

2-2005

febF2005

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febF2005" (2005). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 770.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/770

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Am I only hearing what the music lets,
is it all a carousel? And I must be
the wooden lion among wooden horses,
the one that doesn't go up and down,

this rooted certainty is worth it to be a lion.
Because the lion and the dragon and the chariot
all go round too, same axis as the leaping horses
with all their brass poles and snorting

never do they leap up off the circle either.
We move to the law of a machine
but we think we move to music.
Four paws stuck to the spinning earth

can I hear some other information
something the music lets through, a cry
of hunger or delight or fear, the timid
little child I carry on my back?

25 February 2005

=====

Fox prints round the shrine room.
Holy animals
that apprehend the night.

The snow is over now,
the hillside too bright for me to understand.

It is like thinking about the government
vast and blank and deadly cold.

25 February 2005

WASTE

Nobody worse than anybody else.
Two queens and two sevens and a three
will beat this table, the sun
will slip through the sly green curtains
and the men go home. Every card
tells me to be gone, I never
felt dirtier than after gambling,
win or lose, I usually won,
it was the nastiest thickest feeling
like studying photos of the recent dead
expecting any moment to see my own face
and knowing it's all over now.

25 February 2005

Cu

Curious how some is always left
even when she was 93 years old
the old frisson. Always some.
Copper certainty. A line
drawn across the sea
parallel to remember me.

A line drawn across the dream.
Simone Simon died Tuesday
sixty-some years since she frightened
me to death change disease leprosy
black leopards woman's beauty

who cares about me. In Serbia
an ancient saint who always beat
the devil but not always in time,
on time. Three men died
atop a hill and who were they?
Mercury crucified between Sulfur and Salt.

What wood was that tree?
What did the strange girl see
when she looked at me?
And what bird perched on the crossbeam
just out of reach of his dying fingers?

25 February 2005

PRIMER

Ink persuades paper.

Paper persuades space
to bear its strange message.

Light persuades me to read.

I can't remember a time before reading. That makes me think that
reading is remembering.

They are coterminous in my experience, but who am I?

I must have learned reading, mustn't I?

I remember soft pages of my infancy, with dogs and ducks and
words, the words I knew how to sound and sense.

Did I always know how to read?

I remember a thick book, almost remember it, the soft old paper,
child's book, it must have been from years and years before, big
print and pictures, the words meant more than the pictures did.

They always do.

Or: since I can't remember learning to read, maybe I never did learn to read. Maybe I still don't. Maybe I gaze at the words in front of me and endow them with fanciful meanings and sounds, the way any child looks at a picture of a duck and sees it waddling along, hears it quack.

Who knows what words really mean?

Sure, I agree with most other users of English about what given words mean. But maybe they're just humoring me because I am big. Or maybe I'm just humoring them because they are many.

These doubts and anxieties, though they seem whimsical, are real to me. These are the consequences of not remembering learning to read. Or maybe no one remembers that, no one recalls a process, just revels in the results.

Reading is endemic, is innate, is magic.

You can look at words in the Roman alphabet in an unknown language and the words begin to sound and mean – not the same

things they ‘really’ mean to a Pole or an Estonian – but something, meanings and sounds swirl in your mind. Narrative begins. Narrative is always beginning. Always a dog and a duck, a boy and a girl, an earth and a sky. And a sea. Always a tide of meaning that sweeps you out to sea in *any* text, any language, clue by clue, sign by sign it drags us into itself, the desperate drowning we call ‘understanding.’

26 February 2005

Welken

At least it's not politics.
It's sun
on the snow.

It's an anemone
spreading wide as it fades,

welken, to wither or fade,
of German flowers.

Time is so bright
no color can withstand it long.

26 February 2005

=====

Small bird eating snow.

East of my window
small
bird eating snow,

I don't know
if he's a sparrow
or a junco or a he
at all, so dark

against the snow,
too busy eating
this strange white
form of water
to have a name,

so many names, birds,
flakes of snow,
only one sun
to blind only one me,

the bird knows who it is
infallibly.

26 February 2005

GaTe

[Gallium telluride]

what does glass think
when it becomes a mirror

how does it reflect the sun say
does it make more gold

than the world could hold?
and does it tell me

go, begone,
all this light you see

and see by
is just a gate?

27 February 2005

in memory of Basil Bunting

Chisel. Too soft
even so. Let it go.
We met at Harvard
just the once, you sang

to me, I spoke a word
or two back. This.
And this. Always
this and never that.

Shale under my house.
Ash in the sky.

27 February 2005

for Bunting, again

Why do I think of you today,
old Persian bandit?

My own yaks giving trouble
on this low plateau

a valley in a valley
a garden of foxes

everything slips from one
shape to some other

not even waiting for night.
The sun a gold ring

on Nobody's hand.

27 February 2005

=====

Crows loud today
keep me working

there is a preposition
in the sound of things

a to or for or towards
that keeps me going

they talk up there
I work to listen

trying to mark down clear
the distances they describe

27 February 2005

=====
But could I even try

I opened an old drawer today
and found bottles of ink

old ink all dried up

now I have to write down fast
with some other fluid
all the words they were destined to inscribe

The first writing task I ever had I set myself. My father brought home a leatherette blank book, ordinary octavo size, maybe a hundred leaves. I knew I had to fill it. Could I do it? Will I ever do it? This is Notebook 274 right now, so many books, but is that one red notebook filled? Can it be?

Is anything ever enough?

That's the terror of the situation,
the answer is always No.

But the real terror will come
when the answer turns out to be Yes.

27 February 2005

=====

Nothing by.

Put the onion
on the counter,

let the knife alone.

So many years
to build this house.

27 II 05

=====
All rond-
ure and no
fact. Foil
shapes air
passing.
To make
the inside
of a flute of
oneself to
sound or say

something heard
in the hedge, what
or the rock wall
shale over the Kill
I make myself
bend to listen

tight breath
like one hand
squeezing another
no need
to say much

a sound itself
betraying feeling.

28 February 2005

=====

(I have a kind of mormon mind
I have never been naked

I know all pleasures are what the angel meant
but nothing is permitted)

28 II 05

70

It never is. For might
of time wolfs backwards
too.

28 II 05/1 III 05 Dream

(70 though is backwards as I saw it)