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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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What is happening in that tree
that look-alike locust
so paltry-feathered now
as if it hardly even yet had
begun thinking,

    what is it with things

that seem to look at me,
warning built into weather,
I want to say warning us,
I want to say we
who are wallflowers in the immense ballroom
where all is silk and whirling green
and we try to learn the figures
the dancers follow, so hard because they are so soft,
holy embarrassment we feel before a stranger
someone you have never seen and wonder,
wonder what it will do to your life forever
if you speak to him, how terrible
if it changes everything, terrible
if it makes nothing different.
In this world only the stranger makes a difference.

24 May 2004
Being above a street and not seeing it
makes me remember Dick Higgins again,
fluxus of subways and all the screaming
old experiments when the only real
experimental art is living the end of your life,
getting there for crying out loud
where no one has even been before
and do the things there,

   the few that only
you can do, the long
experiment of breath.

24 May 2004
Lincoln Center
BEL CANTO

In a bookstore café
you see
first what
book they’re
reading then who’s
reading it a
woman who looks
a lot like a
lot of other women.

24 May 2004
Lincoln Center
having gone to the city and come back
and seen everybody and listened and said this and that
I am an ox. A white ox.
I am a steamboat whose gambler is kaput,
in jail, dead, resurrected.
I am an ox, a large white ox
with some peonies festooned on my horns.
I have denied myself to all who might have needed me,
might have healed me. So I am an angel,
a tremor in the wrist nerve, tendon, a pale tendon
running through meat, an ox, I am an ox.
I doubt Bible chronology.
I know there will be no Rapture.
I have a rosary of ruby beads
a clean handkerchief a room full of people
talking to me. I am those people
but I am not the room.
My edges broke. My boundaries
are black and blue from wanting you.
I seem to be the one who says I here
and not be lying. But nobody who says I
can tell the truth. The other has become me
t entirely. For instance it’s a rainy night with one crescent
moon deep red low over the Catskills
setting. I mention this just to remind us both
we are living in the same world, have the same
ornamental white ormolu clock in the sky
that sips our juices drop by drop until.
Only tonight it’s blood orange bloody red.
I hold my balls and swear an oath but I forget the words.
The oath of an ox is made of grass.

24 May 2004
I can tell you things no one ever told you.
What difference does it make that they’re all lies?

Truth takes time to turn into itself.
And things turn true by listening. Listen to me,
as far apart as we are we live in the same town—
you are the courthouse and the public library,
I’m the all-night diner and that dingy park
behind the middle school where all the love and lies
began, along with that tremor of the skin
that tells you here I am, with the one
I am meant to be, and be, and become.

24 May 2004
ON THE DAY FIVE MAIZE

Who gave you this corn?
Some lady under the ground.
Did she say her name?
I was too busy eating the corn
   maybe her name was corn—
   have you ever met her?
Everybody knows somebody who knows her.
Are you looking for her?
Everybody is looking for her all the time,
   I keep following the wind
   but I’m never sure
   which way it’s telling me to go,
   where the wind is headed
or where it came from,
   the house that may be hers.

25 May 2004
Nobody has the same name anymore
the oracle is somebody in the street
talking about nobody, and nobody
is everybody’s shadow and I heard.

Nobody has the same
names, nobody tells the truth,
everybody tries to be a flower and a lawyer,
everybody tries to be the middle of the night.

25 May 2004, Kingston

(And maybe the voice in my head just meant that nobody is Phyllis anymore, or Irving, or Beatrice.)
Something went me
and I was as one sick
staggering the road
into place from
tree to tree
until night came
and showed me how
all confusions
had made a path
soft underfoot
through undergrowth
on the way to my little
summerhouse
hidden in trees,
Everything is in retreat.
The moon is a luster
left on the sky
after some spermy character
brushed against it
on her way out of the world.
All the things we see
are stains
of someone who has gone.

25 May 2004
GROVELING

Groan, a heap of gravel
ground bait
where is the elevator now
when the moon is void of wheat
and what drips down?

Calyx they call it
and the church makes priests.
Couldn’t it be otherwise just once
and the moon give mirrors back
their fabulous transparencies,
to look through circumstance at last
where the fox is fretful in the hedge
red as the moon in urban haze,
a handful?

A handful of moon, is rightly?
Or will your left hand
give me money
in the sense of silver?
How bronze you are, and easily divide.
How soft you sit there on the lawn
as if the sunlight were in business too,
what is the other side of something red
or when the chariots roll in
on soft white cloud wheels
softening the taxman’s tribulations
and stiffening the bishop’s rod,
who will be able to go or let go
down to those chariots above,

the art of magic is an incarnation
for we will go down to the chariot
we break our wits in pieces and reweld
we god our way down to man stuff and girlitude,
we enter the ascension backwards
we go down to the chariot
we pray with our blood and most brief breath
we escalator down the clouds demanding

we demand everything
a place to stand
a shadow of our very own
and light to cast it

how much we require
to enter the untransparent!

