mayC1993

Robert Kelly
Bard College
“each thing’s simple contour”

one said, and bleak
rock, say, sandstone,
arkose, sediments of once-familiar salts
said what does
it know, lizard foot or
they called me “Lizard Breath” she said

what people call us
red poet she
sketched out the delineation of a natal chart,
Leningrad: starlight: snow
sifting down like dust in a weather
you hardly knew it was winter

except the snow.
You are like that too

the point is that the place made of stone and metal and water makes who lives there
hence we are made of minerals
in dubious solution

(frozen river; his cabin
heated with kerosene; a Himalayan smell
that was just coal, black
mountain, a mesa, a motel
comfy with showers and cable tv
crane my neck I see the famous mountain)

you astrologer. You donor
of a rod. You blue
kind of stone and a feather, something Roman and old.
Bleak of an eye
(like a kestrel like an eagle)

the river stumbles at your glance.
Gods again, troubles,
lyric nights in old Babylonia.
When people stay alone long enough
they become very clear or very confused.
You decide. Plywood warps in sunlight.
Is it true that passion is the only ground of conversation?

11 May 1993
THE SEQUENCERS

are those who
spin our places — owl, auto,
killing on their way to business,
beyond intention, or
the smiling personage who reads the news
eyes focused just behind our eyes.

In our faces with what happens.
Or an owl. Some call them omens
or karma-bringers, cats and weasels,
crows and their carrion. I saw we see them
and are suddenly not the place we were before.

Our life catches up with our hearts.

12 May 1993
boy must fear to be
stricken with conspicuousness
a trashy headland over the city's bay
coarse grass and fat
seagulls snoozing on the swell
the way they do
the fear of it
is in him
to become
a sluggish piece of landscape
a mother's lamb a kind of girl
among his harder kind a laugh
like a gull's raucous
unavailing explanations.

12 May 1993
THE SITUATION

I lift a cover off the wind
and find a town.

They need more light more water especially
more glaciers
codiæum
feast of those Honolulu gardens
near the tiger
but her friend was killed by one
(not the flower.)

This is ready. The oily look
of the river yesterday at sunset
said it,
ready. I am marking time
waiting for this incarnation my
life's flower
to begin
as if there were ever a beginning.

Thanks for the grey wind
cool on my eyes,
this human
luminosity
color of marble
or that will teach me their names,
the fish of them or waves of them,
compass rose, the winds
on them,
Bristol Record Office
re: cod re: mes aieux
in the language trade
the winds off Great Britanny
into the Goidelic West
(around Cleveland, great
bend of the suburban line
into lake light,
raptors falling from the clouds
onto the shearlings of Cuyahoga)

I barely understand.

We keep this little place
this closet in the wind
to speak our native tongue
the little one
that no one knows.

\ 

Morning.
Morning speaks it.

Like a telephone
or an egg or a ship,
something undivided
low in the water from the Netherlands
cardinal blue jay two doves next
flag of the West these seedings
semences, bottoming
into alluvial or
up here high on the chalk ridge
breathing,
simple wedge of Russian sunflowers
find their way in.

Smack of wave on the distant hull,
a sound from the earth,
conveying passages. Messages, a sonnerie of ancient kings presaging a common day, o wind you royalist.

An absolute. 
Up the hill a half mile later we still hear the engine throb quietly pervade the forest matter, a boat goes.

We are speaking it now in reminiscence but most when (most like) the wind and now again among the finches actual and everything in this relation with my own eyes seen between the window and the Canadian border one day in May even if not this day it does fit, nested in time the sequences align.

Topological reference points, valid cognitions, graduate students of a false idea, or non-idea, or history that dim memory of not understanding what is in front of my eyes, yet there is a homeland of the wise, Africa the Blest.

Things studied in these local schools
become themselves
only in the light of what is outside them,

the actual unanalyzed situation
when they sleep and wake
and not the thickness of a piece of white paper
between those conditions

and yet there is.

13 May 1993
I am made of this sunlight
I suppose that made you too
we sit beside ourselves with waiting
for the next shadow to fall down

of a leaf of what tree itself
made out of sunlight as above
shivering and full of morning sap
a dance we don't have to do much to do.

