Poetry

DÔKA ‘ON THE MIND’

kokoro to wa ikanaru mono wo iu yaran
sumie ni kakishi matsukaze no oto

The mind —
What shall we call it?
It is the sound of the breeze
That blows through the pines
In the indian ink picture.

Ikkyu (1394–1481) tr. R.H. Blyth

ALL DAY BREAKFAST

A wise man said recently
That he had always known
Time speeds up as you get older
But now he was eighty
He seemed to be having breakfast every five minutes
I’m not quite that bad
It just seems to be Sunday every day
I do miss Fridays

James Anderson

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MACHINES

In conquered hollow spaces of the mind
You make your palaces, O slaves set free,
Creations worshipped, Golden Calves, MACHINES!
Not for an instant are you left behind
To lubricate in silent workshop-prisons;
Set up like Gods, you order, make, destroy
With equal grim resolve. Our yesterdays
Are stripped of grace; new buildings rise up high
In rigid lines of stone which craftsmen once
Cut hesitantly to shapes of beauty. You drive out
Nature’s play and human words whose fewness
Drifted into silence; now, where once
Our music conjured hope in empty space,
Yours drowns our souls in repetitious newness.

—Ivo Mosley (After 'Alles Erworbne'
by Rainer Maria Rilke 1875–1926)

TO HIMSELF

Now may you rest forever,
O my tired heart. Your last illusion has perished —
One which I had thought eternal. Dead. Now I feel
That for us, the sweet illusions
Are nothing but ash; desire is spent.
So rest forever; you have trembled enough;
Nothing is worth your motion; your sighs are not deserved
By this earth. Bitter and boring
Is life, and nothing else; this world is of clay.
So rest; for the last time feel despair!
To our kind, Fate gives nothing but death.
From henceforth, scorn Nature — that brutal power
Which secretly commands our common ruin
And the infinite vanity of everything.

—Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837)