

2-2005

febB2005

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febB2005" (2005). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 769.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/769

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.

LAMY

You at least still have some
juice to yield me
yellow tree with purple ink
standing up out of the sands.
Lake Tchad in the distance.
What is this? An egret arrives.

5 February 2005

SIGNAL TO NOISE RATIO

Sometimes the music sounds like China.
How silly adults are,
incomprehensible in their amusements,
their trivial satisfactions.
Only opera ever tells the truth.
But does even Debussy love Mélisande enough
or could anybody? We give
by being vulnerable. That is all we have.
The dishes break like far off chimes,
the ad hoc chairman of the interminable committee
with the aim of bringing silence to the table
taps his crystal goblet with a fork
the way they do. The glass breaks,
water in everybody's lap. What
words could ever equal that?

5 February 2005

=====

World welding

Athanasius Kircher's

Ignis subterraneus

come forth Hawai'i
your golden breasts

so many instructions,
your breasts
shaking in earth's carnival

the new year begins Ash Wednesday
the dinner of ashes
for the wooden bird

ashes they made of Bruno, a year
is always waiting to begin

study the diagram of the earth's inside—
each age believes its own peculiar catacombs
tunnels of fire, balls of burning nickel,
bowl of iron dancing, form and content
utterly the same in the core of the earth,

that's what a heart always is, where form
is content and the blood flows through,

but how can there be a core without a heart,
earth must have one, a rock
with special clefts, wisdom in its caves,
Sufi dancers, Amish spools
lank transsexual dancers round a pole,

Ashera, the utter woman
represented by a featureless stick
upright on a hilltop,

a stake half in the ground is a stake in air
stake on fire and Bruno burning
all that is him of him
become a sudden missionary to the air.

We do these things
hymn tunes and Treblinka
Sobibor where they battled back
they still kept singing,

o is that what you call it,
this thing called breathing,

and we wonder who I am to speak
gloating on the spoils of peace,

how can there be wisdom with no coins,
earths, playing cards, mistakes,

spheres, fears, arrows
hurtling from heart to heart

and every day a Valentine of pain—
the terrible torture they call “being well,”

valentine, recovery
from the even worse disease

of not being in love with you.
Si tu vales, ego quoque valeo.

This is not the end
of anything, a pause only

while I catch your breath
and breathe it as my own

onto these clever knots in string
loose-looped like cats cradle

but the cat is stoned on nip
and runs every which way in her sleep

you feel your own breath
coming back to you now

through my mesh of string
and it is saying as it comes

some song of the four elements
a song before puberty

waking to the colors of the earth
the skin is risk.

6 February 2005

ATEMERNTE

Anything can happen

it is a miracle
that Cadmus that bearded
lover spent
his shekels

that were stars
that were seeds
teeth, Freud's bones

and from that "infantile omnipotence"
the god Ptah spliced
molecules, crammed them together
and breathed

or had Another breathe
on them its life

and we became,

the sky's life, the sky
buried in the earth
every time we breathe
we let it out.

7 February 2005

=====

People born today will live
and those born yesterday will die.
Do not date this document,
the terrible packages of truth.

8 February 2005

THE GNOMIC

What was that about?

Wise
statements always come true.

Have you ever longed for passionless discourse?
A word without a fist or a caress?
For a sentence that isn't going anywhere,
for a paragraph of elegance and energy
that stays in its book?

Once in a while.
But mostly I like discourse to weave
spiderwebs of tenderness among the wide world
“for that is friendliest” says Hölderlin
of those who weave the very oceans with their little ships
into an economy of touch.

Here is Hispaniola, here is home,
here is me smoking a cheroot,
Bhutan is over the hill. Love me
for I am rare and limited,
different and so terribly the same,
one more ephemeral immortal,

and when the shadow of my hand
falls on the shadow of your body
they become one shadow –

I don't know what if anything that means
but it gives me some sort of pleasure and piece.

