

8-2023

August 2023

Robert Kelly

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= = = = =

**At last a light
to rescue by
the inmost sky.
Awake, awake
Zukofsky'd say
and no one knew
more poetry.**

2.

**So here we be
a month on earth,
a thing the moon does**

**in his kind trickery
to make us sense
we're getting there
when we're still here.**

3.

**Old light in new sky
or have I gotten
the adjectives wrong
yet again? At least
I know my masters'
names, those lordly nouns.**

4.

At least hurry
into the day
as if, as if I too
had hold of the time.
But time knows me
and knowledge
is a fearful thing,
power broad as prairie,
precise as dust in cornfields,
music fading but still heard.

1 August 2023

LINGERLY

Lingerly—is that
a word, can I say
and mean it?

Slow by waterfall,
slow beside tree.

Move no faster
than a cloud,
show all your edges.

2.

That was on my mind,
the gift of reason,
to see the grassy plain
and ignore the ants,

snakes, rats, parasites.

To pray to the tree
and never mind the lightning,
bright enemy of all you see.

3.

Still be still, be slow.

Drive beside the highway
at a donkey's speed.

they used to call us Irish that,
and I know why, and I know why.

4

But the ribbon
is tied to the post,
the pony can't trot

no matter how you dream.
When you go slow enough
you're really there.
His chestnut eyes
persuade you so.

5.

Aren't we there yet
the child cries
from the back seat,
tired of watching
the world go by
tree after tree
and there's a pale house
just as good as ouers.
why are we passing everywhere?

6.

**Someday he too
will join the conspiracy,
the strange grown-ups
who cherish the notion
that there is somewhere else.**

7.

**But for now
be mild.
be slow
as an old
song once,
and you could watch**

**the trees shake their leaves
a lot while one
sung word was
on its way out of your mouth.**

1 August 2023

== == == == ==

1.

***The rigors of the random
haunt daytime hours.
But when we close
the dark door a certain
definition process starts
us into one-pointed sleep.***

**That was his message, enjoy
all the opposites
while the sun is still spritely.**

2.

**But why do I always
listen to his voice?**

**Because no one else
is speaking? All the other
noises come from internet,
all those voices im[licitly
admitting it is not really you
to whom I seem to speak,
you're just lying there
in the gutter of the media
soaked with what flows.**

3.

**But he means me
when he speaks,**

**I am bound to listen
like the bark to the tree.
So I pass the time
reporting what I've heard
all the while you think I'm me.**

2 August 2023

== == == == ==

**Bipolar planet
bight and day,**

**war and peace,
no wonder Nineveh**

**he sang, little song
from a little boy**

**who's been reading
too many books**

**so what does the girl
say when she hears it?**

**History's bug bite
has made you itchy—**

**lax into love, lad,
it's always noon.**

2 August 2023

=====

Beautiful as they are
it always seems wrong to me
to abduct living lowers
from the ground
and carry them home,
even though we enthrone them
in crystal or celadon, we set them at
the core of the table
and somehow act more decently
when we notice them, even so
I wonder at their kindness
in persisting with us a few days,
as if a flower is pure permission.

2 August 2023

== == == == ==

**But I am supposed to be
waiting by the door
or kneeling by the river,
the postures of humility
befit the lover till
the language learns to roar
out from inside him
and the door swings open.**

2 August 2023

=====

**Bats fewer
these nights
and rabbits too.
The cast
keeps changing,
no owls
on the island,
pheasants missing,
from Ferncliff now,
whippoorwills
all gone west.**

2 August 2023

VOLK

**is such a
revealing word,
in Germany
it means the People,
in Russian
it means a wolf.**

2.VIII.23

LOCUTIONS

taste the difference
oak or maple,
modes of meaning,
stand there tall.

*

I heard the pheasant call
years ago and now who knows.

*

The aptitude of marble
to draw limbs and contours in

remarkable since Praxiteles'
girlfriend took off her clothes
and stone took in.

*

For there are deserts in here too,
oases of meaning in leagues of
naught,
dreaded silence till I learned to
listen.

*

Automatic factory of maybes
like a prescription pill

**waiting by the kitchen sink.
Forever is what you swallow,
forever keeps you going here.**

**O it isn't paradox,
that old-fashioned parish
where smiling Irish priests
tended to your errors, o no,
it is certainty and quiet days
and children skipping rope
and thereby spins the earth around.**

**Help me say it simple,
sky, help me even sing it,
until the words turn
into tune and everybody knows.**

3 August 2023

SUBURBIA

**The mighty poet
mouse in hand
scrolls through
his masterpieces,
his children out in
the backyard whimper.**

3.VIII.23

=====

for MLZ

**A woman who brings
her place with her
sits on the porch and considers
the new place that thinks
all round her. The cats
at her feet bring back
their reports, nervous
at the new. A porch
is a very American thing,
liminal, half in,
half out, a little bit of
neither. Sitting on one
is being on a throne**

**no matter if the old chair creaks.
A throne. The mild majesty
of morning at a new address.
I must be this place too
she thinks, she who has been
so many places, stone by stone.**

4 August 2023

=====

**When I was young
I paid attention only
to the subway, people
on the street, books
on the library shelf.
But little by little,
shame to say how long
it took, I began to notice
the land beneath the streets,
open wounds of vacant lots,
the marshes at the edge
where our street ended.
The last few years of living
there I learned a lot**

**but nothing I knew how to say.
Then one day far ot of town
I saw a mountain and them
a;; the words began.**

4 August 2023

== == == == ==

**Wounds are credentials.
Show them scars
to tell who you are.**

4.VIII.23, *lune*

=====

The scalene temperament
gets there slow.
Roll back a little
and borrow a new breath.
Nobody's timing you
except Fate who gives no hint
of where you are along the rod
they guess you're running.
Walking, I mean, go slow.
Mild slope, deep breaths,
you'll get there yet, the goal,
the grail, whenever you stop.

4 August 2023

=====

**A poem in so many parts
the fur flies off the wolf
that chases you. Who said
anything about tin buckets
down grandma's well?
Did you spot the oystercatcher
on your rival's roof beam?**

2.

