

12-2000

## decB2000

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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Not the Bach of it the sheer beginning  
how could a Morgan of the first snow  
simple over Annandale recover

instances such as these of the first light?  
Tasmin Little playing the first sonata,  
and why do they call her Le Fay and not La,

why is anything the strange way it is  
when we first find it, always intact,  
strange, but deeply reminding us of something

far away that we have always known?

8 December 2000

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listen to them, they're seagulls, at it  
again, you've got to bring your ear right up against my lips  
and then you can hear them, the gulls  
inside me, they're always screaming,  
polite enough and beautiful and white  
but still screaming, you have to press your face  
against my face to hear them, listen to them,  
the gulls who are never still, beautiful, never peaceful,  
there must be a whole sky inside me that they fill.

8 December 2000

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I life my knuckle and taste my blood.  
This little wound is a cosmology enough,

Look, I have a body, I have a hand,  
I have skin and something can happen to me,

A wound proves I'm actually here,  
Actually alone in a world full of solitudes,

A hermit in a forest of absolutes,  
And the music, for Christ's sake, the music

Comes from before I was born, the tender  
Beauty that just seems to mean old, old, old

And then I get born and inherit my silence.  
So the taste of blood in my mouth

Is the same as a word,  
Language the first and last of all our wounds.

8 December 2000

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the **m**aze

come out of it  
into a number

alone

the walls are hedges grown from yew  
the statue in the middle is indecipherable  
naked, old

we can do this  
by counting

Go-ban or gammon

There is a ritual

essentially a robin  
on the lawn  
but it is winter, winter

then what do we do with our skin

we hide inside the number.

Between layers of leaves  
layers of skin

Architect, unbutton your dark.  
We need to penetrate,

Be penetrated.

It is an onion of a place, a flame  
cool around a coming home

10 December 2000

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a menu is

a menu is enough to rebel against  
eat the ornamental fig tree in the window  
fry the poinsettia  
lie down and lick the vinyl seats on the banquette,

give all your money to the waitress,  
the law is only a map of transgression,

eat the law. I open the door for your hand.

10 December 2000

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if I were a color today I would be green

if I were a hand it would touch something,

shrink back, and then touch again

if I were a bird this would be an opera

if this were water would you swim?

if this were the only chair in the room

would you sit on it?

if this were today would you be tomorrow

how could I forget you when your skin is on my bones

how could I answer the phone when you are my voice

how could I open the door when you are the wall

don't you think all questions are finally defilements?

11 December 2000



## PHARYNGEAL

Can I even wonder at it, the gulp  
We hear when the Arab speaks  
A word that seems to come from so  
Close to the heart that we, insular  
To the end thanks to our language,  
Find a little bit too close for comfort

Embarrassed as we are by being.

11 December 2000

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Le vent se lève, all the meanings change, a trumpet is shouting in the sky. When he walks out into the morning he will put his skin on inside out, this is the red walk, people come in and out of his house, they don't come into him, where can he go to be entered. That is the wind's work, a word he keeps hearing, mistral, hurts to hear, the wind's knife is keener than music, hurts as much but doesn't linger. Something else he wants to want him, a shadow that should linger, kneeling in prayer on the skin, a forest dismantling sunlight touch by touch.

12 December 2000

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Become a laser.  
What we adore  
Compels us to form.

Then they fall  
In love with us

And we have to leave,  
Leaving is lyric.

Sometimes the memory  
Of a person  
Is the best part of her

And the wind rises  
The wind shifts  
And you remember the flat sand  
That makes the sea itself seem built of hills

And there too the wind is coming fast  
Into you and you were not alone.

12 December 2000

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Come with me to the old  
accomplished wheel  
the one that breeds berries  
in the polder where you claim to live

the first time you take leave of  
earth's the hardest  
and then the landing to be beautiful

not berries cranberries  
a different thing  
how to land without breaking your back

frozen bogland and the cat ice  
is never made for dancing, no skates  
in this serenade, a red sun  
chipping through the sea

what the skater told me  
sitting quietly across the room  
her legs crossed graceful as a ship in sail.

. . . 12 December 2000

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Stood on the shore arms outreaching curved almost joining at the fingers but not, so seen between the sleek of arms the indecisively receding everpresence of the water as if she held a basin of the sea, an arc and shown citadel built only of waves, here in this bowl a building shimmers in the evening light and friends move in to stay the night, lodging snug in what they see.

12 December 2000

## RAMADAN DISCLOSURES

Be empty  
as the belly of the world

*batn*

the bare truth  
empty of particulars

why we fast.

Holy emptiness you  
belong to everyone.

13 December 2000

## WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Everybody answers  
all at once,

I have been listening  
since the beginning of time,

my time, my good hour.

