

8-2002

**augF2002**

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### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "augF2002" (2002). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 972.  
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## **CEPPO**

log left in trees:  
why don't they bury us  
where we fall  
so we lie where we live

Treatise  
against cemeteries

let the dead  
stay among us  
whispering palpably  
sharing the confusions of their state

their chemical destinies.

What would it be if Amy Goldin talked in me?  
Would it be different from my usual palaver?

everything we know how to say  
came our way from the ones before us

the ancient bodies whose wounds we are.

Everything is all we know at any minute  
is a said word, an overheard mistake.

Fill the pen fast  
the world is full of news.

16 August 2002

## THE UNIVERSAL FUNCTION

I thought it was Mahler  
but it was sleep

the way you can't stop  
talking about the weather

when you get down to it  
that's all there is.

17 August 2002

## **TOONS**

I don't want to live in a cartoon.  
And that's why dogs make me uneasy  
even when they don't scare me to death.  
A dog is a toon, half flesh and half  
a wicked fancy of entitlement.

17 August 2002

## MAHLER'S SIXTH SYMPHONY

I don't want to live in an abstraction  
any more. Any more than you do.

I want the scum of my actual life  
frictional and thick. I will walk on glass  
and sleep in shingle. Romance again,

intricate night music, horseradish  
in whipped cream, I send you home  
for breakfast. We risk so much for one another.  
That is what music means.

17 August 2002

## **MENSCHENHERZ**

you have to come with me.

There is a silence you have to light up  
with your easy gossip, loving and interpreting  
all the customers in my café. The smoke  
of barely legal cigarettes hangs across the air  
and people are afraid to listen to their own  
conversations. Hard to be with one's own kind.  
Help me. Make them talk to one another,  
make them settle their hips and elbows  
comfortably to for endless palavering.  
But nobody is looking, talking, feeling.  
Menschenherz, I have a box of seashells,  
I breathe softly in them, hold them to my ears,  
the words I hear are the words I spoke,  
how can I live with that kind of news?  
Make them talk again in my stunned café.

17 August 2002

**AN ARIA FROM *FAUST***

The sexiest move is interpretation.  
No one can resist that sly penetration.  
You say more than you know  
and know more than there is.

Desire is a penknife and a loupe  
a little piece of silk thread and a pin  
and an old pencil for me to write down  
measurements I'd do better to forget

but this is all I have, this dull  
song of understanding you.  
It bores and bothers you, but at the end  
you belong to everything I said.

17 August 2002

## LOSING

It is a dignity, a loss  
at least, and people always  
look serious at that.

A bear day downtown,  
parcel left in the taxi  
you talk too much

to random people  
you lose things all the time  
the token rolls on the tracks

but not tragedy, not yet.

17 August 2002



## THE HAP OF BIRTHDAY

Whose birthday?

Without you

what would I be?

A family of questions

who died before the answer,

that ruined temple

you see the sunset through,

broken columns, a door

open on nowhere,

which one of us

got born today?

There is a country

where one day every year

no one gets born.

And that day is called

Everybody's Birthday.

Gifts are exchanged,

promises made, love slaps

tendered, drunkenness

endured.

But here

we have to shout to overhear

how wonderful you

happen to the day.

17 August 2002

**READING *THE DAWN IN BRITAIN***

haunted by the delicate dissonance  
between Doughty's Victorian verse  
and the slip of Xeroxed pages  
through my fingers. What time is it,  
time of meter, time of tech,  
the fall of language keeps me reading,  
elbows on the table, each page  
as if a letter from someone  
I never knew but here it is. Reading  
is being a child on the prowl  
for all I'll ever need  
and some of it is here  
in the short breaths built  
up in endless lines, this old asthmatic god  
reciting the world, commas  
strewn through like September leaves.

17 August 2002

## NIGHT STORIES

1.

How little we really knew about him  
when he came. Breath to do something  
bigger he seemed to have. But where'  
was his heart, hard to say. So some  
never trusted. Worry about where  
he came from, or what he thought  
on the pillow at night, that's what  
you really need to know about a man.  
We knew nothing about his dreams.

2.

Everybody has a dream world of their own  
usually it's ok to leave people alone in theirs.  
But some people, he was one, seemed to have  
too much breath just for ordinary talk.  
His stories might be really dangerous to us  
if we didn't know, and we didn't. You know  
what I mean, most people, it doesn't matter  
what they're thinking, they'll never do it.  
But some people, you see, so what we really  
need to know is what people think about  
when they're really alone, and tired,  
and in the dark, just on the brink of sleep  
or waking a little and walking barefoot  
down the hall, the staircase in the dark.