**It doesn't have to be super-long
as long as it's in many parts.
Interruption Music. Old elevator
glimpse of different vistas
at each floor. Get off at Lust,**

**climb the staircase to Repentance,
then elevator some more.**

3.

Floor after floor.

**And like the elevator
never see**

where you're going.

**Each stanza a little scary,
what if the sentence never ends?**

4.

But of course

something new

comes to mind.

Wisdom is the sum

of all distractions.

5.

**Push the button
rise again
or sink to the patio
where the film stars
of your childhood
lounged around
an empty pool
with only you
to fill it with desire.**

6.

**But by now alone,
the images disperse
like smoke from little
candles just snuffed out,
a scent a little lingering.
Enough to go on?**

7.

**So you hope
the parts keep clattering
in the auto repair shop,
just keep the tired turning
the rest is skill divided by fate,
uneasy mathematics of going
anywhere, even here.**

8.

So rest a while in childhood
fanncifully remembered,
leave out the bee stings
and skinned knees,
keep the pitchers of ice water
in that place on Times Square.
Even before women you loved water.

9.

You wouldn't call an acorn
a fragment, would you?
No, it is a whale tree
in your hand, just needs
a little time to show itself,
more time maybe than you have,

but you can hold half a dozen
oak trees in your hands.

10.

Am I ready yet?

We both are.

The parts clatter
separately together.

Call it usic, maybe,
mre Kansas City
than Bayreuth but still.

It's your ears that do
the work that I neglect.

4 August 2023

=====

|

t's more like a window
than a door,
yet I have seen
nimble maidens
climb through into out-ness
and leave me here,
watching the traces fade.

2.

Of course I', speaking
of a word, a word spoken
by someone, heard
by me, dwindling,
leaving the shape
of a feeling, nothing more.

But maybe shape is enough.

5 August 223

ABSOLUTELY ON PURPOSE

a tree in the yard.
I name you Linnea,
our linden tree,
cool as Sweden
this August morning—
get the accent right,
it might be an iamb too,
not just a time troche—
but consider: the tree
is an absolute, a newcomer,
more real than the stage
it stands on, as if the word
is more real than the breath.

5 August 2023

GAMELAN

**So begin, so ping
on steel, one
sound is all
a song needs
to start messaging.**

2.

**Two notes
a rising third.
Words weird
if you dare to
thnk them, not
just say them.**

3.

**It could be any
lied or aria,
maple or hazel,
box or bottle.
Could even be you
coming towards
even some me.**

4.

**But as we know
proximity is perilous.
We know that
but don't feel it
and feeling is all.**

5.

**Some dreams are like
being stuck in a stalled
elevator with strangers.
Thank heaven for escalators.**

6.

**See what I mean?
One leads to another
till they're all gone.
What do you do
with love then,
weave it into weather?
Kiss the whole world?**

7.

I thought about copper
pennies, we still have them
but when I touch one
I feel like an archeologist
or do I mean a grave robber
handling a piece of long ago.
There re words like that too,
tears in an honest man's eyes.

8.

Crows harassing a hawk,
keeping he little-life
down below them safe,
kind wardens of the air.
Can word music do that too?

9.

Loose beads a mess.

One string

makes them a rosary.

10.

Word by word

the ice age melted.

We learned to talk

into a new atmosphere,

wheat and cotton

and old-time religion

and here we are.

I suspect we're still

in the first movement

of the symphony.

11.

**But guesses are gates
and who knows if
they lead in or out
or does it matter?
Whose field is that
so dense today with corn?
Or does it matter
who owns what everybody
is free to see? Walk there,
o mind of mine, walk
through the tall green stalks,
stems, leaves, trees, streets,
it's all for thee.**

11.

**So windows, farewells,
escalators, cornfields,
more. What was I waiting for?
I abjure images of entropy,
like the man in Chesterton
I ride atop an elephant
up Oxford Street instead
to buy by love a tartan shawl.**

12.

**Don't I wish. Or leave
out the elephant,
give me a clean sidewalk,
a plump wallet. Once
I knew how to do city things,**

maybe it will come back to me
like startled pigeons braving
their way back to scattered seed.

13.

So we all were migrants once
and who knows now
how long our lease lasts
on this land, this river,
this coast of the sea.

We should all be brave poets
and write our names in the air.

14.

Some days I feel like an asterisk
guiding small print to explain

**a complex text. If it confuses
me maube it confuses anyone.
Work hard to explain
what needs no explanation.**

15.

**Bring back the elephant
the weight of life
toddling up the pavement,
mind full of merchandise
supposing itself in control.
We all are vehicles anyway,
some of us get to choose
what or whom we carry—
are we born to know that,**

**or do we learn it from some
seemingly chance remark
overheard, angels everywhere?**

16.

**In between the subway
and the classroom
the world spread out
for me,me, me.
Soda fountain, sheet
music store, a bust
of Haydn in the window,
drug store deli, man
selling buddy-poppies
in from of Joseph Judas's
wine and spirits, church**

around the corner, no dogs
in sight, paradise in Cypress
Hills. So much for me.

17.

I bought a machine
that tells me what to do,
I stayed in a hotel
where the blankets knew
how to make love to you
so you never slept alone.
I sailed to an island
where her castle stood
but never stepped ashore.
These things happen in dream.
But my father was born

while the old Queen still lived
so I could have landed,
but why don't dare to listen
to my accurate machine?

18.

A little thunder
but not much rain.
Sometimes the weather
seems to be teaching me,
in this case criticising.
Am I guilty of weather too,
noisy bottles not much wine?

19.

**Comforting to confess
to sins I didn't mean to make,
sins in mind and rapt attention,
sins of mute forgetting,
talking too much can spoil
anybody's dessert. Silence
I cried, then spent an hour
explaining what I meant.
Or what it means. I forget.**

20.

**One for each letter
of the alphabet.
Lucky Russian**

has a lot more,
lean Hebrew fewer
and we make do.
One for each flower
on the hibiscus,
one for each friend
you ever had,
one for each bird
you see on the lawn
or rail or flying by,
they all are letters,
they all need you,
one for each letter
and all for you.

