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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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Coruscations of the sea

Under the mares tails
gone before dark and then
strange lights a dozen
miles away on the American shore

Things that are left behind
when Ed Grier died
a carton of monographs
and Whitman's oneiric raptures
shadowed on the Jersey shore
in sad blue hectograph
duplications, who dares
behave like a gull
being svelte and beautiful and pale grey
verging on white

to loop the whole sky into your amorous designs,
and who would dare to be
a virgin with the sea?

13 June 2004, Cuttyhunk

<late>

THE WARFARE HAS BEGUN

I feel it on the wind
the blood smell of the dawn wind
trees outlined against the sky
the standing army of the obvious
beautiful in their green uniforms
the particulars that make us live

and then she threw a stone
and broke the pool
leaned on an old bent rusty stake
and spoke her gospel down the beach:

the world is whatever touches me
ravenous the blue heron of the sky
feds on me all day
I keep myself sane
by counting the irises
as they pass by

the screen itself the fatal camera
that pictures us to death
mouth gaping dead in our seats
before the withering information
art is like that
Milton killeth the letter giveth life

The greatest writers have no religion. Aeschylus. Shakespeare. Goethe. Keats. Great writers, the rest, some of them were tortured by religion and rebelled one way or another away or deeper in (Baudelaire, Dostoevsky) or acceded gradually to its dementia (Tolstoy). Some few great ones used religion as if its winds blew fresh from the world of everything else (Rilke, Virgil). And there were even a few who accepted it in all its horrific details and somehow (Milton, Dante) found their poetry in that.

Towels drying on the deck rail
a brisk wind filling and releasing them
what is this air that makes is dance
they ask, what is this deity?

He's always making categories
he's like young Gaea when she began
dividing her body into continents

he's still afloat
in a liquid world
change is possible!
the Buddha tune
because everything goes down

to ride the moment
conscious
through the yawning gap
between this and the next

into the fresh young universe in between

a quilted sky with sun below the edge
(quarter to six on Monday morning
don't print that, I'm quoting my Seiko)
(stilbesterol makes holsteins fat
it wants to say here and I let it)
that's the problem with being a door
Christ lets everybody in
the church rouses itself
to rebuke His hospitality
but He said I am the door
and we would like to think we'd like to be like Him
have to let everybody in

otherwise you're just a sailor with no boat
or a boat with no ocean
or an ocean with no boat

divine reciprocals
what else are you?

word and mouth
kissing each other passionately,
eternally.

14 June 2004

=====

o despot light that takes my eyes away

blind fisherman
the root of being
is to go

boots drying out on the rail
Van Gogh could paint them
sea wet

for everything that exists needs to be represented
and when everything that exists
has been recorded or inscribed
some other music reaches us

I live for that
old Whitman's tattered cloak
around our shoulders
his fox fur collar still alive
yapping at the meager moon
month's end soon
and so many unbelievers, Americans,

then the dark trumpet sounds
and that too will spirit us away

into the territory of our becoming

the eels of the Sargasso

like rhizomes in a moving earth

neurons in our Comedy.

14 June 2004

<late>

THE OCEAN SOUND

Imagine this: a man
dissolving into his salts
and coming to you

vague as music on a distant radio
you can barely hear
over the dawn surf

he washes up along the shore,
shadows blue as mussel shells
he fills with his pale chemistry

and all you can do is feel
the presence that he is.
Nothing seen, nothing felt.

His salt is not much
different from the sea's--
chrome iodine gold

salts of gold
salts of all his dreams
dissolve with him too

come to you

for you to dream them

now, before the clouds

release the captive moon.

14 June 2004

THE EXPLORATION OF THE BODY

knows no end.

Even sickness when it comes is a conquistador
marching up country through the jungles of me.

To know the body is appropriate
each turn of the road and know it
by feel and fate. Know me standing there
trying to hide behind the palm. Where does
feeling go? What house is this
beside the barely legible track?

There are so many haciendas in the heart alone
and horses everywhere, shacks
tenanted with interesting tragedies
and any midnight you can hear the roar
of glorious buffoons left over
from my last life. Lives.

I have to be orthodox at least inside me,
the body is the only absolute religion.

I have spent this whole life in me
and still haven't walked down every alley,
seen each little chapel, rested my forehead
against the cool tile of every subway station
or seen those eyes looking at me over there
in that house made entirely of amber
where birds are silent but women recite.

15 June 2004

2.

It's the houses in me I want to say.

