

4-2001

aprB2001

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "aprB2001" (2001). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1031.
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Greeting children at the gate

we do not know a simple answer
and there must be one

ghost in the galley, iceberg
blue in sun, you had come
into the acres of the ocean

where waves have voices.
What's more, you could understand
what they said
better than you could understand your heart's
dead reckoning on the next desired.

Psyche trembles with the energy of Luck.

Luck is the one who stands beside you in adversity,
the slim one, the resourceful,
Luck simulates the next idea.

Stimulates? No, not a slip,
a theodicy. Ideas
are not eternal, have no substance

they are only the sparkle of the system,
the force of when.

Today's cool rain was yesterday's Chicago.

6 April 2001

ON MY MOTHER'S NINETY-NINTH BIRTHDAY

Who is my warrior now
to fight for me
advance my cause as I have been
field marshal for so many?

The unseen army's on my side,
the long campaign
to make the word of me
last more than an hour

on so quick an earth.
Isn't it the one who from
the unseen world she is
who animates my hands?

7 April 2001

come to the window and grieve with me
the tumult of day falling past our changeless order
rigid as a battleship banging on the sea

to be so far from you today
as light is from the glass it passes through

on its way to let me see.

7 April 2001

Can these determine me?
The abstract of the absolute,
The true entanglements

. . . 7 April 2001

A SHORT POEM ABOUT EVERYTHING

The word I didn't remember
holds my arms

a phrase I thought it was
that had a story in it I could tell

could never know until I told it
and now I can't recall the word the phrase it was

a day when nothing marches

I try to remember it, a shelf
on the wall with majolica plates
egg yolk yellow in a dark morning
try to remember
someone below the shelf or shelves

what did I mean
what was thinking in me?

It was some expression used in everyday speech,
a broken dictionary, the meaning's
getting weaker, I'm getting colder,
it was a phrase
I had to interpret

 can she feel
 the way the clothing rests
 along her, inside the folds of body, how
can we live with our feelings, how can we feel all the time
and go on feeling,
 the skin is always screaming,

how can we feel.

Everything is an animal.

This is the common knowledge
we have spent our lives

trying to add to and to impart,

impair,

 overwhelmed
by the obvious
 one tends to sleep

and the warriors break down the door
will not stay from their sport
until I say something that makes sense

a long wait,
 cocaine snow dust on the hills above the river

to swim through language without speaking,
without deciding,
 only dwelling.

Have you remembered it yet
the starling (it wasn't the starling)

the common phrase
you interpreted to mean
shelves of lucid china on an English morning

and a married couple,
yes, you, they're married
talking underneath the salad dishes and the Spode

talking in common language

or is it a wolf at the door
diminishing my portfolio

green basket tisket tasket

everything forgets itself in me.

8 April 2001
Red Hook

What is the gender of provender or
why was I waiting at the stove
the gas was off the pot was full
of water only cold water

I keep forgetting what I came
into the room to do I hope
the world is not that way too
or I'll leave it nothing but cold water

not even infused by me
the tisane of my presence
insipid and soon forgotten not unlike
the cloying taste of cold water

too long left in an aluminum pot
by one more dead American me

8 April 2001

SEDER

Means order means

Arguably, the central paragraph in the Haggadah comes on the heels of Rabban Gamliel's explanation of the meaning of the three central foods - Pesach, Matzah and Maror. Immediately after that, we declare that:

in every generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he came out of Mitzrayim (Egypt)...

“telling the story” is a means towards “identifying with the story”.

Every story tells you. This is the otography, the life of the heard, the other hearing its way into you,

to be you. A seder in Egypt.

8 April 2001

UZBEKISTAN

At any bazaar there are endless rows of lepyshka. So many designs, names, smells... Eat your non with plov or grapes, and you will never forget the tasted of Uzbek bread, made with food hands and thee heat of the golden sum.

— from a website

And this too
You give me
The golden
Accumulation
That is you
Your hands
Bringing me
From all the ovens
Of the world
This pale bread.

8 April 2001

ST PAUL

How are the brows lifted
under bald canopies of thoughtful men
dogged by desire and knowing
this flesh that thorn

by which Rilke and Scriabin
took their poison
as if they couldn't know, thus leave,
the world until they knew how looks can kill,

the sad insinuations of the crimsonest rose.
This is our cathedral
but no bishop bothers it or us,
the light is orthodox enough

and night the devious heresy that makes us happy
abbreviated vista
of what hands see past midnight
you not quite asleep beside me.

9 April 2001

Evening. Outside sitting. Fence
New wood pale. A possible
Understanding of this place
At last. Sun on the little ridge southeast.
Squirrel making everywhere Japan.

