this is now? Go outside,
watch the bees? Close eyes
and hope they're mine,
my own dark I see? Still
hear the bees, bees tell the truth.

11 May 2022

=====

**Everything I see
when I close my eyes
belongs to me.
Everything out there
has a life of its own,
each thing or beast or bird
owns itself first of all,
whatever humans think
with our lazy sense of
this is mine and this is yours.
Only the dark tells the truth
about the light—see anything
and you both are free.**

11 May 2022

=====

**Saying what has to be said
takes silence too.
The stones of Leipzig.
The woods round my home.**

12 Ma 2022

=====

**Wait for the obvious,
it takes a long time.
Meantime watch sparrows.
They're on their way too.**

12 May 2022

RELIGION

Power protects power
projects power
protects us.

That is our business
to look out and down and over
and protect every
blessed thing we see.

13.V.22

= = = = =

**There are words
waiting in the woods.
The old man in his head
had been saying that
for eighty years.
Prospector from Alaska
with frozen feet,
uncle from the Ardennes
with poisoned lungs,
all the codgers, old rakes
all said the same.**

13 May 2022

=====

The road is red.
There is no shame
in going back and back—
even you one day
strolling by the Cavillon
saw a human skull
standing [?] on a new-cut berm,
ivory and red-earth,
the road to Spain.

`3 May 2022

=====

**Now is praise.
Now is enough.
The wanderer
has come home
truth in his teeth,
the air breathed in,
the only answer.**

13 May 2022

=====

**A hymn should hurry,
should learn its way
to the knees of the other
the one the words
presume to praise.**

13 May 2022

THERE ARE REPRISALS.

Spring breeze in the Chinese quince
hidden by the shed
where books are stored.

We read so many!

And this is how we're answered,
breeze in sunlight, red petals carrying
thorns.

Glorious disaster Of springtime
where for one quick gleaming
afternoon

all our winter worries crumble,
the artifices of anxiety collapse.

I saw a _____ like this once
and here I am.

13 May 2022

=====

**Look at those people
finishing dinner in the Chinese
restaurant,
they're finishing up,
their ripping open
the cellophane packets
togetat their fortune cookies.
giggling oor feigning awe
at what hey read,
then the crunch of those
sweet amost tasteless crisps.
Don't they realize
that every word they read**

**tells their fortune,
every conversaton
overheard
is the voice of destiny?**

13 May 2022

=====

**Remote in distances
a stone shaft,
looks first like made
then not.**

**Slender
sloping up to a point
but where that would be
a skull of stone, pumpkin,
ball, bone, what
the weather said and did.**

2.

**No room for tomorrow
in a place like this,
so American the shaped austerity.**

A traveler brought this home.
Learn to read
the rock she brings—
I hope the image is enough.
An image is always enough.

3.

No leaf, no tree.
Just weather.
Wait while I wonder.
Can we be together
with what only one has seen?
Star over desert,
remember?

14 May 2022

=====

Automobile

does not move by itself.

Aviation

is not the practice of being a bird.

But we get the general idea.

We forgive easily those who invent

even if they mix Greek and Latin.

or when they thnk time flies

when it really flees,

runs away like a scared rabbit.

My mistake, I think the word is sacred.

15 May 2022

=====

**Full moon in May
Pierre declares,
the horseshoe crabs
come ashore by the thousands
on Pkum Beach
as we used to spell it
when I lived by that shore.
But now I am a crab with no sea,
I have to leave it to him and Nicole
to flip the poor things back on their feet
so they can at their own time
lumber back to the surf.
Our task: walk through the world
setting things right.**

15 May 2022

=====

**Could we live without diamonds
and rubies, live without jewelry,
live without gold?**

**We as individuals
can do it easily
but collectively
a problem arises,
society, economy,
attitude, display.**

I think of the tin *ex voto*

**Mary Sternbach gave me years ago,
shows a human leg embossed,
meant to be hung up in church,
probably in Mexico, to ask
divine help for someone's
damaged leg, or else
to thank heaven for the cure.**

**Is that a jewel? A prayer,
a tin act of faith, a last hope.
Now lookat the diamond
on someone's finger—
what prayer is it saying?
Love me forever?
Or buy me another?
Tell me when you know the answer—
I'll take sapphire any time.**

15 May 2022

=====

Warm morning. Inside,
outside the same
seventy-nine degrees.

