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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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*after a phrase of Rilke's*

Could this be the music heard once  
in the synagogue I never entered  
where a god I never knew was sung  
loud by men who said that He was good  
and women listened? And now  
I hear what sounds that way, a single  
violin without a single consonant  
and yet it says. Its long hard vowels  
insinuate hallelujah. And what that means  
the angel lounging at my busy elbow  
ceaselessly explains. *These*  
are the days of Tobias, the fact  
that we can hear means God is good.  
All this noise is just conversation.

16 September 2008

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Can I find an old sense before form

find an array beyond it,  
a disposition of viols in concordant space  
that rabbit on and on

to fuse your quick unclothings so  
that old Hotel Chelsea musix run to ground

a panting maiden trapped in megaHertz  
I sing thee breed? Poetry is bling?

17 September 2008

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Wanting to break something  
and being the only thing around—  
danger of waking early  
when the world's alone.

Danger of precocious identity.

—that ailment of celebrities  
who are before they finish becoming,  
the only lines of cleavage  
left in them are them.

17 September 2008

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Old Italian music. Stradella.  
Whose name I've known all my life  
from an old shellac record of the overture  
(Suppé?) to an operetta of that name  
about his life. And even now I know  
nothing but what I hear. If even that.

17.IX.08

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But carrying someone with you  
would be a way of speaking.

Praying even. San Cristobal  
with the whole gospel on his shoulder.

Carry truth that way through all the rivers  
the way our alchemists

later, so much later, coax  
flame to swim to them through the water.

17 September 2008

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Trying again to begin  
or begin again

the river of nevering—  
oh we cross that all the time.

17.IX.08

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Sometimes it looks  
and things used to—

paper flower, scarlet,  
winter coming,  
noise of el train over my head—

the musculature of everything he meant  
precise beneath the lovers' clothes  
inferred—

touched  
only by the will's wits,  
the mind's long greasy fingers—

the eye and hand debating, how  
one contour pleasing both  
gives independent energy to each.

A dark skirt a pale blouse.  
Wintering in the warm idea.

17 September 2008

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Different edges.

Different speeds through the toll booth  
amounting to a smelly little car  
on a great curve through the sky.  
rubber clouds, and water down there  
made of something grey and blue  
like a love-bruise or a civil war  
and gulls shit down on the windshield of  
because the world is real

even though me in my car  
only going from one side of the river  
to the other, where else,  
as if there were coming and going

to be done and we could do it and be gone.

18 September 2008

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What is a love bruise?

The car, the triumphal chariot of humility,  
is speaking only for itself,  
goes only as it goes, takes up only its own space,  
something I look at a car it makes me cry

the simplicity of it, the fatedness of it,  
born only to be bought and go and die.

18 September 2008

## HISTORY OF THIS LEAF I'M LOOKING AT

1.

It will crumble  
before the word  
comes to say it

and the speaker  
crumbles too  
before the word's  
forgotten

but that's not  
the point, that's  
future and this  
is this,

the glance  
backwards  
into the mirror  
one sees the moles  
on one's back

the iffy patches  
of a life  
one has been,

one sees a leaf.

2.

There were countesses  
once in my family  
too, thin-lipped, not  
easy to be friendly with,

there were leaves  
on a high branch  
far above my head

I wondered how  
their blood  
so thin and cold  
made its way  
into my hot head

every love affair  
a heart attack  
every welcoming  
postcard a  
chateau of prose.

3.

But that's not  
what one means  
by leaf.

Leaves. Edges.  
Genealogies.  
Devices: an enfield  
holding an earl's  
coronet.

    A tower  
with holes in it—  
ouzels go in and out.

Crying out loud.  
Is that a leaf?  
You call that  
a leaf? A leaf  
yet, or already?

Is it ready yet?  
Is it?

4.

Driving there windows open  
wide to catch late summer breeze  
he thought of castles in his dream  
the empty road when all at once  
a crow flew in, was in the car  
all over his eyes between him  
and the windshield, fluttering  
wildly over his hands, guiding  
him hard, he braked, car stopped.  
The crow was gone. The castle  
was in front of him, a ruin  
now, a little girl playing in the gloom.

18 September 2008

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Finding our way through  
a bone or barnyard – these  
scraps for the wild dogs and these  
for a land beyond the sea.

Translate me. Then it was evening.  
The hosts of the Amelekites  
preyed on my consciences  
—the good, the easy, the conniving—  
their ghosts stood before me  
in God’s name slain—  
so said our chronicles.

Then it was evening, the lark  
shut up in the meadow,  
the gallant owl courted in the ravine.  
I was a victim of my appetite.

Then it was evening. History  
ended here, a dead mole, soft,  
my toecap prodded it  
hoping for a sign of life.  
There is no leaf. Ferns  
were bronzing towards winter.

Then it began again. Then it was evening  
and my hand shook, imitating  
sensitive people I had known  
or old or ebriated.  
Then it was evening and I said alone.

Translate me. The saints  
in their bonnets stand along the wall,  
virgins one side martyrs the other.  
Do not bear witness to or for me  
by your dying though, but give me

your living breath, speak for me,  
tell lies, be a poet, be a spokesman  
for anything that lets you free,

even by denying me you live to praise  
and dignify my doctrine, so: Be!  
Incarnate in this flesh it gave you  
or I made you, like a whole long year  
of Uranus, or Neptune if you can.

Then it was evening. I shuddered  
at the sudden chill  
resolved to live.

Scapegoats scudded past me,  
they found a woodland pasture  
safe from wilderness.  
In solitary friendship I persist  
touching no part of what I feel.

Then it was evening. The brittle  
politicians tried to bend again  
but this time broke. The market  
emptied, quiet Roma busied  
with their gasoline in oil cans,  
their clucking hens,  
then they swept the shadows clear  
into the porticoes and slept in arches.

I was alone with the wreckage of my speed  
like Henry James dictating as he died.

The words outlast  
their referents,  
dear God let me be seeds.

19 September 2008

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1.

The day needs me  
to recite

but if I were silent master  
who would begin

it would be the other  
all over again

every's castle  
bricks rain down

we build a cloud  
and let it go

2.

But is there no lasting here  
no dogs no avocado trees

for wherever these people went  
they brought a sun-baked cruelty with

and all the dialects of death

3.

But isn't that your prejudice only  
smell of your own house the others  
sniff as they pass along your window  
open autumn and no breeze  
and oats for supper?

4.

My denial is my decency  
(shadow of the window screen  
moiré on curved paper  
fine mesh catch such fish)

5.

Something from the sky again  
a *salt lick* for  
a great unseen green horned stag  
who honks above us  
and leaps the roof beam easy

I craved to stand at the rim of the meadow  
and lick one too.

6.

But childhood master  
is a time of fevered cravings no?  
and all the life still to go

and nothing answered?

7.

This is the answer—  
they will taste the salt  
only those who kiss my lips.

20 September 2008

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Could there be another  
in time to say so?

The shape of the instrument  
determines the sound

thereof. Eagle,  
be at peace in heaven

the great earth eye  
sees you. Woman,

attend your rock.  
The season changes

out of music into oak  
and then the silk

remembers shaping  
the frame that shaped it.

Contour is the only  
thing that speaks.

And never answers.

20 September 2008

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Too late for the morning  
like a man with a prize pig

or later, among apple trees  
even, a sparkle left

on dull leaves. Forgive me.  
Every word we speak

is asking for absolution.  
Or refuses it. Too late

for evening, the fruit  
almost tasteless with cold,

no warmth in the mouth  
even, to forgive the world.

21 September 2008