

# Robert Gibbons

## AT THE HAWK'S WELL

A rumor has led me, a story told  
Over the wine towards dawn.

—Yeats

My heart fought insomnia all night collaging a faultless life out of wandering, debris, risk, profligacy. The sudden flood of sleep demands I perform a play. On the bare stage I drive a large spike into one of the many gouges in the wooden floor. It bolsters a red wool stocking, encasing a red-glazed Oriental jar.

Ancient artifacts & masks extend the space. Behind the curtain everything is muted, not black & white, but earth-toned, nature brought inside. The plot will center around the idea that our tribe, the other actors, are forbidden color until the jar is found.

I regret not studying, just beforehand, Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*. Could it be found among the volumes of the theatre's basement library? Opening night immanent.

The curtain parts.

The director, a woman, is in the audience prompting what I'll say. Other cast members appear on stage: a group of young men sitting around café tables reading newspapers. I tell them I'll speak spontaneously, & that their role will be to speak their minds, ask questions, shout out, create potential dialogue, or choric banter.

## ELLIPTICAL, CRYPTIC FRAGMENTS STAND IN FOR ENTIRE PHILOSOPHICAL TRACTS

Need to find a secret place equating itself with a sense of freedom. It had to be brand new. Even with the newly discovered, recently bloomed mimosa in the neighbor's yard out the back window, oppression at home, created by a fissure of children, obsessive obligations, manipulative guilt married into, turned me out, forced me to look elsewhere to figure out a dynamic problem without rational solution. The last sentence is a stupid as the dog constantly barking two streets over today, & doesn't come close to defining the dilemma.

I packed a few books, a bottle of Bordeaux, waxed-paper cups. Drove ahead. Thought ahead, north. Didn't really want to be away long, or to leave her. Constricted chest loosening with each mile. Made a sharp turn. A right turn, it turns out. I eased toward the sea, inching slowly downward toward sea-level.

God, when I saw the cliff in the near distance jutting above the road, man, that majesty meant freedom. Shortly I realized it was part of an island across the channel at the tip of the peninsula. A few cars were parked as close to the water as they wanted. There were no No Parking signs.

I shut the engine off. Watched water flow, cliff stand tall. Locked the car, & walked. That rhyme's as dumb as the two dogs barking back & forth out there past the fading mimosa. Williams once wrote that his work aimed, "to reconcile the people & the stones." Felt that there. Grey stones, words, green, white lines, microcosmoses.

At the end of the strand I turned away from all civilizations except previous ones. Lone figure at the low-tide mark bent gathering something. Here, the idea of freedom surfaced. From or of? Half-way down a man entered at the previous division of civilizations, carrying a child. Asian. Instinctively, I knew he was linked to the figure gathering seaweed or mussels in the distance.

I'm home. Free. Not of, but from. If that answer seems elliptical, or cryptic, I can only recommend finding a secret place, where elliptical, cryptic fragments can stand in for entire philosophical tracts, or lifelong analysis. The lone dog now barking varies its monotonous tone. The screechy squeals it's reaching must be a mere plea for freedom. However twisted, anguished.