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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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THE PLACE IN THE CENTER OF THE BRAIN

Call it a collection of mysteries
a sunboat come back from the west
crowded with all your wives
and all you hear are church bells—

like Little Italy with baskets of sea urchins
on Bleecker, oil drums full of fire.
It is always winter except where you are.
Only you remember, only you wander
this aluminum planet fearing oblivion.

The pain in your leg is an example
of understanding something. Know me
while it lasts. Call it a skirt tied
snug around some statue's hips,
a good child's vision of modesty.

Eye dear, we pronounced it, we
wanted to see all of it, every bit except
the dead man in moonlight and his wife's eyes.

16 January 1993

IDENTITY

And what is wanting to be me while I want?
Isn't the craved-for sensation
itself some other body's vagrant wish
that animates itself in me,

pretending to be me?
Isn't the cerebellum
the rectifier of desires and the amplifier of passions
from everywhere picking them up
via the antenna of the skin?

Is any urgent mine?
Is wanting
anybody's?
Isn't it just a sensation
longing for a house,
a lust in love with being anyone at all?

16 January 1993

THE IGNORANT

We do not know this body thing we use
even after all these winters watching finches
and all the summer nights by the inner harbor
waking beside them in the absolving dawn.

16 January 1993

MONORAIL

A soldier's passion an opera by a bird
encapsulate the singable fury singable lust
there is no music that does not encapsulate

does it your dark flute
do you feel the words do to you

entering the body passion Conquistadors
who needed to find us we were fine in the dark

long ages of her S
 looped around this caitiff neck
torque or twist of gold
by what she simply was
ensorceled me
what need had she of grammar?)

drown in a book.

17 January 1993

IN LITTLE NIGHT

Alone in my kitchen with the microwave
I stare at its blue time.
Is this called studying numbers, mathematics?
The only light in the room says 2:17
pretty blue. The snow's light comes in too
and that is its own kind of azul.
When I swing my eyes the numbers linger,
multiply, a field of never ending increment,
I'm tired, I remember your body
pale as a summer day beneath me
when I was a cloud or a sound.

18 January 1993

Whatever comes to mind
is worth singing to silence.

For that is what song is
a journeying and far dispatch
of what arises
as the mind

or in the mind
that can (finding the way

the very old way
right through stone,
Arnaud's way, Latin's way)

be said.
Hard research this speech
gape mouth answering bright empty world.

18 January 1993

THE AXES OF THE CRYSTAL

1.

Don't worry about how far the water is
there is a crystal (but not the thing you mean
you see in New Age windows, a thing
to wear or carry, a thing to buy, a thing with influence).

It grows below an ordinary hill,
this crystal, and speaks, and what it says
is ocean anyhow enough for you. Water is
the after-breath of speech —that's why it moves—
every spoken thing has its boundless consequence.
But in a reasonable world it would be still—
ice. But our world instead is perfect, full of pain,
hence change, hence escapable, or at least
you want to. You really want to. And this
is what the crystal has to say.

2.

O the *axes* and *angles* of language!
Because crystals have measures of their own
and cleavage one of them — how meaning divides
among the listeners, ever growing less
in clarity, dreamier, and every speech poured out
does not fill every vessel equally.
Nor does a message linger in the atmosphere
but hurries off to babble in the plasma of the Logothete
leaving behind skeletons and carapaces: words.

3.

At the Fraction of the Mass (the *klasis*)
the Priest (Christ's alter ego) demonstrates
how far an understanding can be divided
and still be understood. A chip of wafer.
It is a lesson in the molecular, a theory
of pure theory, a bird hovering above its shadow
to become one substance with its accident.
It is time gushing up eternally as space.

Limitless orgasm. A piece of bread.

19 January 1993

THE CAPTIVE

Try to find where in the body pleasure is stored
—the thing we're always trying to release
and when it's loose we keep trying to retain.
What is this animal that's only mine when it escapes?
What is this soft cage I keep it in?

19 January 1993

INAUGURATION POEM

for Charlotte

Caught in images of national order

like Robert Duncan watching pigeons
wheel over the twin Italian steeples
of St. Francis's church at the foot of the hill
and calling them doves,

 caught in images
of coffee and Cadillacs
 the amazing
scaffolds of daily experience

on which this glad mind scampers.
Joyeuse Garde, the knight comes home,
caught in images,

 through perfect darkness
Lancelot steps up from the lake
guiding himself exactly step by step
by holding her bright body before his mind
and following faithful that, he knows full this.

2.
A strip of colored cloth
enough to tame the dark, why,
it is an arrow, a long arrow

(all bodies are one body)
it is an arrow, a long arrow
its barb hid in the hand of
more than an archer,

the Lama waves the arrow

gently round the sky,
five colors stream from the feather of it,

the birds follow,
turning the sky around.

3.

Over our house now, Charlotte,
the birds

 which are not doves, or are mourning
doves with mauvey breasts
and blue jays. Crows
that speak the Dawn Language
better than the sun for all its light.

Birds for the comfort come
a bare tree yields
into the quivering air

a stable place, a branch
a heap of seeds
fallen,

 a crowd of images
our only nourishment,
squawking and sweet-talking on the empty tree.

4.

The arrow clutched in this more than archer's hand
goes further than any merely flung from the bow.

A cap of snow
on a snapped
off tree stock

under snow wind
vague blue of sky—
"a child's eyes wander into sleep" says William
Jefferson Clinton getting
inaugurated,

vague of all our answers,

destinations,
America *has to be* always beginning,
has to be an endless immigration.