21.

**And so the child
was put to sleep,
dream-soaked pillow
cherishing his head.
And when he wakes
the day decides
who all of us will be.**

5 August 2023

=====

The [poet's wife
cuts the poet's hair,
tosses thr silver-grey fluff
out on the lawn.
A bird finds it there,
uses it to line his nest.
Somebody understands poetry.

5 August 2023

=====

**Pale sun and humid low,
hmm, the dy to go
elsewhering but why?
Why not travel in time
down through the eons
of this very day?
Think of the busy churches
uncrowded alas, folks
making future there.
Think of Shro's roses
by the drive, naive and blue
and opulent. All
that's missing is a pool--
so I guess the come-hithering**

**voice I hear is water's own.
To the river, to the lake
for Aqua's sake!
Something like that.
If I were a scientist
(what a strange word that is)
I would blame the moon.**

6 August 2023

=====

**If I had a chance
the way you can have
a drink ior cigarette,
a chance to savor
and spend time with
before anything is certain
or even has to be done,
I would use it to think
about you, near as you are,
maybe you'll be closer still.**

6 August 2023

== == == == ==

**Empty boxes abound.
That means science
is on the move, find
a place for everything.
I am fond of empty boxes,
cardboard cartoons
flipped uside down
and played on with fingers,
resonant rhythms,
phony jazz, Bach impostures.
O the sound of emptiness,
the song, when I hear
that tubby resonance
I think Yosemite and canal,**

Heidelberg and in between,
so many place sound delivers,
the song of emptiness,
climax of categories.

Tell me the next thng you think.

Or tell me what you see
when you think of me.

I want to know the box
you keep me in.

7 August 2023

====

Look close at the line,
closer, closer
till it seems to curve.
You have come

**beyond mathematics
to the shore of the country
where the body lives,
flesh and music,
guess and gone.**

**2.
Never doubt rapture.
Any road is a religion.
I tell you clearly
all you told me
which you could never
have knwn unless**

**you told and I tell you
and finally you listen.**

3.

**Walking is binary
that's the pity,
based on the premise
that there must be
somewhere else.**

**Left foot, right foot,
off you go, incessant
dialectic step by step.**

**I saw the actress
slither off the stage
snake-wise on her belly**

**but there too the moves
were binary, shove
left hip, shove right.
Going is binary
then she was gone.**

7 August 2023

=====

Open the flower.
Lower your eyes.
The intricacy
of its simplicity.
I don't know enough
to tell you why.
Tiny insistences.
Color. Scent.
How vague everything
outside it looks.

8 August 2023

=====

When I was a kid

I had a baton, a quarter
bought at a music store.
And with it I conducted
the music I heard,
not vocals, I had
another instrument
to summon or imitate that,
but the orchestra,
Grieg and Tchaikovsky,
that's what radio
played in those days,
they hadn't gotten round
to Mahler and Bruckner yet,
let alone Copland and Ives.
So I made do with Marche
Slave and the Mountain King,

waved my arm in an empty room.
No one must watch me
conjure the music, music
that taught me what
my fat arm was supposed to do.

8 August 2023

=====

Bird perches on our cable.
Who are you,
have you come
to influence the message
and bring us news
from media
beyond our reach,

**what the sky tells the air?
A sudden breeze says Yes!**

8 August 2023

=====

L

**et us at least try
to believe
what the old man said
in the dream is true.
we call the pages
of a book leaves
for a reason,
every woman is a virgin
always, something
in her never touched,**

and children playing
their silly games
are doing the real
work of humanity,
what we're here for,
grown-ups just here
to feed them as they play.

2.

Don;t ask me who he was,
ask me whose dream
he illuminated, never sure
when I wake up if that
was my dream or just
something I saw from a speeding
twist in the coverlets,

**an image from a night before.
But not my night.**

3.

**So I can't answer
your imaginary questions.
Try o think of something else,
a compact herd of buffalo
shuffling through Nebraska,
grasslands will help you
till you find the sea.**

9 August 2023

=====

**Little oval silver medal
worn on a slim chain
round the neck—**

**they call it Miraculous,
it has the Virgin on it
and Catholics think
It keeps them safe from harm.**

**I think I may still have one
somewhere, I love
the thought of it, of how
it illustrates the miracle
of things, each thing a wonder**

**open to the slightest touch,
every object, every made
or discovered thing, the voice
of truth murmured to your skin.**

9 August 2023

=====

This stone I put
into your hand
means me.

You can skim
it out across the pond,
three skips if you're good
and then it sinks.

But somehow I'm still here.
Something went wrong.

Try instead to put it on
a shelf with treasured items,
messy little miracles of time,
and there it sits, between
the cotton owl and the lapis ring.

**But I;m still here. Hmm.
Either I;m a defective stone
or I don't know how to give.**

9 August 2023

=====

**In your dream
we got married again.
And I forgot the flowers.
Again. I always
seem to forget the flowers.
I think I think that words
have scent and color enough.
I'm wrong I know, you can't
prop a word up in crystal urn
on the table so everyone
can see the roses. Words lurk
and it's an effort to find them,
read them, bother with what
they seem to mean. Whereas**

**a rose is red. And irises are blue.
I mean this as an apology, I mean I'll
try to remember the bouquet.**

9 August 2023

=====

**Waiting by the waterfall,
I've been doing it for years
from half a block away.
Hearing it is seeing it
and all that flows down
to meet the estuary,
fish and grain and ordure,
and lord knows what else
to mingle farm land with the sea.**

**What am I waiting for?
The uphill uphill
when the sea talks back?
Or for the stream, ancient**

**medicinal stream, to flush
my own rubbish away?
I don't know, don't really care-
waiting is music enough.**

9 August 2023

OAK

**The rustling leaves
the breeze
lets me know
what the tree
is thinking,
a scret between us.**

(7.viii.23)

9 August 2023

== =

**But will it let me be
is the question,
it down at the table
and talk talmud to me,
there's only so much
i need to know, And you
know most of that,**

2.

**Were born knowing it
by grace if your long hair
kind eyes, skeptical
at times as all should be.**

**I linger in love,
you drive the car.**

3.

