

Kerry Shawn Keys

Almost Invisible

Sunlight billows into her room half the day long as it should. Sometimes leaves are falling, and the light skitters between the leaves to get in. When the leaves aren't falling, still nimbly attached to the branches of the birch trees, the light then gently flutters among the leaves and around the branches, and enters the window fluttering, and flutters on the carpet and wall dancing with its partners, the trembling shadows. She watches the spectacle on her wall from her bed, and at a certain time she knows the dance will end, though that moment of time mingles with the time of the day and the seasons, always changing. A leaf falls on her bed. Another on the windowsill. Then on her. Another time will come when only the shadow of the branches and the broken light will dance on her wall, a much slower dance through the moisture on the window. The leaves will carpet the ground in yellow and brown. Then she will wait for the moonlight to come into the room. Earlier in late summer, the apples in the apple tree shimmered silver in the moonlight. The bark of the birches also silver. The apples now have all fallen or been picked and eaten, given to lovers and children.

She gets out of bed and stands framed in the window as if in a Hopper painting, looking out at the empty branches, the windows across the way, a few visible stars, the moon. She shimmers silver in its light like a glass of champagne at a wedding without a bride or groom, and she sees her face in the windowpane, a nimbus of air covered with drops of water, almost invisible, delicately attached to the darkness as the moonlight slithers across the branches of the apple tree and the birches.

Are You An Important Poet

Zagreb Beergarden Interrogation

*“Who knows the questions or the terms – the Sadducees
are drinking the drunks, the drunks are drowning
like foaming prophets and twittering canaries
in a red tide of foam and syllables”*

When the swan maiden swoons into a swan and the swan into a constellation,
the worms that eat all three will be the same as those that live under
the owl's eyelids, rest at noon in the Garden of Eden or in the sherried
portholes of roses.

They will circle around beforehand for sure, dock, sing, hum, wiggle
their tails, collide with the rosary beads of light bubbling out
of the lacustrine aquarium.

They will hang themselves in the shade of a poem. One segment
at a time, one stanza, one line.

They will eat the dolmens of history, the Zohar, the green fruit of the sun,
multiply under the moon, shred themselves into garbage
in the nightsoil of animals under plucked, skinless, stars.

Other worms eat other things, other people, the dust of Rome and Ladon
in Lower Manhattan.

Nightcrawlers eat ancient parchment and computer paper, drink ink,
and measure themselves alongside pencils and condoms.
Yesterday, I forgot that I was a worm and mistook myself
in the mirror for a caterpillar. I shaved off my legs,
painted my lips with chlorophyll, and masturbated
on the green, Oriental rug next to the bathtub,
and reached the climax of a new identity by squirming across
the television screen like an amputated finger.

Are you an important poet?

No ma'am, I am an important worm.

I am important because I shoot pistols of napalm, pollinate the eyes
of potatoes, catch robins, go to sleep in liquid boredom – 90%
of my body is human – and if I am cut into a Trinity I can still
perform a pas de trios on the spot.

Of course I wish I were a poet catching suckers and mermaids
with my dick like the Happy Fisherman, my other organs
soaking in the nectars of Heaven, my breath like the snow leopard's,
my dance Dionysian.

I often pity myself. Why am I just a worm, hooked like a question mark
to Leviathan. Why am I not human hiding from evolution
in a homeostatic, geodesic dome in Spain, or promenading across
the circus tent of hope on the thinnest split-second of theoretical hairs.

Morphine Along The Susquehanna
for Barbara Browning

That poet is a cyborg. His machine
runs on blood and swarms inside cowry shells.
That poet is a vulture in drag
between the living and the dead.
He never sleeps on water
and he dreams inside everyone who touches him.
He's a cyborg. Maybe the iron
in his articulations is similar to the little bones
inside cherries, to the clanking of flowers
as they close their gates at night over aphids
and the latex bodies of interstellar pollen.
He's on fire. That poet is an indeterminate juju
at the intersection of the dissection
of your hemispheres. The poet, not that one, is
a dishrag wrapped around a sponge. He worships
a quince. He is the subtle side of subversion.
In other words, always the other word
that defies definition, a perverted antonym.
Don't even try to out house his infectious rhythm.
He carries madness in his penis. Biolysis.
He's his own father. His head should be castrated,
his hair fed to the silverfish and the monkey
parked outside the door to the temple at Tirupati.
His wig is pregnant. His clitoris a clothespin.
His testicles are ovaries. His nipples prostate glands.
Don't feed him anything but roosters, dog, and goat.
His photo is a pun on an enemy's foot.
His rainbow is a serpent. His passion
is a raven. His shield is Achilles' heel.
If you possess him his liquid will quickly
flow into the ocean. He vacations in Xanadu.
If you dance in his anus the lights will go out.
If you suck his prosthesis he'll lisp.
My sister walks barefoot into the ballroom
and cuts her heart on a piece of glass.
A man without a mask is chasing me.
My mother turns into a fetus on an island in the Adriatic.
The walls of the city are waves of fertilizer.
I can't spell *cast*. I can spell *fish* and *DDT*.
I can spell *poet* anyway I want---p o i t, etc.
A poet is a preconceived solution of nothing.
Don't eat out of his petri dish.
He's a customs official at conception. A cyborg.
It's amazing what living by a river will do to you.
Pick up a syringe and communicate with the moon.
Pick up the moon. It's the deus ex machina on the screen.

