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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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## **ARAK?**

Arrack we used to spell it  
set fire to it  
blue among the raisins

added rock sugar and lemons  
you poached it gently  
as soon as the birds stopped singing

except the owl who keeps pace  
with your drinking  
midnight punch and blue flames

the owls are still here  
but nothing means the same thing anymore.

5 February 2003

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I've always been good at telling you  
more than you want to know,  
endless proliferant detail  
to keep from mouthing  
what's really on my mind.  
As if I knew. Is that a word?  
I specialize in questionless answers,

those wide-eyed children with no fathers  
who walk along the highways  
or hang out in neighborhood parks,  
you see them coming towards you and you look away.

5 February 2003

## ALIGNMENT

Standing behind you  
I watch you watching  
you lean back against me  
soft and the world changes.  
At the same moment  
you're reading over my shoulder,  
everything I learn  
you learn too,  
we are lost in the physics of each other.  
That's how I know you are the one,  
I read about you long ago  
in the Book before the Bible,  
the one I get up every  
morning of my life and try to write.

5 February 2003

## **THE INSTRUMENTALITY**

Bless you in the name  
of the highest mother  
this new pen  
the new word  
it's bound to write  
or gouge dry out of clay  
or just point to  
over there  
when it falls from my hand.

5 February 2003

## **RESPONSA**

sans rabbi,  
lunacy with no moon.  
Steeple by no church,  
lunch with no lover.  
Loneliness is not so bad,  
a dreamless sleep,  
a sleeping god.

5 February 2003

## POPULAR ANGELS

Lately people believe in angels again  
or talk about them a lot.  
I'm no expert in otherworldly ecology  
but I have a theory about  
why the angels came back.  
Into view, I mean, or fashion  
because they never left  
or were never here to begin with  
the way Oldsmobiles are  
or parfait glasses full of lime jell-o.

But here they are. Credulous  
agnostics watch them on TV,  
and the angels love us again,  
love us for accessing them, turns them on,  
they love us for our appetite,  
for our image making energy, our sin.

Angels love our excess. They hate  
the desert, austerity, purity,  
they have enough of that at home,  
they wander through us,  
we are their Wednesday market and their silk bazaar,  
they take care of us a little bit  
along the way, absent minded in their ecstasy.  
Our spectacle. Lucid spirits  
charmed by our thick things.

5 February 2003

## THE MAN

We don't know what day it is  
until it's done.

We're not Indians,  
we are broken men  
white blood seeps out.

Nothing brought us here,  
we have no tradition  
of how we came to be  
where we are, so here  
has no liturgy for us,  
no meaning in the place  
always closing, a gust of wind  
you feel and now it's gone.

Stare into the morning  
and get a glimpse of something  
riding with the sun on her back.  
What is it. We have denied  
our desires. It is a comfort  
at least to admit that, say it  
in so many words. So many words.

6 February 2003

[When I was a child, that's how all adults seemed. Maturity=depression. Wake up, darling.]



## MEMORY IS HARD

Hard frost on beige car  
teenage voices out there  
sun caught in window curtain

tree talk written all over the snow.  
Who is speaking?

and when I learned to read  
whose voice whispered in my head  
how the letters sounded, how the words  
would always try to mean?

Who wrote those books I thought I read?  
Can the author disappear  
between one line and the next  
and someone else slip in,

not him and not me, and not you, not you,  
and still go on speaking?

It is like the shadows of all these bare trees  
on all the snow. Sun makes the shadow  
each tree speaks its own shape in, unyielding.

Yet the shapes change. The shadows  
twist, elongate, recede, divide, marry.  
While the trees do nothing and the sun

grinds over on its brazen track.

Who is speaking? Who is writing?

And all the scribble changes constantly.

Turning world, whirling sun, static trees —  
none of these.

Everything talks.

Reading rapes me.

6 February 2003

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*18 Pluiose. Day of the Yew Tree.*

If I could would you be listening. If I came would you be there. If you were there would we be together or would it be someone else we were pretending to be. If we are who we are all the way through the afternoon will we be married. If everything has to get translated first will we understand. If there is no question how will we answer. If the tree bows low under heavy snow and we can't even see its dark green color how can we be sure of anything. If a thing has a name isn't that enough. If a thing has a name that's never enough.

6 February 2003

## ENTRANCE

Close enough to understand but not to touch  
the circuit rider of the senses on his broken horse  
knows all the tracks that lead to where you live  
town square church house attic room

and sometimes he dreams of forcing his way in that narrow door  
clattering huge up the dark staircase and stopping  
at your doorway, the door swings open and he studies you  
you lie in your morning bed and study him

two people who have something to say but don't know what it is  
it has all happened before but they don't know when  
it means something important but nobody knows what

between you and him the horse's big head hangs heavy  
in the doorway, snorting with effort, saliva creaming his lips,  
eyes insane, knowing all the answers,  
huge animal, little room, his own size frightens him,

it is scary to be so big, to be so huge and alone  
between you and him like a stupid moon stuck in the sky.