**So much work it takes
to get from now to now.
Proof by exhaustion
they used to say, back
in the day when numbers
still counted.**

4.

**I am a midget on a monument,
they giggle as they pass by.
But some of them stop and read**

**the words inscribed below
on my plinth, and they
look serious as they walk away
I wish I knew what they
suddenly know about me.**

5.

**Overreaching led to this,
sore fingers and stiff wrists,
I managed to touch star o r two
and then the daylight spoke.**

10 August 2023

=====

**Perpendicular? Of course,
only light and air
can be everywhere at one.
A staircase is the best
that we can do, unless
you count the elevator
that sepulcher with ambition.**

10.VIII.23

=====

**You must remember picnics,
those ceremonial expeditions
to feed ants in suburban parks,**

**sit at wooden tables with initials
not yours carved in old what
a lettuce leaf from a sandwich
looks like fallen all by itself
shiny with mayo on the wood.**

**There is much to be said for
eating indoors, thus hiding
from the stern glance of the sky
the questionable morals of bite,**

**chew, swallow. Leave rge woods
to the ants—and leave maybe
a cupcake just for them.**

10 August 2023

== == == == == == ==

**After a brief
no-bad-news
doctor visit
we drove out
through woods
round that small
city, I breathed
at pace, exhilarated
by the conversation
of so many trees.**

**10 August 2023
Kingston**

THE OPENING

1.

It could be small
as a woodchuck burrow
or big as Howe Caverns
it does the same work,
it opens, it opens earth
as surely as those famous
hell-mouths of antiquity.
But earth is not hell.
The woodchuck stands
on her hind legs chewing
on a carrot, bold
as any Irishman, she

**has gone into earth
and come back, she looks
as if she might be singing.**

2.

**Cenote or cave or Flume
or Mammoth Caverns,
slip into earth, even when
you still can see a little sky
and earth word sounds all
around you. Be here,
be here, and when you go
take nothing out with you
but a self you never knew you are.**

3.

No gold, lead, coal. Not a mine,
a mine drags earth out,
a mine doesn't listen.

You know how sad miners re,
they left their glee down there
to pay for what they stole.

4.

That's how it seemed to me.
But from the lead mines
a few leagues east of here
a little river flows,
carries its primal medicine,
runs singing past our houses—
the natural earth gifts flow
spontaneously to ease us.

**In a bend of the stream
a tall blue heron sands to supervise.**

11 August 2023

=====

I dreamt I bought
four boxes of cigarettes,
red, smallish boxes,
not cartons as usual.
The bill was \$240–
a lot of money when
I dont smoke. Or do I?
Is dream a danger too,
wake up coughing,
weird smell in the air?
We had a hie vie of
my Rosicrucian uncle Barney
in pajamas leaping up from bed
and lighting a lucky.

**as if the forest magic gesture
of the morning, his breath
altered, offered. His lovely smile.
But why do they cost
so much now, even in dream?**

11 August 2023

= = = ==

**One song left standing
when the wind went away—
can you hear it, can you touch
the place it know you?**

2.

**We have parts and pieces
and every now and then
they work together..
Time is the workshop
where we store our tools.**

3.

**Did you feel it
when the kiss
found you and
we both were sleeping?**

4.

**Idleness the hidden
virtue as silence
the secret song. Hold
fast to that and face
even morning sunshine.**

12 August 2023

=====

**Tabletop battlefield,
scattered salt and salsa
Eating with people
is like ancient war,
no fancy bombers tanks,
drones and helicopters,
just the harsh slog of talk
talk talk while the poor
body tries to take in food.
Restaurants should be illegal
unless silence is strictly
served . Observed.**

12.VIII.23

=====

**They'll be here soon
with words on the loose
then it will be listen listen,
listen hard to hear what
they really mean beneath
the words they choose to wear.
Hard work for noontime
with silence afterward
the intimate reward.**

12.VIII.23

=====

**Strange sacrament
of suddenly seeing
some old thing for
the very first time.**

12.VIII.2023

OFFERING

But had nothing to say,
just Sunday all over again
thank goodnes. Who
are you now? Amaze me
with identity.

2.

A friend moved south,
there must be
some other way
of sying so. A porch.
An unfamiliar tree.
I remember how
in Scotland eve the crows

looked different.

**What is it like to be,
down there and still be?**

3.

**Because I suspect
place makes me.**

**Can't prove it,
no subway to take
me home but still
a deer slips through the trees.**

4.

**Inside an ordinary man
the peasantry is always**

restless, the lord of the manor
calls on the priest
to quiet their unrest, persuade
them it's all for the best,
whatever it is. Hold tight,
hang on till harvest. Hope.

5.

So that worries me now,
what she or he must be feeling
far from the rock and rill
that made them. Sad pun.
I so miss the sea.

6.

This is the architect's report,

preliminary sketches
for a new day. Stay home,
watch the new sun
dry the skiny porch roof
wet from night's thunderstorms.
Analyze nothing, it's bad
for the plumbing,
your car has its garage
but what is there for you?

7.
River of annoyance
runs through sleep.

Pain is too strong a word

but it keeps waking up.

**There. It feels weird
to confess the actual,**

as if I had something to report.

8.

**There was that time
outside Berlin
when I saw a swan
floating on the river
under a blue steel bridge.
And there was another time,
in Philadelphia, in the rain.**

**How can I tell the difference now?
The storm seems over,
blue over trees, your coat of arms.**

9.

