

3-2004

aprC2004

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "aprC2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 843.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/843

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.

MAIA

Here is the May

here is the may the flower

here is Maya the people of corn of squash flowers in my hair

here is Maya the people who know the time

what time is it

it is May

here is Maya here is illusion

here is Mahamaya Great Illusion mother of the Buddha

here is May here is

May Day the day of the worker

here is May Day the day that labor dies and honest work begins

here is Maya the work is Pleasure

here is may our possibility

here is may the present of might

here is may our slippery-hipped maybe

here is Mae our West our life-preserver our beckoning trouble

here is Maya our Deren

here is someone who sent love's eye out to take

pictures of the world that said I love you

because no one even sent a camera to feel what the heart feels

here is Maya the morning song

here is the alba

here is my Maya my May Maya when the lovers
wake on the tower and know they're in trouble

the beautiful trouble of a May morning.

7 April 2004

WHAT THE WORLD IS HIDING

There's some engine noise
the table smells of soap
that modern soap the stink
without a flower from,

dismal chemists
with no noses
who hate roses
sent us this

somebody tell me
why smells smell so bad
meantime it's drizzling outside
and the sky smells like soap too

but nice soap
the olive kind
my mother used to keep
in the small clothes drawer

in the old walnut armoire
with the pale wood inside
shirts on top of shirts
all night long I listened

to their white dream,
it's a train going by
I know you now
hoot of horn and long

alchemic trumpeting
up this hidden valley
fortress of images,
half asleep

naked soldiers lazing
on the battlements
picking out the genders
they'll try on next time

and the grass seed we threw down
thinks about whether to grow,
these are things not in our hands
secret practices of solo forests

where the hermit lives
at peace and praying
to gods you hardly dare to imagine
or maybe he's done

all his praying
already and now is just waiting
like all the rest of us,
like the rain.

7 April 2004

INSTEAD

Instead of breakfast,
shoes. Instead of rain,
a clamshucker's knife.

Instead of a garage
a shadow of a rock.

Instead of a word
another word.

We used to say shoon,
we used to say we.

Instead of a leaf
a bird
but it doesn't sing.

7 April 2004

HYMN

What have you
lying in wait
darling for me,
the sapphire tiara
curved above your brow
maybe needs cleaning
drive a sound
right through it,
a sound so low
only stone can hear it,
a sound to
clean the sky with.
Say it, sashay
into my morning,
enter talking.

7 April 2004

THE CONCEALED

What have you done with the morning
I hid it in the dictionary
I slipped it between the long dry leaves
of the *Tao Te Ching* I don't know why
I buried it in the ground
like a little lead soldier with a blue enamel coat
some other child will find in a hundred years
when he digs in my old garden and be glad.

8 April 2004

=====
I think I also want to be a statue
in a public square
surrounded by ornate old grey buildings
with old green copper roofs
Brussels maybe, like the Mannikin-that-pisses
fountain, a statue and a fountain,
but full grown, and not naked, not smiling,
not a child and not pissing
just bright water tumbling out of me toujours
and running down over my right knee
along my glistening shank
into a basin where tourists toss pennies,
dull euro centimes alas, and at time
drunken kids leap about disporting
like the wet tee shirt contests of newer republics.
And I would be a monument of it all,
source and mystery, amplitude and embarrassment,
never dry and never silent but never exactly
saying something you can pin me down to
or rule your life by, not an oracle, just the unclear
voice of a man standing in the street.

8 April 2004

A FRAGMENT OF QUINTILIAN

monument, as if *monere mentem*,
warn the mind, make it mind itself
by remembering, by being aware,
a mind reminded is two minds at once.
A monument is here to make you think.

8 April 2004

=====

start revising
the book of life
begin now
live forever

8 IV 04

=====

I was born into a very strange
religion, the body, on earth.