A balanced world,
light floods through us,
full moon last night,
Sunday quiet now.

A grand white cloud
imitates the shape
or the trees right below it.
For a while, nothing
needs to be done—
all the doing
is happening around us,

**outside us. And presumably
inside us too. The balance.
Watch and see what we become.**

15 May 2022

FENCE

The Triangle they call it,
an acre of grass with a few
trees in it and a fence round it.
On weeke d nights the kids,
local and otherwise, would park
all over it, mud and slop, to drink
at the noise bar round the bend.
The bar is gone now and the fence
prevails. It's right in front of me,
our house, we're grateful for it,
for the green, the trees, the fence.
Remember *temenos*, the boundary
or sacred *sulca* the Ronan priests
dug with a little golden trowel
all round a place to mark it,
make it, jeep it holy.

**The boundary. The fence,
the light wooden frontier,
keeps out, keeps in.**

**A few weeks ago in chilly rain
a car skidded into the fence
up near the apex. They hurried
to repair it, and we breathe easy.
So reassuring, this fence
that keeps us out! And now
the little ornamental trees
can flourish, safe in the sacred light.**

15 May 2022

=====

Think of a tree
a gret green word
wth thousands of other
words inside
complexly harmonious.
Beech and tulip
tell me this, though
they're not fond of the names
by which we say them.
Call me a tree, they seem
to tell me, as well you a man.

16 May 2022

=====

**Intercept. Galactic rumor.
Chatterbox satellites,
opera wakes the silent moon.
No sound without atmosphere,
no song without breath.
What are all those lights
doing in the sky?**

16 May 2022

=====

**A bus long enough
to curl your whiskers,
a stone rolling uphill,
don't have much to say
this morning, cow and bull,
upland meadow, the bus
is white, the stone can talk,
I am one fortunate reporter—
things do my job for me.**

16 May 2022

=====

BROKEN PROMISES

the irises by the Jacuzzi,

we love you

for the way you talk,

you teach us

not to trust weather,

even be skeptical of stones,

are you always California?

**Ease open the dark knot-work of
morning clouds,**

I think that's what you told me,

let the rain out,

the multitudinous

element in us,

But then I was a child,
stood beside the window box, pansies,
leaned back against
damp cinderblock garage.

Hurt no tree,

take care of me.

And the stone lips, hips, of Phryne
posed as Aphrodite,
yes, yes, see the gods
in our friends,
Olympus is the body of the other,
where all deities abide.

2.

I haven't said a word all day
so don't know who I am.
You know the rule,
You are what you speak.
The cinderblocks
were like rainclouds,
Genghis Khan
drove his warriors
over the pages of my book,
the roses were just beginning .
Watch my fingers as I talk.

3.

Wine poured over the piazzas,

something being
celebrated,
a horse or a homecoming,
tables spread,
old man shouting over the fiddlers

*We spill the milk
of herself the Sun!
We all of us together
are Her one child!*

What a neighborhood
to grow up in,
satin blouses,
the mass in Latin.

4.

More to come.

Insert weather here.

The Weimar Republic

has a way of persisting

and we know what comes from that.

Try again. *J'accuse*. Leave

the fascist envelope

unopened.

Letter litter,

walk it to the dumpster,

come back and sniff

evening settle on the lawn.

Some laws are absolute.

Now help me rise.

17 May 2022

=====

So if the lanyards clank against the mast
and the spray soaks your socks,
know all is well.

The wind is with you,
stay in sight of shore—
that way a perfect marriage
of the land with the sea,
equal partners,
and you are their child.

Rivers with valleys
make good parents too
but their children tend
to be nervous, fractious,

**preoccupied with boundaries.
Don't take me too seriously—
this is a postcard from the sea.**

18 May 2022

=====

All I can think is green
today, even if I close my eyes.
The wonder color where
the yellow of gold
mingles with the blue of sky
and it has leaves. Green.
The window sings in
into every room, contralto
sun and baritone shade,
green. Green.

18 May 2022

=====

**We are described into life
like schoolchildren herded
into chapel. We tend to be
what someone says we are.
Figlio mio! Carissima!
It comes with breakfast,
the quiet reinforcement of our
perceived identity.
How do you like your eggs?
Leave them in the chicken,
do not kill. But who says that?
We keep silence in that place,
the chapel of what other people think.**

**It's hard to have a quarrel
with everyone at once
or with someone who isn't even there.**

18 May 2022

= = = = =

Bassoons peremptory,

trees tuning up
waiting for the lifted arm
of our attention.