*9:30 Eastern 8:30 Central*

said Alan Gilbert

and the spongy light was all about us,

waiting for a new catastrophe  
here among the civil particulars of supper

the spongy light  
blurs all the edges

we sink  
into radiance

dreamers. Dreamer,  
how dare you touch me,

your soft cheek  
trying to own me  
out of the drunken archive  
where our images tumble

in vomit and patchouli  
spilled stars riot

and then he says, and I love this,

“just be grateful the falcon has been fed”

for things rise up from us  
and soar  
above the common hungers

and best for us indeed  
when they do their hunting and their feeding  
in what passes for our dreams

and we wake  
to find the bird is sated and wise

the way you wake  
to find yourself embedded  
in the night you left

— the thing I miss most about alcohol  
is the morning after  
I haven't been hungover  
in forty years

and still the lovely sand-eyed bleary dawnlight  
remembers itself in me

and the sun rises  
like a thousand  
*bleeding harps*

Kristin Prevallet says we can hear

But now sober  
I have to stagger  
to the writing desk  
out of some renaissance comedy

to scribble my message to the galaxy

but “Gonzalez drank all my ink  
thinking it was medicine”

the monk in Herzog says.



Nothing to write with  
but other people's words

and that is the delicate  
dishonesty  
that makes us true,

the sensual honesty  
of "our hybridity"

(Kristin Prevallet)

we live in their language  
the way mitochondria  
live in us.

How old were you when you were born?

13 December 2000

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But I wonder what I was thinking of, I wonder  
about the snowplow and the tree  
all the American tragedies under the bird feeder  
the oil truck bringing half a month of heat

and where was there room for me in all that  
wrapped like one of Breughel's drunken peasants  
in bright rags, a little tuckered out from  
scarping and lifting the animal of snow

serpent-sleepy sluggish heavy making one  
surface with the ground, I lifted and never  
felt more out of touch with language and with things  
than at this moment, stupid with remembering.

Forget it like an old car. Forget it like a name.

14 December 2000

## CONTRA SAUSSURE

A dog day a dolor  
of ice a bark  
silenced the way  
the moon was  
muffled in cloud  
there is a color  
in the world  
same as cold hands

I've been shoveling the hard-crusting snow  
until the fingers understood

this is the letter someone sends me  
I bend and hoist it to read  
such literature

then come inside  
to find

a message left in the machine  
silence and a gentle disconnection  
I knew was you

So I called you back and listened  
to your phone ring and ring

letting our silences discourse  
a satisfaction  
to know at last

words need no languages to speak.

14 December 2000

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Let there be a house.

There is a tree  
certainly a tree  
I can't see through  
into a window where someone is sleeping.

someone not sleeping  
looks out the window sometimes  
sideways so as to see past the tree  
into huge grasslands stretching towards distant woods

We live on a map

doesn't see me, the tree that keeps me from seeing keeps from seeing me.

Things are like that

LATIN IMPERSONAL VERBS

*licit*, it is permitted, *oportet*, it behooves, *libet*, it gives pleasure

gives pleasure thinking of a window  
sees the huge prairie full of autumn mist

*libet*, it gives pleasure

the only thing vague in all this is me  
me looking and seeing and not seeing and not being seen

just the sea of mist pouring over the prairie

not Wisconsin not Minnesota no place I have seen  
and not the mist playing around the huge plane trees of the Vaucluse

and not the sea mist where I was born

another house, another house

*libet*, it gives pleasure  
to be far, to be there

safe from all the cancelled distances of love

2.

*unclean with fear*  
— Franz Kamin, “The Pervasive Cretin”

it’s looking at so many things  
let look at so many things

a woman with her back to looking  
kneels up on a chair

gives herself to being seen

whether to let them see or not, see them or not  
letting

selves look at  
so many things

that is the problem.

Looking makes the soul afraid,  
seeing brings it comfort,

is that what it means?

sometimes to be *unclean with* looking.

14-15 December 2000

## Unifying the Essence

That it would in one large sense master me  
Glidingly, as weather does, the principle  
Unfocussed from the sky and left to fall  
Until it finds its limit in me. In us,  
Actually, he said, this conversation  
Mostly about the canapés we eat,  
The wine they give us, the furniture in the room.  
As if we bring nothing with us. Just the mean  
Little eyes we notice with, he said, we stand  
For nothing in particular, we stand around instead.  
Is that an epigram, I said, he said an epigram  
Is a kind of instant boredom, something  
Offensively the case, I lost you, I said, and he  
Helping himself to more baked brie observed  
That girl against the curtains looks like my third wife.  
Fine boned women are ambitious, I remembered,  
Ain't that just the truth he said and slipped away.

15 December 2000  
Red Hook

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As if I didn't have enough to worry about  
now I have to write poems in German  
since the bridges stand cold  
over the swan-squandering rivers  
Spree Landwehrkanal the Havel

a city with bridges, more of them than Venice,  
with skies more than Montana

somebody has to explain these things  
since the German poets are too busy  
changing their genders and fiddling  
Mallarméan mummeries

why does it always have to be me to do it  
what do I know about this place

Just the trolley going up and up Warsaw Street  
and the railroad yards stretching out to the west  
like characters in some Cold War opera

*Weil die Bruecken stehen kalt  
Ueber die schwaenenentraeumte fluesse  
Spree Landwehrkanal und Havel  
Eine Stadt mit Bruecken mehr als Venedig  
Mit Himmel mehr als Montana*

*Jemand muss diese Sachen erklæaren  
Denn die deutsche Dichter spielen  
Mallarméemunterei*

*Warum muss ich alles unternehmen alles tun alles schreiben*