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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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<late><late> =====

Nothing left in mind
so some other source
must rise

a fountain deep, a well
a woman standing by it
fetching or washing,
the long doctrine of water
discoursing all round her

and she speaks too
but what she says I hear
only as sparkling light
on the water's face and on hers
reflected and reflecting

so whatever she is trying to tell
all I know is who she is

the woman, the woman on the other side of words.

19 April 2004

=====

The taste of anything lingers on the line
after you've hung up. Something is there.
Hear it in the buzz, the hollow
around your head when you listen.
It is big, this room you're in
or is in you, some things are never clear,
just here. Here. For a while
you thought it was the taste of the one
you were talking to, or listening to,
since the other voice did all the talking.
And your mouth filled with silence,
all you weren't
willing to say
made your mouth
water, like food.
Listen and swallow.
It is very young
being now now
spoken to, not
speaking. Or very old.
Another of those
unclearities,
uncertainties: friction
that drags the sun
up out of the dark.

Leaving you no wiser.

It is like that now

around you, listen

to your messages

the machine says.

You do. You go to bed

with that strange taste.

20 April 2004

=====

after Maura Cregan

“It went on swimmingly, it went on agreeably, freely, amusingly,”
naturally, simply, unconsciously, fatally,

words are fatal, words go on,
I was dead and didn't know it.
Of all forms of death, the worst is dying.
The worst is being dead.
And then I knew it—
there I was, kaput already
just a micron or two away from
the texture of your body
as you're swimming in the pool lagooningly.

You swim swimmingly. I lurk closely
consciously, ridiculously, uncommunicatively, deadly.
I am deadly, words kill and words killed me,
I cannot touch you or anything you touch,
I cannot eat food, they say silence kills I say words kill
I say everything kills and it is strange being dead,

being dead means eating dust
even here in this swimming hole
under the old willow tree

with pretty fish and darning needles
stitching the water,
even here in water I taste dust.

It does not please me, it runs through me
with a current of its own, dry all that I wanted,
dry all that I meant. But somewhere in your head
you are a little bit aware of me, I don't know how,
I don't know how you know me but you know me,
I swim inside you for lack of any other sea.

20 April 2004

=====

My upper lip

cruel, effeminate.

My lower lip

voluptuary, hedonist.

After I bite

I swallow.

I grew a mustache

to protect the innocent.

20 April 2004

Olin

THESE DAYS

What does it mean that I am not dreaming
and who am I asking?

I am walking through a hollow city
and whenever I turn around
there is nothing behind me,
nothing, just pale space,
like Lisbon in Pessoa but no Lisbon,

I am walking through a crowded city
in which I am the hollow
a shapely absence moving through the streets

hungry, I am hungry.

I am moving through a city
that is never there when I look up and out
from my reflections, my tumultuous interior obligations,
stumble out of the cave of myself and discover:

The cave was a street.

The street was empty.

Everywhere I turn is empty
but the emptiness is beautiful,

phantoms,

I am haunted by what I do not see.

In the morning these days

I get up and sit outside and breathe in

the sun and other nearby stars

and let them float inside me

while I wait to remember my dream.

But there is nothing left to remember.

21 April 2004

<late> =====

It is always isn't it
the rock. Break
or inhabit, there
is a natural an affine
relationship to your skin,
the grain of both
meet or mesh,

a hydrography, a system
of rivers streams and aquifers
always speaking underneath.
This place predicts my life.
Therefore I have dreamed the way
down through the permafrost
into the freezeless kingdom
of the only one who.

20 April 2004

<late> <late> =====

A bread
a bread baked
in an oven
I don't believe

the wheat never grew
the miller never ground
the water never entered the dry meal
the yeast never came

yet here is the bread.
A big loaf like the head
of a Soviet pianist
formidably passionate.
This bread aches for your teeth.

This never wheat this never mill
this dry flow this never-arising

bend low over the drinking fountain
and gulp. Get ready to be bread.

