

5-2008

mayA2008

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "mayA2008" (2008). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 627.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/627

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.

= = = = =

In the dream the word *sancujatic* was important
but I don't now know what it means
and nobody else does when I try to look it up
out here where the language of dream does not run.

I look at a page and it says: I think we can
help each other here, and should
and it seems to me talking to someone but whom,
it seems to have been possible then

but now who can I help and into or out of what?

2.

San-kew-*jat*-ic is how it sounded
as if a poet is all touch
and a poem just all the skin in the world suddenly touched at once.

1 May 2008

= = = = =

I suppose myself to fly like a bat
certainly suck blood

no reason why not
This is amiable if not immaculate.

Of me. Of course there is shopping.
Of course there are things.
Things stand around most of the time
then all at once they get of that job
and go somewhere else.

Things move.
This is called the migration of the object.
Things on vacation.

Nothing is where it is all the time.
I don't have to fly all the time
to be a bat either or suck blood
till there is no blood left in the world
it's all in my mouth.

No reason for that.
Plenty of blood, plenty of things,
plenty of places for them to be,
nobody has to be all of them do I?

1 May 2008

= = = = =

But your body is an adverb
and none too soon. It controls
the way the verb of the day
goes, makes the way I feel
the way I feel.

There are those who are common
nouns but I know them not.
A bunch of keys slung from a belt,
yes, yes!

An ivy-beset tower. With a little light
in the lone window way up there
as if a candle were talking to itself
about the dark it tries to understand.

I am that candle. I console myself
for being in stone in the sky
in a room in a tower in a night
on earth. I console myself for earth.

1 May 2008

= = = = =

Six they said. A dragon.
Then six again: a dragon
with six wings this time.

Comes sluggish out of its gorge.
To meet exactly me.
I am Five, brave enough
to listen to any dragon,

even this one who said
all women have six wings.

1 May 2008
Kingston

= = = = =

As if there were someone there
already, hand on the tiller
(what's a tiller, darling?), eyes
on the horizon (and that's just
the end of seeing, nothing firm,
nothing you can bring home
to your mother and say Here
this is the one I want to marry

or the one who when my back
was turned came and married me)
and the boat (it's always a boat)
bounded on the sturdy sea
that restless mineral we skim along
across the bay to an island
(it's always an island) and all

you had to do is sit there
with your feet up to the ankles
in the slosh of shipped water
and let the whole *operatio
mundi*, the world pay attention
to itself and everything in it,
while you are carried just
carried between island big and
island little until you're there
and then you really are there.

2 May 2008

CHOOSING A TOMBSTONE

First commit night.
Then rain. A Spartan
supper mostly talk
and bread and tea.
Mostly books you forgot
and women you remember.
Epitaph. Gravestone.
That weary cock your
Nobel Prize. As if.
Where things wait
in the rain for someone
to make sense of them
like the dumb noise
of far away music only
the sodden drumbeat
comes through the weather
hopeless regular. Boring.
Is this sense yet?
Did I blame a bird
for what happened?
Nothing happened, everybody
is still here. Listen,
you can hear their names
clearly recited, your heart
knows that litany, saying
hello to all who are gone.
Everybody here again
always. There is nothing
to be upset about. Just
don't stand too close to the door.

2 May 2008

ONE-QUIEJ

Of all the days to be today
how strange. If a clock could
it would know. And be strange
alongside of it, meaning well.

Because a bell does, though,
or a nun is coaxed to move
moaning in her pew concerned
that other's sins be loosened

or a belt slip off a hired
man and let him rest. Spill.
A bell spills. Bronze
is sweet enough if you beat it.

In the rain what is pain?
Do you hear if someone knows?
Around the corner is a stone
a store where they sell it

and you go. Is that enough, a car?
A bell decides silver at your belt
mayhap Morocco crimson tinkling
in a gold-chased cup, drink hot.

