

10-2004

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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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## NAMES & ROOTS

In a country where no one knows what their names mean, you are in a country where every name means the same thing.

Rise up, reject that nominal ignorance.

Fowler, train your falcons.  
Kramer, pick up your pack.

Etymology is not simply the history of words.  
It is setting words *against* history,  
using them as our weapons to *fight back*

back to the country of “time out of mind,”  
“long ago” mapped as a perpendicular from time,

the meaning of the name is not primitive but *radical*.

A word is always a stream.  
Row back, or with a fortunate wind play the passage up,

*amount*, return to mountain source,

spring. Wade home to heaven.

The roots of word always reveal what society (usage) is always taking away.

In the gloomy same-light of commodity capitalism, a word *visited* is a chapel with a mysterious (=unspeaking, unspoken) gleam of *another kind of light*.

A chapel of otherness.

Not that there is an ‘original meaning,’ not privileging some putative first or primal meaning – not at all. What the etymon shows is *other than now, other than ordinary, something in what you’re saying that you don’t mean, that you don’t dream, something the word is dreaming onward – hence, something free.* It shines with a light (as if of faërie) that may be deceiving, but that at least differently deceives.

23 October 2004

## NYCTHEMERA

my sly bird  
an adjective  
slipped between friends

a little verb

I try to tell you  
I feel abandoned  
and find myself talking to the kitchen  
the clock listens  
talking to the spicebush in the woods  
so yellow

but nothing's missing  
no one is gone

only the feeling's wrong  
that runs me.

I feel like Atlas  
looking for a place to put it down,  
the earth, just a minute or two  
to catch his breath

but that's just a feeling too  
hence wrong, hence me—  
and I have plenty breath,

nothing missing but everything gone.

24 October 2004

## LILA

*remembering Joel O'Brien*

Explicate the rock  
surfaces that face us

with gravid questions  
like who and me or

how does sound go  
and where

but all the time  
we dream we hear

an answer, some Viennese  
tree in a desert dream

a Pontiac run wild  
the moon with rabies

your littlest red wagon even  
out of control, a rush

down the cobbles  
of San Marino, comunismo,

maybeismo, sounds  
something like what we mean

one hears another  
tuning the irreconcilable

differences among men  
and so making music

so someone says I  
heard this man play.

25 October 2004  
(from notes of a month back)

=====

Not sure if close or far  
not sure if bird or blue  
low mountains russet close

purpure far the slants of light  
we are. On Burger Hill  
cast down by openess

to see the whole broad valley  
of every day now all at once  
the distances come home in me.

25 October 2004

=====  
Compress a mile  
meek before Ceres  
no names a love  
left before you spotted her  
in rain in autumn  
the stem of history  
wound till something snaps

a splurge of narrativity  
to hold your life together?  
there is no secret  
only mystery, the famous  
“whereof we must be  
silent” honest  
etymologists watch  
girls eat chocolate in Vienna

what else is new?  
what else is you,  
crescent over cathedral,  
no more travelogues  
the minster is forspent  
with ladophiles and ivy  
you have to look home

to bathroom nook and  
fever bible and watch  
the snail shells dry out



the starfish remind you  
of your mother  
who could never speak  
properly if that's the word  
all absence and seafoam

the Turkish influence  
writes blue letters buried  
in the sands gone mile  
of Mitte, thought experiment:  
be someone else a while  
while I be you, at least  
once a month be a different one  
and have a special day  
between the weeks  
you dream towards with your skin.

25 October 2004

=====

It takes an old man  
to know what's in a young man's horn

*des Knaben Wunderhorn*

sometimes I think he needed words  
almost as much as we do

they held him to the fabric  
of the other's mind.

The last gift  
the world gives a man

to let him wrap  
himself in another's mind

against the cold music he outlives.

25 October 2004

=====

retaining fire till the wall of water  
pleaches the surrounding air: how  
planets form. from words alone.

26 X 04

=====

to make everybody  
look at this

stages of a revolution broken  
into sleeps and deaths

the sad commas of imperial history  
to tell you this

a woman in the power of her dream  
belongs to some man

slavery of imagery alone,  
dreams come from the other side

we have all day to try them on  
and then the sacred interruption comes

like a starling falling silent and a wing.

26 October 2004

=====

You find out if it's true  
by saying it.  
Otherwise  
silence nurtures all the lies.

26 October 2004

=====

If this were Arabic  
you couldn't read it  
I could not have written it  
there would just be sunshine  
dust a thin layer on  
field notes of the dead archeologist.

26 October 2004

=====

I've forgotten all the names  
I whispered in your ear  
in the days when trust  
was our exquisite chemical  
exalting us but you remembered.

26 October 2004

## **Everything forgets.**

That is because  
it is a thing. In Latin  
neuter plural nouns  
take singular verbs.

When I forget in turn  
does that make me  
a thing? They say of old  
old people they are vegetables

but never say which ones,  
they don't say the old cabbage  
in the corner, the carrot  
staring out the window

maybe they too forget  
the names of things,  
maybe we forget the things  
too, not just the names,

and then the day comes  
when the things  
forget us too. Forgetting  
is a political act,

forgetting is the blood  
and milk of politics,  
they rule us by making us  
forget, and I forget

if ever I knew who they are.

26 October 2004



=====

Dying is a lonely life  
it said, it said  
don't worry,  
all your Novembers  
are intact, the blueberries  
shriveled on the stem  
yesses everywhere,  
milkweed fluff  
pilgriming the lower air  
everything seeks home.  
The loveliest thing  
is to be part of everyone.

27 October 2004

## MYSTERIES OF THE MIDWEST

catfish determinants  
I am calculus she said

I was born in bottom lands  
and the tribune never came

I reveal to you a slim secret  
I am the Emperor

the one you thought was  
lost as an imam in hypertime

over Tigris a blur of smoke  
lasts 3700 years,

Emperor I say, enemy  
of the white race

my knee hurts  
and the Day of the Dead is on the horizon

one syllable in my mother tongue  
when the lovers lick each other's bones

and the wine drinks itself  
and the man gasps like Xmas morning

his old teeth full of new air  
and I am there

all violins and chicken fried steak  
moldy fig music

the lord of the trapeze my husband  
slips smooth as the insides of a pocket watch

but no man knows the hour.

28 October 2004

=====

When I say once I mean twice  
When I say you I mean you  
When I say me I don't mean anything at all.

28 October 2004

=====  
When we keep coming  
towards the end of something  
the bird walks out of the sky

a hawk usually  
towered round by three crows  
keeping him in line

then the whole episode is done  
our hips press together  
on the narrow bench

but that is all,  
you talk, I watch the crows  
drive the sly intruder home.

Later I learn you didn't  
notice the birds, I notice  
I don't recall what it was

you were saying, something  
about your grandmother,  
something about Germany.

29 October 2004