

2-2003

febE2003

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febE2003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 890.
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SQUARE GARDEN

So many things
remind me to remember
as if a boat
brought with it all
the water it ever touched
or a cavalier's hand
still felt all the wounds it made

but there are no swords here
boats battles. We have salt
that sifts down from the moon
when no one's looking

it makes us mad with hopes
and hope is the enemy of remember.

Stand still. In wet socks
bankers hurry through new snow
to their ultimate committee
when He comes to judge the living and the dead.

Money is rapture. The rich
you see no more,

only their old shoes
lying on the thrift shop shelf,

the old woman shuffles through the park
hoping she'll live to see the lilacs bloom once more

salt in all our eyes, the terribly simple tears.

2.

Sparrows seem to be deciders
halfway to Jericho forget the Bible
or hot, a big long white eraser
for a long book, lo, the Holy Erasure
is what's left, rapt on spotted page
a plague of moral words
ill-cured by the absences themselves.

So there is light. There is a drift
some snow from left to right
if I were me or north to south
if I were Chinese and sat
before you nibbling my opinions

into four small words
at a time. Opulent window!
augment the simplistic light!

More words to rub out.
Sackbut glee and yeoman's comedo,
The book of impulses, book
of formation, same root, make a movie
of her wanting to do it then doing it

tell them apart, here is the mind
here is 23rd Street on a snowy morning

is that the difference, one park or another,
one fried egg, a sailboat sinking,
a furrier late to work?
But what she wants to do comes out of her,
that's what a *yetzer* is, in impulse an inclination
to do or taste or take, must be felt
to be appreciated, stuck in her
just watching the street where she wants it to happen

when you live in the house of desire
every impulse is cosmology

everything you do makes a world exist,

she wants it to happen to the light too.
Numbers are too holy to count with
we match mink pelts by eye and feel until
she leaps out of the car and just does it
among the démodé skyscrapers of midtown
scattering the pigeons and the kindly furriers.

3.

*She wanted to erase one distinction
and disclose another.*

*The book
chattered in the wind: demons
talk like this.*

*Impulse
made me, I give into it now
outward forever.*

*A pronoun I become,
a simple soul.*

4.

Going too far the keenest lust:
for crisis, purple
irises outrageous by the garbage,

lust to do
what no one can take back,

lust for the irrevocable,
the pathway of tattoos, excess
beyond recovery

but the iris has it too
being purple
a while and then.

Spectacular cures for spectacular diseases —
wound of the spectacle, the last crime

of what we see is to make us lust for it,
lust to join it,
to enter the Display World
and play no more.

17 February 2003

A VEDIC ENCAMPMENT

where the horse is saved.
Plough, not battle. King,
not field marshal. A different
animal of chess,
a bird you never flew
to seize a young gazelle
you never killed. Demure
victim of a victim,
we tremble on hillsides
supposing us in love.
Mountains are always
on the edge of sight,
snow capped all year round.
This defines the page,
love is the science of edges,
here, on smooth swept
earthen yards
women and men
sit on the ground
around a circle where no one sits.
An old man dreams about
snow plows on mountain roads
you'd think he's asleep, he's not,
he watches his dream
out of the corner of his eye.

We call this man the priest
but he is not that,
he is committed to our pleasure

so he has no title,

I am his sin. A chessboard
of flashing lights covers my breastbone
too. My business is to be looked at,
touch me if you dare, I won't care,
you have to figure out every day afresh
what to do with your fingers,
thousands of years old, my hair
reminds you of October grasses
in another country, a horse fleeing for its life,
and tame mares led along a dusty road
by a simpleminded boy
in love with church bells
down the streets of your town.

I come to find you
I sing in your mail box
come hang out with me
I am all the India you need.

17 February 2003

FLOTSAM

The enthusiasm concentrates you
tempted to communicate you are reading
the inner mind and the name
disappeared but it is precisely the origin
of meaning to return profoundly conservative
to the resistance movement itself
disguised as a piece of paper.

But we live in a world without itself,

∴ ξο-β-ομεδ-π∴. so to say so

ngo-wo me-pa

essenceless and African,

up the Beckett to Sitwell Falls

I want your name on my mailbox,

stymie, I want what's coming to you

cause I suspect you are my essence now

no my essence is two blue jays on one branch

above the snow and now thank god they're gone.

