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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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13. K.415

Stars do it.
You do. It speeds
out from the middle to.

Here. Take this.
I have carried it so long
and from so far

amazing violins

so long so far so here
take this

it has no shape
and it has eyes in it

at first I thought you were the sky
then they started talking

some narrative my eyes were busy with
about two birds on or in a green box

who can tell the ins and outs of
what is color to a bird

but you eyes
have always seen me coming

the only tragedy: when a man has to say
I never had what I had

as if his life it had no shape
and his eyes were closed

two birds on no box
and they were blue
so far carried, fetched
the dream slipped jewels on my fingers

autist artist
and I couldn't keep the cat

and the cat ate the bird
there was no bird

a big yellow stone on his magic finger
and he told me who gave it to him

and and and

There is a ripple runs through all things
uneasy play someone's in the house
you think but never a girl just a voice

a voice with no eyes
and she looks at you
too much magic too little math

so I stripped off her pearls and gave them back to the sea
I hid the car keys from myself
and locked the tower door but it was too late

all the sound has come down the stairs
seeped into the room and formed a single word
thank God I don't know the language that it spoke.

II.

Scull across the lake
put effort in it
get nowhere fast

I love the amplitude of noon
mommy when do the trees sleep
are we the only people who lie down

boaters floating away from their bad consciences
who was your father in the war
everyone has a murder or two to hide

some high finance with the petty cash
a twisted thing in the mousetrap still bleeding
unanswered mail unspoken mind

guilt is the same size as itself, same grade
losing anything is like losing everything
so don't let your pretty fingers trail

in the cool water alongside the canoe
who knows who's down there hungry
waiting to marry you and already

the twinkling wedding band
flashes in the sky coming for you
from that squat wet kingdom

where we too have been
and have been two there too
playing at being one

lie back and let me paddle
thunder at the end of afternoon
I like the little thing you sang to me—

no more religion – what tree made it
or did its shadow find you
and for once you simply understood?

III.

Tamerlane, barking at his troops,
paused and remembered
a valley full of apricots

remembered he liked boys as well as girls
remembered he could not write his name
but ruled the world, remembered he was lame.

His soldiers were accustomed to his spleen,
his silences, they loved him the way only tyrants
can be loved, collecting such totalities of trust,

they waited and thought as little as they could
lest they be thinking the wrong think when he spoke again,
but he was waiting, he was tasting

apricots again and auburn weather,

and half a dozen little more than children
who met him once and one of them smiled,

a little girl in the hills above Trebizond
when all the rest were solemn and afraid,
and who am I, he thought, who could I be at whom

even a child presumes to smile?
There seemed no point in going on,
we do what we do to tame the world.

He left the parade ground and his soldiers knew
they had lost their king. A man
who remembers apricots is too far away.

20 December 2006

= = = = =

Ask some to be quiet

already a day a door.

A day or dolor Louis'd say
a day a doubt or don't

a woman swears it
when we still believed
the woods were words

and what and who a young
man might have on his tongue

in those days we
learned how to whistle and be still.

21 December 2006

= = = = =

All art is waiting
for the right time

and then there's no time.
Only the practice

acting as if
telling what happens

through you
happens to you.

21 December 2006

= = = = =

He talked too much
his teeth fell out

he touched too little
skin and grew fat

and a good memory
makes you very old.

21 December 2006

= = = = =

Noises of things. The natural
tinnitus of the world.

Include our roads, Melpomene,
and all the genius of machines
scheming around us

to renovate
and liquidate and clean.

The stuff in my head
the room is saying
or my bones are answering

courtesy of certain
specialized processes inside me
where electrochemical signals
mostly silent in a billioning world

until I think I hear you calling me
and that's my last song
coming over the lawn of future
towards me, nobody
even has to bother to sing
again since mine just did.

21 December 2006

= = = = =

I carry a quiet ocean in my ears.
Hold me up to your ears and listen.

It is companionable in me,
quiet ocean, evening jungle,

the interminable conversation of the wordless
all round us, take so long to say their peace,

peace, love, peace,
we will be with you till the day you die.

21 December 2006

14. K.449

Suns come up hard here.
Interrupt myself
to leave a space
for you to hear.

Kiss my white collar
and I kiss your waist
where blouse leaves skirt
and shows what we all know

the shimmer of far-off smiling cities
or whatever it was Stefan George said
moved me so much I moved it
into my martyrology my high mass

the shabby marble mantelpiece
of my memory where it still rests
a little dusty maybe maybe changed
to make it more like the mind that holds it

Things change
even untouched
they alter
or fingered by our
half-alert attention

Every time you remember something you wear it out

How long will we go on having an *Iliad*?

Smoother everything flows
till soft as cheese
it crumbles when you try to lift it
fresh to some intimate occasion yuck

stale as your feelings
felt again and again

It stumbles along beside you

this body-of-feelings all-your-life
like a shadow you can smell.

Hard sun. Vague wood.
Save me
from my answers.

Cross your hands here
as if you were a Christian or a Mason
and tried to tell me something
but my eyes are closed

So you say it again

hand

a sign in the dark.

II.

