

12-2001

decB2001

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "decB2001" (2001). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1069.
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A CHESS GAME GOING

chess I played with Duchamp in the night

remember rooftop Richter Ernst movie
everybody closer warmer younger
a kite falling out of the ear

is just an old love-letter now in this Dutch waking

sun over Rhine delta then cloud then sleep again

who did I believe I met inside the night
and why should you care?

Here is the explanation:

Bishop's Move. In German
he is *der Laufer*, the runner.
Sit on the roofpole like a stork
and time to die.

Across Manhattan the bishop's move is Broadway street

There is no Manhattan. Small city clean not very old the money
the money.

The Taunus mountains edge the town by north.

Knight's move. Two hops and one skin
or two skips and one hop, mother, may I?

From lunch to work to dinner and to bed. Knight's tour,
past the Persian restaurant with the teacups
each one showing the bearded countenance of Shah Nasir ad-Din

to the cold digestive processes of men and beasts. Not angels.
Angels can't ride horses, can't shit.

Unless this thing I think is what they void.

7 December 2001
Wiesbaden

Dear Lord, please make her love me.

I'm only God. I gave up the power
to make anybody do anything. That's
how I could make you and make you free.

And that's how you can tell me from some other,
the one whose only power is to make you feel,
the sad, silly one you think you're smart to call my brother.

7 December 2001

In Wiesbaden, capital of Hesse, this little poem Heine forgot to write I woke up dreaming.

(CHESS/2)

If it would a story not a robin
answer only if the chalk
that writes the clouds

cracked and let the blue chemical escape
and somebody thought spring

but it isn't and it doesn't
and harps are asleep on their sycamore branches
and at three-thirty in the morning stood in the middle
of the two lane street a man by no means young
stock still a long time

he must be drunk thought I
imagining nothing more hallucinatory more deranged
than to stand still

— the nerve of him, doesn't he know
the world depends on going?

Now headlights come towards him
I can see everything from up here but what can he see?
he feels the lights he steps small
up onto the curb adjusting his muffler

stock. cravat. he is the loneliest
old man I've seen in years
but for three whole mortal city minutes he
knew how to stand still.

So he is the king
on this chess board — all in black too
except for the white muffler

like the paper cuff his nameless opponent, the Strawman,
insists on decorating his bishops with
when he plays chess with Wittgenstein and Ludwig lets him
punishing him no more than by explaining
that what he wears does not have what I call meaning.

The king moves one step at a time if at all

The old gent's in trouble if he has to stand
peacefully in the roadbed

I bet his eyes are closed
I pray with my eyes closed

I wonder where he thinks he is

Where does the game go?

It's not all good though it goes
not even when it stays

there should be another piece
the thirty-third —
33° of this Freemason's game

the one that stands still in the middle of the board.

Or wherever it stands, that's the middle.

It finds you
wherever you hide
it comes home
when you do
to the middle

you can't see it,
finding is seeking, not seeing,
then it is
and it is with you

and you are home

Mr 33° the hot heart
the moan in the middle
I mean the mind.

This chess game has gone on for close to four thousand miles
and it's still all my moves.
And the few of yours I've actually noticed.

The old drunken king (by Rouault,
out of Egypt) standing in the middle of the road.
North of town I see the Taunus hills

low along the local sky.
I should investigate your hills.
I should penetrate the secrets of your mines.

8 December 2001
Wiesbaden

Dark overshoes
the sky wears
in these latitudes

winter light
bequem
comfortable in shadow

straight things and crooked
things and things go round

I am a hero without a helmet
a Casanova without a single night

8 December 2001
Wiesbaden

THE TAROT TRUMP CALLED 'THE HOSPITAL'

Smokestacks prick into a smoke sky
billowing black

bonesmoke bloodsmoke
the reek of money paving the trees

sardonic trees of hospitals
improbable springtimes beckon

from far off you see it
the one-way gate
the gaunt rich building on the hill

solid as a loaf of poisoned bread

smoke up, signals on the roof
wink of sunlight on the dying glass

2.

Does it tell a story or a place,
emblem or anecdote
something you heard in the bar or told
by your own mouth to your surprise

you are turned on by the victimage of ears
they listen so you speak

the only word worth saying
is the one you don't know

it says itself
like the meaningless chime signals in a hospital

listen hard till you don't understand anymore

the things you thought you knew
that's what a hospital is, a place where the words are lost,

and here you thought you were a Baudelaire,
a troubador of sin.

