

11-2004

novF2004

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "novF2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 876.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/876

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.



This clay pot was never fired,
the river never left its source.

My father led me to a spring
in the rock, I filled my hands and drank.

I have been looking for it ever since.
Every mountain. Every flank.

14 November 2004

=====
Look closely at me
I think I am the one you want,
at least the one you mean.

Me with my foot in your door
my suitcase full of encyclopedia
on your doorstep. Me, me, me.

I am the deal you can't resist,
the moon you can't keep out
with your paper Wal-Mart shades.

I peer in all the time,
I imitate the grain of wood,
become the door, become the floor,

I am the way by which you
come to know the place you are.
I am all wheels and triangles,

pyramids and red onions,
sponges to used to wipe up wine last night
you're still drunk from today

or is it me. I am the sound
of your voice saying No, no, no.
I live inside your mouth.

14 November 2004

=====

Camilla, you are a crane.
I have known this for several weeks.

Do not ignore me. This
is a Sacred Resemblance.

When one finds one's bird
things fall into place

the way a bird fits into the sky.
I am a crow. As you know.

14 November 2004

=====
In the barrel of our “Birth of Venus” ballpoint
the mysteriously thoughtful lady
so well concealed by her nakedness
stands still while *Sandro Botticelli*
as a blue signature floats up and down
slow in the clear viscous gunk of novelty pens.

Only the name moves. Her name
is not written, though she is surely
Anadyomene, standing
on the lower half of *Tridacna gigas*
or no, not a clam, it is a scallop shell,

a sign that Venus also is a pilgrim
in this dry world of ours, always
brings her ocean with her, makes us wet.
Her sign is sudden water. Joyous Lake.
The silly little craftsmen hops up and down
exalted and depressed by what he’s made.

15 November 2004

FLATBED HAULING GENERATORS

There was or will be a spotlight night.
Late sun on the gloss of well-brushed hair
as a girl snailshells her backpack along
under the mountain towards J.C.Penney.

Forget rapture. A book is in the mail
to every house no one will ever read.
It is a bible of earth's own religion
—I believe in wood, in water, and in steam—

no one will read, mountains shimmer
at the purple time of day, a Hummer
grazes in the Best Buy parking lot,
electricity rinsing out of the air.

And a gull goes over. I know this bird,
he has blessed me more than once before,
shadow of the cross shadow of a gull
soaring soft between the kill and sleep,

ankle of the day. But still I'll write it
and by putting it into language will
deliver it automatically to every
English-speaking house, and you too

will wake up and find it has come
under the door and lies on the carpet
spread open beside the breakfast table
urgent, it needs you, forgettable as milk.

15 November 2004, Kingston

MERCY

Mercy. Years in his eyes.
He was crying, even
so suddenly. What did it know
in him that made the tears,

the years, those gleaming
automata begin to roll?
And mercy for what?

Who did he ask to spare him?
Was he asking anything of anyone at all?
Maybe there was just this word
'mercy' that made its way to his mouth
without passing through his heart or mind,

just a word on its way alone.
As if somebody else
was talking to somebody else
but using this man's mouth.
And made him cry.

15 November 2004

=====
Some again. Come back.
Near enough to try.
But why?
The late thing,
the opera past its expiration date
still yammers in his head.

Not far away some knight on some white horse
jabs at some Dragon with his lance –
o sweet young man
your metaphor's transparent.
The captive maiden is herself the Dragon,
your lance is your lance,
when you win you lose.

A dragon is what you need to leave alone.

And if that's what dragons are,
what do you suppose an opera is?
A Mighty Fortress is Our God
and then the dancing girls come on
skating through the filmy Paris air
while armies rest their arms and watch.

Soon it is over. Lots of people
seem to have died. Others,
apparently alive, have left the stage.
You see them later getting into cabs,
lighting cigarettes, fondling rosary beads.

The things people do.

As far as you can determine,
nothing ever really ends. It's up to you
to find the frontiers between one thing and the next.
Phases, you think. To be alive at all has boundaries.
Or live without them and give yourself a break –
while cars are snarled in traffic people talk undisturbed.

15 November 2004

=====

Imagine a different morning,
one the bird understood less well
and you more thoroughly.

It would have lines in it
for you to follow
and little rooms where you can sit down

to catch your breath or cry
and wait
for the avenue to get to the street

for the corner to start singing for a change
in all those voices
only other people have

and the bird knew hardly anything of this,
serene in its own anticipation
of a bird-form afternoon

and then the glossy night for both of you
soon to come,
genderless and passionate and free.

16 November 2004

=====

Am I still waiting for *anything*?
Anything got here long ago and went to sleep,
woke up and left again
while it was looking out some window
into the park where the animals are.
They have a different name for it here
but it is satisfied with his own
which all today has been *it hears them roar*.

16 November 2004

After reading a Questionnaire

“Do you consider yourself a religious person?”

What do you suppose? I’m a poet,

I write liturgies.

Liturgy is *laou erga*, work of or for the people

work for their tongues to tell,

their hearts to feel.