Raindrops passing slow,
neums of an older music,
people walking on the road,

or are we part of the chorus
only, this language business
so full and florid on our lips,
did somebody else say
what I think I'm singing?

Where trees outnumber people
logic, exhausted, sleeps
a galaxy apart. It's raining,

**sort of, or as Jack Spicer
would say, Believe the rain.**

**Means listen to it
as to the trees
the white cars passing
boys on the playground
breath in your windpipe,
listen with your heart wide open,
sacred story stretched out
on the ground, the song we share.**

19 May 2022

=====

Strange friends we have,
it's summer so
they're all moving south.
Ah, to be a rebel
with a trust fund,
a hermit with a yen for crowds.
Condos and crocodiles,
whither wander ye, amici?
Hard to hug you on the internet.

19.V.22

=====

**Box of crayons
growing in a field,
stream runs through it
made of music,
you call it a mind
I call it the mush
we feed our bodies with,
ideas and kilometers and lust.**

20 May 2022

=====

**Felt, far felt
what is left
of being right?
Word squirm
as kid tries
just to sleep
without lessons.
Want. To learn.
The dark. Who
dares to say so?
Lie there doubting.
Why not East Pole
and West Pole too,
Buddhists and Baptists
on their dusty plains?
Why is it always**

only what they say?

Who felt first?

Why does it hurt?

20 May 2022

=====

In the middle a mosque
infer from the dome
the tower, the voice at dawn.
Someone must have awakened me,
not a job to do by yourself.
The birds—crows, starlings—
circle the dome.

There must be a reason
for everything, didn't they teach
you that even before school?
That's what life's for,
the find the reason.
Empathize with everything
but not too far..

**Morality starts with how
you look at other people.
Look up from the book now
and smile at your mother.**

20 May 2022

BRONZE

for Tamas, his birthday

**Caught in the courtyard
 the bronze statue of the emperor
 ponders democracy.
 The fools think they're in charge—
 don't they realize that I come
 to life in anyone who rules them,
 commoner or commissar
 or chief elected by the phony
 numbers of schoolboy arithmetic?
 Don't they know that bronze
 (a metal made of Jupiter and Venus)
 lasts for thousands of years
 and I keep watch, unwearied,
 amused by all the changes**

they call me by name,
never hearing, maybe never
daring to hear, the clangor
of my metal heart
beating in their parliaments,
their living rooms?

I am

who I have always been—
kings, like poets, are born,
not made. I told them that
in Roman times. Alas for them,
only the poets believed me.

20 May 2022

=====

Change the subject.

No more I.

Cange the object.

No more you.

**Now the verb can flow
crystal clean between.**

21 May 2022

A GOOD DAY TO BE NOW

really warm at last
and the stones waking up
from their doze along the river.

Dear little hill
that holds the back yard in.

They move so slow
compared to us
but they'll still be here
after we go. The quickest
sperm gets to be father,
the slowest stone
supports the whole world.

Soi-sage! Be careful,
you might be the child
of everything you see.

21 May 2022

=====

Exposed on hill slope
an edge of grass.
Ledge. Not too long
ago a placier passed.
In deep shade
the veins of rock.
Money is not the only
currency, spend
spirit, collect wonder.
Warm day. Watch the rock.
Not far enough away
an army marches by.

21 May 2022

REAL ESTATE

**Like most people on the planet
we don't have a swimming pool.
Yet we are wet from birth to death
with some fresh water rises from
some spring inside us, a deep
New Hampshire in the bones,
the never-ending trickle. Wet!**

21.V.22

THE SATUSFACTION

After the smoky members' lounge,
the python on the staircase,
the anguish of Guernica
shouting on the wall
to breathe quiet, quiet,
no incense, even, before
the great ivory retable
beyond the altar of St Thomas
while the busses go south outside.

