

7-2002

JulG2002

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "JulG2002" (2002). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 961.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/961

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.

UM MITTERNACHT

What could it have been after
the shadow that walked beside me
pretending to be just an accident
that happened to the light

nothing that happens really happened
the shadow had hands of a sort
and gave the illusion of moving
more than I did though everybody

called it my shadow when they saw it
if they bothered noticing that always
there were two of us at the work
at the dance at the sacrifice

two of us on the scaffold
one of us praying one of us mute.

19 July 2002

A DAY TO HOME

Siste columba domo

Carrier pigeon, stay home

There is a wind in the world today
not every body type can feel

but you can, it is the wind
that hides you in the sky

baffles the delicate escapement
by which you fly, how you know why

and how to get there, and is it worth it
all over again, summer

spent brooding on the beach
bronze birds, counting daisy petals?

You are your own oracle,
tarot cards fluttering down the air

stay home and read.

20 July 2002

AGAIN

Recognizing clearly the second time again
(because it is always the next time, we

live in a firstless universe) the very one
you thought you'd lost in hell

or that other prison house, old heaven,
is now walking across the patterned carpet

towards you and only you and she
might recognize you too, go slow,

matter is so delicate, things
are so difficult when we're alive

in this congested pretty suburb of the real,
the physics world. Unashamedly Platonist

you spread your arms again,
gladder that you've ever been,

because the One is with the Cipher once again

and you can spell everything together, solve it, do glory,
negotiate through ecstasy, relieve the poor.

All your meetings is what the world is for.

20 July 2002

PARABLE OF THE PANTHER

A kind of affirmation
of incarnation
in the first place
seeing you again

in the old blue weather
darlinger than afterlust
methusalated
big muriatic world
islanded with us
we see again.

The next time the two become one, and think it's the first time. Maybe it is. What we call thinking is nothing other than the active embrace of contradictions, a lively conscious tolerance of impossibility. This is the Parable of the Panther: he'll never know if it's the lovely roses leaping on his skin, his maculæ, stains or skins, that draws so many to come close. They hurry to come close, to put themselves at risk to be near that *gaia pelle*, a skin mapped with all the islands and skies of tenderness and desire. Or is it that they come (as the old Bestiaries boast) to smell his sweet and plausible breath, sweeter than any lover's mouth you ever kissed, summoned not by sight but fragrance, oldest, largest of the brain's businesses. The panther never knows, and this not-knowing is also called thinking, never knows if it's his beauty of body or what he says. What he is or what he does.

20 July 2002

UXORI SUAE SURGENTI

Come to me
with active skin
young as laughter is

watching a squirrel
leap from a branch
towards feed and fall

and try again
until it does
and that is laughter too

zoom out to see
the ever-branching
parallels and afterludes

only the dreariest
atheist concludes
music ever stops

sorry, I mean laughter
I mean squirrels
Beethoven Carl Dreyer

I mean you.

20 July 2002

CONTRA AESTATEM

Be fair
to summer
how many days
actually kill you
how many nights
bring you to life?

20 July 20, 2002

VIDERI QUAM VIDERE

It's a little closer than that now,
the tiger disguised as the forest.
And the boy with the Bolivian ocarina
has silver insets in his eyes,
he means to be looked at,
he says he has no business seeing.
There's another way to translate Latin
actually I hate music. But the Muses
I adore and they make me.
People tend to forget their father's language
because children find money boring
and responsibility a mistake they're
not ready to make. I told you already
I'll be downstairs as soon as the pastor leaves
he wears me out with his correctness
as if God like Jacob was a smooth man.
Like me. I lie. I know, just sign
his petition using invisible ink, we need
to keep uniformed clergymen confused.
Isn't that what Fouché advised, criminal class
must be countered by artist in crime,
You curl your mustache and smile at the queen.
I don't think we ever do what we intend
my inspection of the orchid was interrupted
by a dog barking in what sounded like Greek
neither of us got what we wanted
it's like marriage, something else keeps happening.
That bird actually does have blue feet,
I've seen it, but what it eats is a mystery.
When did all the tennis balls turn green, or is it me?

It was only the dog of the morning
reciting the little poetry it knew
all the epics they try to stuff it with, lines, lies,
sometimes I forgive his half-hearted howl.
By now the water had finally boiled and the wolf
vanished from the dream, and you told me
to write it all down on little index cards
until the whole thing was done. But what thing?
What do I have to report? You're setting the table
for a dinner party nobody knows about
and then you'll blame me and smash the tureen.
I don't much like folk music it reminds me
and I never had a People sob I was always alone
a stinking little rat in love with difference
don't stop consoling me, your skin works wonders
your face looking down at me over the chair
two lakes upside down and a beautiful nose.
Why does it always get so hot in the daytime
is the sun really a heat lamp or is it something else?
Else, I think, but we are clueless as usual,
maybe the earth is allergic to clarity
makes it sweat with anxiety in her dark designs.
If only we could liberate children from games
and just let them play, the way you drink water
when you're thirsty et cetera, a big ship sails in
though sails are not part of the picture
you can't see anyhow since I turned off the light.
I love the way you look when you're not looking.

21 July 2002

FERMAT

On a margin in his copy
of Cicero's *Republic*, the pages
describing the Dream of Scipio,
Fermat wrote: "I thought of a way
to learn a whole foreign language
in one night. And you may
do this to as many tongues
as you have nights to spend."
Nothing more is known
of what he had in mind.

