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novA2000

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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I come from another planet
The one called Childhood
In the Silence galaxy.

Many moons circle round my home
Some green some blue but most
Are white like earth's lonely lady

And in their light we have no need for words
Because each kind of light reveals
A separate phase of us, so all of them

Show all we are. No need to talk.
No need to answer the terrible *waiting*
Looks on people's faces here

That makes you babble, scribble,
Carve some answer on the hardest rock
To swear your presence in an absence world.

So language is hard for me
Forgive my formalities of speech
None of this is natural, language

Is the human mind's unique disease.
Or maybe it healed in you when I was young
And you're immune. But all this

Seems like agony to me
Even if there's a kind of glory to it
a long smouldering sunset with no night

leaving me homesick for silence still.

1 November 2000

AND IF THE PLANETS TOO HAD HERALDRY

Find in the simple mark
an old tree sunk and resurrected
amber a waxy piece of time

from the shtetl under the sea
where lovers hide in stables
and sunlight is a kind of gasoline

soaks through the old wood
we breathe and go. The smell of it,
all the underneath, the gaunt
coral, the opulent anemones,

a thought is like a place to which we come again.

2.

I feel you near me, waiting for me as if in bed,
to join you the way leaves shake hands with shadows
and no dogs bark.

It has to be said but am I the man
to say it? I am created by your listening to me.

3.

You're asleep now, I feel it, so many rooms
between us, from exile to exile.
Why do I have to be a foreigner,
why am I never home?

4.

What I wanted to say

was whatever wanted to be said
right now,

no matter that I kept you waiting,
it has happened before,
as everything has.

The Taj Mahal gleamed in moonlight
even before there was a moon.

then we guessed again
and the sun rose.

5.
I want to fold my arms around you
eternal conversation

most of the words are yours
and all the meanings

only the arms are mine.

6.
Every night we are given three questions
and wake with them, to work with all day long

to share with you, you share with me.
And these questions are the only things that are really ours

in all the world, these things we ask.
And even they have spilled into us from sleep.

I belong to you because you ask me and I answer,
I will always answer

But not even an answer silences such a question.

1 November 2000

QUESTIONS

To know by color
what things are

there is a medium
no one knows

I love the particular
“...to look at earthworms”

a diagram
of where there is to go and how to get there

and how many chromosomes do we share with that
single-minded tunneling

the lover on his dirty way to love
swallowing every obstacle every humiliation

The Importunity
call it

to have asked the world
for the world.

2 November 2000

... yellow lights of absent arms veiled in thorns of shingle ...

while from the sea had just come onto
these acuminate pebbles the shadow which was all he could bring in his fingers
from down there

where sound carries so well but the voice is lost

in the sea the sun is rain the sun is raining

parallel lines of light that stab the last privacy of water

2 November 2000

OLD MAN COMES HOME YOUNG

tell me where I went wrong
the animal I rode
down the wrong street
into the secret palace
everybody else thought was just a house

whereas this house (any house)
is endless, its rooms (all rooms)
stretch to the end of the world

or would if the world had an end
(if we knew where the world was)
and there I was going from room to room and never came to a wall

everything was doors

and such is the insanity of poetry
that all these doors open into your room
and you are different in all of them
but in each one you are you

we only invented three things: doors and mirrors and wheels.

3 November 2000

Arrogant energies of the never young
beating on the bronze of the art doors
the brass of the god doors the gold
of the dream floors the silver satin *fesses*
of the rapturous priestesses of *gai savoir*

—this is what burns up to write a poem
to break the sky with lanceheads of pure word
and still keep body steeped in flesh
the sweet entitlements of witchcraft,
the sciences of now if ever, of now forever

young poets are the oldest scientists of all.

4 November 2000

Not be death the actual

muse of poetry

four days I have been singing
the prose
 of how it is to be

me or thee

o I feel drunk on the sugar of saying

everything and everything
words thick in my mouth
peanut butter liverwurst

to want to tell you

but do I want to
do I dare examine
the basement room where these wants of mine,

these wants I think are mine

that make me who I think I am

I am my desires

down there where the wants are
o moth and silverfish and rat

the wind lives in the cellar

there are low pine forests of pure dust down here
pure sunbeams through the smeary little windows
haven't been opened in years
leaf fall and all junk of weather

but the sun comes in
and dust dances in sunrays

sun words,
wind in the cellar,

and it is so dry here, borax,
Utah,
plaster and wood dry,

and I hear them walking upstairs
all the people I've never known
people I want
want to walk with want to do everything with

is that you
I hear

up there, you who makes the floorboards shiver
faintly, far away rumor of your coming,

I've got to find it down there
and bring it up the rickety stairs
don't bother with the light
my legs will find the way

and now I hear the music someone's playing in the living room
is it you, a cello sonata, heavy with piano,
I dance to it, awkward, mostly back and shoulders,
mostly hips, mostly elbows now,
boogie up the stairs to Beethoven,
kick the door open at the top,

my arms full of nothing
but I know what I want now,
it's what I always wanted,
now I know who I always was,

want to tell you the smallest detail of every minute
and make that be the proof I love you
and that love avails, love makes it happen,

really, love, love does, not all the rest
of the terrible real estate section and business pages

just this, the thing we reach down and get
and bring up from where it hides in us,
always the same things, hallelujah,

hallelujah, I have brought you everything amen.

