

8-2007

augG2007

Robert Kelly
Robert Kelly

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "augG2007" (2007). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 702.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/702

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.

= = = = =

Giving a clear account of something
is somewhat like the moon
shining in the windows of an empty house.
We stop the car outside, nervous
walk through uncut grass. The porch.
Ear to the door. Listen to the wood.
Hear the old moonlight in there.

29 August 2007

MONKEY BUSINESS

The monkey stands on the elephant's back.
Spine. Information highway. Reaches
fruit hanging from a roadside tree. Exhibit A:
an image. Exhibit B: the mango
itself, your tooth marks at one end.
Exhibit C: Yellow dribble down your chin.

The monkey slips down the trunk and runs away.
The elephant, pale for this time of year,
sneezes. Exhibit D: the elephant doctor
hurries forward with a bottle of pills.
He wears a replica Rolex and a nylon shirt.

Why did God do this to us. Messages
everywhere we're dumb enough to read.
Then we're stuck with all that information.
Education. You can't bite a coconut.
The monkeys are all on strike. Mahler
died in 1911 before anybody was born.
Exhibit E: a grave marker in Vienna.
Exhibit F: photo of an elephant, caparisoned,
in front of the old Masonic Temple in Bombay.

29 August 2007

= = = = =

Show me the man born before his father.
Show me the silver locket that loops
all by itself through the air
searching for the most accurate neck.
Tell me how light can be everywhere at once.

In this story we learn to breathe light
and eat darkness for our food. Dark
is a substance, not an absence – did you know that?
The woman born before her mother told me so.

29 August 2007

= = = = =

Sometimes it's a word.
Sometimes not even that.
An old friend with a smile
like barnacles on driftwood.
It hurts to touch, it
hurts to be close.
Everything is a closed café.

29 August 2007

= = = = =

man ist selbst schuld
—Thomas Bernhard

And suddenly didn't care
about the temperature outside.
A bad sign.
The alchemist is responsible

not just for the fire in his ridiculous furnace
but for the weather all around.
That's why it's so hard,
alchemy. He has to keep
the country's weather under control
to cook his crystals and cool his soup.

What a job! So many try it,
so many give up at the first heatwave
or April blizzard.

You have to care
about all these things.

Touch your toes eight times and kiss the moon.
Hang mistletoe from noon time, open
with your silver wrenches
fire hydrants in poor neighborhoods so kids can play.

Alchemy is hard.
You are responsible.
Everything is your fault.
Even the flowers.

30 August 2007

“Tradition ist Schlamperei!”

—Mahler

Mess is lore.

30 VIII 07

JUDGMENT DAY

An R-less American
standing before a European God—

in my dialect, no difference between law and lore,
hence I was born guilty,

everything I learned was a sin.

Scraps of sarcasm
left over from a life
more bitter than I commonly disclosed.

30 August 2007

PORTENT

A hawk overhead!

—No, it was a crow, sir.

But still we're dead.

30 VIII 07

DEBUSSY

or when music went wrong—

why do I fight him so?
It is the *privilege of the private*,
the dream spilled
into the street
like a burst cistern,
spoiled milk
gushing down the gutter
and I have to follow,

ignoring on every side
the structures of ordinary life?

And I do, I think
because it *is* beautiful
I turn against it, strive
for a music that doesn't claim
a pre-existent drug of mood,

the allurements of across the street
more specious than
the allure of the obvious at hand.
The milk before it turns.

[from notes of 18 VIII 07, Olin]

30 August 2007

= = = = =

Now let another speak my hand.
Red uniform we wear
inside out against the dark in there.

Something shines in us—
enough to say so.
Another age will set it free.

30 August 2007

TIME

Time is a shelter
where we hide from space.

Nothing touches us
in the elapsing.
The present
is safe as the past.

Invisible congeners of
personal perceiving.
I is a grid, me
is an intersection.

30 August 2007

= = = = =

The pretty nanny
hurls the child downstairs

as if flesh and hair and bone
were all together one more Act of God.

A lawyer can forgive
anything a body can do.

30 August 2007

URBAN LEGEND

People die and are buried in the ground.

This is the oldest myth of all.

30 VIII 07

= = = = =

But what comes after?

There is no after, my Arabs,
there is only this.

Don't waste your breath on hypotheticals.
Anyhow, there are no questions,

only answers. Women
in the market arguing about fish.

30 August 2007

The blue light in my mother's diamond ring

and that's all the memory you'll get from me
because it's not about remembering it's about blue.

30 August 2007
as epigraph to my next book

.

= = = = =

Usually something's waiting.

It could be shoes
or the Mongolian army.
It might be just a handkerchief
hung out to dry,
red bandanna say, a flag
of vernacular humidities.

Or a shoe. So often
it's a shoe, with its mate nearby or not,
you have to scrounge through dark closets
to find the missing one.

But that's where things are,
the enemy already at the gate,
you hear their horses snorting.
Your wife, disguised as a shepherdess,
flees over the hill with her lambs.

31 August 2007

= = = = =

What a trivial uneventful man I am
to take a girl walking down the street
as a glimpse of God. And yet

31 August 2007

(a poem ending with an absolutely necessary ellipsis...)

= = = = =

When you offer a feather to the sky
your mind goes with it
and says what you mean.

31 VIII 07

= = = = =

Slow portolan consulted
to find my own land

follow this straight line
to touch the curve
the natural

and a wave (you)
no longer welcome
on my shore.

late August 2007

= = = = =

I could catch the other rocks
sun tumbled
 a gleam
spit-flavored sucking agates—

you've Ore-gone native.
Pale Mingo settler dodging flies.
Civilization is cracking wide.
The birds have started laughing at the sky.

late August 2007

= = = = =

Happiness takes no chances.
All the blue children
who came riding on the moon
slip down and stand around me
forming a ring of suddenly
solemn personages. Where
did your youth go? What dreary
judge is childhood gravid with?

late August 2007

= = = = =

Do prayers to the Moon go unanswered?
At full, the red
of last night's eclipse still
pink in her cheek?

When the Moon draws
our humors up
do prayers come with them
dissolved in moistness

lost in that upward tilting sea?
I need to ask the shortest questions,
say surefire prayers.
Already there's too much if in the world.

late August 2007