

8-2004

augAA2004

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "augAA2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 861.
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MANIFESTO in Saint Jean d'Aulps

Poetry is captions.

The line of Homer, Virgil, or any line you remember
is the title of a painting or a photo or cartoon

something Homer saw before his blindness,
like those little ants swarming in the dirt below his bench.

The line is incomplete,
poetry is incomplete

it waits for that strange thing:
a continuous narrative silenced into a single still image.
an image not seen, an image only labeled

but the label speaks.

2.

A few levels down:

cloud falling under sunset.

Every line delineates an episode of it, the story –

and the story runs over, takes shape from, shows up in,
many poems

poems have no boundaries– that is the first lesson.

Textes sans frontières.

The scenes of narrative pass from poem to poem, story to story.

The fall of the raindrop

from a holly leaf

into a puddle

is the death of Arthur.

Midafternoon. Mist on the peak above town.

5 August 2004, St Jean

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1.

Mist walking in the spruce trees up there.

How far does a road go?

I am a mountain.

2.

Mountains are the holiest things on earth,
and people who live in them the most
sacrilegious. Why? Do they have to be coarse
to withstand the immense exaltations
all round them, not to be deafened by
those incessant hosannas?

5 August 2004

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Getting over traveling is like recovering from a binge. One has survived. Shaky. Just keep moving. Anything goes.

Clematis. Name everything. Lost things: lost pen, a forfeit.

Things have to be lost into other things so *they* can be found.

The sacrifice beneath the cornerstone is the cornerstone.

*

I seem to worship every mountain I see – it's like a church here. Everywhere I turn I see a saint or a god, limestone naked or furred with pine.

5 VIII 04

La Borne

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There is a sun behind the mountain
not yet six
bluing the sky that otherwise is late night grey
the Dranse is loud
after so much rain last night.
Mist in the coombe below La Chaux.
To wake here now after twelve years,
Mist on the hillside pasture where the donkey brays.
And I can read the color of my ink now,
blue, out of an orange pen.

It is not what I say here
but what I hear.

Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne said Liszt out loud.

Only a couple of lights are on in town.

And Charlotte wakes! She speaks to me through the shutters,
opens them and we are together, talking
suddenly out of the dawn,
I'd been sitting on the terrace outside our bedroom

the outdoor of the indoor. The peace of God.
6:08 street lights go out.
So all the dozen lights up there
I thought were waking Christians
were street lights. Only one little
light now on the hill.

The mist has reached the valley floor now, settling
around the ruined abbey. Crests clear.

White truck with four tail lights at the corner
dimming down the road north into the mist.
A different language driving down the road.

The contrast is not between up and down
or coming and going. It is between
language and stillness – how to conjugate them.

One reads the news in case there's news,
Le Monde in case there's a world,
one goes outside in case there's something there.
The church bells for instance strike the half-hour
with two strokes. But why do we sleep

in the first place?
Little cars go up the hill.
And that is good for me
to see them do.

Beyond my reach – a mountain.
Beyond my grasp – the cloud coasting along it.

Across the pines and hardwoods halfway up
scraps of clouds make letters,
Arabic of cloud.

6 August 2004, La Borne