Times change, directions don't.
I remember even younger
the little West Side sign
my father would drive past
on our way elsewhere,

**it said in neat letters
New England and North
and my heart leapt with desire
for that sheer direction.
So here I am, a hundred miles later.**

21 May 2022

=====

**Brick in courses laid
north to south along,
no pattern to them,
just one after another,
modestly supporting,
being supported. Stare
at the bricks and wait.
Identical. Yet different.
Some meaning here, plain
to see, hard to understand.**

**21 May 2022
Germantown**

=====

**If I told you what I know
you'd say I was from Ithaca,
a liar born, a traitor on the shore.
You'd say I dreamed it all up
in crayon colors, I swallowed
a radio, I licked all the letters
of a big fat book. If I told you
what I know about you, though,
you'd be silent, eyes lowered,
hoping that what I said was true.**

21 May 2022

=====

**Drove out into the high meadows,
woods on the crests and shallows,
filled my eyes and mind with trees
and distances, sunshine spread out
as green substance in the late light.**

**What do trees say?
They don't talk about trees,
they talk about everything,
everything else, in words
that feel like shadows
shaping sense in the mind.
They talk about the world,
how big it is, and how strong,
and they sometimes notice us**

**and seem to understand
why we're part of the picture too,
smile at us sometimes
as we dp at a butterfly floating by.**

**I love them and thank them
and would never tell their secrets.
I do not know them, in fact,
but I know they have them,
I know that from what they have
and what they know they bless us
with sher presence a leaf at a time.**

21 May 2022

=====

**That pagan world
that knew my mother,
the sea to worship
not to wash in,
the rosebush over there
and here the silent
closet where old thoughts
suspend themselves
like plump old fur coats
drooping from the rail.**

**The past is omnivorous—
that's what paganism means
and so we praise of all things most
Messiah, who is always**

**still just about to come.
I could see that in her face
as she knelt in the pew.**

22 May 2022

=====

**Heaven has many neighborhoods.
One of them is the place
to which the idea of the deceased
ascends after death,
sometimes long after: the minds
of the survivors,
where love lasts, and grows
and the radiant image
teaches the survivor
all kinds of things.
Never stop listening.**

22.V.22

=====

**Internet warns thunderstorms.
Not a cloud in the sky.
Hot, bright, humid, calm.
Not a leaf moving.
U look at the quietness outside
and somehow think
of a chunk of a good cheese
sitting on the sideboard,
no mouse in sight. Good cheese,
Basque Ossau or newfangled Yarg.
Everything has its moment.
The sky is the color of waiting—
what can I do?**

22 May 2022

=====

**The cost of nothing
is very great**

**even a leaf,
wet, on the pavement**

**gives some relief,
a discount,**

**enough tp live on
inma something world.**

22 May 2022

TUNNEL

**We're together in the tunnel, tunnel
under the river. Not a river.**

**Deepest darkest stretch, longest
between two stations, under the river.**

**We're conscious of millions of gallons of
water above us, around us, a thin wall,
darkest tunnel, every now and then a
blue light bulb on the passing wall,
angel's eye watching us, we feel fear,
long tunnel, millions of gallons, things
break, not a river, we suppress the
thought, we've been here hundreds of
times and nothing happened, but things
happen, here we are, heartbeat a little
faster, think of the nice dark all around
us, comfort of dark**

Not a river. It's the sea, Atlantic, slim stretch of it between the mainland and Paumanok, this island, our island we call Long, it should be a state of its own, Brooklyn should be its capital, bigger than most capital cities in the US, more people than Montana or Dakota or Delaware, our state, we should be the governors, govern with wisdom and poetry. Relax, High Street station, we get out here, relief, why, still underground but, we climb up to see a friend's new work, a painter, she's always nervous, she still smokes cigarettes, love to visit her, smell of her Marlboros, stale smoky air of her workroom, lots of new sketches but one big canvas, abstract as ever, a blur

of pale blue spreading northeast, a great gold-orange sweeping from the west, the sun consuming the moon, and hundreds of small intricate shapes all round, the souls of us present at the conflagration. Consummation.

She's a good friend, I miss smoking, inhale the smell of her work.

