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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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ELEGIES FOR OSIRIS

I want the new thing
the disclosure
men among the trees
crow feathers in their caps
protecting order,

the long legato of Vivica Genoux
embracing a castrato aria from *Artaxerxes*

Johann Adolf Hasse

because love is the slimmest
mercury, a fan dance of potash even,
measure me for a chessboard
feel my poor spine and listen
to that animal electric avatar

reborn every morning
chanting at you dull as monks
prioritizing rapture

o such language darling
you whose spokes are longer than the wheel
so must spin in the air of agreement

—the sun is clear this morning,
bene volente — frictionless in almost
fall.

Beneath their Aqua Velva chins
the channelers grunt and strain to pass
a licit message — where *do* words come from,
Equivoque, where does the lighter get its flame,
plastic Prometheus of so many pockets,

you mean it's ok to tell the truth —
only to your mother, and she is deaf.
Dead? Words, where from, will you,
disclose?

A narrow place where everything is born,
they call it *so.ma*, freshness, the gap
between any notice and the next
— any moment you might be speaking Turkish—
truth touches you in the night
you roll over, truth caresses the pillow
where later you'll fall asleep and dream,
messages everywhere.

Go back to school,
study inorganic chemistry, discern
what the rest of the world is thinking, the part
of it that won't breathe in and out,
the people who just took one deep breath
and it lasts forever. The salt of God,

the silex sparking in the fleshy night,
plastic also comes from living things,
drink gasoline. It's what you do to life
that makes it hurt. See Cohn. Cohn remembers,

the terrifying acceleration, stretto,
Armageddon in every molecule.

No wonder we need a new coat now and then
to hide our naked newborn skin,
the thing that happens to the waking mind
blue sky after days of rain.

Central disorder
rapture bound around her ankles
strum the catgut she uses to connect
the botryoidal mindset
with her prancing feet — ripe ripe
and movely ripe, clusters
of the frost sweetened grapes
chastened to the ice-wine
of November rivers,
I am yours,

 you wait there
storming at the Sea Gate
enraged at me but still
sharing my pizza, one wedge
for two appetites,
we spent our lust on living
foodlessly fat.

But the air's dry now, my sparrow,
and the pale delight is back

the haunted shade inside your clothes

the pale shadow that is your skin
now tell me what divine opacity
casts that shade and from what light

Now summon from the yew trees to appear
medium demons of high magic, Saltarellus,
Sequoius, Quousquinus, they know their jobs,
they can have you on your back in no time
interviewing the immortal stars

and make them answer. They hardly know
what they're saying, and you're no better,
you live for these moments of pure jive
when every word is shining ruby
tail light in rain.

Circle me with light,
there you are, young glory,
one foot past the other
like a goat going over a rope bridge,
be like the bird but don't fly,
be like the moon but don't fall

as she my sister does night after night
excruciating slow.

In all those pages find me one new thing,
anything, name of an angel,
lips of a woman you (not I) kissed in dream —
a kiss is strange, a wordless speaking
in the other's mouth,

and the sun writes only shadows on the ground,
tell me, lover, one new thing,
that's all, fox in a thicket it could be, a hunter
dead beside his rifle, a green
feather in his hat band rolled from his head,
and not far away you hear a waterfall.

5 September 2003

“MAKE A MARK”

Make a mark and follow it
to Jericho.

Sanctuary there
of a new god every day,

we call her Friday and worship her with fish,
oil, green wine from Portugal,

broken bitter olives to make
dark-red stained diagrams
which we interpret to know her will

and praise her, interpretation
is prayer and praise enough.

Tomorrow's god is envious and generous and black.

5 September 2003

I have nothing but theologies
to counteract the actual,
the real always just out of reach.

5 IX 03

BLOOD

We call a man's genetics his blood,
blood line, blood ties, blood
of the Vikings. Which tells us that we come from women,
only from women, and their blood is the first ocean
before our arrogant sassy camphory sperm arose,
overdeterminants sharking in that crimson sea.

This is my blood, he said, raising his cup
to the woman at the table, meaning her, not the cup,
toasting with the cup her as the alchemists later
would say *Bring fire to the fire*.

This is my blood, you see her there beside you,

inside you also she knows how to be.
Until the end of counting, end of bricks and bread and letters,
this blood of hers remembers me.

5 September 2003

ENVELOPE

Always ready for the else
he knew a man. Always
hunting for the pearl he found a sky

things wrapped inside each other
like the Torah in its velvet scroll

if I were a Jew I'd say
the Torah's written everywhere
it's up to you to unwrap it, read it

but since I'm only who I am, if that,
I can barely say I love you.

6 September 2003

PHILOSOPHICAL INSTRUMENTS

Rare machinery aligns the sun
we never knew behind the one

that's all too easy,
the one that blind men see

and cripples carry on about
lying in their stiff chairs

while swimmers shout.
Where did they come from?

The waves.
The ocean runs the sky

the way the ordinary face
controls the timid mirror.

