

# ROBERT KLEIN ENGLER

## Three Poems

### **By the Window at Twilight**

I leave while he sleeps.

I leave while music from the radio dims,

while the clouds pass across the sky  
and gulls reach for the breakwater.

I leave as light darkens above the lake  
and others leave for the train with its  
long stretch of steel into the subway.

And smoke leaves the fire and words  
leave the mouth and blood the wound,  
and we go out of Egypt, leaving our  
slavery to pant like an old dog that waits.

### **Wandering under the Cloud**

Oh, my mother, I walk the city  
downtown early Sunday morning.  
Sunlight skips off glass.  
I think of you here dreaming  
your dream of love.

A wound from the past pulls us  
to remember with its flax fingers.  
The stones grow warm.  
You are here with your worry,

dreaming your dream of life.

Even on this street the prairie  
is never far away. I hear in  
the chattering of sparrows who  
search the undergrowth  
something of the song you heard.

Yes, I know you wanted more  
than a small song on Sunday,  
dreaming your dream of joy,  
but listen, the same wonder  
draws your son well on his way.

### **Janus at the Doorway**

It's modern everywhere: Along the River Tyne  
and on Nicollet Mall ubiquitous steel and glass  
reflects sunlight as winter evening gilds the Rhine.

Yes, step by step on the wind of little feet  
Somali women in burkas negotiate Minneapolis,  
to sail like ships of shadows through the street.

Behind my brother's house, trees make a low  
bristle against the sky and drop their weight  
of leaves to hold the effortless fall of snow.

There is something in us that retreats from form.  
Rare books lay out its spell in faded words—  
that perfect blonde becomes the perfect storm.

This is America: closets of treasure underground  
over which rival armies tread. Then comes  
the god of oil with a slush and slithered sound.

Must he force the issue, make us choose?  
Why not end up like old George? He rides the condo  
elevator up and down in socks but not his shoes,

I, too, taught propaganda for the liberal state,  
only to learn it brightens nothing of the gloom.  
Now I read in Latin and slowly put on weight.

The shadow of December declines into its hole.  
Tell me again of the mansion with many rooms.  
How readily this body drags to doom our soul.