But we have to be going, further out in Paumanok, not too far, still Brooklyn. We walk a few minutes around the streets, I really want to get us to the the Promenade, the Heights, over the harbor, so I can look calmly as we sit there on a slatted bench, all the Norse freighters, all those islands. Staten, Ellis, Bedloes I still call it where Her statue stands, Governor's Manhattan, far off

**on the horizon the dark flat shape of
America itself, the mainland, the part
we call Jersey, never New Jersey, just
Jersey, the little English island off the
coast of France, other way round, we're
the little island, paradox on paradox,
Where was I? No time for the Heights,
we don't go west, we go back
underground.**

**In the station again, same platform,
how lovely they call it island, this is
your home station, but today you're
venturing deeper into downtown, do
some shopping, so here we are waiting
for the train that will come from where
we had been and take us further along
this dark path, something Roman about
the subway, almost Etruscan, entry to**

the underworld, easy to go down into hell / but to retrace your steps and reach/again the upper air/ that is the labor, that is the task. Here we are together, descended, awaiting.

Then a gentle breeze comes out of the tunnel, grows stronger, a wind, the oncoming train pushing the trapped air before it, it spills out around us, here comes the train, the holy train of my childhood.

On we get. We sit smiling at each other across the aisle from one another, like kids laughing, making one little segment of the car all friendly territory, not sitting shoulder wedged against shoulder together.

We are together so we sit facing each other. We watch our legs, crossing at the knee, uncrossing, spreading a little, crpssmg again, right over left, both of us, are we both right-legged? Sometimes uncrossed, rocking softly as the train shimmies along its tracks, slows, stops at the next station.

You're sitting under the map, what's over me, some ad, maybe it's some dumb thing that makes me ridiculous—hope so, makes you smile. I think of you and a map. As a map. A friend is someone by whom one's path is guided. A friend is a road.

How far are we going? You're just going to Fulton Street, I'm staying n to Euclid

far to the east, where the line used to end, but now goes on to Rockaway Boulevard of the mural, Aqueduct, the Hammels, Rockaway, the open sea at last, nothing between us and Spain, Galicia, where the Holy Grail hides still? Don't be romantic, Robert, that gets you into trouble, all those names! Like a hand wandering on a friend's body, welcome or rebuffed it's always trouble, a name is like a hand wandering through space and time, waiting to seize the moment, waiting to take hold. Bring something home from your travels.

And now we're almost there. I can feel you getting ready, you'll be getting off in a moment and I ride on, so we smile,

**we are being apart together, the doors
slide open, you smile once more and
are gone, and all is well, we have been,
we have been through the tunnel, and
somewhere up above us day is fading,
leading us always, together, apart, into
the tunnel of the night.**

23 May 2p22

=====

**Their rapture broke the road.
The lovers lay there in their trailer,
pine trees sudden all round them,
their vehicle enwombed in woods.
he tried to comment tenderly
but Latin caame out of his mouth,
old words came out, he didn't
understand what he was saying.
But she did. She always did.**

24 May 2022

=====

Suppose the otherwise,
the wrong-colored sock,
breeze from the east.
Never mind. The daughters
of Babylon prance
around all the meadows,
badminton rackets, long ted hair,
parleying with the crows,
chattering in that Anatolian dialect
that sang Karahan Tepe into place.
No wonder I get everything wrong.
My wife watches French TV
so I hear English, makes no sense,
or not much, but still a little bit
come through from time to time—
how else would I ever have learned

**that stone can fly,
and love is catching,
and Normandy
is a prvice lying on its side?**

24/25 <ay 2022

=====

**Dvorak in Central Park
surrounded by pigeons,
Tesla in Bryant Park
feeding his favorites,
bird on his hat, two
on his knee! Days later
his pale favorite came
fluttering into his room,
and passed into light
before him. And even I
sat on Eastern Parkway
offering a few peanuts
from the little cellophane
sack to jhalf a dozen
grey birds round me.**

In Nature's Realm

**he called it, Everyone
we feed survives in us
after. E veryone
we feed survives in us
after. Years deeo into now
the raindove on our lawn
teaches us to stay.**

24 May 2022

=====

**Woods my own
unconfined. Leaves
lead me in,
I am a tenant
of their shade.**

**2.
Can't make music here,
so much is here already.
Adjust your ears—
timbres tell
more than tunes.**

3.

**No address. Night
still finds me out.**

And at home

late sun

lets leaf shadow sing

through the pale curtains

so I blink my eyes to listen.

24 May 2022

=====

Said nothing
but what did he mean?
Forget the city,
you long ago lost
the knack for streets,
there's a Fulton
on both sides of the river
and a Nassau and a Broadway
and what are you bothering
your little tree-besotted hed about?
Be where you are—
that's always good advice.
I think that's what his silence said.