21 July 2002

THE ANIMAL

I think there's another thing to say
before the dog barks again
and makes everything real

that's why I can't stand dogs
they swallow up every illusion
and leave us with the fleas of the situation

a dog's every action thinks
I am more here than you are, buster.
I'm tired of that,

of here and now, I'm tired of there and then, too,
all this crafty busywork of being real.
Now what was I going to tell you?

21 July 2002

THE TECHNOLOGY

direct satellite feed images of earth from space
a craft that rides the sunlight round the globe
so we can see

o Sun

don't run out of ink
we need to inscribe your investigations in our hearts.
I'm ordering it today. This is a prayer.

21 July 2002

THE SCREAM

It looks as if the morning's quiet
too quiet, I'll have to carve a sound.

Words are what we have to do that with,
see how loud you can scream
without raising your voice.

Seeing, saying, one of us is terribly confused
and you're not even here so it must be me,
the calligrapher of shadows hiding from the sun.
Although some people try to make mathematics,
all I ever one is two.

21 July 2002

PUBLIC SPACE

Public space means they'll let me in.

Why should I lie to an analyst when I can lie to you
and neither of you believe me anyhow
though you come closer than he does, Dr. Nada
who will catch me in the end, *peccavi*
the brutal losses the fervent briefly
entertained desires. There is no desire left in the world,
it's all entitlement and complaining,
no real remorse just simmering regret.

21 July 2002

A LARGE FISH IN SAINT LOUIS

Through it the very fast monorail carries
commuters from one end of the vast station to the other,
country lines to suburb lines and here we stood,
Ted Enslin and I, watching a man hack at a big fish
—eight feet long at least, what was left of it—
to cut free the half of the head we'd bring
home for our supper. Saint Louis, near eight p.m.
of a summer business day, lawns and flowers
—stocks and hollyhocks and gladiolus—
round the station. Where we stand is also
the traveler's café, and what the monorail zips over.
I am shocked by its speed, the close up faces
of its passengers smiling down at us — they get to see
men with a fish, plus a few couples at tables,
desultory hour, everybody calm, people do smile
at one another. I've never seen a fish like that.
The head is full of juicy cartilage the man discards—
I sink my fingers into one chunk and lift it,
pretend to be about to toss it at a pleasant looking
bearded fellow looking up, and he smiles back.
So many smiles. Reassuring animal, this fish is,
slowly the huge hunk of the head gets trimmed
into something we might be able to carry home
on crowded trains, in summer, eventually
figure out a way to cook. Chowder. Flesh of fish,
white, white bone, white pulpy cartilage.
Then I'm in the concourse of the station, far end,

and Enslin has become Ken Irby and also is missing.
I set off looking — does he have the fish?
It is never seen again in this history. I'm happy
to be empty handed, the crowds are thick now
climbing broad staircases everywhere,
looking down fondly at roses on the pretty lawns,
where is Ken anyhow, this is a terrific city,
I must come back some time when I have time.

22 July 2002

TRANSLATION EXERCISE

At any moment I must
be ready to be translated
into Polish. *Krosno*, the loom.
I must be willing to be a shade
walking among the living,
those comely nimble people
so good at logic and pianos,
pale, physical, alert.
And my phantom self
will stroll through Krakow
whispering and bellowing
words I won't understand
but I'll know that he
(or she: what sex
does a phantom play?)
is busy at my work, saying
me better than me
down there on earth
in the real world
among them, doing
my solitary enterprise
*i.e., shaping time
by speaking.*
My shadow
must be beautiful
and must forgive
my Unseen Enemies
(Mars in the Twelfth)

i.e., my friends.

Shadow, love my friends

for me, I'll

love my enemies.

My shadow

will sit down to tea

in dark dining rooms

dewy with hydrangea

blossoms in Chinese

vases on oak tables,

will talk with his mouth

full of gooseberry jam

and mushroom toast,

my shadow will stumble

with drunks on their way

to the opera, god knows

if the guards will let

any of us in, they can sleep

it off through the overture,

sober up through Act I,

be able to take in

the bitter duel scene

in Act II where the demented

poet falls,

bamboozled by love

again. Again.

My shadow must be ready

to stand inconspicuous

in dressing rooms where

fashion models primp

and get preened for shoots,

he must fall lightly

on their air-brush skin
must not disturb
their telling apathy,
must touch them only
so briefly so casually
their living flesh
worn for a moment between
the fabrics that matter,
my shadow actually
touches their glamour,
he shivers, it's snowing out,
too warm in here,
third floor, no elevator,
big windows riotous with light.
My shadow in short
has to be Szekspir,
has to be everything I'm not.
Let everything happen
(this is every shadow's prayer)
as it must happen
o Lord who runs the light.
And it will
till we are transposed
into the key of sin,
sein, being particular
as if to mean
something a translator
could take hold of
with clean hands,
change the sound
and keep the sense?
Impossible.

It all changes,
thank god.
It will differ me,
it will rescue
this sacred text
holy as any is
from the impiety
of its mere scribe, me,
the sullen solid
now to cast
such a lucid shade.

22 July 2002

Albumblatt

Have you ever
heard of a young girl
anywhere from ten
to twenty who
took great pleasure
in collecting stamps?
Tell me about her,
as far as I can tell
she breaks every
rule in my book.

22 July 2002