Under this river
there is a river
flows another way

where quiet savages
climb blue rocks

kiss me in Dutch
little animal

you who discovered
the other way of water

how nothing ever
can descend to us
unless an other rises

Twist-lipped flower salmon and saffron
roses of winter commerce
the flower salesman
tracks you to your lair

all their dubious gospels
into a world desperate to believe
anything as long as it has no name.

Poetry is this idiot
who uses language
to find out what lies,
lives, on the other side of names.

Who climbs the mountain that is not there.
I have washed the ocean till we both are clean.

21 December 2006

THE DOCTOR FROM PARAGUAY

“The doctor from Paraguay. Ask the doctor what he makes of the children, who, like Miss Hedy Lamarr, give the impression, give off the sonority, of a certain keen intellectual sensuality to come.”

I saw the children, three pretty, calm, unsmiling kids with big eyes. Quiet. I admired the title the woman had chosen for her novel – Paraguay always gets my attention – and her boldness in having the title’s doctor referred to already in the first sentence.

just as dreamt
22 December 2006

SLEEP

I am so pale my friends think I'm dead.

They push me or pinch me to make sure I'm still alive.

I think they love me then.

Sometimes when I lie in bed at night after they are asleep, I can feel the earth move underneath me. Deep down it convulses like a woman having a nightmare, not able to wake.

I feel the whole earth trembling. It makes my body tremble too. My friends beside me in the room are sleeping peacefully, motionless in their beds while I shake.

I used to ask them in the morning: did you feel the earthquake in the night? But they never did. So I soon stopped asking.

They can't feel it at all, awake or asleep.

My face is so pale you can see me in the dark. You're not here, though, so you can't see me. Pale, motionless, my eyes open. My body trembling with the earth below my bed. And nobody knows.

Sometimes I think we pale people don't live on the same planet with you even though our house is the same and all of us, pale and not pale, lie in the same beds.

I wonder what you would see if you did come. But you will never come. But if you did, would you feel anything? Would you see the earthquake in me, even if you could never feel it yourself?

What do people actually see when they look at each other?

22 December 2006

15. K.450

Glad to see you hold my hand
my horn my horn is a habit

a little forest to know you in

*

where a star fell
a stag died
a spurt of his living stuff
grows mushrooms there
truffles deep
in the growl of ground
no one found

not even the white sow
Aeneas saw snoring on the bank

woods woods fingers
erasers more erasers than pencils
more lines than squares
toadstools and tomorrow
more and more

volume of a frustrum
(an amputated cone)
examine, heap up formulas.

More formulas than things!
Sweaters for morning
shorts for afternoon
a shawl for night time

a shawl with stars
woven into it

try to tell the pashmina from the air
around it not easy
not easy island island

as near as I can figure
you never were an island—

keine Insel warst du dann
I saw that tree
moving through those trees

Codex Seraphinianus

lovely fake who needs a flower
when we have an hour
who needs a little cat
when we have symmetry?

We're all a little autistic you now,
John especially, and we are all named John

(as the poet wrote), what else would you name
a tree come walking up the road and

and
we don't need even pictures of them
we have words
we don't even need words
we have this funny feeling in our heads
the great land between our ears
from sea drone to sly sunset
so many cities
and a god is a word enough for *we*

a god is a word the mind says to me.

Quite impressive. Now listen to this:

teapot broke
tea ran south
a river comes
a river knows
the tea is me
the sea is close
we drown
among strangers
we orient ourselves
by how we smell

and I smell the night again
coming over the hill.

II.

Let it think nothing while I try
also to be a table
gloss of a grey morning
removing one by one
such thoughts as pretend to think.

Arriving, arising.
A method to each wave.

I know these numbers, officer,
they have counted me before,

I know the feel of each of them,
this seven pressed against my skin.

And the one thing no one can forgive is love.

O you sly song
you stone hidden in brown leaves
you last meaning left in the world.

Tree. Tree. So many me.
O you. Shy sum
of some and some.

How can I ever be slow as you need me?
Hyperactive disorder
boy in the cellar
chasing silverfish down the whitewashed wall.

Inside every brick
a letter from the fire

he is too busy to hear
though he rests his head against the wall.

III.

Everyone is here now
I can stop being.
It's all about them and me.
This is the you I used to be.

The one I knew, her father
was a baker, she sat in the flour
like a curved white song,

her father was a blacksmith
she learned from him
how to bend me round her finger

nagelneu. brand new, bright and shiny
as a new nail

hammering the guesswork quick together
to make it stand,

her father was a carpenter
and taught me how to build a tree
late afternoons when I sat in his atelier
waiting for her to finish dressing and come down

then we'd go walking out together
strolling through the forest her dad had made

When we got to the oil well in the middle
I always forgot what kind of oil it was
It changes every day she said
sometimes oil of mountain sometimes oil of seashell

Is it good for us I asked
so many times
Try it and see she said
night after night holding close
but never did but never did
even now I taste it on her skin

no, you never licked me
no, the oil stays in the well
the way the wood stays in the tree

no one gets married any more
and a rusty nail is pretty too

a red kind of remembering,
a girl in fact with no father at all.

22 December 2006