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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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RESILIENCE MATTERS

1.

The throne of G-d
lion-claw finial
footed on human frailty

like old poetry
left out to bleach in the sun
like hair, or in rain
or cold dew, we also
lasted, true after all
in our fashion and forgive.

2.

Lived through so much
fresh horrors and the news
of them *uguale* as Pound said
to the mind of whom?

The *man* (bi-sexed,
not aging, voluptuous,
muscular, chronoboric)
the all of us are.

**Or call him a woman
and be done with it.
we care too much
about easy differences,**

**the real distinctions lost,
who sprawled it now
dew soon in the morning sun?**

3.

**And then we turned back
sought cave mouth,
darked our daring
deep inside,**

following the roadmap in our bones.

6 October 2014

FROM THE OLD MILL

The genome has it,

what I don't dare

like a street

I know too well
to know at all.

For my body
is made of streets.

Crescent

went north from Belmont
past Pitkin with P.S.159
(Danny Kaye went there, mother
taught there, fourth grade
was mine there when my brain
still worked)

eventually, Atlantic
Avenue crisscrossing Sunrise
Highway to Liberty Avenue
(Law-Ran Diner some Saturdays sauerbraten,
father's favorite anywhere) or
easterly to the Earl, pronounced Oil
14 cents to get in, to see moving pronounced
moon pictures, or just the show

thence

by commodious trudging north
past streets of no consequence to this history
(Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Tartini, Cherubini)
to the grand romance — Jamaica Avenue
where Crescent ended in parkish places,
dogleg to that uphill questing snaking road
up the ridge of the terminal moraine
through the cemeteries Jewish and Gentile

o the mausoleums I have known,
the ghosts that spoke to me as I ascended
over the Interboro below then
down to Bavarian amenities of Ridgewood
(our nearest A&P, a real cheese store,
hard gruyere from Finland, a taste
never dies away from the mind, a bookstore,
Kierkegaard's *Der Verführer*, don't
ask me why, all the way to the
Passionist monastery, odd Italian
priests who wore hearts over their hearts

but mostly my nighttime was arena,
the Grove for Gorgeous George,
Antonino Rocca, torsos of strong
middleaged men, Lord Carlton)

**and that's where the bus ended
my lifeline to the other and run home,
my first job in the library of Saint Agnes
and what did I know, the passions only,
are passions enough to make a book,
a life?**

**or at Jamaica turn he other way
into Queens and the eponymic district
past Dexter Park home of the Bushwicks
and the infamous Franklin K. Lane High School
(who was he?) filled with imaginable girls
not to be seen in my local soda fountains
all the way to Gertz Dept. Store and the end of the el.**

**El. So many things ended
then or came down. El.
Bab El, the gate of god, and learn to talk,
and only talk to pray,
this is prayer I'm doing now,
this kaddish for the boy I was,**

**you know that if anybody does but
what prayers we reckoned in those parishes,
Santa Fortunata, Blessed Sacrament,
Holy Trinity of the Capuchins,
bearded men in sandals
just like the artists who welcomed me**

**not long after in the weltering
Village vie de bohème,
along with their Wisdoms:
Dolly Reik, Diane Youngswick
and the Astarte of San Remo,**

**so libera me,
deliver me from the order of streets.**

I pray.

**The important thing about all this
is that none of it is important.**

**Nisselsohn's Drug Store was helpful and then, only then,
nobody eats sauerbraten in the Old Mill anymore**

**and who knows what gods are tended now
in what beautiful pale brick high-steeped barns?**

And all the other way was Sea.

**It matters not. It is just matter,
like the rest of me. Here I am,
after all,**

**or is it just your hands
holding nothing, just your hands?**

6 October 2014

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**Lorn activity
mass grave Iguala
tell me something
horror I don't know
crime creeps up the arm
from words we read
papyrus or devices
doesn't matter crime
exceeds itself no
horror someone
doesn't yearn to exceed
louder than the highway
roar not far from here
everything bleeds.**

7 October 2014

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**Each voice
a tree**

**so much music
everywhere**

**the light itself
a language of.**

7 October 2014

CASTIGATE

**or is it musth, a frenzy
or desire as
strikes mammal male**

**hormone, defeat this
with a common street.
Be decent.**

**Castigate
the animal you ride inside—
dualism will get you every time**

**tide, is our besetting, soul-besting
sin. Wheat a minute, genetically modified
triticums, no wonder glutes do
us harm. How can we be theologians
in Big Pharma time? How can we believe
when things themselves
reach out to harm?**

