

POETRY

Raphael d'Abdon

farewell sunup kiss

if i could come closer,
i'd whisper to you that yesterday will come late.
a saudade-wet sky holds us dear,
and the shadow on the street
is a farewell sunup kiss.

i know you listened to the care of my fading steps,
i collect days to hold it up,
without going beyond.

here comes again,
the cutting wind that rose from the sea
through our parting eyes,
tearless, wide open, still,
with no afterwards.

unsaid words
roving into it.

free at last

after ada limón and luis buñuel

the rooms where the rich
enjoy being just together
remind that all dead things,
even more so democracy,
recoil into the ground
to return lighter, clear.
there is a coldness in their
distance, a certainty
about an emptiness that feels
not like the key, but the door.
it is old, distant, bootless.

the poet

he says he's a poet.
the cfs says "send up to three poems",
he sends ten.
the poet struggles with reading so,
by default,
the editors
gently place his stuff into the trashbin,
send an automated rejection email.
he whines on facebook that he's been bullied, that
the gatekeepers keep crushing his dreams.

his fans send lots of sad, angry, care emoji.
poetry moves on,
phlegmatic,
unharmmed.

the old taxi driver with an honorary doctorate

at the robot

a toothless taxi driver shows me the coca-cola he's drinking
places a finger on his chest
taps his temple thrice
smiles at me

i smile back and say
“no sir, you're not mad at all”

he knows what america does to the world
better than meritless emeriti professors
and anal tv analysts

the robot turns green
we scoot along
each lost in the 6 am city fog
only working-class heroes and hustlers

can smell

and see

pretoria, 28 january 2022

shy words

“your alienation in which you are alone is my alienation

The alienation of any hero

In whom the horizon is born”

- Adonis, “Resurrection and Ashes”

the same longing

fires the ashes and the blood

there is a pile of rubble

inside a syrian child’s eyes

on top of it

his tenderness

the skies where flags wave

soon harden

beyond their edge

a poet’s shy words

get a move on

one of us

a neighbour
in the habit of spending his loneliness at the end of the village
a great reader he would read aloud
to the winter afternoons
legends grew up about his state of waiting
by the lantern-gleams no one wondered about
and he kept growing evasive
gradually ceasing breaking bread
with the child who screamed in the churchyard
and sung and was scourged forever
before he gave a sign that failed to clear the silence
in which something waited
ready to spring awful nice
in the same old day

portrait

holy communion
only a lady and three cats
and their silhouette
winged by candlelight

nothing bothers them
not even the thunderstorm
the room is a forest

made of lumbering maples

the couch is a valley

made of velvet hills

the cats are the wind through the leaves

they are an ancestral melody

like the petting of the rain

the woman is a question mark

like the poems she is reading

shurveberg mountains, 1 august 2020

About the Poet

Dr Raphael d'Abdon was born in Udine (Italy) and lives in Pretoria (South Africa). He is a writer, scholar, editor, translator, and the author of four poetry collections, *sunnyside nightwalk* (Geko, 2013), *salt water* (Poetree Publishing, 2016), *the bitter herb* (The Poets Printery, 2018) and *Poesie scelte – Selected poems (2010 – 2020)* (Besa, 2021). He has done readings in South Africa, Nigeria, Somaliland, India, Italy, Sweden, Canada and the USA, and his poems are published in journals, magazines and anthologies in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi, Singapore, Palestine, India, Italy, Canada, USA, Australia and the UK. He is the poetry editor of the literary magazine *BKO* and South Africa's representative of AHN (Africa Haiku Network). He teaches English literature and history at Courtney International College (Pretoria), is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and a Research Fellow at the Department of English Studies of the University of South Africa. His research focuses on poetry, spoken word poetry, poetry therapy and poetic inquiry.