

6-2013

juneA2013

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "juneA2013" (2013). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 246.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/246

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.

=====

**Listening to morning
the noon whistle six hours away
plus enough minutes for breakfast and matins
for any monk. And cities
are monasteries now
each nun in her small room
the narrow aisles of shanty gardens
midnight morning glory, the chant
going up night and day
everybody following the Rule.
Today I'm the first monk afoot.
Almost colorless in dawn.
Phlox by the rails. June begins.**

1 June 2013, Boston

=====

Sometimes you sit there
and see all around you the cubes of light
arrayed mosaic through the air
gists of color hurting towards your house
where you sit idly slapping a black belt
gently against this and that
as if to chide matter for being
so big and needing so much from us,
so many words to say the simplest thing.

2.

So we built cathedrals to be silent in,
control those vagrant colors, chain them
to a telling image in the window
or frescoed on a wall.
But here you sit bewildered
among the scattered gemstones
light crackling and sizzling all round you,
the gentle tongue of the black belt
slapping tabletop, teapot, thigh.
You love so well why don't you speak.

(1 June 2013, Boston)

=====

Get near enough to bite

(a leaf)

(downwind)

in another city otherwise —

getting the hang of a place

the lewd coordinates of space and time

by which you contrive to dance.

The stores are open now

the milk is glad.

Even the villains are smiling,

the horses rumble around just for show

but the birds, the birds

are agents of an alien power.

1 June 2013, Boston

=====

**If I didn't belong to somebody else
would I belong to me?**

1.vi.13, Boston

WHILING MUSEUM

Museum
of time.

Here
are all the strategies assembled
for being by.
For sitting at the sidelines
and watching time go by.

Or (in the next exhibition hall)
it takes a lot of energy,
human energy,
to make time pass.
It needs our help to do.

Without us, stalled time
spreads out, pools deep.
The ocean (seventy percent of the globe)
is nothing but time
left unexperienced by us,
before we came to be.

That is why we love to sit
and watch the sea,
the glad sadness

**of every seascape. We watch
lost time rise and fall,
and here comes some of it again
to touch our toes,
the waves. The waves
lost time coming back to us.**

1 June 2013, New Bedford

ARS AMATORIA

Touch

without talking

the way

the waves the shore.

1.vi.13, *MV Cuttyhunk*

=====

**Can the sea tell
one island from another.**

**Can the young woman
lying on the sand with her eyes closed
tell one ocean from another?**

**We are strange parts of a strange world —
alas, how well we fit in.**

1 June 2013, Cuttyhunk

=====

**By wisdom's token
a hat should be your house—**

**There are sparrows regular
and one order of determined doves
slow fluttering eaters, maters
as often as they can, by *Venus*.**

**She owns most birds.
Principled on the animal arrivers
we accept the afternoon, it comes
the way the sparrows do,
or as riding mowers, those Saturday dragons,
roar us from our rest.**

**And lo! The sun has passed its crises,
totters towards the midden of old time —
butterfly wings and heroes' graves.**

1 June 2013

THE INSTRUMENTS

1.

Reaching for what you gave me first
a word that says more than words say

almost afraid to be where I am
bell clanging in the sea next door

because there is a lift to things a levity
to heave in numbers to be one prime more

and still be beauty in a bounded way
shape shown is self known

the land also licks at the sea.

2.

Less a problem than a love song
the way a bird is supposed to be

implication of the *concerned listener*
makes language like old roses

seastorm havocked in last fall
now leaves the rocks often roseless

but those that live fulfill their meaning
subtle raptures in the noonday glare

the afterwit of something said.

3.

Old poetry is always complaining
you don't love me or too much or someone else

inducing a queasy phase in what is said
always sloshing from 'me' to 'you' as if

as if we had anything to do with what's the case
lone gull on the houseroof the man at work

or all the silent things that make the world
palaverless and fine as wind

least said soonest paradise.

2 June 2013, Cuttyhunk

=====

**Waiting for the wind
her latest instrument
write small so the ants
can read it when they pass —
we have such trouble
with the biggest words
the ones that stretch
to heaven and beyond,
we stumble on the serifs
of unreadable words
simple enough if we
could only see them whole.**

2 June 2013

=====

**Some things we do
or wanting to
why not a catarrh or a cloud
another century remembers this
no flashlight no cigarettes
the sprawl
of music still contained —
remember when the street said
only language or machines? —
solid practices as if bread and cheese.
Listen to me, pilgrims, last night was an exception.
Day lasts forever.**

2 June 2013

TO CHARLOTTE, *ON OUR TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY*

A love like yours makes so much light
it casts the shadow of us back through time
till there's no time in my life that actually
feels Before You.

All the arguments
were lovers' quarrels settling themselves
for us before we spoke, and all my
writing was learning to spell your name.

2.

You speak two languages and I speak one
but between us everything in the world gets said.
You live with language as an alchemic animal,
turning that one into this, my problem
is turning silence into language, and there too
your light foretells a pattern on my page.

3.

Which all sounds formal and metaphysical,
self-fond palaver when what I mean
(it means) is something hard not to say,
how you have made me happy and my life
more telling and more focused than before.

To put it plainly. Your love gave me me.

4.

You can tell I've been reading Shakespeare's
sonnets lately where all is what some 'you'
is always doing to some curiously shifty 'me.'
I should be past all that by now, twenty
years of studying you should make it clear
your life is precept and energy and joy
in the specifics of each thing, and all I need
is to mirror the gestures of your mind.
And also sometimes you let me keep still.

5.

So when they say forever they must mean
something that feels like this today, waves
never stop reaching the shore, the distances
shimmer in the shapes of light, the wind
falls and rises, your birds come by to feed
and everything's so new. An island that is you.

3 June 2013

Cuttyhunk

=====

Of course be other than.

Quiet discourse

Japanese fan

fiddled with,

trifling with languages

so I get to know my own.

3 June 2013

TRAGACANTH

Maybe.

Or gum from the peach tree
in the Hungarian back yard —
how many years.

I had an alchemical
laboratory in the cellar
and didn't know it.
I thought it was all logwood,
spirit lamp, daydreams, silverfish,
window screen, dust, dark weeds outside,
the peach tree wrapped in burlap, sulfur,
test tube, book.

But it was alchemy.

My parents told me so
by leaving me and it alone.

3 June 2013

=====

**Or to tell another thing
there was no animal but me.
Furious transept
of an invisible cathedral —
my hand at your switch.
Am I old enough yet?**

3 June 2013

=====

**Have I told you how you derange me?
Soup for breakfast, a swim in cloud?
Last year there was a seal beside you,
a Hebrew letter, tsaddi, beneath my arm.**

3 June 2013