8 IV 04

AN ELEVATION OF THE TEMPLE OF VESTA

sent to me by a married woman I know –
the roof peeled away and the walls
laid bare in section,
anatomy of a lost protection,
prickly acanthus leaves of the capitals,
angels with wings holding curious things.
Are you a fish or a sheaf of wheat?
Are you a bull I ride or a wine I try
or a knife to hold against the thick
throat of a bull in my arms?
The ocean bleeds from the sky
down the fountains of Tivoli,
the vestals were priestesses
whose function was to proclaim
in their lives and in their flesh
that we are not born for mating
and begetting, there is another
function for this sweet flesh,
a mapping into matter
of some wider even wilder life
the body can best remember when
it is at rest, intact, humming
dance around its hidden center,
untouched, forcefield in the skin.

8 April 2004

=====
Increase, says the day, *Discipline*
said yesterday. Everything
tells me what to do.

But never who.

The who is hidden in the how,
the how is hidden in the when.

The clock is hidden in the tower
for all to see

but the bell is set ringing in the earth.

What we feel when we walk along
slowly the hard roads
is sound coming up to touch us, rings
up the length of the body.

Height of the tower. The tower
is hidden in the sky.

Obey me, the body says,

I keep the earth apart from heaven.

I save you from glory and decay
so you can be busy with your work all day.

All you have to do is find out who.

8 April 2004

Pèlerinage de la vie humaine.

The spelling hasn't changed in five hundred years.

8 IV 04

=====

Is anything really that long ago?

I think Yeats knew Shakespeare and I knew Yeats,
that's all, and Virgil's hat's still hanging on a hook
in that little trattoria by Saint Claudia's.

8 IV 04

THE ONE

He knew her too.
They all went in.
Not just Catullus.
But he was the one
who kissed and told.
Irishman or something
like it, from way up north,
what would you expect,
all music and no morals.
Ovid fucked her too,
and so did Virgil
though it went against his
grain, and Augustine too,
Prudentius, Dante,
Wolfram, Wyatt,
Sidney, all of them,
but they kept quiet.
They let us think
they were talking about
grail or God but all the time
it was only her,
always, the bitch
before the mind, the heart
of matter, not for me
either to say her name.

8 April 2004

=====

Sleep into my hands
so my eyes can tell you
in the dark, sleep
on this very bright morning
so sleep is a denial
and a gorgeous sin,
the Veil of the Temple
shivers in the wind
that rises in the mind
and does not stir a leaf.

8 April 2004

HOLY THURSDAY

Color of the day
itself. A night or two
ago the Eucharist
was invented,
some friends at a table
remembering
what was to come,
and being thankful.

We never will
understand, we still
have to drink it,
chew it, swallow it,
whatever it becomes.

Eucharist: being thankful
but for what?

What are they remembering
now? When you
remember him,
who are you being?

8 April 2004

=====

after Johanna Klotz

The necklace was the last thing to go.

Then she was naked

and looked at the doorman

with a curious humility –

now, is it now? she asked.

But her humility

was the strange humility of a god,

taking somehow some delight

in all this going down,

just as when all the robes

and veils and shoes and delicate

undergarments were gone, and even

the necklace had been looped off

and dropped at her feet so that

one length of it, corals and lapiques,

lay over her instep, la cambrure,

the naked body she displayed

was the body of a god, skin

of a god, fine soft god hairs

on the arms of a god,

not a woman, how could you ever
have thought it would be a woman,

never, no man or woman is ever naked,
only a god can take so much away,

and now she asks, can I go in now,
I am Inanna she says, I am at the gate
of the other
and only when you have nothing left
and I have nothing either

and we are naked
and your soft foot slips out from under
even the golden mesh of the necklace

only then can we go in
to where the other lives.

8 April 2004

<late>

=====

Tell me night habits
(night has it)
from the frequency of flags
over coconut plantations
the unimaginable condition
of the poor – nothing
will ever change that,
“the poor you have with you always,”

tell me the habits of who lives there,
the horrors of not having –

does night have it?
Does not have it.
They are poor.
They work all their lives
getting things from the trees,
copra, husks, fiber, fruit, milk.

We are poor.
The tree falls on our only head.

We are rich
the we read books about it instead.

8 April 2004