25 May 2022

=====

The avenue of trees is in flower,
formal feeling on this country road
stately even, symmetrical,
both sides of the way,
;ocust trees, don't blossom
every year, here they are,
the deep-veined bark, their ;loft
above the dawdling cars.
Montgomery Place, old estate,
both sides of the road, along
the river, never mind the history,
walk below the flowers.

25 May 2022

INVITATION TO THE VOYAGE

**Handkerchiefs for waving
as the liner steams off,
going and staying,
it's all so long ago.
Statue of Liberty! Isle of Wight!
Every placxe welcomes the sea.**

2.

**Be sure to tie your tie—a simple knot,
not the show-off Windsor,
Lapels unfurled, a mild carnation
maybe flowering therein, shaved
chin of course, beneath open lips
eager for sea air, plenty of that still left
after the ship has come, life
of the harvbor, we dress up to say
goodbye. You smile, you're**

thinking of a naked hello.

3.

Then of course the subway home,
public indoor dryland submarine,
just for you and all the millions
who do not get to sail away—
no Tortuga, no Madagascar
wherever that is. It's in a book,
like all the rest of the world.
A world is made of names—
and most of them at least
you do know how to spell.

26 May 2022'

=====

**Can't help but hope
the way a toad hops
pale on a dark road
hoping. By contrast
I will be spared. They
(and they know who they are)
will see my difference.
That is the food of hope.**

26 May 2022

=====

**O tell a different story
how the love began
that made us green
and water pale and you
all over the place,
eating apples, relishing shade.**

**That's the story everyone knows
but no one ever tells,
you hear hints of it in music
when one tone leads to another
and the heart leaps up.**

**But no one says the words.
They say other words instead,
silk and cotton wadded on truth.**

**Maybe it's up to you to tell it,
maybe it never should be told.
Listen to our explanation
leaf by leaf, then you decide.**

27 May 2022

=====

**Watch the door, matador,
the bull comes in
in many forms,
horns invisible, taffeta wings,
roaring like a brook in spring
or wheezing like a gaffer's breath.**

**It all starts with a door,
you know what they are,
they move through the world
capricious as debutantes,**

**anything can be a door,
anything can squeak open
and therme you are, I mean
there it is, the beast itself**

**that has been on your trail
since Knossos and Nineveh.
You could pick up a leaf
and find him there. Size
is not the issue.
The truth comes out.**

27 May 2022

=====

**Agassiz on Penikese
thee vidence all round him,
the glacier did this,
thje ice age left
low coasts and islands.**

**By then he was after other things
but I think of him there,
or of me,
little me on the outwash plain
that became Brooklyn
always near the water
Plum Beach, Gerritsen, Coney.**

**And Agassiz
looked out on Buzzards Bay**

measuring the osprey's flight,
and cormorants dried big wings
outspread over the rocks
and Nora went swimming off
Rockaway.

white one-piece,
laughing in the surf.

27 May 2022

=====

**Idleness on ethelday
the assembly of the nobles
but one lies back
easy as a frog in mud,
ease, ease,
interview the sky.**

2.

**She fell in love with a statue
and it with her
so they enjoyed each other
in the somber museum
and no one understood their smiles.
But love's always a mystery to the laity.**

3.

And that was enough to think about,
green slacks, skinny belt,
Tristan on the radio.
Sabbath. Clouds massing.
Locust trees in blossom,
their trunks like corduroy.

4.

Much to find agreeable in idleness,
blame it on medicine, relax,
make up words not quite right
but say them anyway.
Ministering the semi-agenda.
Interview the sky.

5.

A thousand extra people
roughly pour into the woods today,
shiver intents beneath
the long weather of words.
Graduation, commencement,
the end called the beginning.
Local fact is all we have.
Thunderstorm predicted.
Or do I mean predicated
by the scriptwriter?
One will soon find out.

6.

This is meager music
but I mean it,

**muse of the day
murmuring vernacular.**

7.

**Here I am,
what can I do?
I can be here
with all my night.
Give me my medal now.**

28 May 2022

= = = = =

Natum videte

the song says,
see the one who's
just been born
and that sight alone
jubilates the heart.

There is so much
we have to understand,
so many avenues
we have traveled to this place,
so many islands.

