

4-10-2011

aprC2011

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

 Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "aprC2011" (2011). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 4.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/4

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

= = = = =

Try with the whelk
lift anything at all
from its shell
to find

the underside
the unnatural—

these are my credentials
imprimatur the sun
sets on you when you turn away

a tergo

 approach
everything from behind,
as you must do with words,
those deer at gaze in forest glades,
sneak up on them
circling in from the rear

and the miners sing beneath the ground
still guessing there is something there
wants to come out

 into our hands
or why would Earth let

such toiling robbers in?

Civilization means taking nature by surprise,
'country' is from *contra naturam*—

meantime through black storm
clouds green waters
friends come home.

8 April 2011

= = = = =

It is not easy to come again
to the stone you deciphered when you were young
and stare now at the inscription again, dumb
almost until the shapes begin
by themselves to wriggle towards meaning.

But are they the same meanings you once knew
and carried back from Persia in your skill-set
and used to conquer whatever it is you rule now
to this day never doubting where it came from
or how you came to be there when it spoke.

8 April 2011

= = = = =

How much is left of the old permissions?

This burin's meant for copper
not for zinc. Though the meek
angel of the obvious lets you
use it to stir your milk tea too—
England, mother, I am home!

8 April 2011

= = = = =

Please, at least to answer
where the hard rock candy
dissolves in the whisky jar
and we are near at last
the center of the earth, *cor
mundi*, where the clouds
are breathed out as words
we take so long to learn
to read. The wind spells them
past us, the sugar slowly solves
the toxicity of alcohol we hope.
A medicine. A lie the body
tells itself about the world
around it, about itself. No
chance for truth, that parakeet
we build so many cages for.
Rock & Rye my father called it,
took one spoon against the cold.
Mostly it sat in the china closet
fascinating to watch the crystals
slowly ungrow. For a child.
Later I saw sadder things by far.

8 April 2011

=====

A day when everybody's elsewhere
is a species of flower, believe me,
thornless, a viscid glimmer in the cup
to draw the beetip of my tongue
to taste. Taste this emptiness,
the healingest, the holy. Quiet
as an animal alert. The day so quick
to understand me. What can I do for
you, dear post-adolescent afternoon?
Marry me and we'll live alone.

8 April 2011

THE OTHER THING

And from the bottom of the word
something's left after meaning flies
into the ears of the hearer,

a sound

maybe, what the alchemists called *fæces*
or *caput mortuum*, one skull
from all the ever dead.

Since every word depends on all the other
words in its language for its edge,
pint, swath, cut, penetration.

And then this other thing is left
outside of language, before or after it,
shadow of sound, ash of wish.

8 April 2011

= = = = =



[heron in my pond]

But is it mine?

Isn't it?

Isn't whatever is given

to see

given also to be?

Is the green cut out of the white or the white cut out of the green?

Where does the bird stand?

Did my heron just come down and land in your pond?

Such a splash I made

it tore the woods apart and let the white light in—

the light we hardly ever see, the light of perfect symmetry

the kind the teachers rattled on about in psych class,

gestalt, flimmerwirkung, filling up the field,

a man's heart breaking at the sight of a heron

standing in the little stream across the street from his house

where the stream bends and begins its long fall to the river
and the quiet heron stands at nightfall

pondering green on white or white on green.

And what can a man do with his heart,
is the heart a heron? and where can it land?
can it be safe anywhere?

A score or more of green leaf radians reach out
from where the calm bird looks the other way.

We know how to get the answer,
we watch the knife marks, see the green world cut away
to let the other world come in and burst out at the same time.

I step across the little street
and wander on the grass
I step into your pond.
I say something, I speak bird and you speak forest,
we impersonate the actual
because the actual has no words but ours,

we tell our lies to link the world together,
it all is a kind of seducing
seducing things to keep going on,
keep them coming down into your pool and lingering.

Everything we say is just lingering

because we want to be close to one another,
so close, close as the bird to the sky or the bird to the pond

and we have the words for everything but that.

8 April 2011

= = = = =

From the beginning a blue light—
there, a mark on canvas
enough to start with,

make it, see it, move on.
Or lenticular image
I grow old as you speak.

