

4-2001

aprD2001

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "aprD2001" (2001). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1030.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1030

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.

To be so far apart from what needs me
While a spool releases silky emerald thread
You loop a loop of it on cream cheese
No one can tell the eaten from the future
To mix ribbons in with your rice, a car
Running through the vly in hip-high mud
You affirm a Calvinist principle even as
Your bed is burning below the underpass

The shunts of population dismay classicists
Stardust is actual enough the problem is harps
To hear it, Aeolian extravaganzas a priest
In Portugal praying for a cold white egg
Between the cheeks of his beloved, agree
With your impulses before they candle
And there the night is ruined with gold
Gleam upon oil a translator comes home

Mess rich with latin lipids a blue hair
Looped around your argentine hour
(hair, hour, hour, hair, who are there
who kiss the long triangulars of narrative
sauntering Tiergarten one tall gold girl)
back from the war striations of belief
cheesing their way through dull wax
'marble that seemed to be on fire'

was there an answer only a humming
when the book was opened as if owls
had recently flown past and bees remembered
shadow governments by neat procedures
forget everything that can be lost is lost
kayak under trestle wooden sleeper grazes
tall type in a canoe slug in a turnstile
halfway to Verona there is a mountain

too close to the trains the cosines are wrong
but the geometry of morning still works
the shadows fall the shades go up the woman
stands at the window inspecting her reflection
ghosting in the glass before the whole street
this is the first story in the history of things
a woman with a looking glass man with rock
the Spanish Encyclopedia is full of sand

... 22 April 2001

NEED
(1.2)

There could have been two of them
light poles sulfur Denver kerosene
by prairie dog village past the diner
out of business now it snows early
in most places sometime define
a simple adhesive pleasure to work
like you beside me on the glider
we are who we will always be I guess

dockets stuffed with earlier transcriptions
(ranunculus? surfboard? 'the woman
asks herself a couple questions' title
of my book) original or organdy a hurricane
out of season would you like a parrot
my birth was a beast and a forgetting
born into this world thinking I am you
praying you to make the same mistake

22 April 2001

NEED
(2.1)

safely the Monday of it the because, so bleak
by weeks to measure the deciding ghost
whose harrowed chariot by Oldsmobile drugged
into the unspeakable condition he morphed
from sleep into public proclamation who is that
up there with his hips around his knees
mouthing the mercies who is that with language
choking the little sense left to be made

anywhere any hour American wilderness and if
a poet can't identify a wolf who can since they
invented me to parade in bishop's weeds aloft
prancing on the catwalks of their greed
until guttering tea-lights drive the plaster crazy
making signals on the wall the flutter hurts
the flimsy skin of reason round the eyes
can barely see the waitress sing the specials

[23 April 2001]

I could take this thing be mean
to the stars, frown at Fomalhaut
who walked around the room while I was born
 along with Deneb, Rigel and great Regulus
who held the moon of me between his paws

I could reject the lightfall and the swoon of dawn
the creeping underlying shadows, the vague
that happens to the light among the trees —
is it mist breathed out of the wet earth
or is it the soft shiver of pure going,

 the light is going, soon can't tell one
tree from another.

23 April 2001

Suppose we count the days from the last time to the next time, will now be in the middle? I hope not. I hope now, whenever now comes, if it is not here already, is it, will be close to the end of that pray God finite trajectory, that now will be so close to next time, that hardly any raw time will elapse between now and then, and any minute I'll blink and open my eyes to feel your breath on my mouth.

24 April 2001

[Two Angels Talking:]

— What is he doing now?

— He's reaching for her breasts with his blind hands.

— does he take hold?

— he does, and interviews each nipple with his scholarly fingers he thinks.

— and she?

— let's talk about her, how long, based on your long acquaintance with your man will he be obsessed with her?

— that's a question too much about him, isn't it, but to answer you, and we must always answer, even if only with that lucid silence that is our secret vocabulary, I would say not long — though longer than the others.

