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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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SO THE NUMBERS COUNT

The thirteen number gods and the twenty day gods of the Mayan calendar permuted with the seven day gods of the Mediterranean calendar (accepted now through all the Norse and Buddhist worlds) yield a greater year of 4.99 solar years, call it five years, a Roman lustrum.

So there is this five-year-cycle to attend to. And this is an endless, self-regulating cycle, needing no further observation or computation to keep the numbers straight, but obliging the Daykeepers to correlate the ordered day count with the phenomena they are to observe: weather, the movement celestial bodies, the songs people sing, the price of bread, the fall of princes.

21 August 2008

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Again. The birds told me
this. They tell me
everything. No interruption,
it is continuous
but it bounces, has freckles,
changes as any we
are still distracted by
what we just heard
another hearing, hearing is
what does us in
and brings us round.
Seamless, beautiful,
continuous: the individual
personality a glorious mistake.

21 August 2008

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All I have to do is hear.
All I have to do is here.

21.VIII.08

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To come in
on the end
of the song
say, and still

know who felt
something
but only the shadow
of desire's left

like that factory
of dreamless sleep
where the actual
world is made.

21 August 2008

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Not the shirt I was wearing
but another shirt, same color
same texture

21 August 2008

SMILING AT STRANGERS

she called it, her first try,
it begins in Hawai'i, with a glottal
stop between the I's. Children
came later, the second of three husbands,
a serious health issue she called it
with menacing vagueness. Novels
need plenty of bad news. The girl
(she still thought of herself that way)
came through it all, came back home
to a snug weird town in West Virginia
deep in the folds of Appalachian rock,
Josh (or Jared) was there for her,
they raised heirloom chickens
and a little pot on the side, did well.
We were supposed to care about all this
and somehow we did. A smile is cheap.
Picturesque people remind us of our dreams
and that's where we really want to be.

21 August 2008
Kingston

= = = = =

I really want to know you
e-mail will have to do
for the moment. Till I find you
on that park bench in Peoria
by the little stream, the willows.
It's getting dark already
I can hardly see the keyboard
to touch your hand.

21 August 2008
Kingston

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Coins will soon be no more.
Just paper or the electronic
trail of numbers meaning money.
The Moon will be alone again
with her Sun. Nickel and copper
will go back into the rock
ore. We say things we don't mean
but they turn out to be prophecies.
Be with me in my kingdom – or
somehow the flask of wine
is corked again, sealed, untasted.
Everything is new again.
And in my pocket only my hand.
A thought of rivers irrigates the wheat.

21 August 2008
Kingston

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Dragons litter the highways
with their impressive but somehow
tiresome sarabandes. How slow
sometimes things are to devour us.

Nuclear evidence swept aside
the diplomat is even so uneasy,
so many people! Metaphors
too close for comfort.

Return
all things to their starting place
where Parmenides tried but failed
to find them.

How do I know this?
It was one of those nights you just know everything.

21 August 2008
Kingston

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But there were people here before us.
Where is here though when you say so,
not that I don't believe you but I mean
do you mean America or this backyard
or is there no difference and space
itself is just the most pervasive, per-
suasive of our fantasies, and place
itself a fond illusion, you're breaking
my heart already, is everything
that ever was right here still here
and there is no elsewhere than here
or where are we when we speak,
where are you when you say here?
Won't you even let me answer?

22 August 2008

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Things still near.

Not so easy, a thingless world.
We tried, among the roses, god knows we tried,
all the silken artifice I knew,

but the hotels were thronged that season,
the dingy rooms were all they left us
so we stood outside a while
beneath our very tree,

the mandolins

were agitated, the moon broken
through the oleanders,

you could have done something for me,
you could have made it easier
but people are not that way.

The Indus River.

Rowboats parked along the marble quay,
headless statue of a conqueror,

for all you know

it could have been me
in a former incarnation,

could have been you.

Do you believe in that?
I believe that when the warm wind blows
in from the shallows a skirt billows up
and shows the knees by which you move,
you and all the queens of Imaginaria,

the only country where I'm fool enough to live.

I still imagine that you cared,
the shadows of things are not irrelevant, either,

everything matters. Don't you think?
Or didn't you think so then, or was it the green wine,
the illicit music,

raga bhavalila, those weary
pale faced priestly people played,

it's not a mandolin, it's not a drum, but
we were so close to being close, it almost touched
like the edge of the moonlight on the edge of the stone
hand that still gestured towards the far-out unconquered further shore.

22 August 2008

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Out of synch again, the sorrel
skips the soup. You never know
when the word begins what
it will make you say. Or seem
to: there are weird little extras,
strokes or dots you don't
discover till it's later
or too late, slip of the pen,
a mother instead of another.
accuracy is boring, it's the other
that tells all, the fertile egg,
the streak of blood. As if
the world as we know it is
God's mistake, when He
meant to be saying something else.
Lapsus means both Fall
of Mankind and Freudian slip.
O blessed Latin, your lap in
which I learned all that
I used to think I know.

23 August 2008

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Crow maybe-ing overhead.
Nothing as definite as a cock crow,
the day for all its chill is soft,
it will be hotter later, alas,
it will be noon and things
will have their edges
again, slice through, be decisive.
I wonder if I will ever go with them
to where it is Being Definite.
Desire dasn't be too focused
or else it misses all the other
gorgeous stuff to want. Those
golden eyes. Or were they green.

23 August 2008

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Don't be alarmed – still
one lamb left in the Ark.
The wolf has swum ashore
to seek out the theater
where their liturgy will be recited,
the growl, howl, bleat, bleed
and bestial repentances,
sorry to die, sorrier to kill.
And we'll see the whole thing
again, we always do,
the terrible art that happens to the world.
Stunned witnesses, we shamble home.

23 August 2008

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Sometimes what the dream
left unsaid wakes the day,
bright footnote to a vanished text.

Where do I come stumbling from,
what do it mean
by being here now, out loud,

outside as if the air
belongs to me and ever after,
one more cup in a drunkard's hand?

24 August 2008

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Under the radar
in a small cabana
safe from the sea.

Everything frightens me
so everything is useful,
a challenge, a question, a wolf

maybe to tame.
But that leads to nothing
but one more dog.

One more thing
to love. Fear.
Abandon. Run away.

24 August 2008

THE HERMIT FLEES ESOPUS ISLAND

Something must be wrong with me,
I'm telling the truth—
there is an island where the rocks
cleave edgewise up into the patient wind

and there's no room to build
my Temple of the Requisite.

Just stand there or squat
by a dead campfire between two
fins of this stone shark
the priest said. How long
can we live on what we only claim?

Why do I think I'm telling the truth?
Some story I was told,
something I can barely think,
left-over dreams, the name
of a philosopher I will never read again?
Life is too short for all this understanding.

24 August 2008

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Somewhere says
thing. A sign
a gate is
going in is small.

Then it is there
you are.
Inescapable color
of what happens.

End of some line.
You know me.
You have been here
with me almost content

decisive like a tree
I grew up beneath,
my soul.
My subway home.

24 August 2008

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A leprous twit. I just called
someone a leprous twit.
How dare I? And he's too short
to be a twit, too dull
to have gotten leprosy.
The things that come
into my mouth to be said!
Strange little copper
stain on the back of my hand.

24 August 2008

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As if to close another wardrobe
built into the hallway
how dark wood is inside itself

or never raven. No bird indoors
or ever after, still need
that one fix, the bulk

of her afterward, flex
of all her repentances.
No moon. Not even a sky.

A wall around a thought,
the only thing that matters in inside.
Outside is nothing, and inside even less.

24 August 2008