

11-2001

**novB2001**

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "novB2001" (2001). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1063.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/1063](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1063)

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](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

## ENGFÜHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL

The signature sings  
at the foot of the letter

listen it is from me  
all my favorite noises  
slip into your lap

see a foreigner I am  
after all these roses

6 November 2001

---

Parody? Or plain  
desire's sense?  
You'll never know.

Everything answers  
Is my answer.  
Everything asks  
Is my love song.

6 November 2001

---

So suppose in an empty room  
a few fading lilies unusually yellow  
stood in a blue vase, cobalt, what then?

Do you see her now, scuffling through leaves or  
barefoot at the brink of the bed? How clear  
does the picture have to be, oatmeal, band-aid,

blender with shot motor, serrated carving knife?  
Suppose you said an answer and I said yes,  
would that be true? Greeks had a simple word

for false but a compound word for true.  
English says I lie but no simple  
verb that says I am telling you the truth.

Allow it's not such an easy thing to do.  
She has so many names, for instance,  
each instance of her utterly accurate.

Only in dreamless sleep can we be certain  
who she really is, namely, no one.  
Because I am also the only lie she speaks.

We have been dreaming each other's dreams for years.

6 November 2001

---

Adolescent auto.

                    This is me.  
Cum stains on the steering wheel, I ask you.  
How can such things be?

                    Travel  
has a probity of its own, that amber blend  
of geography and fear and sheer bad luck  
  
it takes to get there. The lucky ones stay home.

6 November 2001

---

The current is meaning

Enough

I have learned how to write

To ride

7 November 2001

## AUTUMN

Or some old men with their sister  
alone on the porch with the moon  
is that what anything means

or slept too late to understand  
what it meant to want  
something unfolding no longer outside

but close enough to the door to feel  
the breezy conversation of the street  
isn't that eternity enough

a clock's hands caressing Henry James

2.

Sometimes I am tired of being everybody  
and want to repair to a plain house  
and walk around my yard with a plain face  
worrying about next spring's lawn

until I forget all the people I'm not  
and want to become again

look, I take your language in my mouth.

7 November 2001

---

Sauntering by easel light  
a sad sumptuous now-you-know

her identity is how you feel  
looking at the black core of her eye

the one that language says is my child  
could we be married more wonderful

beyond the words the intricate texts  
the special doubts that jukeboxes

used to analyze (full heart empty arms)  
unpunctuated by mere happenstance of bliss?

8 November 2001



---

embarrass the moment  
with a whistle

but where

do you put your lips  
to the wind

and then?

is it something sings  
up through them  
the bones  
made to whisper

north to where  
they think they hear?

but hearing  
is always hear  
the heart  
(he thumped on his

to illustrate  
the simultaneity

of source and destination)

9 November 2001

---

Edge is near middle

touches in the heart

I translate navel

rim hub hoop

and everything center

9 November 2001

## **Media means means or middles**

The girl in Latvia her flower  
rebukes the royal bomber

to be in the house of crime but not taste a morsel of that sly food

a dollar of course

it is not a quadrille from which  
anyone can extricate himself

lawyers and brokers rain down on the desert

a jungle made of sunlight and wind alone

and those who want to think about it  
have no material for thinking

believe the pretty pictures or.

9 November 2001

---

Initiate splendor instead.

Unforgiving imagery

Identity

Saltarelle — the womanless peace of the Dioskouroi  
stepping over the rooftops  
a gleam above small city

like autumn moonrise  
but the moon is already risen

and the light has faces in it  
and a voice

                  one speaks and the other's silent  
but they say the same thing.

9 November 2001

## LEAVEWELL

I am nobody you remember  
suddenly  
I am somebody you never knew

bottles of wine on my window sill  
drunken sunshine stumbling through  
and only I am sober

only the one you never knew.

9 November 2001

## FINDING A WAY TO IT

After all the friends have had their say  
the rooms rearrange themselves by night

of course everything is a God I love you  
as the gum machine said to the finger

as the nickel said to the antique wall phone  
call me when you can I am your mother

even though I look like the boy delivering pizza  
you turned the clock upside down on the marble mantle

to confuse the black angels who think time is a stone.  
leave a few pieces of the crust for me

you don't like it anyway, all chew and no cheese,  
pray for me in your blue glass votive lamp

pray for me with your butterfly wings  
your frozen custard machines your beaches

and especially your swollen tonsils, I'm tired  
of making lists, you do it, tell me what I need.

11 November 2001

---

By a fateful hour  
blend of caucuses  
a vote for Lydia

where gold rolls down rivers  
and they hold their rabbits  
solemnly asleep on laps

light up my eyes  
the curvature of space  
body relates

as the sound to the sound board  
into the dark bathroom  
bent forward washing her

hands is spoken

12 November 2001

---

What touches the tree to be about me?  
Aren't most people really about themselves

the way kids pedal tin cars up the hallways  
in old home movies, plaster panel walls in the Bronx

electric candles drip phony wax in sconces.  
It's all about time when it's not all about sex.

