

Songbook

Also by Ken Edwards:

Poetry:

Good Science (Roof Books, 1992)

eight + six (Reality Street, 2003)

Bird Migration in the 21st Century (Spectacular Diseases, 2006)

No Public Language. Selected Poems 1975–1995 (Shearsman, 2006)

Red & Green (Oystercatcher Press, 2009)

Prose:

Futures (Reality Street Editions, 1998)

Nostalgia for Unknown Cities (Reality Street, 2007)

Ken Edwards

Songbook

with music by Elaine Edwards

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CONTENTS

Poems:

Lyrical Ballets – 7

Chaconne – 27

Songs of the Permanent Way – 47

Red: Narrative Poem – 65

“There’s something in there . . .” – 73

Six Songs of the Children of Abraham – 79

Notes and Acknowledgements – 88

Scores:

Astonished in the Flood – 91

Among the Lime Kilns and Dilapidated
Pleasure Gardens of Lambeth – 95

Lunar Holography – 99

Red: Narrative Poem – 103

Lyrical Ballets

for Wendy Mulford

ARS POETICA

Pointing to the words
with the words only
makes your hand ache
your head still in fog.

If previewing a comedian
the first thing you wouldn't ask
is what jokes would he tell.
And similarly the road to there

starts from here always; no map
scans correctly at long intervals;
tambourines weigh against the
body's asserted pleasure

points, just audible, as if
they were chemical components.
Law regulates the respiration
of the body but poetry

unscrambles that again
the repeated mind pitch lucidity
as foreign to hypnosis as to analysis
of what's to become.

I WANT A SORT OF LINGERING

I want a sort of lingering
effect a negligible margin

not sticky not hallucination like
an optical clump that trickles

But where there's time to breathe
and a brilliant gesture like a kiss

DREAM

1

I was locked in a dream
inside knowledge deserted
diesel locomotive
in Africa, perhaps fruit-eating.
An erogenous zone, molecular
not fossil evidence, saying I know
how to walk, & these bones
are part of my body.
Hip bones & thigh bones,
neck/head articulation. Immediately
I was on the airplane,
you could see the white lining, someone
kept complaining about it, I woke

2

as a seagull
shook itself in full flight across
where snow was falling, & blowing
powdery off an opposite roof
and you were on the other side of a city
looking into the interior
falling
short of completion. No longer
named, I'd entered absurdity & you
were a match flare away
in this tiniest world an ontology
perched in the thick of it.

BREAKFAST IN BERMONDSEY

The ubiquitous hue, a stream
that led through from deep heat,
appeared even as the phased roar
dipped. Nel mezzo, etc.

The 2 specks resolved themselves
onto the middle arm, slopes the
valley. Hallucinations of breakfast,
quite unlike the normal nondescript
brown of the “thing itself”,
so soft that they only registered
lightly golden, illuminating the passage,
widened into sharply defined milky areas
that hugged my own perceptions.
Faint freckles assembled on a white
shirt, observed at new resolutions.

BEGGING COMPARISON

There are things in a person's life which cannot be accounted for.

And upon that cardinal, all else hinges.

We stress positive connotation.

As soon as we have what we want, all others are returned with a "try us again" tag.

We wake at 6, dreaming of toilets. The pain is better, but.

We sit down at the piano and start to shake.

Are we to lurk in the shrubs for an illicit illumination?

What heavy sky will our morning selves be in the thick of?

ROSEBAY WILLOWHERB

(after Antonio Machado)

I went to the house you once lived in
It was the only sunny day of the summer

There was borage and mint
On the sill, burst through urban decay

Long flowered, the years have spent since
Perhaps there is no more such language

PLEASE USE THIS SIDE OF THE DOOR

They make a lovely couple
a pint of best & a white lady
slopping back till she radiates
and his learning curve vaults the starry hosts.

Outside and
all at once the main drag
fingers his coat, oh I didn't know
you could dance, she remarks,
there's hidden
depths to me, he says, & steps
out onto the golden tarmac
not looking.

3D SPECTACLES OF THE HEART

I am split in 2 when I look at you

One half of me thinks love
and sees the normal money
right there on the screen
golden slumbers
heated by a mysterious internal source

The other half thinks love
and overwhelms
to precipitate what is
out of what might be

You are & are not in the story but whatever
I'm out of the damn tunnel now.