5.
Into this place
the dark
where the images
repose
and rise
to life again,

naked trees,
to dispose
the fundamental
neatness of the world,

the twigs of it
around him,
nestle restless
in the foreplay of sleep

until the shouting window
reminds us we have slept
and wakened into enormous light.

20 January 1993

BUT WHAT IS

is when the dark comes
and then our philosophy is pure
fingertips and fear

V

A day
is what goes away.

A night
is a color of fright.

V

Blue Norway spruces in the snow
on Uncle Benjamin's lawn blue Xmas lights—

marrying outside your own religion
is what the night is.

20 January 1993

VISITING THE TRAVEL NURSE

for Charlotte

Our friends are having trouble selling their house
A *renga* while these salty eaves drip ice
And I am holy something like a bull who horned
Inside the delicate cerebrum of a better race
Admiral Anxiety is a wheelwright of waves
Anybody who travels is an admiral
Words go on rhyming with themselves
Better leave your luggage home and bring the dog
Nobody loves part-songs anymore the moor is cold
Relentless congruences of social attitudes
Until we call perfect strangers friends
Blackbirds are back today a mallard and his mate
Womped a clear ice pond in Hyde Park
Imagine the yellow documents this exile's King
Or priest is he looking idly past the waterfowl
And penning his memoirs it's a funny world
To have an identity of your own slim hiped
Princess of Wales in a dowdy print haven't we too
Seen something like a city owl-like fluttering low
Filling the whole sky coming towards us at evening
Parks and towers and gates and burning ghats
Everything wide open with a ruby light a guess
Of majesty a sheen of sudden rain commotion
Delayed travelers press to enter before nightfall
Rubbing their injection sites immune to every fever?

21 January 1993
Poughkeepsie

LET PALE DISEASES CEASE PLAYING
DEATH

Not much is more remarkable than waiting
Waiting is the long probing beak of a shorebird
Curlew or snipe. Waiting is also another
country but that turns out to be another story.

21 January 1993
Poughkeepsie

WELSH DANCES & AIRS

for Charlotte

1

The same voices you heard beneath the dome
whispering their alleluias round the vault
woke you blithering this morning, angels of irrelevance
lust abiding, stretching a point
into one more fatal geometry the world.

2.

For I will go back and interview my traces
how my mind is nothing but lore, folkless lore
and my knee hurts, how on the marches
I took my genetic spiritual form,
flesh *is* fire, King David's cats stalk my yard snow
this victimage! this celebrant
of nuptials below the deepest shade, shale slice,
dreams have in general not much meaning.

3.

The subtle analyst knows the few that do.
That animal, that track. Out from the osiers
and across a big field into hemlocks.
Everything is speculation, and I am the mirror.
Show yourself to me and know the answer.

4.

He made an angel call me on the telephone
and speak in Old High Static— good sinner
transform your commonplace desires
into the furniture of immortal mind.
I solved that by opening the window
and there they were, all summery in their instances,
and I yearned at the detail of them, I swooned
in apoplectic accuracy, every blessed thing!

5.

There's no hope for the pilot of the ruined ship
staggering again and again on the rocks through breakers
as if one tragedy were never enough. He's safe
now in the harbormaster's office, no one is drowned,
not too many sea-fowl stuck in oil. His eyes
are tired of taking chances. The sea is born wrong
and all our journeys never teach it manners
for all our straight lines. The sea remembers us,
the sea hears everything we think, and acts accordingly.
It is the ripple of us, and no more.

6.

What did she look like, Nineue,
were her eyes vague as the Pleiades
to an old man's eyes? Were her hips
just smooth enough to slip through fingers?
And she had no smell, or only the scent
of some flowers she counted petals of
to tell the future, she smelled of oracles
and moved clear without remembering, naked
as if she had forgotten you were there
your whole life depending on what you saw.

22 January 1993

7.

What kind of looking if a sound can hear
black cars parked at my doorway
I never dream, a flag is blue enough,
so-called solar winds to light the earth
harness that wantonness display'd
on summer nights and store as energy?
Aurora. Release is common.
What did she look like after you turned away?

8.

Always the ash sometimes ember never never.
And that, given the sacred river, radio clangor,
smiling white dog, geranium in a Chinese pot,
that was enough. It is something red
and people remember it. They fight about it
till it turns white and sleeps inside them.
Never till they die will it leave them,
then like a gull dropping a herring it does.

9.

Striking a match to light a cigarette under water
this wave my breath that wave thine answer
what did she look like with her blue stone rod
polished with hazel nut oil till it seemed the shaft
sky used to impregnate the earth before language,
a core of something he could barely get into his mouth
the way it gritted on the teeth "I eat the sky."

23 January 1993

10.

One smokes another listens. Grammar
has always been a mistake a looking back
when the moon's trying to show you your way

but you keep looking up at her, her glowing
kindly leprous face scarred from all she's seen.
You stumble over particles you never know what to say.

11.

On this day they give stones to one another
and hurry home to burn them on the hearth
the dog loves to sleep beside the fire

in every valley there's a stone that won't burn
and he who holds it is king for one full moon—
tells nobody, hides his face, tries to be normal,

keeps the stone between his shirt and his skin, and lies.

24 January 1993

[MERLIN, OF NINEUE]

Some travesty of how I actually wanted
or the thing I couldn't touch a miracle of being there
and bending forward and touching a blue flower
so that the supports of the sky those thighs
were pale almost white in the doing of it the gathering
of what should not have been touched and touched
sent my mind's heart's eye's center into the spin of exile
from which it will not come back yet I touched her
I groped through the fondness we had of each other
she groped through my desire for her to find me
I groped through her flesh to find her
and we were lost in a world without finding
the both of us were and the charm was lost
and we called the rock that covered us the sky

24 January 1993

