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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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=====

Next wait for me on the dime
the little money where you turn around

anticipating worried poverty is not the Lady
Povertas herself for whom saints cast
their father-given raiment in that fire
where your name is the last thing that burns

4 November 2004

=====

Scat-singing till the end the butter
turns back to grass inside the churn
smell of mowing tells you everybody knows
you've done magic again your lower lip

bruised with kisses and your hips
disinclined to stand still:

our weakness is our strength,
close your eyes and you're in Oakland
walking up her stairs the deck the eucalyptus
the law's asleep in Sacramento now

just the two of you alone invade the absolute.

4 November 2004

=====

after Leah Finnegan

John the Baptist is an ascetic madman.

John the Lutheran is an unemployed auto worker.

John the Presbyterian works in a bank.

John the Episcopalian owns the bank John works in.

John the Catholic is a reformed bank robber.

John the Jehovah's Witness walks out on Sunday morning.

John the Methodist consecrates grape juice and crackers.

John the Greek Orthodox sends money home to Arcadia.

John the Buddhist is trying to learn English.

John the Christian Scientist reads the newspaper carefully.

John the Congregationalist rakes up the autumn leaves.

John the Pentecostalist is a skillful karaoke-ist.

John the Taoist is an ardent pharmacologist.

John the Atheist has nobody to talk to.

John the Wizard is studying *Learn Welsh without Tears*.

John the Scientologist is studying accounting.

John the Jew is thinking of changing his name.

4 November 2004

WINDY MORNING, LISTENING

Certainty of doing good. Wind.
Midnight came and stayed. Sappho
 kissed me
lightly on the corner of my mouth
I touched her hip it was enough
to get the brightness started.

He is bright, they said. Grandfather
went to Australia they said,
grandfather found gold.

He set to work to find the gold around the house.
He was bright, he looked for it,
either it was not so bright and did not gleam
 and so could not be found or
it was bright as books say but not there,

no gold, no grandfather, no home.
So he dug beneath the mulberry tree out front
and under the hydrangea in the garden
till they said to him Stop digging
the War has begun
we need all the earth for Trenches
 and he was afraid.

He was not bright enough to know yet
that adults always lie,
pay no attention to what they say,

they tell jokes that show their true feelings,
never rely on what them, they are buried
in their own ground,
he was not bright enough yet to dig them up,
dig them out of their own dirt

so he believed them and stopped digging.

Deep below the mulberry the gold is still there
dreaming of daylight,
dreaming of war,
Sappho kissed every metal too,
lightly as the corner of her mouth
while her lips pronounced its name,

Chrysea I love you she said
and I answered that is not my name I love you too.

5 November 2004

WALL FARE

1.

Stay to home or heap
a hill upon itself and listen
those words you think you hear
are stars you think you see.

2.

My verbs are simple because you are,
you really are, you hold a sign up
tells me what you feel,

feel means what the stars tell you
when you stand up on that hill.
Hide from the hill.

3.

Discover what no man knows
some women guess
the silent stars behind the ones you see

they tell you nothing and give everything
even this dry water hurries down your skin.

4.

I back away from such exactitude
as your touch necessitates.
It rascals me to try your skin.
Skin is too far. Hide behind the star.

5.

Asymptotes of desire.

Hectopascals of interior pressure.

Calculus of slow approach.

Bitter cosmos. Zero equals one.

6.

The nouns are hard because verbs are easy.

Don't you know that yet, you verb
for whom no noun has ever been found?

5 November 2004

INK

So I said to the chemist
 Bleed me some ink
Ask the biologist he said and I did

You'll need a squid
 he said of a certain size and weight
 we're out of those,
make do with Id

he said so I did.

But still I dream of a great dark flask
sloshing full of words, all the words I ever could,
a million words! said Orwell swooned by Proust,

uncountably many clarities all
in this dark liquor swim,
a liter of ink, literature.

I hold the bottle in my hands
all I'll ever need to say.

Because I am matter I am more than it.

5 November 2004

=====

Why such an appeal to be among “the happy few”
he wanted to know, each of us
has a few of his own I guess to belong to,
Vonnegut’s *karass* if I remember correctly.

Bullshit he said that’s just books
or literature to be polite I mean why
don’t I want (because he was talking about
himself, what else do we know enough

to screw a subject into a predicate about)
to be part of everybody, just me and her and...
Who? I wanted to know, nuclear
families, fission or fusion? Shut up he said

I want to be special but I want to have friends
what’s so terrible about that. Nothing at all
I lied, wondering if I wanted to be
one of them or was. And who her is.

6 November 2004

=====

Who knows why who.

Central question of himerology,
though not the first we ask. Pondering
the question leads securely to
the notion of a Soul or God,
someone who knows.

But the question may be disallowed
by the aim of himerology itself.
Nobody knows.

Is that the answer?
Therefore we have to learn,
must become pothognostic,
knowers of the targeting desire.