18 February 2003

THE ULTIMATE DISPARITY IS PARITY

Now out of all this snow
a blackbird comes, astonished
by all the resident air life
thronging these feeders, o arrive
arrive, nomad animal,
yellow beak, black character
winter's pallbearer, come
a storm too soon.

What century am I, who recognize
a premature genius on the maple branch,
come like me from the bare future,
brother, semaphor from a ship
lost in the pure horizon, arrive,
arrive, meaning-bearer, soul-
feeder, rapture rattling cold feathers,
wing marks, shadow graph on snow
to chart your meaning, my time too
is coming, this will one day be my home.

18 February 2003

DANCE

Most mortal of what we do
how frail its purchase on earth
time, to leave behind just names,
Nijinski, Salome, maybe
some old movie footage
where Isadora's not so different
from Ginger Rogers, grey
girlish rhythms in the dark
and nowhere the body left
that shaped the time. The left
body's gone and the right
body's left, a calculation
we have to do to seize
again the missing senses,
hot sound of his dancing,
or what her body did to emptiness.

19 February 2003

MARGINS

*(drawn from Brakhage's "Playing the Stars" in **Telling Time**)*

1.

Not ever the movies

my angers

in default to thought

innate to stand art

the first shifting

watched night-watchers

passing the gods

and a door did.

Form contrived

reducing the future

lines on the palm of the sky.

2.

Variations

as aesthetic score

thrill advertising

always saleable

Dramatic Infinite

still infinite

father reading from star.

Nature is medium

inherent for those

the movies used to stifle.

This accusation is just.

3.

Thought reversed to affection

expect much who is in it

and who stand the particular.

We know the first, chronicled

passing, son of the gods

a narrative beginning.

Then there were types over the future,

proportions available to sin.

19 February 2003

AQUARIUS

Iron bar. Scarlet yarn. White
shavings of basswood or balsa

knotted in. The bar transverse
iron horizon. What hangs down

from sky festooned with yarn
the yarn prickles with splinters

with white wood. Iron scarlet.
Horizon broken in the yard.

Own ownership a bar of iron
knotted in the *fixed air* above the yard.

White yarn festooned with wood.
Where does the wood come in

how does the bar stay in mid air.
The air is thick with local gravity.

What is a thing when it is its own.
What owns it then. Element iron.

Or color. Or where. Where a thing is put.
The yarn supports iron, iron bears color,

color bears wood, wood hangs down.
A cross is so close to the ground.

In the cellar of the sky the iron sleeps
any night and wakes with fresh wood

white and thin and owned by the yarn
that holds the iron only to itself

iron color broken white horizon
bar in yard yard festooned with sky

wood sleeps too and wake away
and only the bar knows how to stay.

20 February 2003

PARANOIA

It is a hard mystery
a bird on a branch
a soft mystery
a branch beneath a bird
but my kind of detective
can't even figure out that

let alone who drowned King Ludwig
shot Kennedy shot King. "Follow
the money," he said but where
does money live at night?
The conspiracy is just things
whispering together against me,

sharing their breath against us.
Who profited from Auschwitz,
why were those rail lines never bombed,
who is the National Debt owned *to*?
(That one I know: poor Americans
owe trillions to rich Americans.)

But I don't know the answers,
all I know is that the questions hurt.
So I revert to the bird,
a mourning dove now down on the snow
hobbling among the fallen seed.
Other animals arrive. They seem
to know what they're doing, why don't I?

20 February 2003

WORD CLING

A blue havildar
in a dead regiment
such dignity in titles
lasts longer than the man

nobody likes men anyway
lasts longer than color
colors fade, a blue
havildar in a lost company

a man you might have liked
for the sake of what he did
but what did he do
he told you what to do

the title lasts beyond the function
name on a tombstone
too old too cold to feel
a thing that's left

when feeling's gone
blue havildar lost army dead raj.

