When deeds splay before us 
precious as gold & unused chances 
stripped from the whine-bone, 
we know the moment kindheartedness 
walks in. Each praise be 
echoes us back as the years uncount 
themselves, eating salt. Though blood 
first shaped us on the climbing wheel, 
the human mind lit by the savanna’s 
ice star & thistle rose, 
your knowing gaze enters a room 
& opens the day, 
saying we were made for fun. 
Even the bedazzled brute knows 
when sunlight falls through leaves 
across honed knives on the table. 
If we can see it push shadows 
aside, growing closer, are we less 
broken? A barometer, temperature 
gauge, a ruler in minus fractions 
& pedigrees, a thingmajig, 
a probe with an all-seeing eye, 
what do we need to measure 
kindness, every unheld breath, 
every unkind leapyear? 
Sometimes a sober voice is enough 
to calm the waters & drive away 
the false witnesses, saying, Look, 
here are the broken treaties Beauty 
brought to us earthbound sentinels.


Source: Poetry 181, No. 5 (Poetry Foundation, 2003)