— what others?

— all the others his hands have reached out blindly for.

[...24 April 2001]

SCENES FROM MY CHILDHOOD

Off the kitchen was a locomotive headed always fast due west, past Haring Street and into the *mysterious numbered streets* west of Nostrand Avenue, numbers which had meanings depending on the stone lions that guarded *various brick houses* and yew hedges into which the summer sun regularly was lured and trapped until all its light was gone, stolen and divided by the green luminous lightning bugs that sailed then out of the hedges and told me to go home and leave the world to them. In no time my locomotive had shunted back to the kitchen and I stood at the controls, the doorknob, staring out into the night where the hydrangea was no longer visible and the fireflies did not dare come because of my blue sleek lead soldiers arrayed between the pansies and the rose.

[25 April 2001]

A man walked past me paying no attention to my attention, his footsteps getting louder and cresting and diminishing obedient to the rigorous, inflexible laws of the physics we shared to inhabit this encounter, rushing past me, this man, hurrying enough to grow obviously smaller at every moment, more obedient, more laws, as he retreated from my glance, though he may not even have met it, seen me, so busy was he in his haste to reach bodily into the now at evening increasing obscurity as he vanished into the ever more multitudinous circumstances of what can only have been his life.

25 April 2001

NEED

(3.1)

so it was a matter of knowing for whom the weasel
popped wasn't it not some metaphysical retreat
fashioned of beech leaves and Heidegger o no
as cummings once famously insisted spelling it
different in a way we can't any more because of Yoko
you who remember Chambers Street and Higgins
can hardly object to my noncical trivial bass flute
harping on the recent and the said, naked

naked naked as a text without its commentary
these antisemite animals that hate analysis
when all is solving up and going down a god
given gavel rapping in the skull to punctuate
the stupid single meanings of the world and let
them pullulate until the cows come sagely home
into the stone barn built before the universe
full of good intentions I beg you milk my book

a word swells up until it hurts you need to drain
the wordbag mama all those saxon nibbles count
to suck the beesting venom of all history out Amen
most nights I sleep on the other side of dream
healed in black nirvana that wakes up for breakfast
and there all the people are who make sudden need
to reparticipate in that which dreams me
why can't I dream of what gives pleasure?

[26 April 2001]

[NEED]

3.2

Exhausted porters bring my body home
green fever took me and I slept the lake
talked to me constantly using little words
so we could learn them this is water
what it says and light and animals all of them
just one single word sometimes my dream
let me go and I spoke what I remembered
to my grieving wife I would never be the same

27 April 2001

A fact no one
will gather
or having it hard
in their hands
understand:

I never
said a thing
I never said anything at all.

Ca. 27 April 2001

when I think of her I think of a giant geyser
stroking upwards from the vast lake
so that Jordanian diplomats along the shore
sometimes get drizzled on among the mimosa, Geneva.

28 April 2001

[NEED]

4.1

Kingston city of surprises dog asleep in sun
taste ink on the nib of a pen last dipped in Vienna
a name's as good as any other lie mensonges
de la lune be brief with me senators I have to get
back to ruling long sheets of paper with pale feints
man proposes woman exposes cherry trees made
at last safe from hares a postcard big as a burn
licks the color off your eyes and whispers thanks

on cloudless Sabbaths a new geometry of malls
rinsed clean of laughter the sky is one long ad
for the complex lucidity of your skin how it does
some shadows fall and do not leave a kiss
the color of tea all I ask is you imagine me
half past meaning on the way to speed magical
apertures all yours the night is just a glamorous
lie a soft shirt I thought I took off long ago

28 April 2001
Kingston

[NEED]

4.2

or past all far interpretations there are glazes and blue frits
baskerville pushing narrow gutters to spill a wide sestina
so many things I want to pull from the chronicle of skin
to read to you amid the sunken cathedral in my anxious whisper
my whole life has no other purpose than to make you hear
the ring forts of Atlantis each one a different color piled
like quoits around the middle pillar of the world the town
inside the city in our bones these nice bodies of ours the ocean
that swallowed down the wisdom city we keep looking for

28 April 2001
[end of *Need*]

Try to be tender to me
because the old horse
dragged the moon away last night

and your mother
has forgotten the retail poetry of streets
and I am the last of your fathers,
your little son.