6 September 2003

INAUGURATE A NEW POLICY FOR SEDAN CHAIRS

We really need to carry you aloft
lit by torches from provincial opera houses
up the rocky glen where bandits wait
to bring their chorus to your attention,

look, a tick is crawling up your ankle,
look, Albanians are settling in the trees,
look, lovers congregate in churches with no priests,
you have to know these things,

the sky
is made of stone, the earth is made of leaves,
try to think about our needs, our pawky appetites,
our dim attention span, our image problems,
our flat champagne.

You rule the world
so vaguely, darling, don't hide from things,
let us hoist you to the center of the hour
so call the colors kneel before your seat
and you know the answer before we know the question
but you leave it to the salt marsh to explain.

6 September 2003

ON THE TERRACE

Imagine anything else.

Just try.

Worse than the white bear,
the yew tree full of mocking birds.

Anything, anything else.

The joy of it is trying. Try.

Pessoa making his luncheon
of a single glass of wine.

Green wine. Black sand
of the south. Weird dialects
of the far north. Crackpot cosmologies
and a nice glass of wine.

A nice clean napkin.

6 September 2003

SYLLABUS

Maintaining reasonable weather in and out
is what we ask of pagan gods.
Victory in ice skate competitions,
voluptuous hula, algorithms of the most high.

Teach me to swim. Teach you
to forget. Teach her to dance
with her mouth open. Teach him to
carry surveying equipment always
in case he comes to meet a mountain.
Teach them to cry in the night with no noise,
drink with no wine, erase read words
with bread crumbs kneaded with their thumbs
over the poor white paper. Teach us all
to take the hiss of the espresso maker
as a promise of the life to come.
Me, I'm just between lives at the moment.

6 September 2003

CANZONE

Achingly material. *A round*
of weather spelling Bach
and a longer name beginning Z

with just as much mercurial rain
a little less sun, maybe,
and a family all round him too

made up of you and me, darling,
the universal infants that We are,
solvent remedies for mother's grief

and when daddy sits and wonders
where his youth has gone, kuda, kuda,
why then we whisper Into us,

into us everything flowed.
You were our private river
and we were your mallow flowers,

your skyscrapers, your Grand
Concourse apartment houses,
your comfort stations in the park,

we took you into ourselves
and hid your life in ours —
we both have much to complain of

but it's only right for you to go first.

6 September 2003

THINGS TO STOP WORRYING ABOUT

Try to think of one.

Yesterday. But that's where
guilt begins. Remorse

isn't strictly worry is it?

No but it hurts the same way.

It's worry backwards

teeth in the haunch of now.

7 September 2003

AGAIN

Fall for the hour,
the quiet gleemen
set up their music
you think you'll like

their brittle harps
their tarnished saxophones
they don't know what they're doing
channelers from dead pleasures
trying so hard to please

I need a shave I need
something the earth remembers
the good part of being here
flowers and underwear all
the lucid mysteries unfold
archives of meaningful obscurity

Listen morning I take your hand again
I'm still gullible after all these deaths
the Sun is a waitress with glorious haunches
but not much small talk
the Wind is busy somewhere else
listen Light wherever you come from
I know I'm ridiculous but I'm saying yes again.

7 September 2003

(years ago I would have said all that by going to Mass

but nobody listened

since then

I've been trying to say it in English —

it took them two thousand years to get it said,

don't blame me for taking so long

and saying so little again and again)

7 September 2003

Sunlight dappling on the russet roof of the new garage. A new vista. Porcupine weather across the river. Windows open, the ships all gone from the sky. Only the sun herself, luxe over the midges dancing in her rays, sun and dance all drowned in blue circumstance and a low wind. Infinitude of life marshalling its meanings. And what does that mean, killosopher? If I ever wrote a book, it would be called *Who Am I Thinking?*

7 September 2003

NECESSITAS

Willing to agree with anything you say
potrzebe means necessity
I call my boudoir delicate
weary as Tiberius on Capri
making love to eels.

When I am tired

I go out walking,
when I feel charged I sleep —
that is the meaning.

Jasmine at noon,

amphetamine midnight. Irish,
I remember everything.

Little by little, one shame at a time.

The things that touch you are the universe.

Beyond that interestingly textured veil
only surmise — entities and energies
the channelers impersonate but who knows.

Suppose there really was a Rome,
Balkh, Bactria, Bolivia, Peking.

Suppose that red men walked along the ice
following the lady who came first,
Spider Woman and her cousins, pretty
silhouettes on a cold horizon.

And came here. Suppose they rendezvous'd
around the witching hour in Patagonia
and came back, midnight of the world

Columbus and his crew of demons
pestering the coast. Suppose we really are
moving closer to dawn, and the old
papal-marxist age is ending. Light
is a given except when it's not.

An elegy for darkness, where Buddha
teaches you to wake with sleepy eyes,
immortal vigil, awareness breathed
from life to life, something small and thick
you clutch, someday you'll open
your hand and see what's there
and let it fall. Then it will finally be now.

7 September 2003

NIGHT

Clothing hung over the hedge
drying you hope in moonlight
bleaching it to a strange blue

ancient bread
a river with no source
only the mildew heals.

7 September 2003