5 November 2000

to a young poet

you're mad enough to be Sylvia Plath
and your anger might get you all the way
especially the way you suppress it
and stuff it down, there,
where the devils who are muses can use it

and you may get to be famous and fierce
but you'd have to die as she did
to be really famous, is it worth it,
all that anger, all that fury, all that fame
but no more pussy willows in the spring?

6 November 2000

SMALL OF THE BACK

It is hard to think of it even
la chute des reins not where the queens
young and fair fade from the
but the slope of simplicity
by which the body comes to its widest
place, knowledge of the root

where we are most at home.
The bed in the body's there
and the necessary door.
When the philosophers speak of Space
they mean here — here is Room.

The small is to the large
as the catastrophe is to paradise —
a beginning, a foreplay,
an unsingably simple song.

6 November 2000

I am not allowed to mention your body
Since I belong to the wrong party on the planet
And too much sun comes through the organdy
You can see Christians and cars moving out in the street
And the wind makes the shadows of leaves move
Silently on these pale curtains. I am not allowed
To talk of your body, the way you break the light
And silence it into discrete particulars
Subordinate to a unifying *rhythmos* — pattern or
Shape. If I were allowed to do so I would name
Every part of you and call that my Britannica
And study in it till the light got tired of the sky
And the sky got tired of the stars and I could sleep.

6 November 2000

And what if the old pen
should write again?
Paragon of spokesmen, herald,
the green leaves making their own case,
miracle, a tree of words.

I am translating this
from the Arab that lives in my head
and writing down his chant
with an old Japanese fountain pen
that has no ink,

and I have nothing to say, and my hands
are empty, and I looked at you
and I subsided quietly into the intensity of your beauty

but that was all knowing,
all wanting,

and the pen still
has no ink,
and the words are still green —

I leaf through the dictionary
and find who I am.

7 November 2000

(Song)

no ink in the pen but
lots of ink in the world
we meet in a long
difficult word we
pronounce it together
darkness and storm
I never had a grandmother
but still know how to lie

7 November 2000

It has to be my understanding
that I don't know I don't know
I can't conceive why people do
think the way they do, the killing
for instance, the endless delight
in taking life. maybe it's the only
sign they have of being alive,
to kill the other. To grieve
over an empty hole in the ground.

Election Night 2000

ROSE PETAL JAM FROM BROOKLYN

for Kim and Mitch

Angleworms of summer surely remember
Reading Cardinal Newman in previous lifetimes
Before some catastrophe of moral deviance
Turned their minds (we all have minds)
To more organic avenues, sparse wine,
Hard-fought erections, bleak Gowanuses of lust.

Because an animal has no need for politics,
Not even asses or elephants, let alone the blue
Armenian chimera Mr Nader rides stonewitted
Into the meaningless fray. I eat your sugar, dears,
And think about Islam, submission itself
To all that is beautiful — we don't need laws,
We have eyes. We don't need music, we have ears.

Poetry used to be about all sorts of stuff
When it should be just about twilight and how
Did I get here and won't you be here with me too?
There was a philosophy behind the education
We received, just as every bank robber must
Have had a mother. Not to mention banks.

7 November 2000

armed against silver truncheoned with spite
the awful poets who run the banks
spin out their rhymes *you have heard this*
before — the world is safe — nothing new

to scare you they spread some new words out
disguised as euros, take these home
and spend them, this is called *reading the world*
by money, you'll like it, poetry is awful

if you can't buy anything with it,
go to Garmisch, Vegas, the Algarve
and squirm on the black sand
like starfish with trust funds —

that is true poetry. Listen to the whisper
of the violin, it is the clam
come for you again, to close
the smooth doors of your attention

against the trivializing light of day.

8 November 2000

OF COURSE

Wings of a book
Vain against waves
Wavering down in
Carrying man doom

To drown some father
And the son does not
Dare answer the phone
Only foam hears him

And the flying woman
Who is pure relation
Rides no vehicle
But the sight of the sea

There, under me,
Wet with appetite
Reaching up to know
Shadowflesh her sun

Beyond the sun.

8 November 2000

[Two from October, at the Sheep Fair]

Take a look at
Inside the feel of
Wool. Live
On the back of
Someone you touch.



So many guesses
Medusa
Has just hairs
In her eyes

I am trying
To hold last night
Against my skin
Not even my own

Transcribed 8 November 2000