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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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LAST DAY

Last day first day
the mirror smoking

water also
lets mist rise

into the burnt leaf
air I imagine
what the rhododendron

leaf I'm looking at
feels in rain

if feeling
is the word
for all we know.

26 October 2003

[about to leave for the Indiana tour]

AIRPORT VARIATIONS

1.

so many unknown
friends to see
the waiting animal
we are

overcoming semaphores
of human distress
this face of ours.

2.

Bear with me
I am rapture
all the time and slow

and what I know
is all I have
to give you so.

3.

Seal me
with ellipses
those rose-
purple moistures
know how to speak
me in.

4.

Crumbs crumbling
of dry toast
airport nerves

an artist friend
is everyone
draws free

hand in her hair
peroxide lucencies

as if half her head
were still the sky.

26 October 2003

Albany

LES CREPUSCULES D'INDIANA

Trying to walk my way
to something to eat
I find buildings scattered
over the river plain
of separate architectures
in cold wide streets
paced emptiness I'm the only
one not in a car, the lights
I see ahead are the Greyhound
depot, some coke machines
and three male sleepers
waiting for anywhere else.

26 October 2003

Fort Wayne

INSOLENT VARIATIONS

1.

Mud slides on highways
through thick clouds
caterwauling of blue animals
you thought were sheep.

Car alarm in parking lot
goes on a good while before
and the silence has a pressure
of its own, a reiki hand

laid soft upon
my clenched nape,
you try to touch me
but you are not my medicine

I try to remember you
but you are not my lesson
there is a different grammar
spells us together

there are many ways of being
impossible, you are my freedom
and mistake, New Science
of the very small,

the slight decision
through such slippery gates,
don't yet give up on me,
they *must* be improbable,

these shapes and colors you see
when I close my eyes, thang-kas
over the horizon so sharp
the birds fly through without disturbing,

nothing there except the seeming
and seeing that is so is being
beyond being, also a rainbow
or a deer lapping melting snow

or the sun on the roofbeam
of your house neglecting
to walk away west
into the actual forgetting.

2.

Resisting
otherwise:
a mantram

meditate through this
car quick
through yellow elms

sunrise mist
gauze prairie
hold the hard steeple

on a day like this
even the migrant workers'
trailer scrapes the sky

we are exalted
in the Traditional Latin
Rite of middle earth

no cringing bishop
can take away
the holy ancient apostolic weather

no matter what
they mumble in the pews
the air improves their prayers

they pray to mind
to be reminded
to God the Mother

to become her sons
to God the Son
that they too may beget

centuries of liberty
and sciences and
a little dog,

you know that no
man knows what he's
praying for, only

that the earth
is still new, still needy,
and the morning shouts

in at us through every
window Get up and pray
it doesn't matter

what you say
just pray,
here it is,

Holy Indiana
hollers it,
be kind to me

and let me live
I will spend all day
taking care of the sky.

27 October 2003

Fort Wayne

IN INDIANA

These are peculiar
because they stand all night
outside the hotel windows
on the shallow balconies
between the sleeping traveler
(what a contradiction,
what an indictment also
of the way we move we live
we have our brains slung
deep in the saddle bags of
the most random palominos)

between the sleep of the traveler
and the never resting sky
they stand, as I was saying,
before that interruption came
the one that's called my mind
saying what's on its mind and

there they stand, balconied, bare
in every weather, wingless
but very fast, bodiless
but visible in most of mind's light
see-through potencies of color and fire

there they are, as I keep trying to
tell you if only I would stop
interrupting and let you hear

outside your window there are angels
they are there to rescue your silence
from dreams and rescue your dreams
from language and your language from
trying to explain what is happening
to you, now, when the weather
of my words is creeping through
the fissures of your house,
the old boards, the creaking
staircase in the basement, the cold
lichened wall of the root cellar

where another republic is quietly
ripping up petticoats and bloodstained underwear
to stitch together its brave new flag.

27 October 2003

Fort Wayne

THE EPIC LINE

in memory of Al Cook

Ever more casts of mind
ever less trout
the old man said but I
said Listen Homer
I too have been old
and I too have stared
till my eyes ached
into the swift-elapsing stream
with no fish in it
and yet my mouth suddenly
would fill with a savor
of truth, like fried fish
beside the Sea of Galilee
early in the morning
when my teacher cooked for us
and set out on wooden platters
what he had caught
from the ordinary appetites of water earth and air
to which a special fire
o I dont know really
how he did it but the fish

was marvelous, and the taste
I taste now, gazing
in the empty water but letting
the mind say its empty prayers
is just as good

just looking in the running water
is all the fish you'll ever need.

27 October 2003

AFTER SEEING A FILM OF YOGANANDA

Too many haves
to remember

skyboard
the barrier

Lift the swami's eyes
into that heaven
he has inside

but there are muscles
that turn the mind

We play
in the scattered forest
of the world the beast
with one back,

miracle of now.

28 October 2003

Fort Wayne

Who turns out to have been the
confession before the prime assembly
failure of the new regime austerity
required just look in the mirror

outside the Indiana elms conspire
with the rain to make some money
from the little morning — would you call
this prairie plain or ancient lake?

earth relents here more than otherwise
a passive conurbation with a lot of crime
stalled halfway to the west and who
do you see when the mirror becomes window?

