

3-2004

marH2004

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "marH2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 841.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/841

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the knowing of a man
is flaming hair
the resistance of a woman
is a never-failing river
and together the sea

25 III 04

It was a perfect day for bananafish

(after Patricia No's sentence, from Salinger)

when he wrote it, and he's still alive I think
a crazy old man in Vermont
like all the other crazy old men in Vermont
who moved up in the 60s to raise dope.
There he is, his image snatched by a sneaky photographer,
he hates photographers, hates his daughter.
hateth old Time that hath furrowed deep
the Shakespeare of his brow.

He wiped the floor with all the other novelists
but when I read him now there's sadness,
all the suicides, all the brittle little sensitive people
transparent as glass he told us, little men
who see more than other people, he told us,
little men who fell in love and out of it again
and stared at the ocean until they became it.
The way this poor old man turned into
rock or fallow field in some crappy farmland
far from where Zion's harp and timbrels
jangle on the autumn air and David dances.

25 March 2004

THE LILIES

But certainly among the mornings
one chooses to be two and ever after
even a shadow is a friend
anything to keep from thinking

calla lilies, not white

this time,

space, space,
a sensate fleshy almost brown
as if snow set to remembering
and what it thought so much about
was the earth under,

as long as this side didn't need to think
one brought them
and a photo fakes for all
time their fragrant look, their
magisterium of the dining room,
giving some wild American
character maybe
to the table talk of justice
that so stimulates the diners some
rise up discomfited abrupt
ready to topple neighbor governments

and who would not,
given one's sense of empire
and what *altesse oblige*,
never sure like a dowager king
if photography is a proper art
or longs like pottery, like lapidary,
to the shabbier faubourgs of the Museum,

that City God wound up
and set the traffic lights,
green did not always mean go,
sometimes linger,

smell the lilies when you come into the room.
But these have not the odors of the others,

think (for thinking always will win out,
so hard to cherish all the soft light
of emptiness)

think of an ampoule in a doctor's hand
ready to crack and send into the patient
minims of simply feeling better
like a flower on the table,
don't have to listen don't have to care,
everything they do is art. Don't think.

And over there the lordly sciotist
makes shadows whisper on the wall,

everything is art, even this remembering,
or this most of all, *this, most,*
of all,

memory democracy.

26 March 2004

SPARKS

Another choosing?

Apt. Sunlight

at last you think

and time for morning.

Is it really?

Another choosing

this choice for you?

Is it early?

Where does this

this come from?

Scintillæ surgentes

from low fire

in the mind

sparks stand up

who knows

that each glittering

instant isn't

cosmology and Ragnarok?

All at one eye blink

for slow us

and not just mind's

any little fire will

fling a universe
up the dark flue
in search of heaven,

heaven being
no more than
one more morning
all round you
uncovering its
hips of light.

26 March 2004

Morning sickness

a pregnant man
sick as a leaf
but other wise

so much of life
is a translation
some earlier text
he acts or mumbles
in his own vague way,
priest in his chasuble
whore in his finery
who, who,

so much of what happens
has happened elsewhere
and already, so much
of what he does
is a footnote, sometimes
a whole essay on some
sentence he doesn't
know he heard someone
else speaking some
other day, not here,

other day, life, government,
map, coat of arms, old car,
banner of a slaughtered
regiment, water jug
smashed on cobblestones,

but who? Not even you.

26 March 2004

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Immense in their guesses

bathe in what they thought they meant,
after a while their smell
is like my smell, the words
float through the woods
like evening mist, that most
luminous crepuscule. Silk.
Soft things brittled by being said.

Reading people. I want to know
who you are to me. In me.
I want to meet people so
different I forget who I was.
Pray for me, poem of other
person, pray I will always forget.

26 March 2004

SO.MA

There are lights
there are watches that glow in the dark
small cities glow up red the heavy clouds
and the Iowa slips between elms and cottonwoods
as if I were still there.

I am the gone from here.
I am a haircut looking for a man.

26 March 2004

SPRINGSONG

A word to be wet with
you, silver
across a small sky
worn inside the nest

and out every
now and then
the bird of it

all patchwork ruby garnet jasper
and a blueprint of heaven
tight in his beak

he is alive again
the mullahs say
speaking redwing blackbird language
enemy of sleep.

27 March 2004

ECRIRE

And this also says
a channel of lucidity
running through the ink:

this ray seize
with your slim vessel
where you think you mean to go

whale-blunt through this holy hydrogen
it is always ocean decides.

We are medium, Man, as wax or muscle is.

27 March 2004

=====

On the wet land around the house
a shimmer of green everywhere

as if winter had mildewed where it lay
life over brown into this strange

coming to its senses again
grasses and such, the hard

work of happening.

27 March 2004

A PREGNANT LEAF

pale as a tabletop
and here are oboists
one of them essaying
an elegant bassoon
I was a girl then
and knew the difference
saltimbanque means
acrobat in greek
there is no word for it
beyond this water
every care inaugurates
history, *cura*
be careful of the soul
you handle so,
Doctor Man, muzzle
the lyric ego well
and then the thing
itself will tell,
quoting from scripture
just one passage
to share with you
a black Pueblo marriage
vessel one belly
and two mouths.

27 March 2004

for Jane, so much a warrior

Fight like a man
with your mind tied behind your back

fight like a woman
knifing sideways into the heart

or fight like a kid
punching up from underneath

or fight like an angel
spewing ideas into their heads

but keep fighting
because the opposite is death

fight against war
and fight against peace

fight against the ordinary
and fight against dreams

fight against music and poetry
fight against God

fight against the body
and fight against the soul

until all that's left
is the absolute beauty of Being

itself, your only friend, your glorious enemy.

27 March 2004

HARUSPEX

Something in me always knows the future
but so seldom do I know what that something knows

the road ahead and what lies on it
waiting, or what the crow is saying

since crows too know what's coming
and somehow know how to say it

as if their harsh cries that somehow make me so happy
were a mirror of the future

they see over time's hill
and answer out loud and sometimes they make me understand.

28 March 2004

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Capture ratio it wants to say again
as if it understood something I don't understand.

28 III 04

CAMPAIGN SPEECH

Don't you think I'll understand you better
since I've done all the things you always
wanted to do? Don't you think the rich
and complicated life I've lived
taught me the value of *the good* as much as
your temperate repressed condition
ever taught you? When I make promises
I know what they mean, and when I break them
it's only for your own good, not mine,
I got my good long ago, or lost it,
and all that's left for me now
is the thrill of bowing down and serving you.

28 March 2004