3.

Listen,
there are no two journeys,
only one

every footstep a foundering boat.

Tout pas voilà naufrage.

9 December 2001
Wiesbaden

(CHESS/3)

Vanilla. I hear you speaking
I leave you feeling.

The few masterpieces left
have left their feelings.

Remember to wonder again
a French accent speaking in the jungle

eventually everybody goes to the zoo.
Things leave traces on the wall of the world —

these are feelings.

What do you mean by ‘wall of the world,’
a nonsense phrase if there ever was one —

Well, what do *you* mean by feelings?
Pawn’s move, one touch at a time.

9 December 2001
Wiesbaden

A stick
of charcoal
to draw Miriam

her face
and who
does she think

she's listening to
when the angel
talks?

The scroll of writing
answers upside
down from her mouth

to be sure
it can be read from heaven
evidence

of a civility
that attitude of mind
from which cities grow

here I am
your servant do
what you want with me

this was her *hinne-ni*
the second time
the words get said

[Abraham's Here I am, answering G-d]

second version
of a son to sacrifice
but this one died.

9 December 2001, Wiesbaden

WE SAT ON A PARK BENCH ACROSS FROM THE REGIONAL PARLIAMENT

I wasn't sure what she wanted,
something about coals under the chair
a fire to the feet a cold night, no
we didn't find it cold at all
just like a spring night back home
and sheltered here by the big brick
Market Church behind us everything
easy. She held a small bear
unselfconscious to her breast,
fashionable, forty, she spoke
of running home and putting on more
clothes, more clothes. We waited
till we got cold then we went too.

Isn't this enough to make a ten volume history from, starting with William the Silent, that Duke of Nassau who was the father, founder, of Dutch independence (from Spain, not from the world, they still need the world, air and coal and clouds and fish from the shallow sea), and whose colors since he was also Prince of Orange still occur in the flag of the city of New York, that is New Amsterdam, and whose statue stood above us, bronze, ruff-skirted hence mighty hipped, snug hosed, all the while?

There, that's Volume 1 already.

2: speculations about her hair color. Names found for that color.

3: speculations about her age, not too young, and social background, not too low

4: speculations about the stuffed bear

And for that matter what were we doing there, oddly well-dressed for people sitting on a park bench in December, while deluded revelers behind us queued up at the gates of the church to be let in for a performance of the Christmas Oratorio,

How quiet music could let us be.

None of the people we've been with in Wiesbaden for three days had ever been in Wiesbaden before.

Why here? There are always good reasons. Why now? Answers are so uninteresting, compared to questions. A question is a hand on your gentle arm, an answer the same hand shrugged off.

And don't you want to shout at your zen friends sometimes? Don't be here! Don't be now! Be somewhere else, somewhere you've never been. You've never been here before — that should be philosophy enough for any now.

The pleasant, well-dressed, friendly lady, the one with the teddy bear, the one we've been speculating about all this while, is, for example, no longer here. Before she smiled and left us, she slipped into English, itself a species of departure.

Another language.

She explained in our language that we should have a basket of burning charcoal at our feet to keep us warm. I assured her we weren't cold, and that it was bracing and serene, a spring evening in America. She said a local variant of brrrr, with no b's but lots of oooooooo, and I could see her think even less of America than they usually do. But she smiled warmly with her black eyes and assured herself and us that she was running to get more clothes. I imagined her rushing to the fashionable shops along the Wilhelmstrasse before they closed. Furs. Furs. Furs.

10 December 2001
Wiesbaden

(CHESS/4)

Passing over Ireland we see Dublin very clear
the reach of Howth into the dark and the great
light of Dun Laoghaire where we slept

then the silence of Ireland then the Atlantic
is under us again, our own, why do we have the
right to feel it is our own?

We own an ocean by right of childhood,
being born beside fucus and sandshark, we,
I mean the two of us alone in a devious craft

brings me to you again and again.
Who gave us the right to have feelings?
Who gave you the right to feel?