Or glass could do it too less obvious
a public square or private circle
rolling up your stairs your soul
your heart your magazine

maybe tin like Mexico a hand
cut out of sheet metal to say O Lord
or Our Lady help my hand
hurts, what is pain in the sun

from slapping someone hurt
hurts the hurter too you say
and sparrows snicker, bells affright
they flap away the noise of dust

the dim association of ideas
tribes of bells denizens of a sound
I am a potentate of I don't know
it's my birthday and very far away

certainly you have heard clay bells
tolling from beneath the field
and were afraid as sparrows always are
terror makes men impolite bad politics

a sad fact of revolutions with their iron bells
their belts so tight their hearts are crooked

the bankers all have flown away
and the people eat the people up

like the sky swallowing the sound of bells
while globarchs snicker, new ugly word
for the worthless valuers of old Earth
a blue blossom invisible in the nick of eye

or is time the lumen I mean to mean?
Many a bell tries to be relevant
many a bell bees like a honeycomb
homing inside itself with a buzz or a brain

in the meat of the heard, o taste the bell
you have come back from the Near West
with no better appetite than this
or bell at the nuzzle of an english horn

or bell stitched to a sweater so
you hear your infant when it toddles to the dark
and no man sleepeth at that hour
though the moon has left town and the sun

who among us dare speak of the sun?

3 May 2008

= = = = =

But you were a boy. And maybe I had seen you that way before. The way people do. But there you were. And you had just given birth to a child. You were now about to become very famous because you are the first boy ever to give birth. First ever. Never in the whole world until now. And it was you. My own you. How could it be, I wondered, and I was close to you enough in every sense to find out. Sure enough there was a quiet vagina in between your legs, hidden behind the little scrotum, your pretty little penis delicate as veined alabaster that lay Greek but moving slightly along the hairless scrotum. So you were a boy just as I always thought. But what was I going to do about this fame that was coming your way? I could see it but you didn't seem to notice or care one way or another. You went on running your interesting mind and saying so. What a sweet boy you are, the lovely philtrum of your lip I keep seeing in my mind's eye as if your mouth were part of my mind. Maybe it is. And my mouth wanted you.

. . . 3 May 2008
[dream]

LAST MOHTABI TESTAMENT

or lost – unknown word picked up
on the outskirts of dream – something
like sand. A place with sand
the way a stone becomes
to stone the woman taken in
adultery or foul the water that
moistens my dry wheat. Who?

We are linked with angels but we kill.
Ahimsa is the only answer
but no one will ever ask the question.
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,
the fragrant-thinking, called Great
Soul, did, led his people to freedom
and even prosperity a while until
they also killed. Starting with him.

The answer is so easy—do not kill.
Do not harm. He said. O god he said
and died. Don't eat this person
or that one with feathers, you cannibal,
you lamb chop. You becomer.
Bleak believers cower in churches but
the piety's in what you do
after you refrain from doing,
the noun on the other side of verb.

Nuns called me the predicate,
I was the outcome of the world,
the fatal favored son. In polecat weather
I shuffled out to lunch below the el
a hard roll with seeds on it and cheese within,
Adam ate no fairer chow in Paradise—
a day is holy when you don't have to go to school
but they make you stand around in church
even worse, especially if you believe all that

the way I do, because then the nonsense
can't just be swept aside, o no, or must
be swept in just the right way aside,
you didn't learn that yet, they never
teach it, you barely know it now, a few
saints along the way, Francesco, Milarepa,
go out and do the thing the church pretends,
become the words and what they mean
and any passing leaf is house enough for thee.

He thought. Now go shopping, milk and metal,
the girls are gone, the boys are in the desert
fighting, dogs squabble here, grass grows and you
suddenly light up inside like a kid's balloon
exploding, suddenly nothing, suddenly everything.