9 April 2001

BASHÔ

,or the rebuke of memory

something needs me.

A semaphore from the clouds:

Can you read this old alphabet
of birds and clouds

randomness this once was me

your whole technology
this thing I am
to bring to you
from the furthest reaches of insanity

templum, sky desk, hard disk
spinning in your garden,
what you write on me will never be forgotten

On the slopes down from the equinox
the days stretch eastward
always close to me, be close to me,

and woodpecker and mourning dove
the stunts of spring.

9 April 2001

my first love was from New Hampshire
she showed me the granite outcrop they call
The Old Man of the Mountain

I still see it. The lake
Echo Lake was bluer than memory.
Memory is deeper than water.

I will never go back.

10 April 2001

Of course you're Jewish how else could the bronze
Gauleiters open up the book inside their brain
and find your visage there, filed neatly
under Enemies of the race, execrate.

10 April 2001

A NAME FROM HOMER

[Astyanax or Astywanax was the son of Hector]

Astywanax could not *ward*
the city his name meant him to,
Death took him young, his bones
maybe shielded some old wall
from some newfangled curse

Or not. Greeks never knew, Troy
never told. There is a growing
and a growing old. The tunes
of time's catastrophe are dissonant
or else just sad. Nothing really

happens. People die young
or grow unconscionably old.
In the meantime anxiety has such
warm hands. You place them
round my face, for one

moment out of that endless war
we call *the real* you look at me.

10 April 2001

AND IF IT WERE NOT DESIRE

that this angel said
what would answer from the things that lie
broken around our feet, tall
philosophical instruments
smashed against the legs of this chair

Isis was a chair, she made a chair of you,
sat down on what you were
and made you new

a woman sitting on a chair
sinks into you
orientates herself on your pivot.
Outrage at the heart of matter —
that it
is who

and can answer if you can listen.
You listen to her sit down on you like light.

There has to be an answer.
Isis sitting on her chair,

A star
impaled on your stare,
mortal fixity of what is there,

the sight of her is itself
her veil
in front of the is-that-isn't,

what you leave behind in each other,

in a white room
the shadow of a chair.

10 April 2001

breaking off a piece of moonlight
and spreading it on your upper arm
working it hard into your skin to
blend my sense of you with your sense of yourself

like a child playing with matchsticks until they make a word
a word he can't read
but others can, they look over his shoulder and see
See! He has made a word! and then the word burns

then I breathe on you and to you
my breath feels like a shadow fallen on the fine
hairs of your forearm, on the soft skin under your jaw
and I feel to myself like someone whose shadow has gone out.

11 April 2001

THE TERRIBLE TRAIN

Why did it take me so long to get on the train
The long dirty green train that snaked across India
Strewn with dust with dying men with families
From whom all the living had been snatched
And moribund poor people sprawled in strange comas
While I tried to find a place to lie down
It took so long for us to climb on board
Assing around in the shabby immensity of the terminal
Looking for nothing and wasting time
And why didn't I get on and take up my proper place
Me and my party
Who is my party
Who has anything to do with me
The train was terrible
I was alone on the train
Dried old people lay stretched out on filthy pallets
Shared with coffee machines and pantry products
A death train a nightmare the Orient Local
Going nowhere, I was angry and surly,
I was an angry member of the oppressor class
And still had nowhere to sit or lie down,
There were many of us, a party together,
Who did we think we were, we took forever
To get on board, in our canvas raincoats, our turn
Of the century clothes, our attitudes, our mastery
Of nothing, no one even seemed to see us, and the old
Stretched out here and there on seats and floors
Dingy dark compartments
Full of chiaroscuro and flies.

12 April 2001
[transcript of a dream]

The year before I was born
The wind on Mount Washington
Was measured at 231 miles per hour
Highest ever recorded at that peak.
I am not sure what this says about me
But I just learned the fact.
Dragon breath or shadowing cloud
Everyone an afterthought.

12 April 2001

For spring.

 The wild boar
tusked, gold-fanged
uplifting,
 lifting

 Adon
In the hard uprising,

 Spring
always kills.
That's the little secret in the dirt,

I want to write my name on your skin
My name is mortal.

12 April 2001
Rhinebeck

The wonderful ignorance by which a man
Proposes himself as an object of interest
Even desire to a woman who should know better
(And every woman does) continues to astonish
as I stare into the mirror, itself a lesbian
all mercury and dark, willing in her courtesy
(a mediaeval invention) to grant me a piece
of that action we call the Light
(the only thing we invented is the parenthesis)
(a sort of woman embracing the emptiness of me(n)).

13 April 2001