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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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WAKING

The bee in the window
has no calendar

mild morning on earth
what else is there to know

a small planet
you could walk around it in two years

though He did it in two weeks
after He woke

sun on the snow
everywhere His footsteps show.

23 December 2002

RIEMENSCHNEIDER THE WOOD SCULPTOR

I keep wondering if you're the one I want to be
the one with wood shaving stuck in your shoes
I wonder if they'll fit me, that's all I'm good for,
wondering about such stuff and you carve wood.
Or at least a lot of lumber goes into your atelier
and comes out different, that's not sitting around
chewing gum as is the case in my house, curtains
shutting out the weather, gangly rattlesnake plant
gasping for water in the parlor. Pal, nothing changes.
That's the whole fucking secret, Hitler, Milosevic,
you name it. Children wait below their prayers
itemizing carefully their desires — what else
are words good for? — and nothing changes.
It could be Hitchcock 1943 or Patricia Arquette
slipping off her bra or where is King Zog now?
I confess bewilderment, and that's sexy too,
everything is, that's what keeps us here, waltzing
around a planet that seems laid out for fish.
Speaking of which I'd like a drink now,
and none of that Argentine Beaujolais, s'il te plait,
you bought to thumb your nose at Perfid Albion
back in the Falkland War. I want the graves of living men.
You get a lot of people carved but all of them
have the same face. Doesn't look like you
and certainly not me. Does eternity do that to the eyes?
Do all holy characters turn out to look alike?

And the Romans chivvying poor Jesus, they look
just as exalted as their Victim, do they partake
somehow of the sanctity of the Redemption,
made perfect by the touch of what they kill?
The way you are from wood, you calvary of trees.

23 December 2002

[from typed notes found today, composed early 2002?]

PRIMAL

This is the beginning.
But is this really this?
Is it the prairie
we meant to wander

lovers from old Europe
fondling the sunsets
so much further away
than any fire
we had ever seen,
only the heart
was so far

the heart of you when I wanted you
the heart of me when you wanted me

and could you find me
by its glare
when I lost you

in the herds of caribou
the blue shadows
falling down the rocks

mountains mountains and who were we?

[23 December 2002]

DESIRE

1.

But close to, desire is a fire
and when it burns away
the magic ashes of what
you always meant but never
knew are lying there

raw element potassium
ready to flood sensation
if you know how to sing
watch the ash dust sift
up in the air in tourbillions
woozy spirals soft take
shape, specter of the rose.

2.

De-sire is to take away the sire
and be your own. Your own
is what is no one else's, Christ,
capital teaches us that at least.
So desire must be fatherless and here,
must unmask authority, strip
it all bare and pick who chooses,
you carry the grail, the grail
is full of you and only you,

the you you never knew, the you you find
on the other side of the mountain of your life
this intimate infinite everyday analysis.

3.

When you are de-sired you belong to everyone,
the prancing horse, the snowflake floating by, the blue
shadows in the lemon tree, the old woman
keeping watch from her window, the weary cat
on its interminable patrol, they all belong to you
and you to them, because once you are delivered
from a fixed authority you become a cause
to celebrate and not just one more effect.
You move in a mystery to yourself and others
always bringing good no matter how you feel.

4.

Of course you are an orphan telephone
in love with any voice that waits to use you
of course poverty and humiliation wait on line
along with opulence and recompense and fun —
nobody knows what's coming but it will be yours
and you'll be up to it, you sing
new mothers on the barest tree,
you guess a subtle law that runs the stars.

5.

How shall it be done?

Shall a man shall a woman

enter again the womb?

Yea, enter and be born again

without a father. You be you

and you be mother, you be womb

and you unroom yourself therefrom

like fruit or conversation

be born from nothing,

be just there, the moon your placenta

and sunrise your first breath.

This is what I read

in the book of your head.

24 December 2002

BY THE RIVER'S FLAT STONES

Where is the washerwoman
when we need her wringing hands?

Lady, wash the stones
then wash the river

it is weary with coming and conming
dirty with everywhere it's been

A color's left in it
who put it there

the faint dyes of time
but by bit

the wall grows dark around the picture
of your mother, take it down and

the pale rectangle beneath
is the color of unpassed time,

lady, wash the water
next and set us free.

24 December 2002

PERSPECTIVA NATURALIS

Can this be color?

Will it someday be red?

Everything is an answer,
just find the question,

here, or where the river
swallows up the sea.

24 December 2002

PETRIFACTIONS

Lip gloss

smears

on me

mahogany

veneers.

I was a basement

in your house

you dreamed in me

when all the rest

went out

you had the whole

house to yourself

you came downstairs

in me

close to the center

of all things

the quiet inside

the earth

where everything speaks

by touch alone.