The song says *See him*
so we know that much,
textbooks moldering
below the classroom desks,
is the song enough to see,
tones shaping in weary minds

the image of a newborn child?

**And the song goes on,
calls him king of the angels,
harder to see, hard, hard,
just shut your eyes and sing.**

29 May 2022

=====

**Along the boardwalk in Atlantic City
an oldish man pushes a wicker cart
in which a couple sit holding hands,
honeymooners prospecting the sea.**

**The man behind the cart
seems to move without effort,
hums, even sings now and then
softly, the cart silent, no squeaks,
;picturesque, seemly, customary,
fond feature of the place.**

**There are others of its kind,
couples in each one, some
with the sea on their right**

**but this one has it on the left.
It is all a long time ago
but the ocean remembers.**

29 May 2022

MEMORIAL

Day the mind of what?
We are caught to consider
as between strata of rock
the Id of a nation
pressing inward outward at once.

2.

He looks up from his desk
and says: I have seen that
cloud before. In the sky it was
even as now. This is history
and I am here to understand.

3.

Welfare chiseler
therighwing calls him

**for daring to be paid
just for being alive,
and has nothing but words
to sell and who wants those?**

4.

**That's what is meant by geology,
sound presses sound
down till the word is formed,
then word presses word
until at last you can stand
on the assembled rock
and stare out to sea.**

**Jonah is coming in his submarine,
soon the word will take on meaning
—leave it to the border guards.**

5.

None but the lonely heart
the old song sang,
only the lonely heart
knows what it means
to be alone. What
it means to be at all.
Sounds soft and sad and tender
but it is made of absolute fear.
Why am I here at all?
What can I do to help?

6.

Immerse in rapture
is the usual critique.
Remember war and try
to ake heroes of what it kills.
A day like any other

soaked in quotations.

Be brave. Braceros

headed north to mind the corn.

7.

Then I thought I heard

her coming up the hall

but she was still asleep.

Then I heard a seagull cry

but I looked out and saw a crow.

O resemblance is a hungry child,

I want the sky to be the sea.

8.

Woods Road north of Tivoli

is the darkest road I know,

so deep in forest, slender,

dark even with the western sun

**trying to [pry its way
through trees fuller, richer
than I have ever seen them.**

**It's what a road is
that matters,
not where it goes.**

30 May 2022

=====

**Do they still leave Bibles
in hotel rooms?
I haven't looked in quite awhile
so who knows what
might be squireled
in those squeaky drawers now,
surahs and sutras,?
Or are you left alone
with upanishads on your iPhone?
How comforting that used to be
ashtray, glass of water,
thick book that did you good
without bothering to open it.**

30.V.22

=====

**Christening the new ship,
call it The Day
and sail it out of the night.**

31.V.22

=====

**There were dozens of us
at the embarkation
but only I got on.
That's what waking up
must be all about.**

31.V.22

=====

**Or in different language
islands endlessly emigrate.**

**Put that in your gazetteer.
You were born here to welcome.**

31.V.22

=====

**Holstein by the barn
generous white swell of side,
cow in morning sun.**

**Color and contour
reach for the eye,
the black parts shamble
back into night.**

**How still she stands.
Moving means purpose
but what does stillness mean?
Just being part of all there is.**

31.V.22

=====

Raspberries, species
of response. Who knows
the word I'm saying?
Brick in the wall heading north.
They know where the light
is steadiest, they care.
The word does not move.
Fill the tank, engine off
of course, everything costs.
Strawberries less sinister
but not so swet this year.
Puzzles of unripeness, war
in the Pacific remember when.
Cantaloupe. Alligator pear.
Rhubarb. Yes, rhubarb.

2.

The problem is that most words mean something else besides. So much of the body is hidden inside the kayak, head and chest and flailing arms we see well but isn't there more to us that makes us go? What do I know about a kayaker, even now almost out of sight, winging swift south against the incoming tide.

3.

Because the word has to be gone all the way over, to the other, for its work or play to be done. Are you listening? asks the mother and the child doesn't want to be

**but here the words come, one
pounding after another on the door
of his frail attention. Yes, mother,
I am listening, the word is stronger
than I am, what can I do, the word
was here before me. Was it here
maybe even before you? Hush,
says the mother, there are things
all round us even older than words.**

31 May 2022