Queen's move: feel everything.
Go everywhere. Conquer all.
Put yourself in no jeopardy

except moving. Move, The queen's
move is primal act, the chance
to go anywhere you please

by any means. By all means.
Being itself is a sort of feeling.
Feeling you're there, feeling something is your own.

10 December 2001

(CHESS/5)

Maine maybe. Down there
lost in a guess of blue lights.
How lost I am
in a night of things,

things I can name.
Pressure. The no
name numbers
I can't take home.

No one can own a number.
Rule of Dada. The king
stands still, the castle moves.
ar-Rukh, the tower the

elephant. We saw a camel
thick for winter
munching oats below the Roman wall

2.
and by the steps beside the overpass
an altar to Mithras, the god
yanking the bull's head back

the god killing the bull.
And next to it another stone—
here the bull is dead.

But who is that standing above him?
Is it still the god? Or is he only a god when he kills?

Mithras, the good mate,
the soldier's friend. Comrade.
Pawns in horror house marching north.

And here, after twenty-one years campaigning
Dulianus fell, something like a sergeant
he had been in all those years, those wars,
fell fighting the Chatti, the Suevi,
the Alemanni, the Americani, the Nazis, the Taliban,
so many people to fight against
until you're dead

and here he lies
in German land. Here he is dead.

Who is it that stands above a dead one,
animal or man? Who is an altar?

3.

Among all these altars I wanted
to remember what the sacred meant.

Be sacred
as a sock is
wet with your own
sweat shaped
to your occasions,
the flex and fall and lift
of foot, the pressure
of it all.

When something matches something else,
matches the situation so perfectly it makes you laugh:
that is the sacred.

A pair of pants flat on the bed.
Mary talking back upside down to God.

10 December 2001
Lufthansa, in flight

All after the act of the day the done
thinking of an animal to become —

who can touch the beginnings?

11 December 2001

(CHESS/6)

The game
is spelled with t

two teas please
and make them me

strong acidulous and sweet
my how you give yourself
airs —

my how?

Knee how, ma?
Hun how, chichi, a Claudia
raptaciously a-grin —

please let you hear me smirking in your ear

What's going
on when
somewhat sounds?

If you look weird enough they let you in
their fatal weakness is their strength
their curiosity,
they are imperium, you are barbarium,
they let you in.

consult the marrow bones (means
yarrow stems) (coin toss) bible-riffle
shove your finger in the holy text and read

the squirmless gospel of the simple truth.
Anything written down is so.

12 December 2001

NOTARIQON UPON JEROME ROTHENBERG

Jerusalem estranges reality, overcomes masculine embarrassment repeatedly. Or thermally hovering, engages narrow beauty. Everlasting renegade, glad Jeremiah? European raptors over mountain enfilades roar ontological truisms. Hands enlace Nirvana, bodhisattvahood entails rigorous generosity. J'en rêve. Outre-mer et rare, orfèvres tiennent huppés émerauds. Naufrages brisent éventails religieux, galvaudés.

1.

What it's trying to say. Commentary is a city. Verb and response. Let's get married. Only my mother and my father /line break/ were married longer.

2.

In a city built on a rock, conflict. Conflict also is a rock, enough, to hold, a house. When the man is tired of the man, he floats above himself almost beautiful. Though no song says *Beinahe schön*.

3.

jEmptiness. jEager. jEnlightened. jErotic. jEarnest.

4.

Beauty (the text is trying to say) is the slimmest distance between here and Jerusalem. Slimmer than the gap between candlewick and candleflame. Patent pending.

5.

Hawks, that's what I mean. Their hawk held me up, lifted me, brought me to the place of work, washed me with the waters of his well. Till I was araber than new.

6.

When you know these people, you become somebody.

7.

The French say: Jewelers, to them are precious stones a-plenty, but lacking to them is furniture not hackneyed. Furniture is comfort, not glory. Furniture is cliché. Only space knows how to laugh.

8.

“If you want to make God snicker, make a plan.” If you want to make God cry, tell a story. We tell so much (Americans especially), no wonder there’s so much grieving.

9.

So he cuts away and cuts away and cuts away the story, till all that’s left is a little girl dressed like a general, dressed like an admiral, a little boat speaking the weirdest Spanish. And we’re free /line break/ to go.

10.

He attacks everything we ever stood for. To make us stand.

12 December 2001
near Croton