24 December 2002

<notes> 24 XII 02

I'm glad you want to talk with me, and that it's me you want to talk with, and talk is such a funny thing these days, these few fingers trailing lightly over a clickety keyboard, not even the old heavy punch of the typewriter that really hammered out what we felt or thought, talk is so funny when we do it with the hands, not like pre-teens talking with their paws in the dark, but fingers picking through the alphabet while trying to listen to all the hellos in my head.

==

Noteworthy among recent arrivals at
the old forge where Mime works his
hypnotic charms on blond young men

DRY MEASURE

faltering from the inn
a wet man
remembers women

so long ago
his fingertips
are scared
by the touch
of his own skin

A measure
lasts
in that way
different
from a quantity
or time of day

a measure
sleeps with us
and suddenly wakes

sunlight in the room
there is no need
to forget.

25 December 2002

CHRISTMAS HYMN TO ST. JEAN COCTEAU

What has all this snow to do
with stars and angels

your scarecrow elegance
dithered through so many afternoons
a shimmer of personality happening to the light

while Protestants sang our Mighty Fortress
a star came down
to disneyland the dictionary

comes in all colors, everybody's
under Capricorn, everybody's born today
a star came down along the beam of the projector

actual alien down a runway made of light
taking off all her clothes his clothes
taking off the vesture of identity

until the beholders (us, in other words
the us you made by seeing us
together, eye gossip,

scandalum oculis, hot shot
you made the eyes)
until the long-winded spokesman

of the beholders (me, in even other words)
couldn't tell a lady from a pussy cat

and the whole Mediterranean fleet
sailed up the aisles at Bon Marché

and everyone got a new valise for Christmas

Then you took off the light
the light took off the wall
the wall took off the wind
the wind ran and hid inside the tree

for one morning in ten thousand years
the whole world was at peace
Christ was born, something changed

nobody knows what
a lot of people smiled in their sleep
six new languages were spoken in the Caucasus

Prometheus untied himself and flew away
Pan went swimming in the Euxine Sea
you call it black because the light is out

three devils caught an angel in a net and let him go
my indigestion was a little better
the bitter taste of coffee is a secret treasure

confetti roses on the dining room table
indistinguishable from the famous morning stars
doing their Rockettes riff in the dawn sky

of course the Bible is still being written
we're in the part of it where the mind reaches puberty
where all the commandments turn into one

Thou Shalt Not Kill.
All the rest sound good but they're just old newspapers
and nobody reads the paper on Christmas Day.

There is no news, only the New
constantly unfolding from the old
like the profile of the woman I'm in love with

I can't ever get enough of seeing
and project against the interminable sky,
the line traced by love along the actual,

wake up and draw me that,
luminous ancestor,
make it look just like her face

her lucid profile, a single line says everything
above the snow that comes down all day
like a ransom note from God.

25 December 2002

A PRAISE OF KARMA

Only what happens to other people
becomes my life.

My feelings are just leftovers,
morning afters. But what I see
around me, things

the impetus of my whole life
brings to me, brings me to,

that is the real, the place

I can stand, the stuff of use,
the beauty of what's there.

25 December 2002

PENGUIN SIGHTINGS

“But the most exciting penguin sightings lay ahead. Following our guide, we ducked into a series of ingenious underground trenches, arched over with netting and camouflage. Since low benches lined the trenches, we could stand and look through four-inch openings right into penguin nests. (Although the penguins could obviously see us, we appeared to them, our guide said, only an unthreatening four inches high.) Flash pictures were not allowed, as their light could harm the penguins' eyes. So I have no photograph of the two fluffy chicks, perhaps a foot or so high, who were so close I could have taken them in my hand. But I will remember them.” — *NYT*, 25 December 2002

Exciting penguin sightings

ducked into ingenious

underground netting

benches the trenches

we stand through four-inch openings

right into nests.

(Although penguins see us

we appeared to them

only four inches high.)

Pictures not allowed, as light

could harm the eyes.

So I have no foot high

in my hand. But I remember.

25 December 2002

A ROOF FOR SANITY

over the coal bin a house
over the house a roof
over the roof a bird
a sky a god what
is wrong with just that?

Why do we have to go to war?
The sky over Iraq is no better than ours.

26 December 2002

POETRY

Poetry is all diction
and contradiction
all mirrors and epiphany
foxes running through snow.

26 December 2002

CHAGRIN D'AMOUR

The hippies in the house next door
have sailed back to Slovakia.
Actually they flew. Languages
like you wouldn't believe, even their
toaster talked. They appear to have taken
the front door with them, and the yellow
dog it used to keep in. We don't miss
that kind of people but the dog was cute.
I'm lying, the dog kept talking all day,
birds were afraid to fly over the place
and they had no TV. Yesterday
a black man was walking on the roof
or he may have been Indian Indian,
something foreign about the house,
it must appeal to them, people
with weird money in their wallets,
with unusual gods. This new snow
makes it pretty anyhow, no footprints
to spoil it. I am alone. Maybe
the house will keep empty for a while.
Get over it. I did actually like her
but couldn't understand a word she said.

26 December 2002