

9-2004

sepC2004

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "sepC2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 869.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/869

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.

=====
Call me one winter and a rock
you brought home from the beach
'a paperweight' you called it
but I knew better

 it was the island
itself you meant to sneak inside
our dry house,
 it was a hole
in the wall that could sit on the table
babbling non-stop crazy stuff about the sea.

11 September 2004

THE STRANGER

I led a stranger into a church.
“What are these places for,”
he asked, “don’t they know
that all together their own
‘aspirant energy’ gets contained,
insulated from the world
it proposes to effect? Church
locks it in. Keeps things
as they are. The laissez-faire
economy called heaven.
Don’t they know that churches
are neutralizing chambers,
where love and kindness
turn in on themselves? This
is the heat-sink of the heart,
where all energy and altruism
evaporate in a dream of fellowship
and brotherhood dies at the door.”

11 September 2004

=====
sometimes: as if not to exist
in a physical world
at all,

 just let the zones of thought and lines of desire
overlap / interact
deceive one another into
the momentary permanence we call 'thing'

and then disperse.

 The eternal is the neverlasting,
the shift outside time,
from which it is all too common
to fall back,

 forged identity
 insistent on itself
in a thingly world.

But only the names are real.

11 September 2004

DATELINE

a deed,

a way of doing things, a dog.

Nothing like that here.

No Achilles. No afterlife.

It is about following someone through the woods.

Quest or call,

your voice lingering,

getting confused with the creaking of branches or

the squirrels scolding,

what does it mean to follow a spoor?

What does it mean to be two persons at once:

the *pioneer*, far ahead of everybody else

scouting through unknown forests

with scarcely relevant materials and few words

leading the way to the unknown region

and also the come-lately, the afterling, the meek but

persistent *follower*, whose whole being is

caught up in the reverent attentive study of all the

signs of the one who has gone on before

the one whose sheer *preceding*

makes this current struggle

both possible and necessary

so being on the Quest is being *leader* and *follower* at once.

12 September 2004

revised *pyrotechnica*

midnight fireworks
over the river
foxes cower
behind the owls

strobe lights
behind the skeleton
of the almost dead locust tree
that catches lightning
on the common

the bones of the trees
hurt against the sudden sky.

(17 July 2004)
revised 12 September 2004

Variations on *pyrotechnica*

fire works midnight
the river foxes
behind the owls'
investigations
like strobes
behind skeletons

I am almost locust tree
I catch lightning
from the common to the wonderful
shout it
at the top of my hands.

12 September 2004

CAGLIOSTRO

I could at least write
till the pen falls out of ink
last dipped yesterday
and no bladder to fill

chamberless, adventitious,
charlatan like me,
I would be Balsamo if I could
for your sake, woods,

and know the girl of every name
and bird, and know the boy
of every bark and fire,
smoke. Reek. Dark water.

I know my mother's name.

12 September 2004

=====
Bundling up a portent
of impending death Charles Olson
it's 34 years since he did

and those summers before that when we walked around Gloucester
him in his tweed overcoat and muffler and hat
on August nights out to Magnolia

but Rama and Culianu wore tee-shirts in the snow
and they died too
strange deaths and died young

so are you going to tell me again
that moderation in all things is the best,
the sovereign mediocrity of all those savvy Greeks?

No, not the middle. The middle way.
It gets there. But *there*
is here already, and the soul lives by excess alone.

13 September 2004
Start of Notebook 269

CAUGHT LOOKING

Animals know
when they are seen
and understand
this observation
touches or tinges them,
subtracts a little
from their liberty or life,

the hard eyefall
hurts them from afar
and they run.

We forget how much traffic
runs along the eyeroad
'eyebeams' they used to say,

a road runs both ways.

We are trained to passive seeing
where all the info flows
in upon us from some screen or mask or other

but beasts live in a world where every eye
sends news out and brings it back

a glance is an aggressive, grabbing, pressing thing—
we perish sometimes by sheer looking.

13 September 2004

LILITH

But Lilith was Eve's sister,
the elder.

And Adam married both
as was the custom
in the first days,
the first garden.

And Eve wanted revenge: to seize
an exclusivity with him
not matter what it cost?

For Lilith was the Lady of the Garden,
chatelaine and primal wife,

and Eve tried to own him
and he wanted to be owned –

and that possession dispossessed them
of the grace of Eden?

People talked about Lilith later
the way the second wife talks about the first—
a demon of malevolence and greed.

But they were sisters.

13 September 2004

THE DISPENSARY

1.

Dispense, as light
and shadow does
a candle flame
a moth around it

acolyte. We do
not know the riches
every thing pours out
or catch the shadow

of its as if travelers
in parched vacuity
huddle in the shade
of some solid thing

tree or wall or rock
and call it permanent
because it shields them
a moment from sun

2.

from all the intolerable
brightness of emptiness
we shelter
from what heals us.

3.

Dispense, as judgment
to petitions, word
to listener, mercy
to the undeserving

a dispenser pours
out or administers
regardless of the merits
of the applicant

the water from rain flows
they bend to drink
who come thirsty or
thirsting for this

4.

how easy to amuse folk
who come to be amused
just let me bury
my face in the pie

and while they laugh
I'll be tasting rhubarb
strawberry sugar
thinking sugar

pure lard crust maybe
a crow flew over the
wheat field this flour
came from and now

my lips are thick
with what I say
words and their things
jumbled in my mouth

while people are laughing
with empty mouths
happy at what's happening
in their poor heads.

14 September 2004

KEY

A key in the sky
turns. I see it, you think
it is the sun but I know better.

Does a keyhole move around?
Yes, to a drunkard's fingers fumbling
and we are drunk

on distance and unthinking.
Does a key give such light?
Yes, when the room we're in is dark

and on the other side of the door
a little girl comes by holding a candle
above her on her way to bed

that's what the sun is
we see shining in the keyhole
and when she sleeps

it's lights out for us too.
But what door does
the key set free?

14 September 2004

=====
What did I could
that talked to me

imagine me small
like an organ in church

filling the nave
with sound from nowhere

my bones are hollow
hold sound, give sound

somewhere in all
recollection

there is a skeleton.

14 September 2004

EN APXH

But what they touched
came later, brushed
against the coats hung in the hallway
and spoke with each one

a man's weather stays in his clothes
and answers in his absence
when a wise man asks

He had hurt himself with listening,
with going out of his mind's way
to taste the other road

the dust of it still on his tongue:
what language is.

14 September 2004

=====

Where are the women in this green story?
Waiting, always waiting,

the way the bow is so often waiting
for the bowstring to come to rest

long after Mr. Arrow has gone and done.

14 September 2004

=====

Waiting is to doing
as the face is to the body

Someday you will be you
all the way through

14 September 2004