

7-2003

JulB2003

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "JulB2003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 900.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/900

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.

LOVE PATIENCES

Wearing patience like something you want to be
or waiting outside the cathedral for the mass to end
the public worship whereas the abbey church
veils its authority per musicam and night,

they start the work of song ere dawn
and their confession leaches out unimaginable sins.
Leprous fantasies in the daylight clinic healed.

Maybe. I have been inside, a prison house
that hurries you onward to a condign punishment
shaped like your life, that's what a church is,
on your way to an appointment outside of time.

It leaves you alone. Peace. In decorous somnolence.
Curled asleep at the foot of the god.
The soul does not grow old:

heathen particulars fall away, stud
the walls of the mind, dusty,
like crutches hung up on the rock at Lourdes,
miracles, trophies of psychic rearmament,

obsessions that finally left me alone.
Maybe. Such a work it is to be in love,
a thousand years and we're still at it,

Enitharmon mist-thighed wills not to wake

not yet, until the dream is done,
higher than Salisbury's spire, a scratch
left on the white belly skin of the morning sky.

I don't matter if I wake yet.

Telephone in Tartarus. They never ring,
somebody else's voice is heaven honey
no matter what they say, they're talking

and they're talking to me.

My left hand lying heavy on my knee
looks like the head of a snake, heavy,
venomous from the breadth of it,

is it venomous to touch you too
or is every resemblances poisonous,
we die by metaphor?

Pull

your own shape close around you and become.

6 July 2003

CIVILITY

If a pond a scattered light a tree
these three near things amaze you
then what of the Roman city ruins the holy well
from which the clouds draw up their substance

wait till you see the smart Lydian captives
teaching theosophy under these same elms
because every forest becomes a city then
from which no tree is lost a room abounds

to avenue along the light to kindle or renew
odd sciences your mother thought you knew
so forgot to tell you of though you could tell
her deathbed eyes wanted to say more

but all we know how to talk about is love
so if we think hard and walk carefully in green
can it be that one day even love will be enough?

7 July 2003

A sprinkle of rain

A kindness

7 VII 03

SECRETS

What do you do when the secret's all used up
when you have seen the photographs
of what no one has ever seen
when you have drunk from the cup
that no one found,

 when you know the name
of the face on the other side of the dark
and you know what each thing feels like,
every one, as it presses into the morning
and spills over into your life?

...

7 July 2003

AFTER

Let the afters of a river
name me. Rio, I am wrack.
I am tree trunk. I am eel.
But enough about the night.

There is someone here
whose full name I don't know,
not a myth, not even dream,
just a stranger, an ardent

vagrant morsel of history.
Who has to eat
drink, sleep and multiply
poor banished

children of Eve.
Who always was Africa
where Eden is
a park in the Harrar

a rock fallen from the sky.
Say Mass on this
is all I suggest, my heart
in trouble again with your skin.

7 July 2003

QUINCUNX

A public language for this private thing
that's what the moon was looking for
rubbing against the smooth bark of beech trees
dullsilver with a light of their own

planetary consequences of green hope
helped by all these tractates on desire
the unknown force that never says its will
and leaves the desirer guessing all the day

even at midnight it's light enough to read
headlines in Hollywood but not the text
that tells you what it means — nothing anyone
can name can be the force that makes them name it

the bones they hold us up all day long
no never see the bones, the meat
around the bones is hidden deep
safe in the colors of how it seems

and all you see is how they do
and leaves are looking for it too
when the leaves come out the sun gets hot
a public language's what the ask is for.

8 July 2003

CABALA

1.

Some of the letters
are truer than the others —
that's all I've learned so far
the Rabbi said
in sixty lifetimes trying
to read the simplest
thing you say
whoever you are —
there, you said it again.

2.

Because the words are spelled with letters
but some of the letters are lost in the past
and other letters have not been spoken yet,
lost in the future, their meanings
the chemical elements they portend,
foretell, unfold, encode —

but all the letters seem to be here right now
so foolish we are in the words we say
we speak them, we even write them down
with our ordinary hands, the lost along with the found

and the known and unknown meanings dance
together like True and False at a Greek wedding
swaying their hips, swinging from
handkerchiefs clenched in their fine white teeth.

