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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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## THE SYSTEM

Ask the Ptolemies of it  
for your axes  
then spill cathedrals

if I claim tomorrow  
who will know there  
better than a street

or say you never  
or a nave, the columns  
of Amiens did you ever

no they will let though  
the assertion stand  
like the sky around the sun

by old entitlement  
come close to truth  
and make love with number

or go to sleep  
earth bare  
no other choice.

28 July 2007

= = = = =

Wishing I could come closer to us  
a dog. Not afraid.  
Wishing people shouting in the street  
shouted at me. I am afraid  
of madness yes and every flower  
on that tree. O for the bare  
winter of our sanity  
where nothing sounds but wind  
and wind is always other  
to each and each. An egg,  
legal as an egg, quiet now  
with everything yet to come.

28 July 2007

## A SHOUT

How a man on the street in New York  
shouting angrily to no one in Japanese  
is the same as an old friend maybe dying  
in Mexico full of clamorous refusal  
means the world cannot hold  
all the things that have to be said,  
talk louder talk faster never listen,  
our normal condition should be  
screaming against the languageless void.

28 July 2007

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All we have?  
Or is it all we have to do?

Rain spotting up here  
while those who fled to the interior  
roar in jungle pain.

Sorry. The reality principle  
is stronger than bone. Sorry,

I flee from rage. I cling  
to the surfaces of things,  
only they can save me

when the last light falls.

28 July 2007

## SHAKESPEARE

Never minded being wrong.  
The color of the ink  
told him what to say.  
By hue and density  
decided for him.  
A writer is just along for the ride.

28 July 2007

(SHAKESPEARE, 2)

Maybe he listened better than anyone else.  
While Blake heard angels, he heard us.

And both kinds of hearing are needed.  
Put the Sweden back in Swedenborg:

the social and the notional. The sea and the shore.

28 July 2007

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Warped, almost,  
by the comfort of having.

Sun briefly out  
where 'out' means

with us. As if we  
lived outside the world.

28 July 2007

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I can't explain anything.  
It is done.

28 VII 07

## DAY EIGHT-K'ANIL

*(for Cole & Israeli)*

Roast corn we chewed  
when corn day came in  
rain around us and the river fish  
this is the full moon too  
and everything knows how to hide.

And aren't we just ampersands,  
a thing that's not a word  
that tells you you're just reading  
a book when there you were  
thinking somebody was talking to you.

They hardly ever do. We ate  
the fish, eggplant ivory and blue,  
seamless corn, I emptied my plate  
like a theater after a good play  
leaving the audience – that living  
coral Marcel called it – with plenty to discuss.

Gossip is our god.  
If only clams could talk.  
We know our limits,  
we are patriots of the horizon,  
just fence me in. Insinuate  
me, the other Frenchman said,  
into your story. So the day  
begins at nightfall, is holy  
in a way, the way things are  
that come and touch us  
and then they go. The days  
are gods, and numbers are  
gods and you and I do share  
certain aspects of divinity.  
The only thing that is not god is God.

29 July 2007

## THE ILLUSTRATED EDITION

—That was the rock told me a story.

—What does this rock know  
and will it tell  
and will I be the one,  
mother, may I?

—Why is gold(?).

—My skin is almost close enough to touch.

—Noah's Ark means everyone, Each person has to be an Ark, must carry a Full Set of Everything Else inside him. Each one of us has his personal Deluge. And someday each one's Dove will fly off from the mast, and a crow will come back, that wise and decent bird, to tell us that Earth is still there, still ours enough to live on, live with all the people we're bringing with us in our Ark. Our Arks. Then we must decide, not alas for the first time, whether we're fit to live with each other on this rescued Earth.

—You've seen this stick, or is it a twig. Now imagine it.

—Now imagine you never saw it at all. Imagine not seeing it, while not seeing something else either. That's the sort of thing we did in high school while the other boys were having sex.

—Imagine your skin worn neatly by someone else. What would it be like to touch her then?

—Would you even know?

—Me is a condition of nausea. I vomit when I see my shadow, then I weep, apologize. I would kiss the mirror but I would taste my lips.

—The worst thing about lovemaking is tasting or smelling or seeing traces of oneself on the body of the beloved.

—A man strangled by his shadow.

29 July 2007

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The light before there was light

the alien glow  
from which the first light gathered

Aurora they thought came from  
the apes at first light, *ur-ur-ur* they cry  
out in something like pain

because the dawn is breaking  
and time is the only house they have..