**Once
it was all about touch, the queen
nestled deep among her attendants
all winter, 93° at the core
the beekeeper told us,
once it was all about keeping warm**

**to breathe the light back into things,
breathe the light back as story—
nobody tells such
stories as we do,
that is who we do.**

**Castigate doubt
that poisoned fountain
whose waters leach beauty away— [7 October 2014]**

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**What we offer
of, out of, ourselves
into the imaginary
world turns it real.**

**We are carpenters
of breath,
what we hold back
will never be.**

7 October 2014

AS IF A STATUE

**Her breasts
in a night of fireflies—
her hand quieted her body
two thousand years—**

**how long one night lasts!
Lasts as long
as what she gives,
a raven calling in the woods.**

7 October 2014

U-BAHN

**She's on the subway
he sees her by the door
she's reading a book**

**he has spent his life
writing books so that
one of them could be**

**the book she's reading
now midway between
her eyes and her lap**

where his eyes hold.

7 October 2014

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**Such things as waiting for
are round our throats already
—it was raining lightly—
and the trees had lamplight
from the full moon**

**Alexander, Iskandr, lay there
looking up at it
and wanting that too—
so he invented India and went there,**

***Luna in Terra*, our moon on the earth,
and found there stones lucid and lustrous,
fire rubies and yellow sapphires
only kings can wear, and one great opal
in which he swore he saw his mother's face**

or was it Venus, sole ruler of the world?

7 October 2014

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**Voigtländer lens
old camera phase
darkroom fugue
cancrizans in light and dark
red the light
my true love's bloom
across the ascendancy of mere gender—
out from one slim pine
a single monarch butterfly leads our way
flirt of wing, the root of color,
sky-boots on your heels
fugacious!**

8 October 2014

FROM THE OLD MILL

Day Two

8.

I am what's left of me
after,

 after I don't know what —
something changed,
something changes

 and the almond tree
flourishes where the golden
apples of the West once

but I don't know what those are either,
were,

 the tall masts so thick at base
even a big man couldn't get his arms around them,
even though he can reach across the sea.

And so the ship of me stggers on
by stormlight and crosswind
wondering,

 what if you needed
more than numbers to define a day,
a date in love's calendar,

caldera,
change all the words,
the winds,
and wait.

Suppose I really meant today
or it did,
more likely,
it knows the shapes and times of things
as no man can,
especially the kind I am,
a traveler who never leaves home.

9.
So it's not a question of where I saw you,
the bus in Paris, the black river in Osnabrück
where the Treaty of Westphalia had just been signed
a few centuries before I looked up and saw
was it you on the banks of the Hase, or under
the waterfall on the road down from Darjeeling,
how modest you always were in the offering,
the offering, sometimes you were unsteady
on my feet, sometimes you lurched
when you stumbled on my glance,
I was always looking, no wonder, always.
It's a matter of looking,
looking for wonder.

It's really not as simple as that
but it is.

10.

Can you cauterize a memory, drain
the sad sepsis from the blood somehow,
set the leeches working on my temples
(like Stalin on his deathbed) to suck
the putrid memories out
of what had been
so sweet, so sleek
in the beholding, in the holding?

11.

No such suck.
What happens
happens forever.
That's the rule.

The school is strict
we labor in, to learn
year after year some
lesson we never

get to recite, memorize
formulas for sciences

that will never exist
this side of the long eclipse.

12.
Have I told you enough?
Too much! they cry
but sometimes a true answer
can be a lie.

13.
If there is no measure
where are the nights stored
you gave to me, Venice,
Vienna, everything is white,
stone and sparkle, la vecchia
all places much the same
in being where you were
you aren't,
 chestnut trees on the Limmat,

or in mild distance from the Donau
Prine Eugen on the hill
no matter what, his palazzo
tedesco that cries out good to see,
good seeing from his bed
stretched out and lingering
after all those interrupted wars

waiting across the formal gardens
where summer strums its orchestra
cooler than the city, shade, up there
in the oldest zoo. You'll find
me there too, uncaged
by accident, unlabeled, left
for you to figure out
what I am by size alone
or sounds I can't stop saying.
Making. I wish this house
was my house, then I would be
safe inside a story, not cold
autumn afternoon having
to mke up my own
from slim pickings of
the opposite of memory.

8 October 2014.