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Robert Kelly

Bard College

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THE NATURAL

Wood march
closing in

the green battalion
that takes our lives

breathless with character
a destiny arrives

oxygen destroying like flowers
the trees come down the hill

white sailed, wearing
a dark red poppy in the buttonhole

like a wound I promise to give you
and you put on

trembling with equivoque
not sure even yet I have it right

what I’m trying to say is that my urgency to you
is not just like but is alas an actual part of

the boundless
push of ‘nature’ (all we know)

towards fulfilments and extinctions
in its huge beautiful idiot dualities

I mean like this field of tall dapper weeds
hurrying inward and downward towards our house

like a relentless(because mindless) mist.

5 June 1994
DUHKHA  
Chatter for a pilgrim  
from these pilgrim arts  
nothing not the same  
be bodiless  
courage of blue things or be bare in splendor  
circumstance is motherhood enough  
a trowel needs one day alone to marry other  
the grit holds hair together our immigrant buildings  
sand and long black hair  
stress is universal suffering  
to say it straight a party of noisy children  
each sacramenting solo inner own separate feeling  
the *Existenz* inside blue path and Africa  
our pointless revels come to hand.

6 June 1994
THE PURIST

The spiritual range or the day
come back
humidity you old seducer
Juneable in sunhaze how
it brings a city to her knees
with amorous complaining με μουσικες,
like a cat and a cat and a newborn babe

the sky is sick
inside her clothes

language is on loan, the breath
alone
may be our own

(and Flaubert tried to own it,
Dictionnaire of his spleen about clichés, about
received expressions,
the words
all too common,
too mean to mean,

and wanted to purge it,
make it pure and just again

but all
you can purge from language
is other people

7 June 1994
THE PROPIRATE

what is our own
maple is our own
a tree or Berkeley
People’s Park strolling
through the stoned
zones unscanted
leaf-battered as may be
in strong sun
happy as Egypt
as a termite
keep the Hittite
sun north and the shadow
of a woman
be my side
no a gate a doorway
into the inmost
holymost that moving
altar with me all
my days in the Name
of the Name
and of his Mother
ve le-olam hasdo
her mercy also
that would be our speech.

7 June 1994
When you know what the god looks like
you are ready to impersonate him
you think with your eyebrows your shoulderblades
everything you learns in Descartes is no benefit now

you have to think with your hipbone
like a common dancer with your ankle
like a common million-dollar athlete.
Who are you now with all the bones thinking?

You are the god your eyes are rolled up inside
they turn into one eye in the flank of a pyramid
you’ve seen it all your life and now you become it

you are it and you rattle around you are a car a door
banging open and shut in wind on the endless prairie.

8 June 1994
Who knows where weather went
one hurries to declare whatever is unnatural—
the rest needs no saying, hence valentines
to speak to a spirit roused by joining
that is not just for joining. All through the light
crows busy [verb] on the lawns. We know a word
that waits— the Baltic shallows deep
enough to swallow any man. A whole army
is one breath deep. Past counting
all sorts of wise remarks occur to one (I am
a street. Discover the city each one must be,
hamlet or metropolis.) but does one listen?
From the garish earnestness of the Cathedral
you go down Vauxhall Bridge Road to the river.
Too big, the place, for the religion. Impressive
rather than beautiful. Effective? Don’t know.
Had only these effects on me: refused a beggar
on the steps. And now say this. Remember
the sheer seductions of Eric Gill line by line.
Art! What little sense you make of emptiness!
With a long walk and crossing Chiswick Bridge
you’d come to Mortlake. The river there
is said on certain oily mornings to reflect
the flames that once burned John Dee’s library.
Stare into the distressed stream and hope
Since the crematorium is not far.

9 June 1994
AT THE ALTAR OF THE LARES

Ripe to re-personate that deity or that dead occasion with brass buttons how well the years polished them against the midnight blue of his coat my grandfather my serge I carried his baton in ornamental urgencies, neat riots, crownings in Himalayan monarchies, or cats in heat. We inherit so few instruments, and these were mine: a wand of light wood turned and polished black, his. A red blank notebook with many pages, his son’s. A ball of yarn, rough tingly blue, hers, with glints in it that made me think of August lightning.

10 June 1994
When you know the mind you know what is to come

easy sayables of men drinking together
in the shadow of a tree not making much sense

or no sense but contact — strongest of all chains

talk to me true and tell who the shadows are
and what this mockingbird is up to talking now
while the crow speaks with native fluency a field away
all the sweet clichés white and red and their thorn twigs
and everything quiet except for the far traffic

I say to know all this is to know nothing
I tell you for no reason
except that you can know me knowing.

11 June 1994
Rain spatter trim my tree
I have an open mind I can’t get started
blue prairie I have to learn these people
a friend’s vague eyes and Ûlumukhâ’s owl face
all worlds the interpenetrate the sudden now
I lift this cup of gods my body drink me
Prince Andrei is still looking at the sky.

2.
Who are these people? Words fall off
informal pages. Only the accurate
held in Form’s focus speaks. Else
is fugitive and sad, come home with diseases.
Sooner or later one leaves one’s house.
The monk chooses the sooner of the later
the rainy season catches him serene
winter lets him test the serenity of busy roads—
a market is all learning.

12 June 1994
a woman named revenge is getting married

Who is the priest who’ll hold her vows
to what strange husband? I see in the papers
a woman named Revenge is getting married,
a sunken priest and a decorated groom
lead the bride, she holds a knife or scalpel
I can’t tell, the groom keeps changing faces,
you see strange things in the papers,
a scalpel walks, an island takes its vows
and sinks them, isn’t the sea itself
the first of its own victims, drowned
in its heaving, water in water spent
until we call it marriage since no one listens?

14 June 1994
There is a kind of order known as sky through which our tourist cultures move, uneasy at the silence they provoke, that all our chatter never turns to speech.

When things are dark enough you see them—there is some certainty, some home and a mango in a basket. Philosophy, trying to account for things, should strive to take note of them instead, and be content in this vast striving to attend. Who is left to name the pieces of the world?

I say a rose on a table, cat on a windowsill, mango in a basket, a million people wake and go to work, a street sullied with sunlight. But these are general observations, consequences it is true of what is seen and what is known, but not this cat. This cat. This house where no one wakes. Thorns in the water glass beneath the roses. Pain that capital city where all the information is.

14 June 1994, Boston