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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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We promised to be near
enough to the truth
to smell each other's breath

the smell of a mouth
tells the truth
no matter what the words

and worse than lies
are small talk
and the blue apartment house

and interest rates and
human rights
there are no rights

anywhere but here
in your mouth
I taste your mind

maybe you and I
are the last humans
I touch you at last

cocktail time
on a doomed planet
I like those movies

no brand names
empty envelopes
a crisis in Japan

and you and me
looking at us warily
I love you too

doubt is forever
I know how it is
I used to be you myself.

23 December 2001

One thing pornography teaches is deft grammar
otherwise the streets are full of baby carriages
from here to the Place des Vosges crammed with them
and all the newborn mothers reading Proust.

We can't have that. Pregnancy's the death of conversation
have you ever noticed, with the ruby glass votive lamps
hissing in her eyes whenever you dare to disagree
with holy mother church I lost my heart in Byzantine

a beadle was a boy who ruled class while nun was gone
he didn't wear skirts or have long rosaries but still.
Why did you do it? Why did you sit under the apple tree
with anybody else but snake? Snake was safe,

good talk, fresh ideas, long views. Why did you get
your baby husband (he could have been your brother too)
involved in the action, eating, sexing, guilt and exile?
One minute the garden of philosophy, the next The Gap.

The question must remain rhetorical, id est, historical
since you left Eden long ago to become my mother.
Just think of all the things we might have done
together if it weren't for this snare of being born.

What kind of music is life anyway, some tired
show tune you can't get out of your head.

23 December 2001

READING LACAN

Not *le nom du père* — it's *le père du père*, the one a father calls father — that is a father. So look for the generation before, the generator of your generator, to hear what the father says about his father, thus defining father, thus saying the word. Because it is only the father who knows the father, and who can say the word of the father. Which too often is his father's name.

But *le nom* is more often the sentence, the verdict (*Urteil*). So it is to the grandfather (“always already dead” anyhow in my own case), perhaps grandfathers that we should go. For the mother also has a father, and speaks his name. Strange accent, the woman speaking the father's name, but the child hears. Maybe it takes more than the father to say the father's name. Maybe then the true father is that composite person[a], the Father of the Mother and the Father, and that persona is the mask who speaks at last the final *nom du père*. That is why not every child without father grows up psychotic, that is why *le nom du père* is such a good name for ‘it’ — it is the one-who-is-named-father by the mouth of the father, the mouth of the mother.

And what of those women, once perhaps more common than today, who call their husbands ‘your father’ in speaking to the child, and perhaps later, after the child is grown or gone, go on naming that name with its fearful accuracy,

saying and even calling him just 'father?' They may in fact annihilate their own fathers into this new, present composite, the father-in-the-mouth-of-the-mother.

Who are all these people each child must master, in more ways than one, compressing them all into a single word, name, he can honor most by transgressing?

24 December 2001
Boston

THE AGITATION ANIMAL

The agitation animal
Spoke me awake
He said the president
Is wrong He always is
I said why wake me
To tell me what I always
Knew You have to do
Something about it
What could I possibly
Achieve You could take
An ad in the paper and say
Nothing but the blank
Pulp of the ruined
Forest paper could be
What god calls
True Is god wrong too
Are they all wrong
But this animal
All asky and dreaming
Death's uniforms
Is it all always
About revenge
Like an opera that never
Ends and brother
Always killing
Brother how else
He answered could
They ever know
Who they are
Language belongs
To the survivor alone.

24 December 2001
Boston

I don't want to wake up thinking about governments
pursuing murderous idealists through gaunt sierras.
Only forgiveness does any good. And changing
the evil imperial American into something decent.
Can we still reach it? Are we dead in the same desert?

24 December 2001
Boston

Green arch out
from in your lap
writhing there till
in and up and in
your do I there
you expand
to understand
me. You expound.

Something wrong
as if I came
to the wrong room
or the right one
before you moved
in a girl comes
to the door too
but I'm not home

give me everything
you need. I am the old
spider caught
in my inferior design.

24 December 2001
Boston

To this day I am stuck on a Pitkin Avenue (B-14)
bus trying to get out at Hopkinson Avenue
to go to the movies where they show Russian films
and not getting out because there's this girl in front of me
something written on her right hip pocket The End
it says or *konets* it should say what I'll see in three
hours after the two Eisenstein movies ("Alexander Nevsky,"
"Potemkin") are finished I'll never see them
I stare at her jeans her hips are not moving she
stands in the stairwell of the bus to get out the bus
stops and stands still for her to dismount I will get off
behind her I will never see her again I am still there
I have never stopped seeing her no face just brown
Hair white shirt blue jeans she's not getting off we are here
forever because this was a moment in which you can stay
this was a moment that people can live in busy as books
in a library as rabbis praying in the synagogue just
on the other side of the doors that don't open or they open
and she doesn't get out she is here forever I am behind her
we are an ordered pair a function of some eternal
mathematics I paid no attention in school I'm caught
behind her stare well stare well the dark hair the white
shirt the unmoving unfaltering fact of what just happens

and catches me in its move when you're caught
in a move you can't move you are part of the other forever,
to live a whole life with her, in summer, with bibles,
with people waiting for her and waiting for me,
the terrible smiles of people walking by in the street
and nothing ever changes but the weather I reach out
to touch her to push her gently maybe I can wake her
maybe she can step down and out of the vehicle holds us
I need to be under a sky to have a cigarette to stub it out
to look at a tree and think about whatever comes to mind
not her not this not here not the end of the end
the driver is dead the bus is empty of everyone but us
anything I ever hope to do I'll have to do right here
with her and nobody but her and she wont turn around.

