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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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BY HOUSE LIGHT

to read how
we family it

fumble tell
and ragged touch
but nonetheless.

See how
a venture is
the boat at evening
sails the ceiling

shadows
ate what the light
actually says

shadows are the truth.

1 May 2009

= = = = =

Not a kind of country a mirror.

Half of what is said is seen

half of what is seen is touched

half of what is touched is you,

I have left the room

my wrist tied up with an old sock,

you will be born again

but what about me?

All I do all day is recognize and bleed.

1 May 2009

TABLE TALK

Is this the point of it, how
you sit at the table
impatiently meek
wanting always something else,
something that is not far?

Intimate ant
in sugar fallen
nothing alien
to its need
leaves a trail
we dare not follow

no home for this kind of us
our gender does not work on wood
our language does not work below the stars

nothing alien to a sign
except design—
start thinking about crosses
and Jesus vanishes.

She's trying to contain
“my violences, my violences”

tied her to the door
then walked through the wall

tied her to the chair
and told her:
you will be my window

sat down facing her
hours passed
thick as the Messiah
on the radio
in the next room
where somebody thinks Easter

faced her, seeing
not watching,
look through the window
her body was

and while she slept the clouds away
saw the sun rise out of her
screaming but in whose voice
she smiled as she was sleeping

and all the rest is as it is
no commentator
the democratic light fell down

and worshipped her

hours later she

had somehow freed herself and gone.

2.

But what did you want of the table

the food didn't give?

And what was the chair

trying to tell you?

You rocked on it, made

it wobble, made it creak.

Had you asked the wood something?

People were talking all around the table

you loved them, you love them,

but it so happened that black birds—

not all that small— were flying

in and out of their mouths—

did you know your friends had birds?

You watched the flurry of their wings

the cute hard little beaks translucent

when they passed by the candle flame.

You don't recall a single thing you ate,

you know that there was cake
but there is no taste in your mouth
but mouth, not even a bird.

3.

Many a man hath sickened from love
and few have died of it, he said,
sort of quoting, you could tell by the hath,
you listened respectfully, warily,
the way you'd listen to an old kitchen chair
creak as you squirm around on it
trying to get comfortable, not wanting
to eat breakfast. Food comes too early.

You stare through vines out the window and think:
in the forest of the beginning
we lived without eating.
Eating was the first sin
because we have to kill to do it,
kill or maim or cut things down.

Here in the archaic morning of each day
we live in Eden before we eat,
we are peaceful to everything around,
we drink the kindly mineral
that springs out of the ground for us
or falls into the old rainbarrel out of heaven

I think that's what the chair was saying—
you are animal and I am vegetable
and the shining mineral feeds us both.

But the table was still silent,
stretched out in front of you
with friends stationed at all the horizons
hemming that desert in,
the friendly empty place you wanted so.

Why didn't you taste the cake
or remember it if you did?
Even now there is a cup in your hands.

1 May 2009

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Mockingbird flew across the lawn – she’s me
voice not my own, a cracked shellac recording
of Chaucer parodying Milton, faint outside you hear
street sounds of heaven’s ghetto where poetry
is taught to prisoners by randy nuns – some
sound like that is who I am. Each heart
wants to be another heart and have it
stridulate and hump inside their personal
bone bag. Inside is never lonely.

2 May 2009

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How much of light
lets who hold?
Corn has rough hands
kind as after-winter
before it has a name.
Ambulances pass—
this is worry, your milk.
How white the black is
on a crow's back
suddenly sun. How
much do you live?
I have tried to fill
the cup and get
you drunk on water.
The plain thing
that sings your ear.

2 May 2009

= = = = =

Under the brown paper bag
of personal identity
the primeval face of Apollo
grins out at your mistakes.

2 May 2009

ΜΟΥΣΑΙΣ ΙΕΡΑΙΣ

I have been given so many poems—
what have I done with them,
have I kept any of them
clear as they came?

Done what I could, gave
what I'd been given, shaped
or shorn, spoiled or rightly said.
I hope it lights your way.

2 May 2009

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Quantity is debt
the paper said.

Relationships
are sour like a peach,

when you're done
it's wrinkled and hard.

I saw you
playing with the weather,

what goes on inside
you is Lascaux.

2 May 2009

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Always impatient never begin
your tongue makes promises
without saying a word. Fun
turns out to be the only sin.

2 May 2009

= = = = =

If there were an answer
there would be a question—
obvious as that, as hymns
make Gods appear

and noises in the forest
wood and water wood and wind
bring animals to life.
You think? Is there hope

where we saw only grammar,
law, arithmetic and sin.
Can we begin, again, simple,
knowing no more than the wind?

2 May 2009

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I'm still looking for the thing I found—
will you help me when you go to town?
Pick up some bread and one small hen
bring it home if I can find my house.

2 May 2009

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We sometimes know who we're talking to
we never know who hears.

(This is the root problem of human poetry.)

2.V.09

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Robins work a long day
I meet them soon after light
and hear them still when dark's
on the land and one of them
just flew across the stream
confirming my suspicions.
All that work, eat and fly and
sing and god knows what else
and he's just one of them, and they
are just one of all the kinds
of kinds. I am baffled by desire.
Everything is here—it's left
for me to turn away.

3 May 2009

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I asked my heart
What are you doing with my blood?

To being with, it's my blood
my heart replied, mine to play with

capture and let go—
you're just the game-board of my play

my playing field, years and years
I play, each pulse a word

and all of them you keep trying to repeat
try to learn how to speak for yourself,

I laugh at you, my love, you have no self,
you just have me, and yes I love you

this love is what I'm doing with our blood,
trying to wake up your silent bones.

3 May 2009

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO JOHN MICHELL

We need a good rain, a carwash rain,
the moneysaver, a day to stay home
bundling reeds together to slather mud on later
to build our dwellings on the marshland, we
need to build our own mountains, nature
gives us only mysteries but we love them, we
build our house like they sing in *Candide*
we tear down churches to find the hidden god
wise old toad or amorous dragon in the cellar
we follow guess-lines from one peak to another,
we heap up gentle piles of stones and cry
an ancient mighty hero's buried here, embedded
like a clue in Sherlock Holmes, the way
she holds her thumbs together and moves,
what does twiddle really mean, o we read books,
we follow from synagogue to mason's lodge
deciphering the line of sight, the way
her tongue moves when she doesn't speak,
the way her frantic eyes are so peaceful
if you stop the film, I think your film
has stopped now for a while, we need a rain
to swell the dry young husks again and wake

the chicken in the egg the basilisk the *Rights*
of Man sailing up the Vineyard Sound
en route to Prospero, stop motion, Atlantis
sounds its flutes and drums for you,
you have drifted off to play another night
cat's cradle with the northern lights.

4 May 2009