Bach for instance, those heterosexual English Suites  
surprising teenagers screwing around in the rec room

before we all died or moved to one room apartments.  
Even so copulation kept thriving, as Lear complained

— morality is the last pornography of old men.  
So examining these dead leaves carefully I deduce

there was once a thing called science and a tree  
came up out of the ground and cast a gently moving shadow

standing by itself like a Guernsey cow amber brown  
because time pisses on all of us, these golden showers.

13 November 2001



## AGGRIEVED BY THE ACT ITSELF

Blue disciplines scissor the back door  
Forgive my passion it's only a little war  
Between the swallow and the acid reflux  
We always taste what we swallowed last  
A tenor howling love songs to the iron moon

O sit there in front of me like a svelte  
Clam shell on the shores of Lake Orgasmo  
Across the room I can hear your body think.

13 November 2001

---

Why it wants so much what scares it so.  
Excuse us, the canary has gone to the movies

we're alone in the apartment can I touch you  
I mean when I touch you what do you think

exactly if think is the word for such a blue scream.  
And I feel you moving in me too.

13 November 2001

---

A climate by water  
a signature you hold  
my hand  
instructing the letters  
I am too tired not to write

like a sheet fluttering on the line  
an owl arrives.

13 November 2001

---

Most of me is close to you still  
and here is a city  
we are not allowed to forget

are we? Wine. Wine the same as you.

Thinking of you I hear the shiver of my vows  
cold night and glass

is it one more tiny earthquake or did you suddenly think of me?

13 November 2001

## FAUST ET MOI

I was always young. It needed no transformation music, pretty as it is, for me to seem so again. My beard and fusty robes sprang away from me the way leaves rush from a lawn, cleaned away by an invisible wind.

“To seem so again.” To seem to myself young, and seem so to you. To her.

I was the devil I sold myself to.

And Germany is calling again.

Faustus = *favustus* = fortunate, favored, favored by fate.

Faust = fist.

Which do I mean, my force or my fate? Am I agent or am I angel'd?

Spoused fun. Faust pun. He needs a wife I need a wife. What's true for him truer for me. Comparative of bliss.

He goes from woman to woman, not out of licentiousness but to seek the perfect wife. No matter how many he has. Marriage is no obstacle to married bliss. Find her, whoever she is. Whoever I seem to be.

Marguerite = *margarita*, 'pearl.' A string of pearls.

One after another.

Because he is a perfect husband he must marry everyone he meets. Or at least everyone who seems as if she might be the perfect wife.

His desire is the fire in which they're both to be refined. Defined. They are transformed by what he wants. A hoax, like the hoax of poetry.

This is not adultery but its opposite.

This is not infidelity. It is a pilgrimage of faith itself.

Faith in the perfectibility of person, in the perfectibility of relationship.

Adultery, adultery is settling for imperfection. Settling. It is as when we say of a substance that is not purely itself, it has been adulterated. Something is adulterated when it is not utterly true to itself.

So wrote Faust. (Take this out later so the reader can't tell me from him. From her.)

I am a bottle, dark green glass, barely translucent but translucent.

In me is a message carefully and neatly written, on sturdy paper with a decent ink, screwed tight and stuffed inside.

My name, personality, history and so on — all those are just the cork snugged into the mouth of this bottle.

The message is intact inside. I am in the sea.

I wait for you, wave. I wait for you, shore. I wait for you, hand.

Certainty was never my business. A puff of smoke, greenish, from my chalice. A few dead leaves, scarlet symmetries. Enough to go on. Guess.

She knew she was in trouble when she felt his eyes all over her, her body, not just the face, not just the glances that smooched along her cheeks to linger on her lips. Lips open, moving. To speak. His eyes were on her body. Body: midriff, loins, nape of neck, socket of knee, small of back, hollow of throat, curve of belly, chute de reins. She knew she was in trouble when she could feel him reading her skin, her shallow breaths, her cautious smile.

He stole her feelings. Shanghaied them into his huge complicated design where he worked them in, her feelings, so important to him, as if he had none of his own.

His phantom city he built around her. Live in me, he seemed to be saying. But he had no in.

She knew she was in trouble but knew he was in worse trouble. A perfectionist has no peace, ever.

He was a pilgrim through a world not yet finished. Never finished. He was to go on forever. He called that living, sometimes he called that loving.

She was afraid of him, so she took him in her arms. Maybe so close to her he could not hurt her.

She could see him: he studied her the way a blind man faces the rising sun.

How (she thought), how does what he sees have anything to do with me?

Open me, open me and read! He would say things like that, and no god, no devil, could say what he meant by such jargon.

The language of enthusiasm is always inexact. If one truly knew the thing one wanted, one would not go on wanting it, since want is consciousness of deprivation, and knowing is consciousness of possession.

Enthusiasm speaks from deprivation, approximates, yearns.

The shadow adds dimension to the man. She studies it in turn, trying to know the thing he makes happen, the thing of which he cannot be fully aware.

No man knows his whole shadow, she said, and he thought her clever for saying it. It made him more determined to possess her. Or not so much possess her, as possess that power which simultaneously summons, appropriates and dismisses all such images into and from the niche in the world, in the mind, that she presently occupied. Her amber yellow hair.

14 November 2001