

1-2011

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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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Why do I want what I want or  
it wants me the way the sun wants shadow  
I am the artifact of it whatever it is

but to be on the other side of it  
christen like springtime the not much on my mind  
tree stump a prowling deer over snow

the enigmatic images that drive us nuts  
why is a cinderblock like a pansy  
nobody is listening and that's why

too many answers to too few questions  
that's been bothering you all these years  
poinsettia tree in the Taunus hills

he wouldn't speak although I cried his name  
suppose I called you up and mispronounced you  
suppose you couldn't hear me through the snow

all those sparrows! the trees are restless  
reading a book about the eye with tired eyes  
three tiers of boxes round the Queen's enclosure

growl louder sycophants you bass avunculars  
cozy up to pinch soubrettes and sip their tea  
not even the cat is looking for trouble

man with clip-on bowtie orders cappuccino  
kind whimsy of wait-staff blue-eyed husky  
so many tables! inside as bad as out!

animal everywhere! maxims maim the spirit  
pawky semaphores her limp fingers flap  
I only know you want something but so do I

and it's never the same is it, why even try.

5 January 2011

## LUSTROUS PACKAGES

abound but who  
would dare deliver  
the consciousnesses trapped in them  
when all our glee is glitter?

Imagine the somber-sober Principal within  
who would unarm and falter free  
looking at you with the candid eye  
of never-dying spirit,

could you bear that?

When such a one might look at you and say  
I am not what I seemed, darling,  
and now there is nothing to see.

5 January 2011

## TO THE SUNNE

Go behind a cloud  
and gone me,  
go ahead, and I don't care,

I kiss the shadow of you too,  
on the scale  
of human life (that's she and me)

there's no way to be gone.  
Neither you nor she can  
escape my reverent horseplay,

any more than I can flee  
the granting and holding back  
of your fierce beam.

We sing at each other  
croaking joyous  
across the spacious

silences of mind.

5 January 2011

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Not so much nothing as the sum  
of other absences. Earlier,  
when the wind still knew how to blow  
and there were flounder in Broad Channel  
and I thought that everything I could see  
was for me.

Meant for me  
at least, and it was, and I took hold  
as best I could of marshland  
and shouting gulls and the edge of the sea

and that was enough for me,  
the sea was not to go  
the sea is everlasting coming

and it came so much into me  
like a bible that I can still be  
far away from the word of it  
and still embrace  
that multitudinous emptiness.

6 January 2011

= = = = =

But first Africa.

I will not yet believe  
we began there  
or any one where  
but everywhere.

Myth of single origin,  
myth of Eden.

No.

We happened everywhere  
and interwove and interbred  
as we still do.

I see a lake  
in Switzerland or where the Rhone  
on its way down pauses in Lemane  
across from where  
H.D. wept on her balcony  
hearing Pontius Pilate's  
endless explanations below the lake.

I don't believe in Eden.  
I hold the stupid apple in my hand.

6 January 2011

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Having left the place where place is  
there is only being.

Being must be the same as knowing—  
a jitter of consciousness  
with feeling in it,  
I am doing something with what I see.  
Hear. Taste. Smell. Or touches me.

Say a friend's hand  
holding a glass of water.  
This is the limit of epistemology.

7 January 2011



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Resign myself

to being actual—  
snow sifts down  
and I have to talk about it

But report is not response,  
I am bound by law  
to respond to everything that happens.

My law, the kind I can't break,  
dare not.

Answer me  
says the snow.  
Take my temperature says the linden tree.

7 January 2011

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Nerves. Need me.

Tell a story about a goat.

Sheep. About a ghost—

that creature you see in the gloaming  
on the stairs, the whiff you feel  
of someone passing in the dark—all  
of them are you,

                    your past years  
and the man you were in them  
are still here.

                    They crowd the house,  
they are terrifying, they are trying  
to find themselves in you  
right now. Trying  
to come back to life in you.

Every ghost is the ghost  
of some you you have slain,  
outgrown, misunderstood,  
forgotten.

                    The way you looked  
in 1983, imagine if that face  
looked in the window now.

You look Jewish, you look young.  
Like your face last night  
in nightmare, but even paler,  
eyelids quivering.

7 January 2011

## KISSTORY

*Aisling* means dream in Irish  
but I dream in English  
a lion kisses me with a woman's mouth  
how can that be?

And how can I be  
anywhere where kisses come  
or resemblances can be detected?

A red cardinal almost black in falling snow—  
how do I know what language things speak?

My mother tongue is hard enough for me,  
I have a speech impediment, it is language.

But when you read me never be sad  
take off your shoes and be glad  
turn out the light and be bad—  
every great artist is an infant trying hard to fall asleep.

7 January 2011

## THE AXIOM

And I was ready for each sound  
ready as a merman in the afterglow  
looking for new words in what I heard

what does the sound say? song  
is an old mistake, to make the noise  
say what's on our habitsick minds

instead of listening to it, hearkening  
to what the sound is saying, and not  
the way we colonize sound, exploit it.