**The child can sleep now,
it doesn't believe in weather yet,
so many article of faith
in the religion of growing up.
Dolce, dolce, go back to sleep,
notice how your figers curl
as f you were holding something,
something in the dark.**

13 August 2023

== == == == ==

**Tell the government what to do—
don't let families in,
families are foreign countries
all by themselves, let in people
instead, one at a time,
the bold scared scary individual—
he might become one of us yet.**

13,VIII.23

=====

**If I can tell what
day it is
can I make it mine?**

13.VIII.23 *lune*

== == == == ==

**Teach the young linden
how to talk
by listening hard.**

13.VIII.23 *lune*

= = = = =

I watched the feet
of the letters
as they walked by,
serifs they call them
but I say feet
and it's hard to know
whose feet they are
except for those
few who have no feet,
O mostly, O magically
rollig with the rest.
Seeing the words pass,
seeing just the bottoms of them
it's hard to know what

**if anything they have to say,
do they even speak English,
do they know I am watching.?
Somehow I have to lift the shade,
lift my eyes and properly behold
them marching their message
on its long way past me.**

13 August 2023

THE WELL

**We have a well
beside the house,
roofed over
with a pump inside.**

Once long ago
and only once
I was able to look
down the shaft and see
the living darkness
that gives us life.
But I know it's there.
It comes u now and then
to water the lawn
or wash the deck
while in the house
town water comes
from a tracery of pipes
I can only imagine.
But I can still see
the water in the well,

the generous, the natural.

13 August 2023

= = = ==

= = = = =

**No rom here
to be somebody else,
I've got to be me.**

14.VIII.23

=====

**Carry the flour
back to the mill,
roll the miller
to roll his millstone
backwards and bring
this fine white powder
into wheat grains again.
He will look at you
stroke his beard and say
quietly Do you think
I am a priest, can make
history run backwards?
Say: No, you aren't
and you can't, like me.**

**But the stone knows how,
the stone can. Do you even
listen to your stone?
Or does the rush of water,
mill stream, mill wheel,
drown out the ancient priest?**

14 August 2023

RECENTLY, AT THE GALLERY

Does it bother you that I can walk through your paintings, green and pale and ochre, abstract indeed but so substantial that I walk through them as if through Mnet's garden at Giverny, without the inconvenience of flowers and slippery pools, where the actual impersonates the real. In your paintings the color does the work, I use the singular because in some sense I see all the colors as one highly complex hue, deepening and shallowing and springing to light. Do you mind it when people see what

they do in what you have made? Does it bother a woman say, when someone cherishes her for her bright eyes or voluptuous hips or any other feature of the body she has made for herself? We make our bodies just as surely, though often less consciously, as we make our paintings, music, novels, films How much does a painter trust the eye? Own eye, and the eye of the beholder? Does everything, or anything, I see belong to me? The mystery of art is in some ways deeper than the mysteries of love and life. What I see in your paintings only I, in all the world, have

**precisely seen. Do I belong to them?
Terror of art, we belong to what we
see. Maybe that's why we all mostly
deny our bodies to one another,
another part of art, to set the other
free.**

14 August 2023

FRIENDSHIP

**One endures
being desired,
one endures
being denied.
How hey both
grow strong.**

14.VIII.23

=====

**So there is something left.
Harder maybe than nothing,
each remnant a reminder
when there could be just one
nice empty room. Meadow.
Harbor. Island. Maybe the moon
feels this way too. Moving out.
New mon today. New hope.**

15 August 2023

=====

The trees have grown
so dense and lush they hide
the building
where I used to work.
Less guilt in my window now,
it will come back
with winter. cold clarity.
Why does retirement
feel so like a sin?

15.VIII.23

= = = == =

**It was raining at dawn,
it's not raining now.
isn't there a song in that?**

15.VIII.23

SMALL

Being small,
a rat in the organ loft
where Saint-Saens is playing
hymns for Easter Mass.

Say. Being small.

An oily wavelet lapping
on a modest shore.

Black cap on chickadee,
comma in a love letter,
pause for breath.

Being small. Being small
and being long, trail
of ants on the picnic table.

**Clang of a bell on a little
church too poor to have a belfry, half
a mile away, reverberating
faintly through the trees, small,
being small, being small and long
sometimes loud, a bee-bee gun
goes off in the yard, an empty
tin can topples from the fence.
Go back to bed, go back
to the organ loft, Bach's
hungry fingers this time,
one chord lasts and lasts,
no, tat's Saint-Saens again,
no church, be small, be small,
let the memory linger, smile
of a woman pouring cream**

into her coffee, until it spills
over rim and out of the saucer,
cup overflowing, is that love,
can a smile explain it,
cup of coffee, be small, smaller,
let the memory slip down
a throat, cool, pleasing, gone,
gone, be small, be small,
small enough to go with things,
small enough to be gone yet
still be there, memory, mucilage,
the music shudders all around,
being small is the only way,
the only way to her it all,
the whole splendid stupefying
symphony, pennywhistle

**lamenting Limerick, mosquito
near your color saying beware
of meeeeeeeeeee, be small,
it's all we can do to be true,
to hear the whole story, to be
and be there till the end,
be small, be small
until there is no end.**

15 August 2023

=====

There is hope for it
but none for me—
I said that to the stone
and it answered me
in an archaic Latin
I barely understood,
but I understood
it to be telling me
I have live as long
as yon mountain
and will go on living—
hope is just a taste
in the mouth, a little
like lemon.

16 August 2023

== == == == ==

**A clam shell on the desk,
breeze in the window.
He lights a cigarette,
all four elements
at peace together.
Years pass, time's
long masquerade
runs on. He breathes
out, his work is done.
For this day at least.**

16 August 2023

=====

**Going to the doctor
for the annual visit
I had to sign my nme
four times on the same
jabbering document.
The doctor signs nothing,
the secretaries barely smile.
Who's working for whom?
Sickness hovers over
the whole procedure.
Physician, heal thyself.**

16.VIII.23

=====

**Word swllowers,
danger of saying
the wrong way round.**

17.VIII.23

=====

Repercussions
of s pillow
tossed out from under
a drowsy head,
who knows where
tht softness flung
will go touch another?
O muscle move
and whistle breath,
sleeping in bed
plays slowest basketball.

17.VIII.23

== == == == ==

Pale sky and children waiting—
something about Long Island,
south shore, halfway out,
years pass, tee shirts, clam shells.
The children have learned
how to wait silently
and how to move as they wait
slowly, almost in formation,
down a street leads to the beach.
They hear the surf. Something
about the sky worries them,

a pallor, not rain, strange

bedsheet over the sun.

But the sky does nothing

and they have come to the sand.

A young mother stands there,

she belongs to one of the kids.

Nothing more to report. Ocean

takes care of all the rest. At last

I am free to think only of the sea.

