

2-2004

febE2004

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febE2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 837.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/837

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.

=====

Now so much of it is certain

wind falls flowers

bend of their own weight

sometimes it is cold

write your way into it, child,

the dream darling waits to tell more

the meaning each thing has

the bee the little cupboard

the sleeping bag the scorpion

talk yourself into knowing

into going, be a waterfall

for a minute, what have you got to lose

we have nothing nothing

it happens to us only

by the will of another

and who is that god, that other?

The one you were a life ago

but isn't my life now

going to be the god of next time round,

karma, residue, shadow?

What life is that?

there is nothing but now

but you said this life is from that other
no, it was language said so, they are words,
do you believe them?

anything that seems so
it must be the talking
tells you

walk your way into it
the terrible incest of man with word

the rose bends of its own weight

you wind up believing
your nieces romp over your lap
it is the Bible again
a camel is bleating by your windowsill.

20 February 2004

=====

And each one waiting to explain
that's what I love
kieselgrund the abyss of pebbles
from which the forced narcissus rose

rises by the astonished window
over the baseboard heater
the strange angry smell of them

in a glass marked with Venus's mirror
your mother set four Dutch
bulbs their base in water
to do what such things do

what do I know of such ordinary
miracles we blunder through
day and night dense mosaic
of them everywhere I look
something busy changing

old lizard of the moon goes in and out
and tonight they tell me the year
changes too don't I feel it in my skin

how can I tell my changes
from the world changing

is it all one question
judging from the stars and

lady bugs colonizing
schoolhouses, all one
miraculous circus act by act
and never see the whole of it

20 February 2004

=====
Measurable entities

people, small, living up in trees

names heard in dream

coming sometimes from the trees

sometimes from one's own mouth

a throat you feel only in sleep

small people speaking a quick

language like Persian not Persian

odes not odes, nothing named

just sounds making sense

but not to you, miracle of dream

that it stretches out your whole life

always new always its colors

untarnished o doctor of the soul

why does the dream never grow old?

21 February 2004

=====

Measure me by your standards
am I three enough to be?
For no decent man can live
as one or two, this one or
that once, there must always
to be him be a sacred trinity of me

wander love or when the music broke
still had to be the road beneath my feet
as if I were all the going in the world
and even I am Africa

22 February 2004

FOUR FOR THE GOSPELMAKERS

The animal symbols of the four evangelists
are the actual gospels. Man eats Ox.
Lion eats Man. Eagle watches
from the mouth that is the sky, a great
pale word waiting. Waiting there for you.
Or Ox eats grass, Lion eats Ox,
what does Man eat? Man eats woman,
the secret and universal Opposite.

Eagle equals Serpent in tradition.
Snake bites Man. Woman crushes
or at least controls the serpent
with her heel, the rounded part
of all her going that touches earth.
Eurydice fails, Miriam succeeds.
That is when The Paganism changes.
Eagle is Serpent. Ox still eats grass,
grass eats manure. Man is woman.
The lion stands alone on the earth.
The lion is the word the sky spoke.
The lion has no opposite. The lion
has eaten everyone and said everything.
Now the lion sleeps in the sun.

22 February 2004

=====

Catherine means pure Mary maybe bitter
who wouldn't be with a brother like that
I like the pure because they feel so intensely
the pure are at the cross-hairs of the world

and everything is on the march towards them.
Catherine. Blake's mysterious naked wife
who knew his colors better than he did.
And his brother was gone on before,

his face left in the shine of morning sun on
mahogany. From those we have lost
messages endlessly arrive, the ones
who stay with us are mostly mute.

The lost recover their purity in death or absence—
that is when and how the silent brother speaks.

22 February 2004

=====

You don't have to know anything about me.
It was enough, the blue sky and harsh wind,
your voice on the telephone telling me,
not telling me what I really want to hear.
What do I want to hear you tell me, and why?

Isn't the enough of this the final word of that?
Why am I always asking for what I do not want?
Wanting what I will turn from soon, turn
back to the silence from which wanting comes,
where from time to time your voice also speaks

telling me what I shall have to make do with till
the word I want to hear and will not come
decides to come and I will not hear it
as if to hear you say I love you too and then we sleep.