Hearken! Ken by hearing! Know what *it* says.

8 January 2011

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Cast upon the light  
snow takes all of it  
writes on the dorsum of everything  
(our bellies keep colors of their own)

8.I.11

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*(to Nathalie Shapiro)*

A pomegranate is many, it is one,  
we taste its color  
just as the sky tastes us

we are many, we are one,  
and we are none,

wake up every morning free.

8 January 2011

*for Susan on her birthday, 9 January 2011*

So many stumbles on the beach to find you

when there is no sea and no one there

but me and the marshgrass and the lonely sky

the nice thing is we've been at it forty years

almost and—wait a minute there's a seagull coming now

and a tern screams and a plover drags its wing

and the sea comes back and there you are at last

sloshing sideways through the surf as if

walking my way but too far off to know.

Why are we too far off to know?

Am I complaining? Stumble

is the root meaning of *peccatum*

which Christians translate as sin.

I have sinned on sand. You sin

on surf as you approach

though in fact you may not be coming

my way at all, just having fun with the sea

the way women do. Men

are mostly along for the ride.

8 January 2011



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*for Elizabeth Snowden, in revenge*

You are so girl of it you  
make every else woman so  
you sent your golden spears to me  
me suddenly girled by your man-how

so strange I take kind to get even I wrap  
scarlet silk around you tight tight  
now you are Kali's, then throw rice powder  
all over your face and chest and now  
you are Saraswati's

and you have to sing to me  
to make my silver  
of your gold spears of yours fly back to you.

8 January 2011

## THE PHYSIOLOGY

Want know when receive  
 recede wapiti at 12,000 snow  
 summer mistook me for her own  
 but I belong one does to whoever speaks  
 that is the rule the rigid rapture  
 sung around your neck faux-fur the little eyes  
 for kindness sake a miracle mathematic myth  
 what is the operational etymology of to be  
*esse einai ên* and why Parmenides  
 because no one is there to understand  
 rhapsode? swim-bladder dried yellow peas  
 in dry gourd Rothenberg's rattle sound of truth  
 unmistakable authentic unfocused  
 being all over you it is not desire it  
 is organelle or bewilderment in the flesh  
 the Mayans know it a crocodile or a wind  
 it moves things around spirit is all verb  
 and no noun what are you going to do?

Release me from feeling let me know  
 I need the things you tell me heap yourself round me

skandhas proliferate iron gate a wolf to tell  
 the story ate you all night long dream teeth God  
 rests undisturbed beyond the chalkmark pentacle you conjured in  
 for it is magic to think logic is masturbation of the mind  
 be approximate Lady as if the hibiscus  
 grew without the stem or housewall or weather  
 sparrow flutter and no sky your two hands  
 arranging the sounds of light peer through the gate religion  
 is the oldest music has no etymology there's no one there  
 to do or be done whatever has a hymn in it is a church  
 I press my ear on your belly and hear me murmur in your womb

None of us is born yet warmth still around us  
 I can't find me in the crowd we're all  
 trying to get through your door at the same time  
 in and out are the same how you know inside it  
 some houses could not hold wit's interest  
 the basement the heartbeat in the wall nobody's  
 I am a victim of narrative a thread  
 holds us together a sinew strong the piano sounds  
 thick tight-coiled wire of the lowest world help me  
 I am falling into the sound the swelling of it  
 that does not die away the way sound should  
 what is this sense that is always beginning  
*a horn exalted* between us between-land

hum-land try to answer naked in public  
 a song spoiled by hearing  
 dance is a fierce sly subtraction  
 from the actual body music  
 should just move by itself inside  
 the body stands to hear still dance the polar  
 principle dance should despise music even words  
 confess it would make you dance  
 or walk the plank over the meaningful waves  
 drown you in the phony rapture speak  
 save me I save you it's your turn to lift  
 the sun is tired of my words the moon accords

Or is it growing to be green lap land  
 small dear thighs of love you language is farrow beasts  
 of the sky littered here among us  
 don't ever want you to want me  
 a letter fallen from the mailman's hand floats the kindness  
 of gravity bears it away the gutter  
 rain run-off the heart-flutter of your mouth work  
 the words too spill in your throat leave out  
 all the human names travel in  
 where the ocean of the interior is so crowded with ships  
 brave white wet canvas bellying out the silent wind

your breath fills the sky the sky travels  
the ships stand still the vessels! the vessels! all are full  
because it is alchemy after all come back to us  
organ tone of no surprise *tonor* how the meaning  
held up to the sky shows through the body  
of the sky looks down on us and up at us at once  
I told you it was difficult you were blue you had stars  
painted all over your body because we are in her always  
in her the inescapable imaginary actual we taste  
you also each other from very far.

9 January 2011

