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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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THE PILLOW

The pillow at last.

The pillow at last feels just like a pillow
for my head. My head feels
almost like my head. Outside
they're readying the tea house in Russell Square.

My hands are dry with thirst,
a name says itself over and over in my head
like an old Chinese poem everybody
knows so well they'll never read again.
Could this be sleep?

6 April 2002, London

NEAL'S YARD

Roads as tentative scratchmarks sun a
permanent risk on stucco walls the love
that passes in the shape of German lovers
strolling tall and light and tight,

the moon would be a skateboard if he could
and you the island glider
from one cup of earth
aurochs passionately rekindle

where I see someone eating in the street
I'm sad to think of his missed meal
but then I think that any random street
is a careful sentence in a sacred text

endless, accurate, right here.

6 April 2002, London

In Dream

In dream I was giving a teaching. Just as the experiences of the afternoon, the perceptions and pleasures of perception are eternal as they live in us, in me, insofar as I keep them alive by mindfulness, just so nothing is ever lost. In a lossless universe, we remember. And the act of seeing in mind is endlessly renewed, refreshed. Can be. The point is that it's up to us to sustain that eternity. Eternity is a production of time. This eternity. It endures as awareness, as long as awareness lasts. In the awareness of perception, what abides is perception —

— this is what I was saying in my sleep to Richard Coldman, who had given us yesterday such a dynamic adamantine motor tour of his North London. His driving, the slim roads, the impasses passed through, Vale of Health, Kenwood House, Freud's house — and it became in dream my sermon to the world.

7 April 2002, London

To be in time. To be here in time,
the literal garret in Bloomsbury
comfortable, dragon-snug, the northern
light outside, flag at half mast.

The Queen Mother's dead
and I'm in London as it happens
on my own mother's hundredth birthday
she could not wait to celebrate

with me and mine and what I have become,
a man looking at the world out loud,

here at the old brick, nothing like old brick,
stations, vast and numerous hotels
this planet also is, the little
bright row house up Hampstead hill

where D.H.Lawrence lived when my
mother was thirteen, a plastic clock
quacks in the window now, ticktocking
some other life, the whole

hill smitten with the maiden light.

7 April 2002, London

as if on the other side of something
a personal adjustment silently made

open as a park, a flower
(they have their flowers already)
the sky full of tomorrow already

a morning when we almost get the point
and know we are close to the original Design.

7 April 2002, Queen Square

Now be soft with me, sky,
you nimble lord,

I need to take a thought inside
to the rain-lit palace

wrought iron glass painted white
or painted green old ironwork

the palm house at Kew intolerably humid
but imagine it cool and me in you

cool, cool, memory is calorie enough
feeling falters thinking cooks.

8 April 2002, London

(to Iain Sinclair)

say something about Hounslow.
something killed Ed Dorn. something
kept him alive beyond
the feeble guesswork of physicians
members of the wealth professions
surgeons of our means

and so on

Hounslow seems to hold a secret
Hatton Cross another. you wind
your turban tighter there
among too many Yankee caps.

8 April 2002, London

HEATHROW

Terminal Four is as hot as 1, 2, 3.
The feeble rotors of the ceiling fans
(what century do they think it is)
imitate New Delhi. The local air
is taken in by the imposture,
chokes us. Three hours back I was clean,
a man stepping from the shower
to rule the Raj. Now feel my pits.
English people are fair and pretty,
you can spot them on the Airport line,
the few natives on their pink path
to their fortnight in Ibiza, already
wondering what they've gotten themselves
into from the awful look of the rest of us.

8 April 2002, London

CHESTNUT TREES

Leaving London we saw they had already budded
in Hounslow, full leafed in the Luxembourg
unflowered but such an elegance of green arrayed

unbroken along mind the quay
of thinking where all those people stood to mourn
the Queen their Mother, perfect oedipal
release, to mourn a mother, a true mother,
one who doesn't have to be exactly yours.

You are not exactly who I am
yet to understand enough to rule my life
by clever acts of devious resemblances

to make me think all the time that you're
the one I want.

Whereas I want an empty park
a moon slashed to ribbons in the clouds,
children scream in unknown languages
stone smooth and cool on anybody's skin.

8 April 2002, Paris

faire déclaration

to be sure, the sleep
that rules here

to create a dream: this
is the city of appetite

hungry people stalk the night
happy vampiring experience

and what they want to dream
arms over one another's shoulders

hunting their shadows on the walls
to know they've been here

where I am too
how hard the shadow falls on stone

all night I thought the falling
of the dream, the pallid Hollywood inside

that makes our fragile instruments tumesce.
Dream is a bone that breaks and life spills out.

9 April 2002, Paris

Did the young man feel such an
intense necessity to come to the
city where so many years later
he was an old man supposed to die?

9 April 2002, Paris

QUINCE FOR MEDDEB

1.

What the restaurant couscous lacked
cinnamon and saffron most
it lacked quinces the special sense of
what can give rise through taste
to human scale like copper like
cinnamon like quinces.

Soul in other words.

You said this through my broken
French I understood. I would use
cumin you said no. Sicilian
sardines and sultanas, oil
of green. A railroad in Siberia
a mountain in Syria, dead Sufis,
our Lord the docetist dancing
round the cross on which he seems.