Everything the doctors see as bone and tissue
is actually urban architecture.

Awareness, the slender voyager,
finds its way through all the streets,
climbs all the stairs, goes out of town,
up in those green hills past the pale
tubercular asylum, into nomad pastures,
deserts, mountain and all that stuff
we think of as just outside but here it is,
nowhere to go but me, and you too,
you're just the same, that's why we try
so hard to travel in each other,
a different country every time, a deep
New Zealand out of your nightly mind.
And travel is so quick inside
it's strange the body steps outside itself
to talk -- puffs breath your way, whispers
in your ear, writes things down out there,
here. Here and there are the same word,
one of them muffled by the mouth that says it.

15 June 2004

STALK

stem flute
you held
the spring wind
in your mouth

and let it search you
the way air does
that long investigation
you call music

what is it
but finding your way
in the hugest unknown
space you hear

it could be a sea-rose
now flooding white
or magenta, down there
where everything is

where the sea comes in
to answer
the soft imputations
of your lyric lips

with Plato of its own
doubting the big
body he carries
to give himself to you

as ocean does
all bravery and salt
and we come so late
in the day trying

still to make sense
of what we both
in the same wind
heard you speaking.

15 June 2004

=====

The way things turn in the middle and go
somewhere else.

Even while I'm writing it asks in me: why aren't you writing?
Even while I'm working it asks, why aren't you working?

In the heart of action is a doubt---
is this the act intended?
Aren't I always doing, but doing the wrong thing?

15 June 2004

=====

New pen new pen!
I lift it to the setting sun
to see what it will say,
green green the hill
and white the gulls that walk on it
and through the pen barrel's plastic
pale as a gull feather's shaft
I see the green green hill.

The instrument is like what it inscribes.
Look through this
to see what is.

15 June 2004

<late> =====

The animal drops what he's been carrying.

It is a tiger hurrying out of the sea
and what it dropped is a strange bone.

Nothing on this planet's built that way.

Where did he get it? Did he eat
some solid meaty light that falls
once a century from the stars?

If so, then all that alien energy
is in him now, he comes
over the wet sand with big paws,
over the dry sand, over the rocks,
always coming nearer to where we are.

He has white eyes
the way the sea does.

They have seen too many things
and nothing lasts.

15 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

=====

Rhapsode, riddle me this:
a scurf of cloud under sun
like dirt on a farmer's legs
in a muddy season with no rain

and the whole thing in Latin
like a plague come in on a rusty ship
moored two years already in New Bedford,
a Cambodian freighter, its flag in tatters.

16 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

=====

The strangeness of a thing is how.

It calls attention to itself.

It wears a scarlet coat.

It sobs quietly under the blanket.

16 June 2004

=====

Now the glisten is back on the sea.

Six of cups

pouring into the Seven.

Before we die

it is said there comes a moment

when we actually understand.

People are the way they are

waiting for that or getting over it.

It is said that if it comes

early you do nothing more with life

but contemplate the thing you undersood

with prayer or wine.

It is said that if it comes too late

you leave nothing to remember.

Everything listens came

later than *Everything speaks*.

By the heard them both

I knew.

Three of coins,
the work begins. Eight of wands,
the word sets fire to the air.

16 June 2004

CREED

The mist is lifting
the sun's a mile above the shore

This faith I kept
to say these things

Not just what comes to mind
but what the mind goes out to find

Find the sea the sea finds me

16 June 2004

====

Small car or chariot
little king of a small country

an island is feminine
ἡ νησος or insula.
Language insists
on certain things we need to know

or it needs us
to know.

Without language
we would not be able to reach and touch her hands.

16 June 2004, Cuttyhunk

Or tell you what a code is

When a man can't count what does a woman
do she is his hard drive his imaginer

so I measured all the spaces and they were letters
I put the letters all together
they were animals
I spoke the names they formed and they all ran away

out into you where I still hear them howling

the trouble with the alphabet is there is nothing in between
the letters and nothing the letters are between

they just stand
like all the stars in the night sky jammed together
in one coruscation of the mindlight

breathless alphabet of Jews

... 17 June 2004

<late> =====

casting this

as a movie the blue

sea as a stranger

the white bird

as you

walking the cliff road

where the roses rise

profuse in poison

ivy and the gulls

of course laugh at such

delight as ours

in flowers, flowers

in such bad company

especially

like a camera

trying to take

a shapshot of itself

we walk

all the way to the mind

17 June 2004