Leitourgia. Liturgy.

What else have I been doing all these years?

16 November 2004

[watching Jeff Scher's *Grand Central*, Olin 101]

(thinking of Robert Duncan)

I am with you now
watching the dead walk

I love their feet in shoes

some of them are Jews
so I love them best
like my mother and my wife

this town walks all over me

I am literal because a shadow

a shadow is literal

duck walk

Sefer Yetzira
the ancient Book of Formation
from which our qabbalah comes

all these people come from there too
they all are Jews
everyone is carrying a secret
you help me decode –

Write a poem
you seem to say
then you'll understand

sitting around hell in your pajamas
innocent as Wodehouse

they all are coming
for every two feet we count one secret
the Middle Pillar

the bilateral symmetry of the Perfect Man
who is a woman

and the secrets are coming towards us fast
and going by

you can't count on them to stand and stay,
can't say Sit, be a good dog of a citizen,
be a fish and swim through
this amazing early morning rush hour light
swelling down through the eastern windows
that had been sealed up for fifty years

you never saw them opened

this light is new

*The light is you
you tell me,
it's up to you
just write it down
these words will make dead people rise and walk!*

But won't they just be zombies, Robert?

I have gone into the sanctuary of God
with bare feet,

the stone and the tiles I stand on
tell me different things I must believe,
I must believe everything I'm told,
where else would human history be?

stone says No one made me, I just am

tile says A man made me, in Portugal
a hundred years ago and made me blue
I lie here so you can walk

I walk while the light lets me

and then the tunnel debouches into the concourse
and the light is made of wrought iron
and the iron is on fire

the dead are firmly back to life
light knives through them

this knife gives life

I see her face at last
hidden in brightness

they have been hurrying to work a hundred years.

16 November 2004

IN THE QUIET ROOM

1.

Air gets into the system
causing steam to rise in the pipes
making a sound like music or
someone pounding on the door.

Causing the inspector to neglect the escalator
permitting the arrival of a fatal dog
the check lost in the mail
the balcony on fire

and still she stands
signaling to her lover by flapping the red Bukhara carpet.

2.

It catches the sun as it furls and unfurls
it's only a couple of feet long

when he sees it he will know he must come to her soon,
this very night, disguised as a wolf.

3.

Here is the wolf. He brings his own door,
sets it up between them so he can break through,
he seizes her with his rapt and learned paws,
cries out O Fox my Fox and carries her outside
in the manner of a bridegroom hauling his bride

the whole world is the bridal chamber
into which he carries her, armful of honeymoon,
old ivy dithering in the open window
because the children of such love breathe indeed
but they know and use a different kind of air.

16 November 2004
Hopson

<late:> =====

1.

By task, a basket.
Full of reeds.

To include something in itself
takes care.

It is as big as Saint-Sulpice,
it stands around
to impersonate a crowd.

Diesels at 2 a.m.
and then a plane.

Imagine going anywhere!

2.

Imagine not always being here!
How strange 'here' must be if one can go away from it.
Locusts eating wheat in Idaho I saw.
Hotlands of the unguitarling west.

We were almost close enough to know
but then a flag went up instead of the moon
and the Pleiades were plainly visible. Indians
called them The Basket of Seeds.

Planted language long ago. Grew up to bring us
strange horizons aglow with senseless light.
Sourceless light. No tree, no star.

16 November 2004

DAY OF OSIRIS

This year Wednesday. Herмосiris.
Who knows everything
because he's dead.

What little there is to know
the dead do it.

And then forget
and come back east again
to live with us.

But they come east from the east—
only the dead and the gods
know how to do that.
Today is the day of the death of Osiris.

*

And the girl cutting my hair in the mall
said We have a god of that name too
where I come from. Where is that?
Vermont, she said, the Northeast Kingdom.
I've been there, it's flat, flat as Quebec
but I didn't see any gods there though.
We don't keep them in churches,
they're little, but mighty strong,
we keep them in our cellars, our pockets,
our laps. Some look like spindles
and some look like old medicine bottles
clear glass almost green, some look
like branches of trees, or shells, and one
looks like a dried-up tangerine.
What does Osiris look like?

I'm not supposed to tell, but he is black,
tall for his age, and very wise.
I'd like to see your gods some time.
Come up any autumn, I'll tell you who to call.

*

Because they're everywhere
and no way not to feel
their quiet power never shouting

always hear their conversation—
the gods never stop talking in your head
if you listen,

hevod, your head
is what the old books call the West
n Dwat, the dead house across the river

the Nile between the living and the dead
is the same water between me and thee
only the gods know how to cross it

I touch your hip you take my hand.

*

Go west
they said
into the voices
in your head

keep crossing the river
the one that is always flowing

from your right to your left
and you go on

always needs to be crossed

especially today
when the sirens hurry up the lonely highway
and god only know what emergency is on now
and in the ivy birds bang at my window
and it keeps saying in my head Osiris Osiris.

17 November 2004

=====

Interesting that this skillful
window showed
the rain coming down
and I see you. I see you.

17 XI 04