7 February 2003

## CAVE MARKINGS

Be less tentative  
out there  
make a big mark  
lasts like Lascaux  
as long as rock  
just as easy to read

by touch by optic  
firing but  
understanding?  
such a terror  
in the ground  
that word inspires  
in me who all my life  
have stood under  
all the things I could

and under the place  
where I am standing  
another meaning  
means its way to me

mooing like buffalo or  
crooning like the old  
man with antlers  
his eyes dissolved in smoke  
who with amazing suppleness  
leaps out of the wall

you have heard it too  
the voice of the stone

anytime you see red

a smudge of color outlasts the sun.

8 February 2003

## ODE TO CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

Is everybody under the ground the same?

Does the 'interior of the earth' *interiora terrae*  
have one single culture everywhere?

Why are the cave 'paintings' only in a few parts of Europe?

Is it we can see only Europe  
or did they happen only there?

They must be everywhere  
beneath us and around us.

Do they reveal themselves like γτερ-μ when *(gTer.ma)α*  
the 'world' is ready for them?

Space knows time  
*intimately.*

Really inside itself it knows another thing.

2.

When you read a rock wall below the hill  
time turns itself inside out  
and puts on the garments of space

the dirty shirt the torn trousers the scuffed shoes  
the uniform of childhood

time dresses as a snotty brat, a wiseass street kid,  
time has smelly armpits, time reaches out for you  
beneath the earth, you are Rimbaud your nose  
pressed to limestone, the yellow comes off,  
you are marked

we are marked by what we see.

And I who am terrified of the hallway closet  
praise you down there, scrunched,  
squeezing your man condition down into infancy  
to unlearn language  
and learn it again  
from the scratches on a wall

that no one made  
we know by name

that still speak inside us  
where I do consent to stand  
stuck inside myself the largest cavern  
watching mind light break on an actual  
factual wall

you are brave enough to stand against  
drunk with all the years spent coming here,

delirium of travelers, delirium of language  
spooling up from in us, artesian language  
splaying muddy at the cattle's feet



splashing us, wet in the garments of space.

We say: under the earth.

But most of the caves are really in the sky,  
in the mountains, treasure is everywhere,

gTer.ma, treasures buried in the air,  
in earth, in solid rock, treasures buried in the mind  
long afterward remembered, the voice speaks

IT IS THE SAME VOICE

that is my proposition that is my prayer  
the voice that spilt its blood and ocher in the caverns  
speaks in our breath, whose, ours, when, now,

the treasure caves of France and Spain  
are in the sky: in mountains, buried  
under the ground but still above the earth

we climb up to go down.  
All the under-art is still over sea level,  
right, the face of the sea  
is the deepest cave we see,

right? Are we listening  
to *Vitriol*?  
Or are we listening to the sky?

It is as if the birds had not been born,

a wild boar charges down the sky.

The thought I think on the hill  
from the thought in the valley

the range of feeling between Sinai and Dead Sea  
gives the flavor of Judaism and its little daughter Christian daughter  
Buddhism is all Himalayas

we think where we are.  
When a thought arises in me I am a node of space  
a soft howl of an everywhere wind  
suddenly locked some special place  
this here

this here, phrase we were told never use  
when we were children of this foreign language the mother tongue

this here.

What is the *here* of Lascaux?  
I have never been there

it is some pictures in a book  
and a terror round my shoulders  
of dark rock pressing in,

have you been to Australia  
have you seen the portable mountains  
the caves they carry with them  
a little ocher on dark hands, chalk cheek,

a barked out word, a song

bury the mark in me  
so that I speak

later an ocher  
hand to touch a woman  
to leave my mark  
on a suddenly eternal skin

Did we never know?

Did we let the eye do the work of the mouth  
did we never taste the sign?

For the taste of a thing is an instruction,  
an indiscretion, a doctrine of cabbage a gospel of lamb fat, of cheese,  
these inscribe a wisdom of a sort in us  
a wisdom I think you can get no other way.

Days in the cave nights in the sky.  
The only research is what you feel

what feel entrains and makes you do.

Is that what you do when you look at the wall,  
read back to feeling,

the feeling one who was completely alive  
felt so strongly it left a mark

skill? skill is feeling  
gouged in rock  
they tell you  
what you always already needed to know,  
how the inside happens.

So you guessed to stand  
inside and see yourself

starting in time  
intime  
mesomorph Mallarmé hunkering in messy cavern  
reading the explicit with his fingers  
to sense the never spoken never

the nevermarks that make absence  
come, comes back, comes back

the god you lost by opening your eyes.

8 February 2003

## TWO VIENNESE

Time to make mistakes again  
we asked them why they walked  
that way and why she bent to look  
close at the *edelsteinkette* in  
the jeweler's window on the Graben  
where once I bought amber,  
isn't it obvious, it's on  
display, the all of it, the day  
itself is mortgaged to the night.

8 February 2003

## **TWO VIENNESE (2)**

Try to make mistakes anew  
try asking them to walk by themselves  
try a gold sky and she bent to show  
try a diamond necklace on  
try amber  
try to break a window by gaze alone  
try to be obvious, it's on your throat,  
try to be all of it, the day  
itself tries to reassemble the night.

9 February 2003

## **A WEEK BEFORE VALENTINE**

When I said I loved the smell of incense in your hair  
it wasn't about incense, wasn't about hair, it was you,  
it was sudden evidence that said we are together,

we share a liturgy and a morality  
a way enough akin of looking at the world  
that our bodies can handle the same or similar prayer.

9 February 2003