28 October 2003

Fort Wayne

TRANSMISSION

As against peculiar emissions
the quiet purple light of the sun
that strikes our charts as gold

we read almost the same letters
as yesterday I was reading Ulfilas'
translation of St. John's gospel
out loud in Gothic histrionically
to George Kalamaras in Hyde
Bros. bookstore in Fort Wayne

the both of us marveling
behind the words how the Sacred
finds its way to us everywhere, *a light*
burning in the light, a man of light
for whom the light was made.

28 October 2003

Fort Wayne

THE ORDER OF MIDNIGHT

welcomes another me.

A wing here, incisor there,
a fang and the moment's
blue again, like a songbird
out too late or a shark's
shadow on white sand
ten fathoms down.

I who am blind

live for what I can see,
and never having learned to read
I recite all languages there are
from the mere smell of alphabets.

It is too late
to be who I am anymore.
There have to be trolls
to undermine my sleep,
dubious jezebels to lick
my right ear with new
syllables of impurity

something I never heard before
ever, the schoolgirl and the sparrow,
the bent bible that stopped the bullet,
the path beneath the willow trees
along the tow bank, fine,
where we found ourselves
but who was looking,

all these will be yours
if you will just bow down and be me.

28 October 2003

South Bend

WHERE IT IS

It is in the place
where there is no where

only here
the prairie

is the only place
that is no place

else. It lopes
beside me

dreaming its why
into our sleep

that special
wide-eyed sleep

called driving
Route 30 West

paradise maybe
or brown

golden grasses
winter's wheat.

28 October 2003
Warsaw, Indiana

ACROSS THE SAINT JOSEPH

Casting for the solitary energy
wakes the water

it “comes it comes”
(as if a) birdsong

the old ones left us
half-eared

to understand
what they say

is always
in our own language

we have met no crows
but the lake

was loud with ducks
water lapping

at our new brown shoes.

29 October 2003

Notre Dame

BESIDE THE BASILICA

How many stars on a moonless night
how many stars in cloud

a golden statue of the Virgin Mry
atop the dome beside the church

and on her head a bird
of some sort perches, hawk or dove,

upright, for an hour, giving to her
the air of an Indian maiden

robed and simple with one tall feather
in her lustrous Jewish Algonquin hair,

mother of God. And when I hear
those words I knew at last

who she really is and where
I have seen her face before.

29 October 2003

Notre Dame

IN THE CITY OF CHURCHES

Every block has a fan club for God
all of them with peculiar names
all the tabernacles chapels churches
zions assemblies prayer temples houses
of god, they love him, they love him
or love looking for him, talking about him,
singing easy songs about how much
they want him, how they want him,
where they want him and what they want
him to do, so many names, him, the beloved,
and all they know about him is his name,
names, so many names, each name
allures us, Come to me, the father says,
I will make you my sons, No, to me,
the son replies, talking to his father
and to us at once, no, come to me
and through me forever and be me
stretched on my eternal cross
all over your peaceful earth,
no, no, says the Holy Ghost, be nobody
and let me be your breath instead,
I am the wind over the prairie,
and let me be your life for you, then o no,
no, no, great triple negative

the Fourth Voice says, calmly and sweetly
from the bottom of the world, Come to me
from whom all of them come,
all their squabbling divinities, their beauties,
their criss-crossed destinies, their disasters,
come to me from whom all things come,
I am before the names of anyone,
I am the mother of god.

29 October 2003

Fort Wayne, airport

AIRPORT, FACING WEST

Holy Wisdom bring me east
into the rapture
of every day, sunset, clouds that are the flesh

of some body stands above time
striking through the vague of ordinary cloud
your hands,

huge incarnate sky
Prajñāparamitā, Our Lady of Wisdom,
mother of all Buddhas.

29 October 2003

Fort Wayne

MISSIONARY

Staying too long at the fair
home again
from the little triumphs
in elm and wheat
I turned prairie preacher
for one gold season.

30 October 2003

THE SIGN

Waiting for the dead leaf
to fall on the living text
so it points out a phrase
needed for the practice
of this special art
of making today
yet the leaves declining
to be literal, though one fell
during the recitations of
establish the root of virtue
by creating the mind that
aspires to perfect Buddhahood
without interrupting the chant
nor did the leaf itself
touch any portion of the text,
wanting writing to be reading
naturally the scribe
attending the event
in his or her actual hands
the nervures of language
exactly the archaic veins
that rune their way
along the back of his or her hand,
pattern of the leaf
living through time
what it splays down
her or his hand,

what it says, what it keeps saying,
a leaf alive
this time and maybe
all time, the hand
never dies, this leaf
never falls, this scribe
from the morning of things
breeding with things
forever sought and found
a calm much kinder
than a consolation,
a polite refusal of things
to insist on any single interpretation
of what it meant to be,
or be him, or be herm
this morning this moment
this portent
as if all the leaves
could go through
the heresy of their death
and fall but never
in all their twirling
cavortings settlings,
sign language frantic
wind-worded semaphores
ever reach a final earth.

31 October 2003

HALLOWEEN WAKING

a noise in the house
who let the noise in
who wakes me
I sneak downstairs
like the thief I suspect

we become
what we imagine

the dark itself
in suspicious
who let the dark in
why did I wake
why did I sleep

and now stand
in the harsh light
looking at nothing

a noise came in
but the cause of it
stayed outside

why do I have to know
who made it

who made me
am I a shepherd of the night

wolfless, silent
to worry

far away
I hear a drunken cry

it must be human
nobody I am
should I repair my sleep
and trust the dark

where noises
come and go
and who am I to stay?

31 October 2003