24 December 2001
Boston

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Girl in doorway
cars line sidewalk
quiet suburb street
girl in doorway
lights all over house
her mother turns
back to the car
to get something
her brother in tee-shirt
December girl
in doorway wide
double blonde wood
doors are open
every window
in the house
piled up with lights
girl in doorway
lights around her
lights in every bush
her body outlined
against the different
quality of light
inside girl in doorway
Christmas tree inside
all the lights
outside are white
girl in doorway
maybe sixteen
slacks and sweater
in doorway standing
a moment in the
doorway girl in
doorway the blond
doors are moving
she turns looks
back into the street

sees her mother her
brother maybe me
across the street
girl in doorway
turns in profile
now her body turns
to the right the dark
inside the
lights of all the
house a girl
in the doorway the
doors are moving
she is moving a girl
the door the girl
the other door the
girl the girl going
inside the girl going
the slim snug
dark of her body
disappearing
into the light
infested dark
inside inside
the girl the door
the door the girl
the door closing
the door the door.

24 December 2001
Boston

SECRET ACTS

technical term ‘nocturnal adoration’
secret republic beneath the known

conspiracy of texts to hide the word
— hide a leaf in the forest —

shape in a doorway, hide a hope
in happening *hide a shape in light*
too bright too bright
the moon of it
turns into the sun

 the rain itself
melts silver
 we hurried through
the diamond merchants their glittering
hands
 negotiation
 money

has a healing power, it takes
a curse off someone else’s things
becoming mine
 transaction
touch.

 The lingering resentments
of midnight mass — who are
these languages the shadows spoke

cold courtyard empathy, a voice?

And you? I am she. The one
you remembered, a cat
walks behind me, you sit down.

25 December 2001, Boston

Christmas day to be at home at home the
door consents to open the blue hour no longer
a fabulous artificial perfume from the early
days of being someone else when Time itself
is an alias for space I ask you I ask you
let me spend the night worshipping in you

a god who impersonates you night by night
and stretches out across my mind most
intimate and small, all the skies in the world
snug inside your eyes, the parallax between
is another story one that lets you find me
on the other side of the optic chasm who am I

when you are gone behind the waking door?

25 December 2001

All kinds of miracles maybe
your heart on my sleeve
Saint Exupéry found in the desert
translating Baudelaire into Berber
and no news anywhere on tv

nothing in the market but bread and meat
long stemmed brussel sprouts
and girls who milk their goats for you

everything for you. I was a child once
and knew every song, the want, the wish,
the wait, the soft velleity
to touch the cushioning flesh around the bone

because we are born knowing bone,
right? It's not just surrealism or despair,
there really is an afterlife and this is it

the long morning after I stagger from your couch
you, you who'll never have any other name but you.

26 December 2001

In Piero della Francesca's *Risen Christ*
the drapery of shroud writes a letter round the Man
that keeps his modesty and lets his glory through,

that angry almost disappointed face
like a householder roused at night to challenge thieves
— by being in the flesh we have broken into his house.

We stand in our shimmering loincloths just out of sight
trembling. What will he do? Nothing. He stares at us.
We have no right to be where we are,

but pity is easy for those who have passed through death.
There is no police he can summon, no other place
to which he could exile us, he is stuck with us here,

for lewd characters like us all his sufferings
were taken on. Were we worth it? We shiver
with self-esteem. Of course we are, we're beautiful

in our disarray, meat on our bones and gaudy dreams
cycling through our heads, he should love us, he should.
He lets us be. Presently we come to worship him.

Every minute he lets us go on living seems
like a forgiveness. Sacrament of being in the world.
The rising sun. The feel of cloth against my skin.

26 December 2001

MELANIE

So I dreamt another book by Proust.
Long as *Jean Santeuil*, not a part
Of *Searching for Lost Time*, a whole new book.

A heroine it had. This time Marcel
Was a woman, and a woman's dignity
understood the fragile circumstance of time.

26 December 2001

All the silences recall me now
Dreams of a river without poisons
And swans with upright necks, heads
Balanced proud as horizons.

27 December 2001

Penetrate sunlight
to find the dark inside.

This is transgression.

(Lawrence's black sun behind the sun we almost see)

it's in the dark too
but at night it's not black
beyond the dark, it is a strange
dark amber light, not radiant,
a swallowing ingrown sort of light
that takes more darkness in,
glows inward, a hungry light
like brown orange garnet, like hessonite,
the only thing darker than the dark.

Rahu, my star. Black sun,
you are the only one.

27 December 2001