14 May 1993
then at this keyboard open and the lease
lending my fingers a lax entablature

THIS FRETTED STARBOARD

signed with destinies
a glue to hold the light above us
together with the shambling footsteps of our beasts

the ones that walk inside us
swaying their haunches as we walk

and call that music, you men of Ceos you women of Cnossos
this gnostic preponderous happenstance
that glamour is a lover in his sand surveying
swift currentings of sea breeze  look like her

curl of kelp and hope of east,
easy fingerings
this song of mine

the wine she sent me
stoppered with seafoam
only yet no essence

spilt, no terebinth
crept in from the cask
no bitterness

the endless valley of old Fresno,
the endless sunshine
arched over her smooth back

so far from the sea
jagged as juarito
this bite-my-lip this yellow

sign your name to this esplanade
the sea is vanished now and the haze you see
is the color glints and beads and bindus you see through your eyelashes wet with tears you don't know why you just know the eyes are busy grieving for you while you hope

*the ones that walk inside us*

and we can follow them in licit woods advancing taste by taste to know the furthest Tree

madrone evening-red in any dawnlight prone almost in the seawind pointing west into all you guess of mystery

stretch your body out along the air and find her there before you

........

........ 14 May 1993
look like her he whispers to the furrows
the little dunes
swept up from the low breeze that chases
in and out of surf,

wet sand contours sastrugi
look like her
the currents as they snake among the salts the salts
layering by density and gravity

among the metals contours of their oxygen
deep by deep the shape
of each of them, descending
to form a body
inside the water, the beast of her
to run there, stretch through the length of it, ocean,

look like her since there is no one else to see
he tells the sand the salts the seeds
of colors which are metals,

the four strings of his fretted lute, the C
the O the H (B natural)
the N
among these make mastery
this is all that music takes

be natural Creeley told his daughter
as and whatever
the comparison might be, take
hold of water

and follow it meek aggression
through all the art-forming energies of,

tide. As a nature
tides it over
till what is better
in the sense of other
finally arrives.
Times me
from my measure
into the absolute

fact of when.
Be like her
as music is
like whoever hears it

necessarily
in the act of union
prefigured
by the stars

embedded in the fruitwood
of the lute
—pear or cherry—
honeyamber

resinous with time.
Wood is years.

[14 V 93]
It becomes a habit
it becomes morning

the manifold
of it

the full thing.

15 May 1993
the distinctions (raven
   in a tree they'll
listen to me if I tell
   what someone else thought
once upon a time —not now— and somewhere else
with a different weather,

as if that is wisdom
to be not now.

No one wants to listen
to what a man makes up right now.
Let us disguise ourselves as ancients,
let me go back to Latin
or latino
   my native language, quicksilver
   in a stony crucible

to speak the new as if it lasted,

resisted
quick or easy
transparency

same as this
immaculate blackness
in the tree

or carve it in
telling a people's custom
into
the place itself
   elaborate replications into limestone
columns, the heat all soaked
   out of it into the lucid
tumultuous imagery of
some new words
rubbed raw by caring
so much
for you all of you

to make them old
by speaking careful

two ravens side by side close touching
on one stub of a branch,

considering the offerings
abound,
they come down to receive
—renew—
star-feeders

then away to the vague nest

you want to keep this (music)
up in the air
like a man walking downtown
weary of rectangles
cut across the park
where the difficulties are waiting

just lay the lines down
the world will follow,

Ace of Importunity
played
with a sound of low trombones

this voice from the hedge
saying nothing easy.

Or nothing's easy.
I am a gypsy girl
I promise you
I need your touch
not just your silver
so-called,
  rain-sky, statuary, bust of Pericles.

At the skirts of the wood the waiting deer reconsider
their situation leaves them with a flare of white
the vulnerable flirt, the man with an idea
everybody waiting for the library to open
to keep warm among the jettisoned ideas

And let that first impulse river you

why is it so hard to renegotiate
the entrance to a form you animate?

living inside the house
keep walking to the door
eventually you'll get there

but you can get lost
living in a house
like the ox of Yugpacan

and the house no more know you
than air remembers
some sunlight passed through

on its way nowhere too.
Live in the house
keep going in.

A little splatter of rain says.
On its way to a word. And says some more.

If it could only rain in the library
—it was probably a rabbit—
heart-leaves of linden in a hurry.
Crimson nectar
humming-bird
feeder we
put the color there for us
so we can see it needs refilling.

16 May 1993
DOGWOOD

Now this late time comes after. Tree facts (lilacs, chestnut tower flowers, honeysuckle — goatleaf — dogwood) are arithmetic enough for spring, you violenter us breathing all those winterish surmises into the dangerous leaf. Seed comes some future, wouldn't the present be endless if we could! A kind of ink to write our names so slowly with it finishes itself only as we come or die or pass into whatever glory of the mind you reach across such hazy Mississippis. Steamy coasts, really unrelenting. I walk on fallen petals by the woodshed.

16 May 1993