17 August 2023

=====

**My agents in Umbria
are storrng up ancient dust,
opening doors the Pope had shut.
Who knows what wester
floss uo from the underworld,
Dante wasn't making all that up,
it was there, Italy the roof of hell,
but by no means the only hell.
Every meadow needs its Dante,
Look under me, look under me!
is what everything cries place
after place in love wth our attention.
I need agents everywhere.**

17 August 2023

=====

**I want to build that esplanade
out over the sea, with benches
and statues and pigeons all marble
and shiny and wet
almost all the time. Dew and surf,
rain and snow. But where
should my godly walkway go?
Does it matter, as long as it
heeps going? Why be anywhere
but on the way?**

17 August 2023

=====

**There are flaws in my flowers,
not the ones that grow
out there. real, irises. lilacs,
Sharon's roses, but the ones
that color and scent the mind.
in here, yearning for Hortensia
blue a childhood, offering
their quick multiplicity beside
the hedge of red roses. Try
to smell memory, try to touch
through time the smooth hard
shell of the little tortoise
that seemed to elbow its way
out from under the bush.
It doesn't quite work but it**

**won't go away. My garden,
I try to make the best of it.**

17 August 2023

= = = = =

**Bottle the wind
bring it home in a tube
now everybody
can have the mountains.
The air of a place
is what you live, lives you.**

17.VIII.23

=====

**So in this strange familiar room
with only a glimpse of trees
a man dares to say what
he thinks he's heard, thinks
the words will come to help him.
He thinks about praying, comes
to what he learned as a child,
*Holy Mary, Mother of God
pray for us*, and suddenly knows
he's been told the great secret—
of God is all powerful, if God
made the world. created us
and all life everywhere, then
the primal immeasurable power**

**must be the one who made Him,
His mother. The man is quiet,
knows the words have said it all.
He knows who to pray to now.**

18 August 2023

= = = = =

**Suppose the carpenter
in the middle of the night
suddenly had a taste for wood,
went downstairs and bit down
gently on a sliver of maple.
His taste buds explained:
taste but don't swallow,
bite but don't chew. Dear Man
of Me, so much in this world
of ours is like that; now
thank the tree and go to sleep.**

18 August 2023

=====

**Come closer,
cut the distance in half,
half again,
we taught you math
to help you learn
distance is infinite,
divisible, terrifying,
sad. Come close
and try to touch me—
can you be positive
it's me you touch,
not some sly flutter
of matter, water, air?
You can tell if a touch is real**

**if when you've touched it
and gone on your way you still
can feel it, or just the sense
of having felt, tears in your eyes.**

18 August 2023

=====

**The wind is the mind
upside down.
It always comes
from somewhere else
and is only here
when it wants to be.**

**It doesn't want to be me
or you, always other,
always on the move—
but always full of information,
news, revisions
of the ordinary, smell
of ocean, smell of flowers,**

**all the alphabet of scents
articulating to us, Not ours
but everything it tells us is.**

19 August, 2023

= = = = ==

**Why is chalk hard?
So that it leaves marks
on blackboards, sidewalks.
Then why is ink so soft?
To make love to iron penpoint
whose fierce nib scars for life
a soft piece of paper. All writing
is a dance of opposites,
gravestone longers, flesh decays.**

19.VIII.23

=====

**Try at least as hard
as music,
turn into a song.**

19.VIII.23 *lune*

= = = = =

**Trees listen
as well as speak,
all they have heard,
history leaf by leaf.**

19.VIII.23

=====

**Remember coins,
shrined in the museum
of your hip pocket,
nickels and dimes,
haven't touched them
in weeks, quarter
for the meter in that small
greedy town, otherwise
no spend, no spin,
just that faunt faint uneasy
feeling called history.**

19 August 2023

=====

**Remember me?
I carried a tree
into your living room,
had to make the whole house
bigger to accommodate the oak.
And it had to be oak:
the acorns of answering
grow nowhere else.**

**2.
Remember Dodona?
Look it up if you forgot,
oaks, more oaks.
What is it about y tree?**

3.

**Yes, yes, Dunbarton
and Sevn Oaks and all that.
Eichendorff and Druids
murmuring in shade, yes,
but the one in your living room
is best. Thank me.
I brought it there.
Rest on your sofa
and consider.
Now forget me
and hear the tree.**

20 August 2023

=====

Imagine a book.

**It's made up of mirrors,
each page a pure reflection,
but each page a different
color, density, clarity.**

**Imagine you're going to bed
in my seaside hotel Marina Maria,
and you find this book
on the night table instead of Bible
and you leaf through it
on the way to sleep. Sleep.**

**Next morning begin your serious
study of my shining pages,
you can read it on the beach,**

**day after day getting
closer to who you really are.**

20 August 2023

THE SKY IS A BUILDING

with many floors,
near as I can tell they go
up from sparrow to wren
to blue jay to crow to heron
to swallow to hawk to eagle—
but I probably have it wrong.
Yet there they are romancing
dancing their busy emptiness.
How lovely all that is, I look up
yearning, from down here
among the penguins, here
in the basement of the sky.

20 August 2023

=====

**Waiting for the waltz
a long time coming,
my sleeves grow longer,
my feet cover acres,
cologne odor, must have shaved,
the music hasn't even begun—
yet (the priest beside me says)
in one sense it never stopped.
Never stops. Or is he inside me?
I see nothing but the shadows
of women dancing slowly,
waiting for their partners,
escorts grooms, chevaliers.
Why don't do something?**

**Because I never do and never did
unless ths anxious watching
is doing something. I blame myself
for the absent dance.**

20 August 2023

== == == == ==

**It's hard to interest signs
and not get superstitious
but we try. Bird at the window,
cat on the lawn, everything means.
Two cats in fact, and in the eyes
of the closer I see very small
the image of the woman
who sent them out to graze,
cats don't graze, here they are
in thick grass, watching her
approach them, their queen,
their loving problem. Once
I was a cat and with my eyes**

**(yellow then) I saw my queen
approaching, on her way
from the sea, that's how I know
what these cats are seeing now,
fur fluffed, terrified with love.**

20 August 2023

=====

A word to say
a word to go away
and come back well-fed
on all it meant
along the way,
how it picked up
fur and flowers.
glimpse of a mountain
down south, swallows
circling over it.