Everything is boring
when you want something else.
Remedy: Want *this* thing.

Who are you to tell me
to want anything?
Doesn't all our misery begin with wanting?

And want means 'lack, scarcity, deprivation,'
so peasants 'lived in want'—
do you want that for me?

Already this 'this' you spoke of
is long gone, the shape
of a day turns inside out—

you should know a day is pure topology
the same surface bends
a different way for everyone

and there is nothing to it but surface
and surfaces go on forever—
that's why beauty makes us sad.

9 April 2011

= = = = =

Lift up the natural
that's what we need
the sleek necessity
of spring weather

blue flowers
all over our mind
like the small bruises
left on her hip

where Hades grabbed her
as he brought her home
where she belongs
the light of her

from which of course
she speaks again
now hellebore,
now Siberian squills.

9 April 2011

= = = = =

Ask me to be nothing need.

An orange alphabet, a book of seed.

Care for me, the lioness sleeps beneath hawthorns
annoyed by dreams of having to pursue.

To live in a body made for killing
and be beautiful—how hard everyday life is.

The seeds when planted grow with vigor
but the flowers come up somewhere else

another country where their colors
fickly toy with the local light—

and that too has to be beautiful,
the countrymen have to respect it

deeply, but deeper still they wonder
(wrongly, I think) whether even light can kill.

9 April 2011

= = = = =



[she wanted out]

But that is what it's all about
the fleeing into nakedness
as if the only Out there is
is what we are to start with

bare, colorless, full of wanting,
ready to tear the world apart to get it,
what, it's not easy to know.
But it's there, on the other side of the usual,

the other side of our clothing
is the inside. The artist undresses the picture.
You find an image and strip it bare.
Then what, what do you do

with a white stone maiden with big breasts
who comes hurtling past you

trying to get out? You try to hold her
but it's time for everybody to go home,

even that stone suchness comes apart,
the eye cuts through the world
and everything seen turns out to be
just a veil you want to rip open

and you do. Each one of us on earth
is married to some invisible beauty
we tear the world apart to see—isn't
that what your little scalpel says?

9 April 2011

= = = = =

You wonder how I knew
what you used to do?

Your body told me all of it
not just the skin the skin is the doorbell
is the message slipped under the door
the skin is the sunlight dappling the pale
wood of the door in the shadows
of all the trees of days around you,

the skin is message and messenger
the skin remembers but the body tells more
and it isn't even the body you walk around in
or that a friend can touch or even hold
the body is something beyond the body
as the body is something beyond its shadow
so there is a body of which the body is just shade

and that body walks away from you anytime it pleases
and does what it wants in night and vision
and one fine day it came to me like a verse in the Bible
and told me what you used to do.

But only you can tell me if you do it still.

9 April 2011

=====

Rage to know—
that's what looks
from the worm's eye

Wollust war dem Wurm gegeben

not lust and certainly
not wantonness
but the yearning to know
the other,
the one seen.

(9 April 2011)

IN SAMOTHRACE

Close to the future
the seed falls
everything ready
even the sky aligned
for such mysteries—

the three hooded men on the island
only their eyes can you see

one lives in your spine one in your spleen
one in the little turret on top of your head

the three hooded men
are really girls
you've known all your life
because you have always been this island

and their eyes you find so sly mysterious
beautiful even in amber and seagreen and blue
their eyes are you.

Now pauseth Priest to snatch a breath
he tells what he knows
plus what he's been told

his whole life cunning in the mysteries

scant repose and strawberries

goats milk and black pepper

who needs god

when we have mysteries

the three hooded men

deep-carved into the island

the three hooded thousand year old men

who are actually girls

or eyes or your fragments of memory,

how could a girl grow old

(sometimes your mother is younger than you are)?

but Time is mere distraction to Priest,

Priest dwells in always almost

everything is ready already

and the three hooded figures of Samothrace

giggle inside their hoods

hidden inside him where he can't reach them.

the Muses of Matter are mighty babes

they stay young while all the arts get tired

because they are not made!
pure soft sensuous illusion from end to end!

Priest thinks he can touch them.
Instead of touching them.

10 April 2011