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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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Still, it's hard to reckon with people
who think King David's still around
sucking oil shales in Tennessee.

We know where Texas is. We have seen
the blood flow in the Persian Gulf
which only poetry will ever some day clean.
Not religion. Not the rights of man
those poignant guesses from a brighter time.
Not government by men who want to rule.

L'indifferent. We need him again, we need her,
who doesn't give a suck for anything but life.
Keep everyone alive. Let everybody do
what anybody wants to do. The rest is lies.
Memo to me: never tell anybody what to do.

29 November 2009

= = = = =

for E.C.

Lizzy, I'm sorry I forgot the day
or the day forgot me, I sat at my desk
reading portfolios and no one came
but departmental crises rose
e-mails with the dean flew here and there
and a woman came to talk about her past.
Most of the afternoon I was just alone,
a psychoanalyst of emptiness, my me.
What were you up to while I sat there
and Charlotte at home was busy packing
(and translating the Dalai Lama's
memories of his dark retreat in Lhasa,
rats nibbling the offerings, so many)?
I can't say (unlike Dante) let's all
get into a boat and sail away. For people
like us there is no away. And water
scares me anyway. Let's have dinner
instead, food (our first sin though it was)
consoles us for our subsequent mistakes—
maybe some vindaloo before the snow.

29 November 2009

= = = = =

When the mountain breaks
it leaves the climber
remorseless
 on the level
we used to say,
to mean I am being honest
with you, I am saying words
whose meanings I guess
ratify my experience of being here
and being with you.

When the mountain breaks
it leaves us
hungry for the words
 words
that will not help us,
a word is a piece of broken rock,
we will lift them all our lives
and never put the mountain together again.

(mid-November)

29 November 2009

METAPHOR

The word 'cat' is a metaphor for that smallish animal sitting over there. Unspoken, it leaves us free to look at the animal and react to what we see. Spoken, it endues the animal and ourselves who look at it with all the vast biblical burden of catness, old and new, now and forever. Calling it cat enrolls it drastically and irrevocably in what it merely seems to be.

(mid-November)

29 November 2009

= = = = =

Sent back from the furthest world
by innocent design

I love this thing
I love this man
I will bring the two together

and the whole chariot of the Sun
hurtling 1100 miles an hour
across the sky
couldn't keep her from
bringing this twig home.
Better than the wood of the True Cross
this leaf from its tree.

28 November 2009

= = = = =

Listening to Johann Adolphus Haase's
light ladies' voices lifted
an ever-ending new beginning
ceremony of tune,
constant resolution, ear soothed
by every tension quickly slaked,
women wandering on an elastic sea
shadowed by quick silent birds
it seemed. He met Bach once
and they were friends thereafter.

28 November 2009

= = = = =

Silvering soul matter
one side sees through
the vessels hold it maybe

be nothing but light
all ways reflected
o master seem through me

let me be the place
where those lines meet
and there is nothing to see

only to be
and to be in, master
let me in

can I write there
suddenly
a language I can't speak

no one can speak no one dares
says what's on
that word's mind?

29 November 2009

= = = = =

I keep asking
some self
questions
the way an owl
flies through trees.

29 November 2009

RAPTODE

Push the body to make her sing.

Antonia is Olympia

we are all automatons

of our genetics

mitochondria

put us through our paces

as they watch

snug in the molecular

our lordly mysterious

inhabitants

who may be my own.

Who may be me.

I'll never know. Call

it a flower and be done.

29 November 2009

“TOO MANY COLORS”

the devil complained.

So winter came

and he slept.

Woke for hunting season

when men

(so seldom women) stumble

drunk through the woods and kill,
taking the colors away one by one.

29 November 2009

INSTRUCTIONS

Quest a shadow

you can write with.

Anesthetize the name

till only the man is left

then listen to what he says:

Buy a home and live in me.

The smallest words confuse us most—

maybe only the long agglutinations

of Eskimo or Turkish tell the truth,

can *specify in innocence*.

I,

being littlest, is the worst of all.

29 November 2009

= = = = =

Even if they turned against me
it would be just one more song

and the opera marches on.

Sometimes an intermission comes

and the crowd mingles sipping this and that
and suddenly bodies are louder than music

in red garments, laughing, with teeth.

Then the lights go down and reality begins.

29 November 2009

= = = = =

Measure up to it—
Vivaldi flacked by Pound
out of Dolmetsch landed firm
on his red-haired feet

Music confers no moral force
on its performers—
the thing works through the thing itself
and sinful bakers bake good bread.

The sacrament (call it)
of song
 (the sensuous
presence of invisible force).
Call it grace.

 Anything we do
we do it for ourselves
and the Supreme Witnesses attend—
and from their effused Attention
in us the music
 rises.

But I haven't played a note all day—
just the scratching of light upon the windowpane.

Like Nietzsche's last man
I blink in the morning sun.
Moral: be belated.
Be so late you're early
for the next new day,
for the sinful vintner's new wine.

29 November 2009

= = = = =

To own a pen is to have responsibilities.

Like a houseplant, must keep moist.

But from this water anything can grow.

29.XI.09

INSEARCHES

Only those you gave me count—
sun, moon, stars,
slow talk of the longest mind

▣

Can we reach it ever
the not even yet withered
peach at the top of the tree?

▣

I want those thing but you
know how to want.
Stone born, I can make do.

▣

As if the only season
that matters
is inside the one who sees.

▣

Was I long enough to be
in harmony
with the rain? Don't dare answer.

▣

Politics spoils more breakfasts
than burnt toast.
Silence seems like sanctity.

▣

I still am waiting for answers
I won't let
you even think of giving.

▣

The end of the month the end
of the mind.
That thing up there? Pure thinking.

▣

Coin with a harp on its face
wet from rain
sound of your hand stroking it.

▣

The things you gave me the things
that make me
who I am. But who are you?

▣

In seventeen syllables
a weird mix:
theology, politics.

Id est, poetry. I am thinking of the ancient seventeen-syllable epic line, spread across the earth from Homer's hexameters (five dactyls and a spondee) to the haiku of Japan and every highschool poetry class. Seventeen the number of the Sun in Tarot. Seventeen – as one of the hidden (obvious) bases of poetry. A breath rhythm flourished beneath what we say, making us say. Here are poems (reminiscent of my lunes in shape) to search the ways of seven as it becomes seventeen: 7+3+7 syllabled, the lines enclose the core of what is saying.

30 November 2009

STAR RISE

Portuguese evening, star
over Cuttyhunk—Church's Beach
looking back over the pond into the east
that follows us everywhere, a man
can't get away from origin,
starting again,
 where the stars butt in
seeming to come up out of the Vineyard
all that money glitter reflected in the sky—
it is a day
 to be superficial
 to lick the skin of things.

Of course money makes a difference,
even Homer would praise Thessaly if it pays.
But I don't know that, can't
answer to that or for that,
 the star has nothing to do with me.
I don't even know how to see
what this star sees
 though I am down here,
though it looks at me and I am the least of its worries,
a man of moderate means
 too fond of oceans.

30 November 2009

CARTOGRAPHY

Well-thought-out evasions
a worm-hole in the map
so up to date it shows me
trying to escape through it.

Cartography. The writing
of our predicament.
Sailboats swallowed by whales
great cities weltering in smog

we have no grasp of who
meaning means to be. We have maps
to walk around in
but never escape. Drift

might be the answer, drift
until the language forgets you
and suddenly you find yourself
outside. But outside of what?

30 November 2009