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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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LOOKING AT THINGS

Lèche-vitrines, lick the plate glass
windows of fine shops, select a cross
of rubies a star inside a sapphire
a moon of pearls a wheel of diamonds
that will never stop sending out
fierce quick blue messages
and be finished at last with the mind.

Just looking. At you too, pleasing
salesperson, at you too, potted plant
(*Ficus benjamina*, relative of light,
indoor nomad, cool leaves, a promise
that every dirty floor can be India,
every mind turn into the mind)

at you too, speckled industrial
tweed carpet stretching towards the eloquent
escalator that persuades us all to rise.
Arise, commodity, let me lick you with my eyes.

25 March 2002

Annunciation

THE WORD INSEMINATES MARIA

A few days ago we rode the N-Judah car
west into splendor, park, flowers,
people, food. People in a city —
no need for any religion but that.

But then the sun goes down, they go to sleep,
the fashionable crêperies shut down
and the big street looks like a little stone,
impenetrable, nothing to report.

Then the seed of something has to be in her
from which a waking comes. In me.
Something the other side of the actual
already beginning its devious work

to be god among men. As a friend
lives inside a friend. You in me
being there in the morning full of words
ready to understand me the day.

In that strict sense every day is Christmas
and this is the nine-month prequel to that light,
this light. Mary says yes. We spoke
quietly last night too, repeating half-asleep

the friendly vows from which our god flesh grows.

LIFE TRAPS

Caught in living
here I thought
the unexamined life
was more fun, heaven
in the head, a dream
leads to a dream

But wait. You thought
this was all you're getting
but you're more.
It's in that box over there
disguised as the morning

wrapped in the sky
formal as Hell.
One more confusion
sweet as a metaphor,
comparisons
keep us going

round and round the
wheel, wait
I was trying to say
I've done it wrong

ask me What to?
I grew
distracted
by the comely presence
of my luscious

complaint,
word stalled a silence
till I knew.

But what did I know?
It started out
with that Courbet painting
of two women sleeping,
history of their bodies,

history of sleep.
Ultimate voyeur
to look on those
who can't look back,
poor man, their beauty.
But why Courbet?
Resemblances
are endless,
my text in German,
a collaboration
two languages
shading each other
from the reader's
sunshine, every page
should have something on it
nobody understands,

origin of the world.
The door is closed.
I didn't get out.
Both of them looked
like you, they stared

at each other
in dream, grapes,
oranges, cream
poured from hand
to hand, in dream
they tasted
trusted, accepted
the beautiful cage.

26 March 2002

Can I find a way out
in between the words

graph paper grid a
word breaks boundaries

a route thither
where the Others are

waiting their turn
in me, while you

are away you wrote
Highway of Dream, one

word to go forward
one to turn left

or brake, refrain
from waking

in our little room
there is a garden

ever after no matter
how infrequent flowers.

26 March 2002

DANS LES COULISSES

Reading a rapture makes you worry.
You think of feet, blisters, poison ivy,
Unwelcome tumescences. One feels you
Across the way, really rather terrible,
Dark, beautiful, like eight o'clock
Blue shadows, gold cabs, the opera
Ready to begin. Overture
Means opening. One feels you over there
Open to one. Two fingers parted
Just like this, to show how pregnant
Someone is. The aftermath
Of economics is theology, you can tell
What's coming, by Standard & Poor's
Who tomorrow's gods will be,
And what it will cost to worship them.
A candle for your thoughts, bluebottle,
One envies your vista from the wall,
Ladybug, all yesterday's hard rain
Leaves no traces but new grass.
The automatic friction of the world
Work of unseen citizens in the wings—
Don't you ever get tired of being nice to me?

27 March 2002

COSMOLOGY

Take a bite out of this —
a sparrow did
and from that seed
the sky came out

and all the rest of us
the rest of it

then an eagle tried
and from a rabbit
took one bite
and that bunny blood
ran out as the entire universe

around us all over forever

then a crow flew over
and bit and old bone
long dead and worried
a scrap of leather meat
off some gristle
and gulped it down

and from that bite
the timeless entity
arose, empty
passionate and very kind

you see them
(we use a plural
word for it)
every time you close your eyes.

28 March 2002

HIMEROLOGY

a questionnaire

How many sexes are there?

If two, what to call the varieties, moieties
within moieties, of sexual Difference?

And how many of them are there?

Himerology proposes:

1. A Taxonomy of Lovers,

to be characterized by their objects

and by the passion/commitment and the like with
which they they do/do not approach the object

2. An Etiology of Love,

Why does x fall in love with y?

Why does y respond?

(Of course karma is efficient cause, but we need to study

(do we? Or is

this nonsense, this stuff we ponder every day/night of our lives and never get around to
studying?)

the proximate causes of each enrapture.

28 March 2002

WHERE THE SEVERN MEETS THE SEA

in memoriam V.W. 1942

Find the exact shingle where she decided
Against continuing the conversation.
Smite the water with a stick. It will do
Nothing but will mean something.
That is all a listener can do. Blame the medium.
Then the media. Then the king far away
Worried about his liver. Rain
Or no rain. Hardy in a nutshell. Hurt.

29 March 2002

GOOD FRIDAY

it has come
back to us again
the formal thing
the death
halfway to heaven

at least his feet
are not on earth
the blood drips down

who am I quoting
who am I fooling
the belief
is part of dying
the belief is the pain
from which the tomb
does its dark
never-never work

the rock surprise
I say too much
who seek to measure
the morning
the sun has not even
set yet
it hurts in the sky
hours hours
before it goes

but it happens to us
without awareness
the rock and the blood
the wood and the cloud
all work by themselves
to die and die
and at best (worst)
we remember
we suffer (that
is we permit)
the dying
to touch us

feel it inside
chest or throat
or loosely held
in your hands
hold death
loose in your hands

and let it also go
the way a tree
lets green happen
a massive agony
unconsciously leaf.

