

The Garden at the Byre, St Andrews

Up from the cafe, a little sloping garden
where one fat bee meanders mild March air
Among ice-white and golden-yellow flowers,
rock and fern and willow,
dark patience of the ash.

In this theatre at the prow of Fife
so many inner worlds uncrystallize
in new beatings of their rhythmic wings,
new meanings meet and resurrect
in careful ears, nascent intuitions interweave
like gyrating starlings in the Old Town air

And through us and beyond us
the hammer life repeats, a blundering thing,
no pretty bower of blossom and bohemian bees,
but that old protein-pulse of blood and sap
where we must snatch our understandings
so few anvil strikes of knowing
so many senseless hurting sounds:
mix your metaphors for the glorious mess!

But here, epiphany and rhythm, observation and surprise,
our keenest silence our clearest listening
made special by these chosen words.

And inner smiles and outer laughter spreading
illuminations shared and swallowed down
among these friendly easy-going spaces
with Scottish ale and East Neuk air

As the bee dusts on tomorrow's garden,
bring your eager open pages
for five days to St Andrew's town
to ken the trick
of listening well and living well

Perhaps you'll find certain seeds of phrasing,
meanings, one small but perfect garden
for all of those

unspeakable unspoken years?

Geoff Cooper, Scotland

Passing St. Andrews on the Airplane Home

I found an empty window
Raised the plastic shade
Too late
We are already shivering over the firth
The Tay a black mouth shouting at the sea
Dundee blistering on its lip
St. Andrews, on the limit of sight
Winked like an eye
Goodbye
I stared, stock still
Trochee and iamb throbbed in the jets
The smack of the words still clung to my jaws
And the faces of new friends unraveled in the cloud

Clark Morgan, USA

Cathedral Ruins

St Andrews, Scotland

She said, *let's go to the Cathedral,*
it must be quite wonderful,
ruins and all, you know,
and we have enough time to kill.

I said, *sure, sure,* though I was dead tired
and certainly no admirer of time
or broken altars to broken Gods.
I said, *maybe we'll find a sword.*

It looked like it might soon
rain on the magnificent, still standing
stonework, dark, weedy clouds skirting
the armor-plated horizon.

I said, *let's go into the gift shop*
and look around, maybe find a Celtic ring,
an instant guide to runes and Original Sin,
or a petrified grimace of a green man.

I didn't really say this verbatim,
but after taking stock of the sales items
I might have said something
similar, light-hearted, not very profound.

Soon we were outside again, investigating
marble and granite tombstones
that seemed to sprout from human bones
beaten to death by wind and rain.

She said, *I wonder if they had a mort house*
around here to protect such as us
from Goyesque ghouls like Cronus
out to pilfer for medical schools or restaurants.

I said, *I don't know how it was back then*
but I suppose those barred, deep dungeons
would do the trick, preserving the flesh
for lesser birds and insects.

On that cynical note, we started to make
our way toward the graveyard gate
but stopped in our tracks at a stone
coffin with a curious hole in the bottom.

*She cried, Oh my God, what's that for,
do you think ventilation or a pore
for the soul to escape the smelly chore
of the body's slow diaspora.*

I pondered a bit before I replied,
*I think it's to drain the mind's gray fluids
or the ichor marinating the bed
and the body of the dead,*

*or maybe it was just a tunnel
for the drenching rains to funnel
out and not kill a second time
by a clepsydra of drowning.*

And so before the gate was locked
we left the time-warped ruins
absolved from all our tourist sins
of speculation's shallow ad hoc.

Outside, I turned once more to look
and to my astonishment saw a mermaid
with a fish-whip tail and wings outspread
like an angel's or cormorant's.

She was at the cliff edge hovering
as huge as the sky itself as if bearing
all the clouds of heaven and hell's air
in her stern and seductive demeanor.

My friend also turned for one last look and stare,
but never had a chance to see her
for she had booked me, the unbeliever,
to deceive, then disappeared into the sea.

Kerry Shawn Keys