9 July 2003

RARE FRUITS AND DEVICES

Who all this time was ringing a bell
was a language spoken on a new planet
other side of India — find a race
that ne'er oppressed another —
win a love that speaks in yellow
blue and silver, sister with every brother,
river with no winter, grapes come
and pomegranates to the rescue
not everything must be fermented
this poppy red reminder to forget
for instance for a little while for better
and for worse, standard light bulb
flaring in a gold torchière to let you see
o there you are the sacred space inside
your wine-dark living room before
your oldest friend is speechless at the door
knowing no better than to stroke your hands.

10 July 2003

Let it follow till you're after.
When things have turned inside
out and followed what they find
then they can lead you past
the sickness of ordinary time
through the near veneer of mind
into the skilful silence where
suddenly everything is again before.
The old blind man laughs to see you come.

10 July 2003

THEOGONY

The hauteur of her daughter
because the mill her husband ran
was strange, and stranger still
the flour that sifted down
beside the chattering millrace
on the first day of creation
he made us. The world came later.
First the law, then humankind,
then nature naturing
in which we promptly sank
in love with such productions,
cauliflowers and temple prostitutes,
printed books and wide mouth bass
a three-pound specimen this very lake

I chose the daughter
first born of the Torah,
amiable, speaking decent French.
The law is God's wife, capish?

And desire is the angry alphabet
that spells everything there is,
the law book is written from sheer yearning
and all the things for which you yearn
are kinds of contact with her,
gunshots in the dark
and every page is skin.

A small unexplained bloodstain
on your lap next morning.
Chapter and verse. An animal
is stirring in the underbrush, late now,
fox or coyote, maybe a wild turkey
tumbles from its perch, they sleep
so high. Does everybody dream?

10 July 2003

TREMENDUM

Architect,
choose your engine,
leave it running
till it overheats the sky —

siegecraft,
the blocks fall down
of special stone
finds its own way

into walls pilasters
columns porches.
The mark of matter
is burning gold.

Only your eyes
can see through
such narrow slits.
And everything they see

comes to belong to me.

10 July 2003

THE BLUE FLAME

How the blue flame on the kitchen range makes me happy. How many wants everyone! And most of it blue too, merry mostly and something bubbling above it just as you heard. O look at her small mouth and you wonder, such a blue word and so big. Morning just seems like something brought home you thought was lost doesn't it or the famous rapture comes in like a wind in the window and everybody gone and here alone. Alone and still and the pot bubbling above. The kind of quiet it so happy makes, a virgin. Virgin morning meant it and the clock said rain. O all the merrier isn't it, blue flame under the quick dim of rain light, that silver sort of virgin alive in will and wanting all though all is a little word indeed for every this and most of that. Or that's a puzzle, should it say instead most of this and every that, since that is far and tasty to behold and want closer? Want closer. Then people stick flowers in their coats and have narrow eyes and Easter, or wear no coats and don't know the hour. Mostly though do. It is not even breakfast or well before and the pot boils water to make a morning's tea. How blue the simple happiness. People from another country, come from

the Orient like the kings in church and here they are so earnest and so handsome, quiet people like the taste of silverplating on mother's spoon. That's how they look. So much to measure in a morning. Put a girl's face on one wall a boy's on the other and the Rock of Gibraltar in between, near the clock and the cat and the hard chair has a cushion on it and the tea is poured but the blue flame is out now of course. But the flame stays blue in mind and the tea's in the mouth. It's so churchy in the morning like the feel of your skin. There's one hue of everyone and no one sad. Or no one said they were or weren't, so quiet soft beneath the feelings and a rain. A small mouth says the most. They way they look is the way they love. Blue fire is a sample of more sky than they let be seen. As if the way an angel sees it if there were such a person and are or aren't they, shouldn't it really be known by now, thousands of years? Trusting what seems to be there is like believing in angels. The air comes through the air, and is a constant messenger. Who sends the air? Does there have to be someone to? Who reads it when it comes? Couldn't message just be messaging itself the way the wind? The way a tree? Maybe in fact there is nothing but angels. And everything and everyone does it, let communication thrive! Nothing but blue

eyes no matter what color are your eyes. Nothing but blue fire no matter how yellow the sun might be tomorrow. And night, night is just blue folded in on itself, over and over till we sleep. But this is the opposite mercy. Sometimes things that get read linger in the mind like a blue pilot light you have to bend over to check is it still burning? But sometimes you're busy elsewhere in the room bending over or feeling something and you see the blue light from the corner of your eyes, the same corner that sees dim stars, and that is like remembering this or that from a book or a church or someone said. Play statues with the morning, still and don't move, sit and be wise and let beauty be shadow on the sallow walls, and some of it talks back. It is the self that sees itself, and morning knows.

11 July 2003