20 April 2004

<late> <late> <late> =====

Magna Mater

the cult of it

worked through city nexus

like subway

freight cars unloaded her stuff down there

in the bronze piazza

where never the sun came

nobody talked sense

all those Garamantes in the kitchen

conspiring against themselves

against the ordinariness of wheat

why wheat?

o Africa Africa

where it all seeds from

Sunland the bright black

where even the gods

(those closest to us of all species, commensal with us,

intimatest, we are mice in heaven)

are strangers

and nobody knows what to believe.

But belief has nothing to do with the gods.

20 April 2004

=====

#11

the risk
the molecular habit
of it, to come close
enough to touch or
tell is: to be captured

by the superior power
of the other, the other
is power,

every other and
the sobbing or is it sodden
doubt begins then
when you look at your
body in the mirror
and say Where have you been
what have you done

what macabre jokes

have you told
all the ones you loved?

standing there
holding a word in mind
something in italics
you want to tell
so loud nobody hears it

a mad girl running through the trees.

21 April 2004

<late> =====

a different thing a glue
that holds the roads together

owls and raccoons are shouting
at two a.m. they sound like people
but people would be dancing
on tv or in Belize

and the admirals who run our dreams
would be piloting madness
deep into my harbor

from which by dint of Saxon magic I
a Goidel from nowhere have
for centuries kept myself sane.

21 April 2004

=====

There is usually a price to pay
a phone that rings
a girl to fetch it from the bakery
the salmon tulips among goldfinch daffodils
a Jew walking on the street alone
a Jew holding my hand and listening

swans settle where the water is
follow the swans

don't know much I am a furrier
a coachman a cardinal a surprise guest
my face shows nothing I say
because there is nothing to show
heaven is the land of desire
hell is the land of desire unfulfilled
in between is middle earth the land of need
(in English we make a big mistake
saying *want* to mean those opposites desire and need)
war is the sickness of desire land
rebellion is the sickness of need land

thus I spoke and he listened
as I carried on till finally he
pulled me by the chin and kissed my cheek

and maybe his lips brushed the corners of mine
and said: I am not who you think I am
I am not a man I am a building
built of granite and I have stood here for decades
since the Belle Epoque
waiting for you to come by and tell me something

now I have given you
stone's lasting kiss
o foolish lover to think granite was a Jew
to think a building big as a bank
could walk with you along the sidewalk

you are the Jew and the walker and you are my ghost,
you pass me every night in your dreams
and never till now did you ever take my hand and speak.

22 April 2004

The children do not want to go into the fire

they do it because the god tells them. One two three.
They have names but one two three will do.
Because of the god and the other god. When gods
get angry children go into the fire and mothers sob.
Then mothers go into the fire and the fathers flee,
they set up businesses in Paraguay, they speak Urdu,
that is what the children feared, even the fire
seemed better than that to them, along with the voice
that came out of it, always towards them, a voice
is what comes towards us, did you know that
flames have voices? Not just those curious faces
we see in the fireplace those chilly June nights
on Buzzards Bay. Voices. What do we know of fire?
Fire talks. Fire says

Come into me and be children

only for the littlest while. Even I
am better than a father selling high
definition TVs in Paraguay.
Better than jungle, better than books
with no words in them, like this one,
they make you read at school.
Every page says nothing, nothing,
and this nothing you have to learn by heart.
No wonder you prefer the fire, all
three of you. In your story, one god

rescues the children, he said Sing
in the fire, children! And the children
seemed to sing. But it wasn't them,
it was the fire singing, singing You
know nothing about me and my song.
And that fire also was me, and I am every
voice you will ever hear, the voice
that makes you children and makes you sing.

22 April 2004, Olin

<late> =====

This girl writes sideways
weaves strands of beads
into her hair: sandalwood,
coral, turquoise, roundish
things that remember stone.

The man thinks back on
old desk sets made of bronze:
ink well, box for paper clips,
box for stamps, rocking blotter,
pen holder. He thinks:
things grow old to keep us young.

A nurse with affable hips
hovers near him, closes his eyes.

22 April 2004