And this is just the first of all the roads.
2.
   At the spectral intersection
   Waybody, met,
said:
   A bridge carries the river
   like a lady carrying her handbag.
   
   The lady is old, a bridge
   is always old.

3.  
   But who said different?
   What kind of person am I fighting
   and how high?
   Is he a he
   and up there, speaks Hebrew,
   does he, or some she
   tongue, full of magic,
   a form of the verb that says
   whatever this is we will do it forever?

4.
   I have no secrets for you.
   I have come from nowhere
   with Atlantic Avenue leaking out of my pocket
   like a spill of rice,
   I walked home leaving the city behind me,
my spoor, mind scat, red roses,
the Korean deli man, his tubs of flowers
who could credit nature be
so aggressive unrelenting colorful?

Name me. Cypresses grow over my signs.
I street.

26 May 2004
4.

as much as anyone can
barley, oil of bridges, salt,
sugar of time (that *saccharum temporis*
of the alchemist Rufilius
or it might mean sugar
of each season, from his treatise
On the Broken Monad
not yet found, you lost it,
didn’t you, mean one,
or tender one, who hides all things
from me, hides them
in the back of my head
because you know I’m always
looking forward, so hard to find,
find it, I hate the past,
I worship your back not my own,
wont look around,
you find it in me for me
(that’s how it works)
you find inside me
what some you has hidden
and you fetch it out
and wear it as your clothes
so that I can see it
again or at last,
avenue by avenue the argument,
sweet river and bitter bridge,
the proposition.

    Sweet you,
the unforgiving forgiver,
the forgiven, I am always guilty,
as any god is, it all
fell from my wanting and disdaining,
I did it, I built a garden and a rule,
a wall and broke it down,
a door and locked it against myself,
sweet you, my keyhole and pale sky.

5.
The other side of being must be said.
It is said. The one who said it will.

Willing is at an angle to to be. A stammer
in the soul consents to yes.

Young nervous ones as if on stage
(that’s what he meant), all the world’s
a stage and to be a being on it
is a song of stagefright, bright fear
and sweet persuasions, why don’t we
hurry to the coulisses of the dark?

27 May 2004
But on another day another wise man
staggered in from the east
and no one listened

belated he was, exhausted,
disappointed, drunk
on distances

the famous child was older now
a trial to his parents
as usual, a little demon, smart

fond of stones and stories
throwing them, calling out
up in the hills to make echoes come

down in the arroyos
irritating the goats
a little insolent to adults

to strangers like this one
with that quick tongue
would never leave him
Where have you come from
he wanted to know and the wise
man no longer could remember

And why weren’t you here
with the others when I needed you?
I was late the star was dim

and everything was far
all I remember is
that everything is always far

I can barely see you
the road was so long to see
and what I hear

is the voice of a boy
inside the shadow
so you must be the one

the one who is always young
no matter what we do to you
there will always be another word.

…late spring 2004
27 May 2004
Gone from the edge
to the center. Let the
center be a door
and go in. Let the states
south of the border
interpose pale clothing
to keep you from your body,
I hate your body,
it is the one thing you must not use.
It will die, it will be tin,
no punctuation,
the air will break,
I can touch your name already,
your small songs, your
recitation of the morning dream,
the nervous pigeons
on your almost city roof,
I can stand all of it
but not your skin.

(mid-May 2004)
27 May 2004
So this is Africa.
The place
from which I have always
been arriving.

Into that Vienna
deep embedded in
the complex Brooklyn
where I grew,

sacred luncheonette,
holy academy
of music, my street

peeled off the ocean,
my street sucked out of dream.

(mid-May 2004)
27 May 2004
Sly sailors wooing ache in my inert breast –
the one of them would sail to Taprobane
across the inky ocean while the other
would come ashore in Albany among
the tankers and the truckers, the hard
living hardhats of a third-rate port but
that’s how all the oil comes in we burn.

(mid-May 2004)

27 May 2004
Because everything is alternative
and no one sweet thing exists
that doesn’t have its else.

What is my else? Blue music
from opera’s latifundium,
purple music from the date-stamped library

where all the good books are out and overdue.

(mid-May 2004)
27 May 2004
sobolove brwi

the eyes are under

so many wars
have waded through me
I hardly know

sable eyebrows
ashen eyebrows

I am where the things are

a little knot of nada
near the boundaries of spring

I will listen and be still
the river runs me
and summer is a horn.

(late May 2004)

27 May 2004