Now

It was out in the field then not far from there nor here then
Standing water then and eggshells so thin then
We were candling them then by the reflection in our eyes then
And the sun was candling us then us so empty of hunger then
And the playground was built of headstones then
As it is now then
And there was the amphitheatre then like an empty roofless tomb then
A flayed womb then
Casting the ghosts of spectators and actors into one spectacle then
And someone was flying away home then
As it should be then with clouds soon fire-breaking the air then
Toward sunset then
And she muttering then
That it would be a pity then
And her lips puckered then as she said that then
All muscatel then
Repeating that it would be a pity then
If we ever stopped to see how then
Before we got to the headwaters then
So I replied then we might go on then
And asked are you there then
Not that I wanted to have a bird's-eye view then
But preferred the rack as it was then
Cherishing the contagious desire then
With the horsepower not manged in the stable then
And nothing scattered much then but it then
And we should perhaps straddle the green then
I thought aloud then
Or test the waters or the clearing then
Being surely better than going sidesaddle then
All night longing into the sunrise then
And adding better a flashflood then
Trying to be a bit more blunt then
And she uttered too that she preferred that we then
Finish each other's business then
Since the fingers of the sun were like a halo then
Though she must have meant to say thorns then
And if we didn't then the blood would dry up then
And the fish of our longing turn into footprints then
And how would it feel then in the darkness then
And I didn't feel abandoned then
Noticing the divinity of the rising moon nodding then
All numen then
While we stared stark and steadfast at each other then
The air disheveled then and our eyes then
Like leaping fish then
While I knelt then and her knees were positioning themselves then
Arched in prayer then

And the spider's trapeze shuddered then
As if it were a ribbon breaking then
And so we took each other in then
Or what I mean to say is that then
There was a mutual returning then
And my how the red dust rose then
While it was about to rain then
As is always fitting then
While I told her not knowing nothing then
That the river wasn't too far then
And I heard my own voice then
As if another were speaking then
Not to mention then that she and I were then
How I had always imagined it to be then
As a child forever then
While the clouds burst then
And the water sloughed off our skin then
Racing then
While the leaves still green then
Were rowing through the wind then as we were then
And then it arrived then the realization then
That this is it then and time dissolved then
And she is muttering then over and over again then
Though I confess no one nor I can understand then
The wording I mean then the gestures I mean then
With the singing higher up then
And the entrance of our meeting then smeared then
With blood then and above a phoenix and a swan then
Making light then together then
And the stones falling like hail all over us then
And our hearts then like a seamless garment then
And it is easy not to say then
Being speechless then
That this is then
And we are bright shards in a curtained playpen then
And it continues to rain then
Slanting crosswise the field of vision then
And no one is going anywhere then
And this is home then

She muttering then
And I open my mouth to say I do then
But I don't then
And who will condemn the astonishment then
The silence then
Or now the silence then
Rehearsing our election then
Then surrounding us the dumb anthem then
Since then
Between our hunger then

Theological Treatise on Heavenly Brides and Their Mortal Circumstances

According to Oliver Todd,
Albert Camus' biographer,
the Arab and European
workers in Bône, Algeria
(Saint Augustine's illustrious hometown)
had little intercourse,
laying aside the bordello,
wherein I suspect from my own
synergistic experience
in Hyderabad and elsewhere,
that when on taking possession
of the same voluminous whore
the Muslims went in the backdoor,
the Christians opting for the front –
rarely simultaneously,
preferring a first come first serve
evolutionary sequence.

If Saint Augustine was watching
in admiration as I imagine
he did when not writing or praying,
undoubtedly he berated
the Christians for sinful decency,
and praised to the skies the Muslims
for sparing the women for God.