20 February 2003

Es war einmal mitten im Winter, und die Schneeflocken fielen wie Federn vom Himmel herab, da sass eine Koenigin am einen Fenster, das einen Rahmen von schwarzen Ebenholz hatte, und naechte. Und wie sie so naechte und nach dem Schnee aufblickte, stach sie sich mit der Nadel in den Finger, und es fielen drei Tropfen Blut in den Schnee. Und weil das Rote im weissen Schnee so schoen aussah, dachte sie bei sich 'haett ich ein Kind so weiss wie Schnee, so rot wie Blut, und so schwarz wie das Holz an dem Rahmen.' Bald darauf bekam sie ein Toechterlein... (*Schneewittchen*-- die Brueder Grimm)

WRAPPING THE SKY

airs how the sky works everybody knows what everybody knows they give us nothing to think with, or the wrong things, so we can't think, or think wrong (i.e., conspiracy theory), it doesn't matter what we think, it's what we buy that counts it doesn't matter what we think, it's how we feel about ourselves while we're thinking. radical chic: how to feel good about yourself while everything's falling apart, they are captives, captives of our eyes on the runway, we are captives of their moves, the silk of their pretenses wraps us, we smother in the love-smell of radical cosmetics, the warm of professional thin women, the cold of fashion mavens sneering down their leather lapels, they are captives of our purses, our inclinations, we trap each other in mortal embrace, lust me to the bank, cash my sperm, the sense of people captured by fashions, falsities, media, chic, actual sinister governments and institutions. Captives. Vaneigem. Debord. They were here a while before me.

21 February 2003

Word forms trickled into the folds of her listening. — Barbara Leon

THE MOTORBOAT BOYS

It's not enough to glow a lot or tell
the till is empty, the Motorboat Boys again
on their way to Mecca, the midshipman
zonked on actual opium for toothache,
didn't work, where do they come by it,
kids say the darkest things, a palooka like you
has no business in arts administration.
Drunk, drunk, drunk. Arles soaks in
debauched sunlight typical of Roman poetry
a walnut shell carved to look like Colosseum.
We have to do more than that
letme go for instance, in an alphabet
bad girls locked in Reform School devised
for billets-doux to local congresswomen
Get me out of anywhere, Let me be
the pluperfect subjunctive of the verb 'to be.'
Anywhere you could call here. Here
is terrible. You've read this book before
in childhood terror and you know too well
how these characters turn out. And then
you know they all turned into you. Quiet,
taxman, this money is still mine till April.

21 February 2003

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

One thing makes the wagon roll.
The Hasdrubal Relief Association
sends mean letters to the papers,
especially the *Corriere della Sera*,
forget all the history you ever knew
the baldacchino over St Peter's altar
trapped all the sunlight from outside
permanent change in Roman weather.
No messages for me. A sparrow
knocks another silly, accident, one flew
the other veered into a window
both survive. Even tragedy is hard
to come by in a Friday world.
But once Baron Saturday starts his stroll,
aieeee! as the comic books used to represent
non-white hostile personnel declaiming
as they swiped their krisses through
our blue-eyed guys. Now all our enemies
are just aliens, with no P.R. men of their own.

21 February 2003

AGITATION, ANYBODY?

My aunt though Welsh by marriage had French doors.
Infant perplexities have not resolved themselves in me,
everything is still weird. We crept along the zoo drive
across from the thirty foot plaster Dachshund
offering hot dogs in the Pacific fog with a smile.
So weird, everything, still. I'm at sea a lot of the time.
Why olives in martinis? Why gas logs in real brick
fireplaces? Why is suicide called the Dutch Act
when the only people known to perform it
are Irish-American women whose husbands have left them
for eager-lipped Italian girls? Words go one way
and things another, hold onto the words with a wistful
little smile and eventually they'll give you something to eat.
Paper plate potato salad Sunday suppers orange light.
Evidently assent has some role to play, and getting past
the stories I tell myself constantly inside, and enduring
the appalling tedium of adult conversations on real estate,
furniture, misbehaving relatives, and clothes. I too
tried to kill myself once or twice, wasn't good at it,
not one of my special gifts, leave it to those who know
the difference between giving up and giving in.
It would be years before the narrow heaven-seeking
row houses of Amsterdam explained more than even they
were meant to tell, all that skeptical philosophy, reach up,
reach up, take your place in the patient fact of earth
and hold your breath until your brick turns old and plum.
Then when I looked up the word for 'love' in Hungarian

the dictionary gave me what it means in tennis,
that zero invented they tell me by the Arabs, something
that makes computation possible involving very
large sums, possible though scarcely fun, something
connected with deserts and (where had I heard that
before) being content with silence and being alone.

21 February 2003