2.

Nothing comes back
because nothing is lost
that is the form
I've fought all the day
that there is a permanence
a life builds
around itself out of every

perception and every response
to what is perceived,

that is experience
we build a body
from experience
more lasting than
animal, the
body dances round
the cross we die on.

3.

We got off the Métro at the Daughters of Calvary
and walked down Brittany to the Algerian door
where you were waiting so much got said
so few the words we might have been a haiku
heading west through the Marais into the polyglot
Araby beyond St Denis. In the passage between
languages a meaning can light upon a word
lightly as a wheatear under tall grass or
a shadow of the bus runs along the convent wall.
You said a certain writer was all experiment no soul
a store-bought couscous lacked cinnamon and quince.
Gently as if we could hardly expect anything more.

9 April 2002, Paris

THE CONFESSION

I have a sculptural not architectural
sense of language, every language
is a foreign language, filled with things.

Things that are words. I say a word,
I know it, mouth it, feel it, rich,
distinct, shapely, a smooth stone.

What do I do with this word.

I say it. Then I say another. Each
is alone. I am alone in a strange
country where they have speech
and I have words. The difference.

Can't put them together to make
them say what I might mean.

What do words have to do with
what I mean? What do words
care about my intentions? I don't
talk, I pronounce. The words
are ancient virgins passing me by.

9 April 2002, Paris

SLEEPING IN PARIS

One sleeps well, why
is it the anagram, Paris is pairs,
we couple well
into repose with our peers
a parliament to house
the long rhetoric of different
kinds of city love

all veterans and virgins
catastrophes of recency
soothed by the stones
of churches that slept through fifty wars

it's hard to know
which one of us is sleeping.

Mirrors and metaphors,
and who is it who really
feels what I feel
I mean who does my feeling
for me,

I tried to talk about
in the svelte café
and you were silent
saying only that the thing I said
was nothing to talk about

answering questions that no one asked,
you said the silence for me,

who really feels the meaning?

The weather

is what the sleeper notices
when he abolishes his state
and stumbles exiled into day
uncoupled from the long experiment of dream,

and who is he going to talk to

in the simple

English of the heart, the ordinary
doubt, the school of memory
that graduates me into this
day, this street, this light

no matter where I think I'm coming from,

as if to tell me

“all you were
is what you are
now, you never
did anything
but come here.”

10 April 2002, Paris

RUE SAINT JACQUES

Pilgrim here. The route began.

Now why was it Saint James
that Europe courted with such devotion?

Why did he make men and women, women, stand up from their lives and leave, become leaves and pollen on an endless dusty road? Just like the Crusaders but with no weapon in hand, no sword, no cross even, just a shell, a shell and a stick to lean on, a sign and a thing. A shell is all receiving. Hearing.

The pilgrim hears with his feet, listens with his eyes to what the road has to say.

Just like the Crusades but going in the opposite direction. No killing, no sacking of cities. Instead, the pilgrims are bilked by merchants and slain by brigands, but keep going west, as far west as you can go in Europe, backs turned to Palestine and all that.

The cross is behind them. They follow a natural road, a natural order, sunwise, to the bottomless west, the empty house of dream on the shore of the discourseful sea. Empty as a shell.

What was it about James, Jacobus, Jacomus, Diego, Iago, Jacmes, James? Cousin of the Lord, brother of the Lord, elder, who carried what holy thing into the west the pilgrims came to find? Did he bring some lost word of Christ and lodge it safe beyond Rome in the unremembering, unforgetting Druid stone?

10 April 2002, Paris

We believe in everything. In the light
pours through the Senate's gardens
and cheers everybody up. We are everybody.
The spine with all its fingers
is just a kind of flute, and all we feel
is whistling, silvery
foolishness up and down the flesh of the world
a shiver and a sigh. The air moves
through the copper beech tree in the Luxembourg.

10 April 2002, Paris

THERE IS

There is a red man
who runs the mind.
Might be yours might be mine.

My father was a Red Man once
Totem of the Eagle.
A father is the angel the mother
Is the angel they fall
Together and make you.
Make me. Or they knead
The dough dark flour white
Water with some leavening
Only they know

It is time to make you remember.
Do nothing but remember
And in the doing
Everything comes to mind.

When she stands up and starts
Thinking around the room
That is the Red Man.

10 April 2002, Paris

ROAD

But what I wondered was a road
and how does the word (road, rode,
rood, rod, rowed) all
straight all difficult all lead
to this crooked palace where I Am?

How to read a road. I write this
down in My Egyptian letters
scented with violet — harsh as Métro
iron work and delicate
and send it to You Whom every palace
houses and no mirror does

miles away at the beck of an idea
you will of course at last alas not
call Your Own — roadwork ahead
where We go straight — a ship
for example is the straightest business

strict line in the topology of sea
and how to get anywhere makes something bend
(You are Me, I am a crumb of We
and yet Us be) to be uneasy with position
as if a life wore two bodies in one bed
joyous with genius always half asleep

as the lady herself said and I heard,
You *are* the only one who knows how to talk.
Hence one hurtles west like a pilgrim at Spain's
Sephardic impossibilities of clear light
with arduous commentary. Up these stairs
behind you to the calendar of what we mean
leafy with desire and lie down.

11 April 2002, Paris