29 March 2002

Why would he not know if she could?
A passion is a lonely house at best
Never sure how many rooms you're in it
As a bird known just by fluttering leaves
In a dark corner who? Why wouldn't she
If he were obvious and no radio no TV
The meekest of all stories has to be touch
Because one at a time. A hand. Identify
The animal. The tragedy. He isn't
In love with her anymore. Be glad
With what you have, the human fraction,
The part that can remember and forget.

30 March 2002

THE REBUKE

Who will feed

The birds after I'm gone?

Who fed them

Before I came?

30 March 2002

THE PUNCTUATION

A piece of hardware disguised as a love letter.
Of course you don't know what it means,
You're a girl or maybe a boy, I saw you
On your way to the income tax man
And you walked inside all the questions,
You can't answer a stupid piece of paper,
I watched your body trying to decide.

30 March 2002

THE WHOLE OF SATURDAY

a day between
nothing and again

a day perpendicular
to everything

I knew what color you were in my pocket
that smell between the legs old churches have

we know where the wax comes from the gleam
and where the fire rises
that burns the Palm Sunday palms
into that grey greasy ash

men write an unknown word with
on the foreheads of those who trust them

mix everything with everything
and let it sleep beneath the earth

soon enough everything is everything again.

30 March 2002

THE IMPERATIVE

A stifling habit of saying Yes to
everything becomes as mute as No.
I am not a harp to every hand
unless I make my clang mean music
by sheer dumb will, that Brahms thing
or cocaine, when all is saying Yes
and no exploring, no venture inward
in jungle doubt. Amazon inside
where wonders come from
trussed and fangless for our bright zoo
this universe-of-thee, kinder-
garten of God. Someday I'll be.

31 March 2002

How many colors to they have in France?

Lavender sable azure puce.

31 March 2002

JAVEL

The roughcut foreigner who brought the Javel
water every week to wash Pat's diapers
cried out "ja vel!" at the door, now what
is the deep *ta'wil* of that, this mild
chlorine bleach in gallon glass jars
label-less, corked and pissy colored?
I never understood. Why buy? Why wash?
Why live? All the despair of my used-up life
gleamed in that fatuous chemical.
What sort of life is that for a man
hunkering old wooden crates, 4 gallons in each,
up the stoops and down the cellar stairs
for ten cents a bottle the mercy of God
I don't know how much it cost. Don't know
why it scared me so. Can't drink it,
can't use it for anything but dirty clothes
soaking too long in the washtub smelling
of nothing but Javel. *Ta'wil* means
leading back before the word
to understand, Freud before the fact.
A child decentered by his sibling's birth
stares at a half-empty bottle of dilute
chlorine bleach called eau de Javel.
named for somebody who was alive once too
and made or sold or had a bright idea,
who's now just a name in a sad kid's mouth
whispered with disgust in foreign cellars.

31 March 2002

Ta'wil

By *ta'wil*, a word plucked from a procedure used in exegeses of the Koran, I mean my notion that every word that comes to mind* (arising fresh from however minute a silence) can be followed back, spiritual etymology, to its personal or transpersonal** root in my experience. And that this tracing is the fact, even if not yet the goal, of every thing called a poem.

* Freshness (σθ-μ-) characterizes every arising from some bright null (between-state) into brief awareness. This momentary *saying* is (of that time) your Word. The word that reveals you to yourself in time (now, this now) and in that specious eternity called history. How you got here is the same story as how that word got into your head.

** Of course transpersonal is personal too, the history that happens has to happen to someone. By transpersonal I mean the history that ensues when some word you hear or learn becomes a sudden lens through which you saw, see, the outer world come into focus. The effects are personal (hence you can still work with the word, find them, resolve them) but the revealed causes and conditions are (as much as anything is) out there in the world. As the world.

31 March 2002

Easter

Every word is a resurrection.

That's what I learned this morning
even when it was not clear
if it was I or another who rose
after the stone got up and walked

or was it a shell a sympathy
summoned from the blue-eyed grass
began this morning also
as if it knew. It knows

always what we have to do.

31 March 2002

Empathy and language.

Language is bait. People don't talk to express or persuade or even make contact. They speak to draw the listener in, to bring them close, to bring the immense authenticity of the other (the only authenticity most people know is other people) into themselves.

A word is the womb's will, come fill me, come fill me. Listen to what I say and in your hearing I will be real, I will exist.

The woman talks not to the woman she's talking to, not to the actual or the audience, but to an unseen camera. What is a camera. A camera is the magic wand of authenticity waved above us — if we are 'taken' by the camera we are accepted by the real. Not the world — people don't care about the world, the world is too big, too far away. People care about the real. The world is an abstraction, an implausible rounding of experience. The real is just real.

If it's real, you can talk to it. If it's real, and judges you to be real too, then it will answer: so all speaking is to solicit that answer, that redeeming reply by which you know you exist.

31 March 2002

L'occitane: Thé Vert

Fresh and sparkling green tea. Top notes- bergamot, lemon tree leaf, green tea. Middle notes- tea leaf, jasmine, peony, cardamon. Bottom note- white cedar. Contains the softening and nourishing extract from the flax plant (linseed).