6 November 2004

=====

Himerology: the science of human affinity. Put simply, why does X fall in love with Y (but not Z, not A...). What attracts? What repels? What normalizes? What satisfies? What dispels?

Pothognostic: 1. Knowledge arising through desire.
2. Knowledge about desire and its object.

for Betty, at eighty

I don't know much about the prairie
but I do know when you're standing there
you can see forever.

Is that how it was in Roggen
when the sun came up out of the earth
and went down God knows where

and you were in between, young
as somebody always feels young
when the sky's on their heads

inexperienced, standing on earth
that's supposed to know whatever there is,
past, present and to come.

You spend your life
taking care of other people, all of them,
all the way to the horizon, the poor, the anxious,
the frightened, even the dumb.

Because a woman who stands up on the earth
sees the real nature and causes of things

and carries that with her. Knowledge
means taking care. Care means being there.
Even when you're the only one

and your shadow reaches to the mountains.

6 November 2004

=====

Why begin any other way
a day is a day

take three deep breaths on the deck
then bring the sky inside

and study it
feeling the dirt grow
beneath my fingernails.

7 November 2004
Boston

=====

So what if the man across the street
who waddles out to check the clouds
is a different man
from any man I've ever see,

we root for the same birds,
we kiss the same shadows,
all our mothers are named Doris,
why should it be any different today?

Am I sure it's not still yesterday again?

7 November 2004
Boston

=====
It's a crime to leave your cellphone home
the whole world belongs in your pocket—

we need you. This is called *being in touch*
but it is the opposite of touching,
especially of touching someone.

Some music in your pocket comes
and Pavlov you answer

though it is the opposite of a question,
this voice you hear.

It pins you to the earth
while it talks so jackals and werewolves
can read your coordinates and track you down.

You put the phone back in your shirt
and watch their yellow eyes close in around you.

They are the law.
They see almost everything,
they are good at waiting.

They watch you now
to see what you'll do.

If there were somebody you could call
it might hold them off a while
even though what you'd be doing
would be really the opposite of calling.

7 November 2004, Boston

=====

Being amazed

at one thing or another
is a game for children like me,
every day a new religion
with its interesting new sins.

Today a chrysanthemum snarled at me,
I looked it up to get even
and found golden flower in Greek plus *-emum*
is what it means
which is clear enough though this one was red,

color of a nun's tongue
hiding in her mouth
and intermittently flashing
wet while she berates me
either for talking in class
or else not answering her correctly,

something to do with language in any case
from a Latin word meaning the tongue in her mouth.

7 November 2004
Boston

=====

I was lying spread out on the bed
and a word looked me up
to learn how to say what I mean.

Word after word came to study me
and one by one they all went away
leaving no business card behind.

I lay there a long time unspoken
heard them murmuring outside the door
plotting something I was sure,

words are always trying to make
things clearer than they can be,
like nice animals, helpful pets

trying to simplify my life—
eat, shit, have kittens, die,
go to heaven in a big fat book.

7 November 2004
Boston

=====

On the way down from the mountains
he found a river

a blue star
hung in the window: a boy at war.
Gold star: a boy no more.

Suddenly he is walking up Pine Street
in war time, his little white tee shirt,
the little dusty city wind

seeing the tattered satin flag
proud in the window: A Gold Star Mother
her son dead for the country.

Memory is like football
a little, but no one wins.
And everybody actually dies
and everybody else has to remember.

7 November 2004
Great Barrington

=====

Home. as in among oneself
where all the prepositions line up,

glad wives in your harem
vying for their pasha noun –

the one they must relate to
by a relation wise grammarians

describe as ‘governing him’

7 November 2004

MARIA STUARDA

In the opera the Queen sings before she dies.
Is this sort of thing the truth of opera
or of queens?

Or is it instead
the usually quiet animal of death?

7 November 2004

INNATE SPECULATION

A bezoar stone
to set against the verjuice in
the king's crystal goblet.

The pearl dissolves
and he drinks with it
the fleck or flimmer of red light
that dances on the pale clear fluid.

Fluid, fluent, flow –
things dissolve into him,
that's what makes him the king,

what in other men would be a conscience
is in him the chyme of dissolved pearls, ambers,
juices from living bodies – these

slosh around inside him and make
mare cordis (neuter), the sea of the heart.

7 November 2004

EXPIATION

of certain acts of music

modesty, *yü*, ‘a fish’

when we want to express forgiveness we draw a fish
because the fish released swims fast away from the fisherman
and never looks back

this never-looking-back means ‘to forgive.’

When we want to say a monk
we draw a duck
because a duck is smooth and placid
all the while her feet are paddling forward
out of sight, quietly, flawless, sure.

Music never forgives us
since it keeps coming back.

A tune is an accusation
like a shepherd boy playing on a hillside to his flock

the high-pitched whistle of his
song accuses the sky.

7 November 2004