18 August 2002

## **POLARIS**

Clarity breaks.  
Spirit is a thing  
also, waits  
for matter  
at a mountain pass

but will we gather  
in time  
for that meeting

and what will we  
have to do  
with matter?

Won't the mountain  
be enough  
without me?

I was afraid to ask you  
as I passed by  
but you left your face  
written in my mind  
I look at you still

the ground rises  
towards a terrible  
simplicity  
I look into your eyes.

18 August 2002

## UNTIME

I woke up before the day was ready  
people were on their way to get  
churches ready for other people  
a scorcher it will be today a look  
of fever in the trees am I the one  
you thought I dreamed last night  
there is something else wanting to be me.

18 August 2002

## **GNOMIKA**

To know the future doesn't mean to say it.

To say the future doesn't mean to know it.

To say nothing of what's to come

doesn't keep it away though

a word is a dog that keeps the thing at bay.

To specify tomorrow might close a certain door.

There are rules, alas there are rules.

Things depend,

like a heavy amber chain around your neck.

The mind is perpendicular.

18 August 2002

## **A PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL**

I want to know the words I never use.  
Tell me some words I never say  
so I can know the things I do not know  
the cities I forget to visit. Index me.  
Let me visit the wells of my neglect.  
And then explain what I really mean  
by the words I keep saying all the time.

18 August 2002

## **ZAOTHRA**

to offer and be the one who offers

to call a divinity

to write

signs, runes

to repent

to be the one who is supposed to repent

repent means think again

or think it through

hard or stand in awe

of what one has done or not done

to be afraid

of one who is afraid

to protect

protect fear

fear is the feeling that holds upright

protect fear from being swept away

bright things, by bright things

to shine or to give light

a word

fire in a chalice

make a grave mound

heal a mountain

healthy evil

wise shame

to turn religion towards us

to make a positive

contract with what seems



instead of repent give something to someone  
instead of fear help someone make something  
instead of a mountain walk over to a stranger and make him or her happy  
anybody can do the least of these

a new prophet there is no word  
for prophet in this language

a language is a religion

the language people speak is what they really believe

isn't it.

18 August 2002

## **THE ATMOSPHERE OF EARTH**

Sometimes I think everything I have ever written was written with you in mind, the grace of you reading me, the grace of you taking it all in, understanding it, using it, and going beyond.

I certainly would not be the first one who thought: one writes to get beyond oneself. One writes to say what one doesn't know. I write what I don't know, so you will know it. I write what is the case with me, the words that flee like foxes and hares from the forest fire of my feelings, so that you in safety may know what set the brand among my branches.

If you know it, then it is known. If it is known, then I am remembered inside your breath. We can't live by our own breath alone, only in the breath of another.

19 August 2002

## LUCK

Gamblers know a lot about the soul.  
The underwear part, the never shower  
while you're lucky part, the words  
you're not supposed to say. Don't let  
that evil image cross your mind.  
The soul is made of stuff like that.  
I wonder what the priests make  
of this soul, the one that loves  
bright colors and the smell of yesterday  
when you won big and everything was good.  
There must be priests who gamble.  
There must be a soul like that in me  
because just now I picked a sprig  
of windblown leaves all withered  
off my table and tossed it god knows  
where, and immediately I knew  
I had done wrong, scorned a sign,  
an emissary from the holy everything  
that of all the world picked me to visit  
and I have failed the encounter  
one more time. What have I done  
and what will Luck do with me,  
that quick impatient friend? Won't I  
ever learn? Will she leave before  
the music stops? And will I have  
the nerve to follow wherever she goes?

19 August 2002

## QUESTIONNAIRE

How close do I have to be to far  
to be a farmer?

Or given  
all the cabbages, is this tree,  
hemlock, fruitless, dark  
nearer to me than a mother.  
are you?

I want you so much  
and there's no border to my wanting  
only the terrible  
borders of me.

We live  
in each other's silky pockets,  
we give up oil for Lent  
when we are Greeks but all night  
we are Jews along our pillows

won't you?

Doesn't it want me  
in you too? Aren't all  
our differences the same?

19 August 2002

## SACRAMENT

Compose yourself darling  
the night's asleep  
and any touch  
might be your mother,

I have a little silver plate that says  
*he made the fruit he made the vine*  
at tipsy midnight drink the words with me

19 August 2002

## **PRISON FIRE**

what's caught  
between us

we are the walls  
in which it yearns

for a prairie  
clouds on the mountain

and a hawk  
it hears

whistling in your chest.  
Only when we're very

close can that fire  
squeezed out from

the space between us  
(there is no

space between us)  
leap to be

and be a beacon  
to our understanding

the nameless

light of us

among all the too many

stars with names.

19 August 2002