21.VIII.23

=====

**I don't want to remember
I want to know.
Brown seaweed in the rocks
tells the literal truth.**

21.VIII.23

== = = = =

Let each wavelet
rolling in be
a word, quick
write it down
not on the sand,
scribble in a notebook
or in your papery mind.
Quick, before the next
speaks ashore.

21.VIII.23

=====

1.

**I fell and it hurts
and I can't keep talking,
my mind seems out of breath.
Where are the bast stretches
of the Adriatic, domes of Delhi
when I need them? Be big,
be long! I tell myself,
there's more to report
than a pain in the back,
give the ocean its chance.**

2.

**It never stops meaning.
That's the point, the goal.
the go all out to get there.**

3

**But when anything
happens,
everything
is different.**

4.

**Size is illusion,'
a ward full of patients
from a mosquito bite.**

5.

**That's no consolation,
keep going.**

**The locomotives of Calicoon
steam through the town,
I watch from the door
of the saloon, I don't drink
yet and won't drink long
but somewhere the train
is running still, hoot
of its horn at midnight,
I can sleep peaceful now.**

21 August 2023

=====

**Fold up the kayak
drop it in the mail
lots of stamps to
bring it to the lucky girl.
I've seen too many movies
and now I am one.,
the impossible seems
to be the only truth.**

21.VIII.23

=====

**And if this were the last
thing I ever said
what would it be?
It is all for thee.
For you.**

21.VIII.23

=====

**Show me
what you can't
see yourself,
stars in daytime,
curve of your spine.**

21.VIII.23

=====

**Lessen the labor
let the birds do it.
Whatever it is,
scattering, gathering,
singing, nibbling seed.
Eating is hard work.
Just watch. Watching
is enterprprise enough.**

21 August 2023

=====

**Narrow path
between low hedges
starred with blue knapweed
led there. Open structure
with swallows in the roof.
Rest on wooden benches,
guess the river's not far.
Maple shade.
Time to walk back down,
a white and amber cat
led the way. Being
in a place like this
makes me somebody else.**

21.VIII.23

= = = ==

**The mail from nowhere
keeps rolling in.
Who do they think
I am, these vendors,
persuaders, informers?
I get a clearer sense
of my own identity
from my indifference
to all their profferings.
Maybe that's what e-mail's for.**

22 August 2023

= = = = =

**Smell of oil.
Delivered?
Spilled?
Then the air
takes it away,
translation
of what haiku does,
glimpse of
the otherness right here.**

22 Augst 2023

=====

Then the window
then the breeze,
the understanding grew
cloudless far as we could see
and suddenly it was now.
Gravity and friction.
the usual sonata.
We love this place,
it means us to be.

22.VIII.23

=====

Is there an eagle over it,
not last night's pain
but that schooner
full of prisoners
measuring the depth
of the Aral Sea.

A storu stays with you,
works its way
into blue sky. Morning.
Nice day for eagles,
cool for August and the river
rinses the night away.

23 August 2023

=====

**Catwalk over marsh.
Wood is good
gets old with us.
A bittern from Britain
on the Brooklyn shore!
Water rats and Gypsy moths
life won't let us alone.**

23.VIII.23

A SCIENCE LANGUAGE

1.

A giant clamshell, over.

**It's full of rain that slips down upon
us.**

2.

**It's such a bother to be me these
days.**

**I think it's time for me to become
somebody else.**

**But who? Who is far away, or moves
too fast.**

**I can't catch up. I have to stick
With being what I think is me.**

3.

So back to the sky. Why not?

The science tells us: there's nothing there for us.

Space. Molecules. Empty moons.

Several million planets that may or may not

Have friends of ours on them.

Or animals who could be friends.

Or angels who could instruct us.

How can we know?

We don't know.

That's why we look in the sky and say: "I pray, I pray."

25 August 2023

== == == == ==

Towards the end of summer, a young woman is walking through a field. To her right, the grain has partially been reaped already. To her left low hedge is full of blue flowers. Asters, she thinks, those stars of the earth. She bends down and picks one. Looks at it. Counts its petals. Holds it close to her face, as if to breathe it in, and then walks on. Ahead of her she sees a man walking. It is her uncle. He has been visiting the family for the past few days. She hurries to him, but

hurries slowly, the way girls can, and hands him the flower.

“Here, this is for you.” Her uncle smiles and takes it.

“Thank you, thank you, what a beautiful thing.”

“It comes from this very land, but it comes by way of you.”

“And what can I give you, my darling niece, my favorite niece?”

“Well,” she said, “there’s not much more for me to do here,” she said, waving her her arms towards the wheat field, towards the meadow, beyond the hedge, where far a way a few sheep were ambling on the grass. So let me come with you when you go back to your country. I haven’t been there since you took over.”

“Well yes,” he said, “why not? You won’t find it as pretty and bright and sweet as here. But you may find it interesting. Well, let's talk to your mother and see if she agrees.”

So they went back home and the girl told her mother her plan to go back with her uncle when he was leaving, even tomorrow. She'll be ready. Her mother, of course, was worried, muttered a little bit, reluctant to be left alone, reluctant to see her beloved daughter somewhere where she couldn't see her at all.

But she agree, she agreed. She trusted her brother in law, why not? He was a decent man and a man of some power in his own place. So next morning they girted up and set

out. A short journey in some ways,
but it took them all day. And it
wasn't until the dark of night until
they got there. And there she was
installed as a kind of princess of her
own in the palace of her uncle. 25

August 2023

== = = = = =

I wandered through the wilderness
of what I wanted
And came upon a grotto where an
old man sat
Old as I am or maybe older, maybe
younger.
Who knows with years.

**A long, grey beard suspiciously like
Hakim Bey
My poor dead friend, my dear dead
friend.**

**What are you after, he said.
I said I am looking for what I want.
He laughed.
His nose wrinkled and the glasses on
it rippled a little
As he threw back his head.**

**You don't want anything, you don't
want anything!
You don't want anything.**

And anything I say three times is true.

