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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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THE TRANSLATED

I tried to translate Hafiz
but it wouldn't fit in my glass,
tried Kalidasa but the horses
ran away. Homer sulked,
Virgil let me fool around
but nothing more. Shakespeare
almost understood, Pope better
but was irritated by my palaver—
too many line breaks,
too few words, he lisped.
Then Baudelaire I met
beside his grave in Montparnasse
a little haughty a little humble
real doubts about my French.
But Rilke let me have my
way with him, I wore him down
with Russia, baroque churches,
dying women comfortably
in bed, Mohammedan
angels with cherries in their
transparent fingers just for you.
A few words came through.
Then I died into them and became
no one, with a voice like no one else.

30 March 2009

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Of course the empty wallet
the song the mattress
the sun in the sky
so many articles
clutter a simple life
comes from none of these and goes without
outstretched for one last aria
then a bright thinglessness
happens or not happens.
See, I have persuaded death
to be a landscape and no rebuttal,
but it will be more than that,
it is a narrow place,
that breathing out of the last breath
a squeeze not unlike the one that let you in
a life ago and now
you are born again
into an inconceivable – appallingly natural—
reality. My body is a whole vagina
that will stretch someday in pain or ease
to let something out into the real world
something that may yet be me
out there where I can finally be of use.

31 March 2009

PINDAR

Always something to be learned from
this, whatever this is,
the road and the moon
seem to be no different

did Pindar notice that too
as he lay outstretched
on his belly watching
the road come towards his little hill

to see if his love was coming yet?
Moon, road, man,
and the words tumbled up his mind
like nothing outside he could *name*—

dust, maybe, or snow, or rain
but rain that pelted up to heaven—
a word is rain that soaks the sky,
he rolled over on his back

and turned the world upside down.
Can a man do that?
Can someone come walking up the road
and change the way I see the moon?

He lay and watched the words rise up,
lose themselves in brightness,
an old stone granary with bats around it,
a moth too near his face,

how to say all this, all this
and still care about the person on the road,
the one always about to come,
maybe even now, and all the words

to which this one who comes is full entitled,
language is for the other, not for the sky,
not for the busy moon, am I wasting
love's words on language alone,

nobody's sister, nobody's brother, am I?
But they tasted so good on his lips
coming out, to think is to speak, he thought,
and kept thinking, let the road take care of itself.

31 March 2009

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Farai un vers de dreyt rien
—Guillem de Poitou

Willem of Poitou I make you
sound Dutch like rooibos
a girl to make my tea
I too am glad at making nothing
verse out of the wind
and treatises on sand

Give me a girl for my tea
and a book and a red bush
like those viperous oleanders of Avignon
where the Pope pees
over the city walls

So many books I've written
already, Will, with pious piss!
down here where the people are,
glad of their tea and their girl and their colors.
where do they go in winter for them,
the red of oleander, the blue eye,

where do they go for girls when the doing is done?

31 March 2009

AOUDAD

There is an animal called an aoudad
I think it lives in North Africa like a goat
in the dry high mountains where I'd never go
I can't live far from water
I am an animal called water-one
depending on what water you make rise
or fall or milk from the mountain rock
to woo me to love you and rest there and remain.

31 March 2009

End of NB 312

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Colporters peddlers
amazing me
carrying bad news
from town to town
in the form of combs
mirrors spools of thread
twine silver polish
ribbons glue and felt
to stuff inside your
wooden shoes, what
could be worse
than something you own?

(28.III.09 – Kingston)

31 March 2009

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My eyes erase
the words from things.

31.III.09

IN ROSENDALE

our backs to the kilns
for Nature is a despot too
a merchandising beggarman
a god who loves you:

She

is just as confused as we!
and down these limestone cliffs
men toppled limestone rocks
to burn in limestone kilns
to make lime to make cement
that built America once upon a time
while Nature slept
and towns like this grew up and died
not quite.

My back is to all that *history*
which is just Nature's usual excuse,
loving us and killing us
by kiss and war. The town gives life.

31 March 2009, Rosendale