29 July 2007  
Olin

= = = = =

Not feeling walkative.  
The day. The sun a  
golden skirt on whom?  
What hides beneath?  
Transiency. Lumen  
of the obvious, the light  
inside the egg. Ache.  
An angry face passes  
fast. Falling asleep  
at the counter, old days,  
the old days! Gunshot  
and the famous outlaw  
falls. Wake. Lie there  
for all I care, dead  
as fantasy. Get up,  
there are children watching,  
wake, speak check-out  
French, barroom Basque.  
I love you is an impossible  
proposition in any other  
language. Limestone  
we can translate, cave,  
candle, lupanar. But not  
this. Never this.

30 July 2007

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String of consciousness  
Amish midwife  
hauls the newborn out  
up to the light, I give thee  
back to thyself again,  
give me to the light again  
Amen. Like all truths  
it is whispered. It is old.

30 July 2007

## COUNTRY

Something seems to be burning  
in what seems to be a kitchen.  
A flapjack has caught fire,  
carbon now the rim of it,  
syrup melts, fuses, scorches,  
dries. The fire fails finally.  
Wait. The mother appears  
to be still smiling. The grass  
outside the house is full  
of its usual unawareness. Nothing  
but beauty anywhere in sight.

30 July 2007

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Skull antrum under atrium  
the foramen aloft  
the building's intelligence  
the light falls through

three hawks above.

What is infant in us sees.

Skull mountain.

        Dig limestone till  
the actual neural tunnel shows

then gasp the dark. Take it in,

make a horn in your mouth  
suck the light in and hold it  
till it gets thick and dark

then you can see. Then you animal.

30 July 2007

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Put on your custom  
someone's dead.

The wolves  
never trusted us, the woods  
themselves fall back. We lie  
to each other all day long

and wake afraid, choking  
on the half-truths of dream.

It's all right to be wrong.  
Just forgive what's going to happen.  
Forgiveness means now.

Means everything that is.  
Children set to scrape  
paint from an old wall.

30 July 2007  
in memory of Ingmar Bergman

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As if there were revenge  
and a white horse  
quiet now at pasture now  
and then a rage

a word that comes from a mad dog  
a man I find inside my cage

**<drawing of a ribcage>**  
**<with an angry>**  
**<manikin>**  
**<in it>**

or a bird. A bird is something else,  
something almost irrational.

Or why do they want to be up there  
where only virgins are?

Streetcars and hearses and ice cream and clarinets,  
o Polish wedding just to be on earth!

but then the old-time record broke,  
shellac shatters after chattering,  
a whole generation of pale men  
grew up to see the fragility of art—

it's not the words are ugly, the music is.  
The music hates, the music loves  
and we're left naked in between.  
The white horse lifts his old white head.

31 July 2007

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Soon there will be time  
and then again. The striving  
of compunction in a killer's  
heart, a knife held back.  
There. Anger is the only animal.

31 July 2007

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Presumably they know what they're doing,  
presumably the weather has something in mind

but they never tell us, we only know  
what happens to us, if it really is us,

if we even know that. Opinions differ.  
Who killed Kennedy. Or anything at all.

It must mean something or else it wouldn't even be.  
But what could such things mean?

And what does even meaning something amount to  
in all the smoke and screaming and rubble and blood?

31 July 2007

## WANDERER

Would you take your name from a lake  
or a mountain if you had to? Would you walk  
all night talking to a forest or to a glacier?

Over the ridge, animals are coming, are watching you  
but you of course can't see them in the dark/  
You need a different kind of eyes.

As they come closer you keep talking,  
they stop and listen. It seems that you persuade them.  
Without your know anything of all this they turn and run away.

31 July 2007

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**Walk me by eye**  
and touch my piano.  
Wisdom of skin  
alone, unpracticed  
perfect crafts-  
manship the sun.

Be a believer.

Now it is summer  
at last, the sweat  
starts, my eyelashes  
mist over. Walk me  
into your glance.  
Keep me by radio.  
Remember for me:

this is a steeple  
those used to be people.  
Now it is only now.  
Hopelessly wonderful,  
presence itself  
is the only power.  
Whenever I think  
of you it turns into now.

31 July 2007

## NACHMITTAG, SPÄT

No more poem.  
Sun at back  
I write in shadow.

The dog sang  
on the hill,  
sleep was a sister  
who called my name,

softly Robert Robert fall  
into the unremembering

where long before you  
the words got lost.

31 July 2007

## THE POSSIBILITY

To be able to be a line  
and walk there  
starting out always from your own house  
wherever that is

and all the magic animals  
walk at your side  
and above you the Guides and Shelterers  
mostly the crows

and have there really be there  
when you arrive,  
every kiss you ever got  
still wet on your lips.

31 July 2007