I smiled, relieved.

He had taken a great weight away.

I turned back to thank him, but he was gone.

So was the grotto.

So was the wilderness.

Everything was gone, except me.

There I was, in my own bed, thinking.

Oh, that miserable thinking.

25 August 2023

=====

**Gilgamesh was walking by the shore
And saw another strange thing:
A giant hand came up from the
water,
Its palm full of golden coins.
They fell back one by one into the
sea.**

**Gilgamesh had no idea what those
might be.**

**[:38] Hills, perhaps. Something from
the bottom of the world.**

Pretty, shiny.

**He kept them in mind as he went on
his way.**

And thought no more about it.

**A thousand years later, some men
came along**

And saw the signs again.

**And this time, knew all too well what
they mean.**

26 August 2023

== == == == ==

**The caravels are slipping away.
down the lonely, gleaming Adriatic.**

**I watched their red-striped sails
Pass down the sea.**

**But the sea remains
Murmuring at me
As I stand on the shore
Wishing I really was there.**

27 August, 2023

=====

Slow, slow.

We want to get there at noon.

Have lunch with the sun

And then get back to work.

In my case, dredging down

Through the names of things.

Stones. People. Trees.

Yes, trees.

To find the one that will speak to me.

27 August, 2023

== == == == ==

**This is not the way I want to write
Burling with my stupid mouth
When I could be speaking words with
my wise hands.**

**Here I lie on my side on the daybed,
Oh, cursed word.
Looking out the window at
unfamiliar trees
Twice as far away on the other side
of the house.**

Maybe one of them, maybe,

One will come and speak to me.

**And this is the second time today
I tried to talk about trees
Talking to me.**

**Everywhere else is here,
And maybe I'm here, too.**

27 August, 2023

= = = = =

Then thinking began
Like a cloud covering the sun.
The rocks of Carthage tumbled
Down the hill.

At the base
A young man stood
Picking them up carefully,
One by one,
Building with them
A small structure.

He made a board atop it
And called it an altar.

**This is an altar
To the god
I just discovered
Working in the back of my mind.**

**A god far beyond the earth,
Far beyond me
And yet, deep inside me
Is the only way I found him.**

**Look down at me, lord
Or lady
Or what you are.
I'll never know entirely,
But please know me, know me.**

**And if I am known,
That is all I need.
Know me, know me,
Know me.**

28 August, 2023

== == == == ==

**We went up the hill
To watch
The harrier hawks.**

There were none there.

**We came down hill
And saw the cat who was.**

We went on our way.

**Stopped at the market
And tossed cheez-its
To the seagulls.**

**This is the day
Of animals.**

**They count, they fly
They murmur, they disappear.**

**And leave us puzzled,
Left in the world of quiet mysteries
Where nothing much is going on
Except...**

Who is that over there?

A fox? A bear?

Yes, we have bears here.

Large animals hiding in the woods.

Large ideas hiding in the mind.

28 August, 2023

=====

When I was a child and went to church, I would kneel, elbows on the communion rail, sometimes, when there was no mass. Sometimes nothing was going on. Just the flickering light of the votive lamps, blue on one side, red on the other, at either side of the chapel. I would kneel there, not praying, exactly. What does a child know about prayer? Give me this, give me that, do this, to that. That isn't prayer. That's just wanting. I would kneel there, elbows on the cold marble,

knees hurting a little bit because they're not meant for kneeling a long time, those communion rails. But I would kneel there and think, wonder, and be concerned. But what was I concerned about? The darkness of the church was the whole story. I was safe, surrounded, flickering lights, holy images, tile walls, a sacristy at the side, an empty pulpit, an altar with a golden tabernacle in the middle, and a crucifix above it. What more was there? Why should I go outside? And yet, and yet, the knees hurt. I got to my feet. I would walk down the aisle, turn round,

**bless myself, turn round again, and
go out.**

28 August, 2023

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I need a girl
and didn't know it
I need a girl
the way a stone by the seashore
needs the sun
I need a girl
and didn't know it
no more than the rock
knew what it needed
or maybe it did, maybe it does
who knows?
I need a girl
and needed and needed
and whined my need
in writing until an older woman
(she never was a girl, I think)

sneered down at me
Need, need, need she said
you know nothing about it
all you want is Want want want
Need is noble, need is nature
want is stupid, want is dumb
want is just desire,
all you do is desire
desire is disgusting
desire is dirt.

She left me weltering in doubt
I've spent my life trying to find
and speak the true need
only the true

and still I need you, my holy wife.

29 August 2023

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**The master stroke remained for the
sea to give.**

**We had to wait
Patient on the shore
Where the palaces grew up,
Crumbled,
Fell away.**

**We had to wait while the hawks flew
in from the North,
The penguins floated from the South.**

**We had to pretend to be in the
middle of the world.
But there was no world.
It was all a pretense,
A loving, golden, glowing pretense.
Something that you might have
found
In a child's Christmas stocking
Ten thousand years ago
When there still were people.**

30 August 2023

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**When the trees come walking
We know what happened to the
Scottish usurper.**

**But when he sees them coming
The Irish poet limps fast as he can
towards them
To greet them.**

**His vocabulary spread wide
To catch all the new words
He always meant to say.**

30 August, 2023

ACTION ON THE TABLE:

A GAME OF CHESS

The pieces move all by themselves.
Play is best when the mind is asleep.
I woke at dawn to hear the thunder.
The white knight dashes down the
street.

30 August 2023

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He built an altar to the God inside
him.

**God or goddess, how can he tell.
The words that spoke
used his own voice,
And yet he knew it was another.**

Maybe the only other.

30 August, 2023

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**As soonas the sea
found its way in me**

something changed.
I was born on land
but there it ended.
Can't swim, won't boat,
but cast my soul out there
insofar as I have one
if she will have me.

2.
Make persons of everything,
be person to them.
Now be weather.

3.
experience of course
is a flower,

**withers soon, lingers
scentwise, shapewise,
coloring the mind.**

4.

**So anyone you truly loved
is always with you.**

31 August 2023