22 February 2004

THE ACTUAL

What kind of flower would
refuse to answer when
the voice I'm trying to imitate
actually speaks? Narcissus
for me and laurel for you,
is that the problem, that even
now I don't know your favorite flower?

It's so hard to be a man
and not know these final things,
the taste, the source, the sweat,
the texture of your anger maybe
moving when the toast burns
or the cat has misbehaved,
it's not about power or conquest
or desire or control, just
the little recognitions that fill a day
with what is actually you.

The actual, that is the problem,
so all I don't know stops singing
its musical comedy and opens
wide on the human person there,
you animal, you vocabulary, you god.

23 February 2004

=====

The trouble with words of course is that there's no way you can keep them from meaning things. Meaning stuff. Meaning everything you don't want them to mean. Meaning everything you don't want to know you mean.

No matter how you set them down, words creep towards one another, touch. Words are like lovers, no way to keep them from touching.

Words are contact. Context. Text is what is woven, word laid on word. That is why the Ancients spoke of text in the first place. And why the even more Ancient Ones called words the gift of Mercury, and called Mercury the lord of words. Elemental mercury has such an affinity for itself that two drops of mercury will, if brought close, turn into one drop.

Words touch each other and each pours its power onto the other and a new mass results.

Poetry loves to interfere in this process. Its failure to arrest mercurial union is poetry's great success. The words will always make meaning beyond the conscious wish.

23 February 2004

CARNIVAL EVERLASTING

But we wait for them anyway,
children of bland disorder
waiting in their turn to be amused

terrible absence of anything happening
be a world full of entertained
docile in their momentary gondolas

while angry football fans from Udine
batter at the railroad gates
locked to keep them from the vaporetto

I live in the liberties of this invention
city on a cold dark sea where love
is the only date palm the exclusive oil

breathing down your décolletage
to remind the ornamental flesh
that men have needs

often nobler than they are.

This lust of mine for instance
is the Holy Roman Emperor

and so I mark this movement
adriatica con morte as if a ship
sailed down your arm and left your hands

forever with just this wake behind it
that on some mornings you can look at
and read as an actual word and sometimes not.

23 February 2004

=====
Lukewarm cavalier
spitting live horses out of his hands

from the south so many days
marrying a woman from the Algarve

where Prince Hebrew the Interrogator
finally cracked the cipher of the sea.

This knight hoped she'd remember
what her sovereign guessed

and tell him now. Salt on horseback
turns into waves. But they run away.

23 February 2004

=====
“The sand is black with us
and the sky aches above it.
But on cloudy days the ships
still come and load our grieving
women and take them off
to lands where music happens.
Here we are too close to Africa.
Here all the music speaks of God,
but we need the desperate operas of men.”

23 February 2004

=====

Herringbone philosophy.

Old runes

left from a nasty time

making simple

magic, hard answers.

RK for example,

road, keen,

a sharp passage,

a bitter highway.

Yet I long to travel it

all the way

to that island where

you are the last

letter of the alphabet.

23 February 2004

RECK OR REEK OR ROCK

I bear it on my back.

You can see it but I can't.

This is the highway of the moon

I follow in the dark

going only by the one face

to guide me.

The pale one. The one

that so often turns away.

The only one I know,

you see me stumbling in the dark

you know I'm after something.

You see what I carry on my back.

23 February 2004

BIENVENUE

Castaway enigma
on my blue shore
I will restore you
to your proper body

after I lick each part
clean and smooth again
and press it together
with every other and you

suddenly are here
walking by my sea
thank you for coming
here is my lofty door.

24 February 2004

THE ORDINARY THINGS

and the true, specify
for each occasion
a scriptural permission,

just find a text
that tells me to touch you

six thousand years
a clever idiot
a squirrel-brained emperor
has been trying to open
this one golden chest

inside is a jewel
or a machine,
talisman maybe
combination of a stone and a sigh
that lets him or anybody
do anything they choose

they don't even have to choose
for it takyth the mind
thither, whereof it thinketh
to that place, how can you
call it a place
when it is moving too,
breathes back in your face,
nibbles the old king's neck?

24 February 2004