Shut up, you think, and open. Shivering
is good for you, look what the rain does for grass.
Who said that. The books, the books
all got left out in the rain last night

now all the grass and flowers read the secrets
and all the animals your clever brothers learned
language while you slept and snorted.
Now everybody speaks! Not just the crows.
Everybody. The books are gone and everybody tells.
You would be happy now if happiness
were on your mind. But nothing is.
Alone, alone, again and always. You think.
We are born to be deceived. Each pleasure
serves us. He said. Sit there on the rock
and try not to listen. They all talk at once—

that's all a book is good for
to filter out one story at a time
or one voice from all the trillion voices
since everything talks. A book
is a narrow thing, like a snake
but can't bend, can bite, o a book
is a sort of forgetting, 99 ran away
and you are left with this one lamb
bleating pleasantly page after page.

Everything is animal. The same
in fraternity equality with you,

freedom to exist and go on changing,
he said, quoting some scripture
he transcribed from the rain wind,
something soaked into the red rug
left over the railing last night,
the way wetness brings out the real
colors of anything, so being suddenly
heard makes the meaning of anything
clear, he said again. Brother talking,
walking, flying, swimming, all ways.

Time to stop killing. And time itself
is only there to be killed. Time
is a human superstition. Any other
animal believes its body, we believe
the clock. The bell. The bell kills.
Stop killing. You'll know you're close
when everything looks like flowers.
When everything looks like itself.
You think of Gandhi. You think of water,
scented with sandalwood, flicked
with the fourth finger in the general
direction of the deities. Whose images
stand and move all around you.
The animals. The men.

You think of old men going sannyasin,
you go and wander in the forest, you sit
and let the forest wander in you, you sit

and remember Gandhi, you sit there
like a *leiminen Goilem* she used to say,
a mud statuee not quite brought to life,
lump on a log, fly on the wall, an eye
in the sky. Nada. You want to be an ear
that hears everything. Never listen.
You want to be an ear under the sea
can hear the secret fires flickering
only down there, only in deep water
is true fire, only in the thinnest air
is our true earth. He said. Maybe

it is time to cry, he says, maybe
the salt of tears meets the sulfur
of intimate reflection and then the mercury
of sudden insight turns the whole mess
of your aging ardent personality
in an ipseity beyond identity, he said,
what does that mean I needed to know,
no, you don't need that either, just means
be quiet till your mind sinks down in mind,
quiet till it tells you what to do,
what flavor of nothing you need to taste
before you don't need anything at all.

4 May 2008

HORSETROUGH

Charles Olson speaking just like himself
with urgent eloquence big words defending
a young man maybe wrongly accused
of killing his father.

Wherever the crime was
the guilt lay in another country
but the evidence right here:

just go
(he said) look at the old stone horse trough
(really cement) up on Dogtown Common—

cold water in it, moss along the sides.
The slime of time.

Anything this distinctive
must prove something.
I thought of the horse trough past the crossroads
in La Borne, I have drunk very cold
water from it many a time.

4 May 2008

= = = = =

But where could, and the other
there too? Stifling with symmetry,
the Other. Matching every
move. Moue. Matador
of mass, earthly, the bull
of the sky slain bleeds
on your hands. You. You did it.
I blame you. You ate the weather.
You broke the moon and look
what oozed out all over us.
The wrong light. The dead seed
that sucks my light. Stop.
Stop wanting me.

5 May 2008

THE FIFTH DAY OF THE FIFTH MONTH IS POETRY DAY AMONG THE CHINESE

but what is today to us but today
or a Mexican celebration or a sun in the sky?
Beer beer beer beer beer beer
the end. But the fifth
day of the fifth month is the day of poetry
among the mountains of Sichuan
and on Mount Omai they climb into the sky
and every hill and tower hath its customers
who clamber up all drunk and singy
reciting the joyous melancholy innate in language
murmuring rhymes and assonances
tonic matching swift shunts of metaphors
all but traditional but watch this
the grape topples from the lips
the crystal tear along her cheek
is a motorboat on Koko Nor
the blue lake a mile wider than the sky.

5 May 2008