28 April 2001

DEEP BLUE TILE

deep blue tiles
I listen in my hands
to the deep gleam of you

more than any sea more than the Roerich skies of impossible Tibet
a dark of you

something I need to know

boulevard in the state house
policemen running frantically in rain
under the El on Fulton Street imagine

girl dust spattering my shoe

a dark of you

if only they could inspire
the fire-blackened oak stake of the pivot
shoved into the volcano in the middle

and the earth swings round

I thought of you.

2.
this would have been today if I woke later
but as it is the sun is out
it leans on its elbow over the fledgling linden

assemble every morning these components
into the guess called me
neither artifact nor usufruct
sometimes a tool sometimes a word
gets into you

after so many sibilant adventures
whisper the truth
the truth's in you

I burrow to pronounce

there is a school where the crescent moon
leaves no light for distinctions

all we learn is in the doing
we touch to get there and come home
by this bewilderment we call consciousness

define define

o most delicious in the senses, miracles
of proximity and pain
as if your body meant more than any other could
your body means more than any body can.

[29 April 2001]

3.

be part of the underpart of the chain
the part that loops back under the seat
to spin the fore-rake so it bites under the wheel
and the whole girl goes

be curtain velvety do the black
against vagrant headlights there's a war watching
tumble down the haychute into the tolerable barn

you only have to do this once you know
this fierce adolescence where a dog
knows more about the fucking world than you do

only once this time round at least
and then the slim forgetting
pulls the carpet gently from beneath your feet

Sinbad
a flying carpet is a nickname for death
your death not anybody else's
and you swoon in the middle of space

remote from any specious landscape you spent
so many cabbalistic years imagining
with bank account and camera

4.

the deep blue tiles of Samarkand
the mosque of what you say
or blue mosquito drone along the air
night mesquite charring by the picnic tables

[29 April 2001]

DELIRIUM

Do you spell that with one L or seven?

No, one knee.

Sit on my knee.

Don't be rude.

I'm not rude, I'm knee.

I know you're you.

Not me, knee.

Oh. Do you want me to?

You called me rude.

I'm sorry.

That's all right. Do you?

Do what?

Sit on knees?

How many do you have you want me to sit on?

Seven.

That's an odd number.

I mean it.

Don't be rude, I know what you're thinking.

Now you're being rude.

I didn't say anything.

No, but you thought it.

How can you know what I thought?

How can *you* know what *I* can think?

You're right. Nobody knows what anybody knows.

How can you know that?

Don't be rude.

I'm not, I really want to know.

Then I guess I can know that because we all share the same delirium.

Do you still want me to sit on your knee?

29 April 2001

Red Hook

There are so many particulars
needing the oils of immaculate attention
but 'the hands have nothing to look forward to'

30 April 2001

SELF

There is a force field of almost random relations
this is the habitual geometry of a 'self'

drawing by its whirling self-regard

[magnet/*aimant*]

random flotsam to its congeries —

a collection of trash in space
around a core of God.

2.

imagine just this: lines of force
faintly phosphorescent
against the black of space

(no planetary atmosphere to give light)
edges without solids, edges without planes,

cadres pure de lumière insolent

naked edges reaching
rickety light shafts tangled

a shipwreck of pure lines

sucking stuff inward towards itself

so that it moves and sings.

30 April 2001

Vesture of the green
amazing that it comes
again and goes and means
we are a sort of accident
to it, furtive creatures
moving in its quicker shade.

30 April 2001