

5-2009

mayB2009

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "mayB2009" (2009). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 546.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/546

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.

DAWN

Let the commentators sleep.

Nothing happened in the Bible overnight.

Some king still whoring round the hilltop shrines,

lovers lost at midnight in the vineyard

scared of foxes. The moon

washes her hands of our whole mess.

4 May 2009

= = = = =

In that town the special leaves
on ordinary trees
brings buyers and speculators both
from all around—

one week mid-May the freshest
leaves are out and children swarm
to the tender topmost branches and collect
easy money from the earthbound looters

down below. A dollar a leaf and up.
Thousands camp outside town in cornfields
still tawny with stubble, angry crows.
They sleep light to get the early leaf—

seven days of frenzy then all the leaves are gone.
No shade in town but lots of money—
late August some trees have put out leaves again—
how does that work?—there are mysteries here—

more people come hungry from the city
for the last of the green. How rich the barren streets!
Those leaves must cure everything,
maybe make old men young again.

I never get around to going, I hate crowds,
and so on, I don't know what the virtue
of such leaves might be. They're good for
something, surely. Money doesn't lie.

4 May 2009

= = = = =

What must you tell me if I ask?
Which way does the Jordan flow
through the heart or through the will?
Beneath the rocks a little moisture lurks—
does it partake of water's virtue still
or does lying motionless erase its soul?
Are we meant to move, or settle down?
Is it wrong to sow what we do not reap?
Why does any single question have
all questions in it, when did time begin
and who made it, or me, or why?

4 May 2009

= = = = =

This pencil I found on the ground
has religious questions stored in it.
Such energies it picked up from the dirt,
gravel beneath the buckthorn tree
outside the house where the old priest died.

4 May 2009

VIRGIN

Long before you were born
long before anyone was born
there loved a maiden
with more than one body

she moved through the world
the way we speak, one word
and then another then silence,
so she from body to body went

or when she wanted to
she could live between.

4 May 2009

= = = = =

Before what we see
what the sky
wrote on the earth
we have to rub away the dream,
that luminous mistake.

5 May 2009

DREAM PALACE

What place was that
with so many I knew,
the old were young again
in my arms, the young
were old, grey streaky
blonde beings close-
pressing each other,
vague sheeted revelers,

all of them knew me,
knew my tastes, my musics.

The whole huge building
was an anatomy of sin
without the thrill, without
the fun of consciences.

All it was, was us.

The last boat or plane
of the day had left.

Making love in purgatory
was what they seemed to be.

I didn't believe in those things
but the dream believes in me.

Telum autem rigidum

it said about the door
but all around the place
the sex was bland as golf.
All white, wrinkled,
wake up now, hard to,
wake from what I never
grasped, the flabby
customers all round me
smiling at me as I smiled,
all of us puzzled, childish,
switching age like jewelry,
I never did believe in being young.

5 May 2009

= = = = =

But breathing in and breathing out
both drive the dream away and make it
clearer — a bad play overlong
you remember next day, angry
at the actors for not really being
who they pretended to be so well,
angry at me for not being me.

5 May 2009

TIME

Cast away this flower
before it falls
austere as dawn
on a day with no afternoon.

5.V.09

CHURCHES

Tilework and fresco

wall a mind in.

Go inside to go to heaven

old churches said.

Stay there in the silence

till you forget everything

you want, desires

are your only chains,

clanking affirmations

of your selfish self.

The fresco says. Mosaics

invite you to be bright,

one glittering miracle among

a million gleaming others,

each as beautiful as you

and necessary, They claim.

Quiet in shadow

you hope no priest

comes into your religion,

the crimson light

of the votive candle
is all the doctrine
you require, the blue
light of the Lady chapel

windows. It all
comes from outside.
You have come in here
to find the way out.

5 May 2009

VENEZIA

Shallow places of the afternoon
beckoned. Can I trust you
enough to touch your thigh
shyly, beside the table,

when all the birds are busy
with the indifferent charity of tourists
tossing crumbs on the piazza
while policemen frown?

Have I found your ski, this,
or is it still the cloth between?
So soft you are, so slight my touch.
Your eyes tell me nothing.

Teenagers lounge by laughing
at the sign in three human languages
that tells them, tells us,
it breaks the law to feed the pigeons.

5 May 2009

= = = = =

They are cunning in their way
up there, mild disasters in the leaves,
a squall of squirrels chattering
make me jungle too. I stretch
animal skin over mind bone. Here.

5 May 2009

=====

S O . m .

for J.W.

It could fit. It could slip in
between the moment and the moment,

the blue space
between one thought and the next thought,

that is not blue. That isn't you.
It is the gap where freshness falls.

And for an instant you are no one—
the ailment is identity,

the relief is actual.
Come there again and again and again,

the blue that is not blue,
blossoming undistracted by a single flower.

5 May 2009

NOT READY

Not ready for morning
still caught in night webs
luckless chatter of a few
pale bodies squirming
in the virtual, no virtue,

a ballerina's elbow cocked
all the also's, stick it in
ink and start believing—
Rumî was a man once
and to him appeal beyond
the shadows of his shadow
the untribed words of
mute affection—valentines
you sent to your own
lonely self when you found
them in some book—
vapidity of rhyme, you smell it
coming a line or two ahead—
a life before you get there
is no life for thee—thou art
a leaf for whom there is no tree.

6 May 2009

KHPEΣ

I want to hear them wanting it
for destiny has many hearts
dark many little hearts with little
wings in those old days
and a man had more than one of them
to spell his fate. They flew
in and out of his night hair
and he knew, in his noon shade too,
his scant vocabulary of human will,
to have many hearts is many fates,
I wasn't there when you needed me
I am here now come use me, touch
forgiveness in the unbroken skin.
Unclog the circuits of human discourse
where Augustine apologizes for being born.

Kindness is all. Everything else
is just hunting for food.

6 May 2009

WHAT THE HEART HAD.

The habit of wings.

We had hearts in those days,
more than one heart
each one had
and the hearts had wings.

And the hearts we had
were not our own,
came and went,
bearing strange images,

they flew in and out
of what we knew

or what is now meant
by knowing was
seeing them.

Some
times they had faces.

See, if the heart you have
just comes to live you
there is no claim.

Heart has a house
for you and a road
you get to walk.

Hearts come in and out
—never try to claim
the heart you hear
as a heart you have.

A heart has me,
I am alive
because it flies.

They have no kin
but they are kind,
they are small but rule.
They are all you have
to lose. It is all
a function of their wings.

6 May 2009