8 February 2005

GODS

Numbers are the gods of our local system

But there are local systems ('worlds')
where they have other gods

where there are no numbers.

But here for instance on this very land
the god Four had nocturnal knowledge of
of the god Deer. Or Horse.

What is this night knowing?

What is it that numbers tell?

8 February 2005

RENEWAL

We are new.
But who are we?

The train passes
we hear it around midnight

we meet it also at the station
by the frozen river.

The train stands still.
Ice boats skim,

they say it is the season
for such things.

Red hearts
and frozen rivers.

And snow tonight,
Wein, Weib und Gesang, a waltz

nobody made.
Nobody moves.

That's what frozen means,
siesta of the molecules,

God asleep too
weary of our prayers.

9 February 2005

SOMETHING STANDING

A herald in a tabard
starring a strange coat of arms
and the man inside it
lifts up a scroll, just like the movies,
and reads our destiny out loud
in a strange language, Hebrew not
and not Greek and nothing else
I could even guess, something
juicy in the mouth, as if the words
enjoyed meaning what they did
and what would become of us.
Then a chime went off, the herald
looked around, rolled up his scroll.
An old woman standing nearby said
It was all about colors, what he said.
Gold domes of Muscovy, I said,
No, he said, the herald, no,
where I come from
there are too many colors to have names.

9 February 2005

HOODED

Like a crow
across the Elbe.

Or the opera – three
hours of understanding
everything all at once.

If you die watching an opera
you enter death omniscient,

almost omnipotent.
And then. Then the Elbe
meets the German Ocean

the name nests in the water.
Stop believing.
You have a hood–

pull it round you.
The rain. The rain and mist and snow.

9 February 2005

=====
Listening to the road
the rain took us

the road told us where to go
as clear as crows creak

to investigate a departure
in a long scroll

the moon shows through
the king's index finger knuckle

white with the effort
of signing his name,

parchment, my name,
hold me, hold me.

10 February 2005

LAST ARIA IN *FAUST*

As once I held you
hold me in mind,

je tiens à toi
and all the railroad cars

burrow through the earth,
bedrock city

Hungarian plain
to the last horizon,

air shot of a boundless city,
you.

10 February 2005

An old woman standing there said *It is all about color.*

I beg your pardon, about mothers?

No, colors,
red, blue, yellow, primaries, Dragon's blood,
avocado, mulberry, puce. What's puce?
Wine red blood red color of a crushed
bedbug on your bed. Not my bed.
Doesn't matter. What is *it*, I asked,
trying to be clever. It what?, she said.
The *it* that is all about colors.

That is the *it* that is the hub and socket of the world,
she said, the spin one, the quick lady, the priest
with no hands, the sun with a blue bandanna,
the moon in a ragged skirt, that's who,
that's who the *it* is, a spear of certainty
piercing the gleaming hide of beauty
to let the terror out. Why let it out?
To disperse among the necessary. What's that?
Things as they are.

So it is dangerous to talk
to old women. It was one of them who told me once
about how God died. Since then
their soft white fluffy hair appals me
and I dream of icebergs looming through the night.

10 February 2005

=====
That's what I heard them say,
those little birds, those jealousies
against the order of rivers and mountains

a piece of slate and an oyster shell
a Roman nail
found under the wall

how long does it take to rust
what sort of measure is the oxide
how many springtimes have to come

air happens to metal
water happens
iron turns red

to remember fire
the signatures of things
the rivers in my hand.

10 February 2005

=====

wake up in the morning because
a chance of go

a change of art
a pocket

the kinds of grass
already thinking under snow

trying to come
trying to stay until the end

11 February 2005

hypermetric

too many songs to sing
what will we do with them
all the drunken sailors all
the empty caravans

the cliffs at Mundesley
looking at the warrior sea
spilt crowds on Ponck Hockie
bar close streets
it is a festival a carnival it is a cannon
let loose at the moon &

just this one time the moon falls

[11 February 2005]