

5-1995

mayA1995

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "mayA1995" (1995). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1171.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1171

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what is taste
to know
such powerful
differences, why?

Yew tree by my door,
who killed my mother?

Barley magic. You hand
(you are a hand)
some food to a child

the taste of barley
on a white plate

it seemed to have
its own grease
Greece oil its evening
glisten

it seemed
(it was all seeming,

the mild sweet salty taste,
an oil of absence,

gleety, scary
by dint of difference)
from what I knew

the taste of barley taste of plate
the mother turned from the child
the child is eating
(a child is all eating)

this and that
the taste of

of taste the

that and this

every day was new for such as her
and when she was old and could not often swallow
without a little cough a little trouble

one day was like another
why do they give me simple things to eat?

Of course all of life
you look to taste

the thing that so
surprised you then

that a thing
should say something
in your mouth
and each thing different
but barley was
differentest of all

whatever is most itself is magic,

barley was magic.
And later the stiff white grains of it
like knotted fists
a child's hand

meaning something takes a life to tell.

1 May 1995

WHITBY

Whose name he knew by
pattering up the sea steps
deux cents et un
to reach that curious sky
called land
where we can feed,

o and the narrow river
sliding into the North Sea along the mole
red roofs, evidence of storm,

we leave the walls up
and let the roof fall down,
the terror firms us,
the sky's a better ceiling
my teeth on fire for that starry meat!

And in this chapel once
they argued against the liberty of God.

2 May 1995

Arbeitswetter the scald of time.
To be without no.
Sum game
by men or welshing
manufacturers. One has
no right to say
no. One is owned
by being,

made to move, starved
of reflection. One.
A moon without a sea.

3 May 1995

Spare cinctures
to bind the maiden me

sky glue some little
machine
then all the violets

be a freak
light is accident
itself of color

bindword
free fetterly
hands tied behind
the back know back

at least
do what can.

4 May 1995

goldfinches
in morning sun

green as parrots
on the feeder

the way we cling
to what we guess

sustains us
sustains us

4 May 1995

The stark of truth awaiting your reasoned judgment,
you are an alchemist with yellow hands.
And I am Jacob. I walk through the diverse rooms of your house
and call them chambers, and guess the colors wach would wear
if I could see. I mean if I could walk, for Jacobs limp
famously, after that bad quarter hour with an angel,
which is all I know about heaven to this day, some glorious
impairment and a mutilated name. Of course it felt like love.
We don't have much else to feel like — coin, chain, finger,
palm of the hand caressing a modest convexity somewhere
in that continent called you. Could that be enough?
I am afraid of the simpler remarks. They are weeds
that sneak up through the gravel of the whitest silence.
I will do almost everything to keep from hearing them.

5 May 1995

The knowers also
among the weeds
always

a deliverance at hand
coming
from the inside

ebullition a chipmunk
engorged with heaping
up light.

6 May 1995

Chill wind on these bare knees

How can a cloud talk so loud?

6 May 1995

(for Joan Tower's Duets)

Sunbolt promises
handcar from Callicoon
two men pumping north
along the iron track or over
there one fainting on the road
to Damascus in red clay notably
thick and glutinous by grace
of rainstorm now
in gold afterlight red
and dangerous: a wild
boar of a road and the river
waiting. Stay on the track,
the handcar, to go, it
moves by two. Takes two
to mean a thing.

6 May 1995

A senate passing some laws
is like a man

the man is painting
dead leaves green

to make the summer happen.

7 May 1995

Nothing listens
to a crowd.
The worst
is fortitude:
makes the terrible
eternal.
A wall comes down like rain.
We have lived
all these years
in shadow
and trains run through.
Far up every tunnel
the track runs and once
in your lifetime
shimmers in blue light.
The sky or else.

7 May 1995

The pain of happiness
this blue sky

the this
of all my thats

held close—
those
become this

and this is it,
the ones I always wanted

have become.
There is no more than this.

8 May 1995

For fear of letting the mind walk
where it might go, tight twisting ever tighter
in its own streets, dark
except by passage.
Going lights the world.

9 May 1995

The trouble is the size. If small, then clear.
Kafka rows his boat far out on the Entensee
fearful of those *mothers*, the shadows of trees.
A shadow is a womb. “The lap of shade,”
his happy friend said a little tenderly,
a smudge of cigarette paper on her lip
like a pirate flag on a tranquil sea.
The trouble is rowing to get there — dead
island, spooky with overgrown lilacs,
fragrant old houses with no glass.
The breaks of music. We had all come there
for instance for some conceptual engagement,
go floating out to think. There were rats.
In rubble. And pervasively lilac — Kafka
came ashore one pant leg drenched from debarking.
The sun will dry all this out of us. Out of sight,
far off but distinct, a bagpipe wheezing,
presumably a record but you never know.
Quacking real enough from nearer by. No need
to check that out, and yet he does: these common
beautiful white ducks, he looks at them
and leaves the mysterious Scotsman unpursued.
The mysteries of race are fathomless.

9 May 1995

FAUVERIE

Fauverie that part of the zoo where big fierce tawny
animals are, lions and such, and sunburned tigers
slinking through our dingy afternoon. I came here
on word-back, soaring from a big thick book

to tell I love you and love is most animal and what
isn't animal though is such a starry business,
gasp cloudburst mountain range
made up of silver ore and afterglow,

our mind held safe from its own quick jaws!

10 May 1995

Catch as graveyard can the yewtree
with vermilion berries waiting
for the mulch of men. One dies down there
for good. The longboat men

staggered up this identical shore
drunk with getting and the sea.
I cannot mend my greed, I turn
in the meek flare of simple skin

to a palsied minotaur, a spoken
bird. All night I looked at you
where we had been — harbor and harmway,
rockwall and ratchet lifting

one by one the suns over the hill.
Caught in this copious machine
I want. And that is simple, isn't it,
the weather is our last identity.

10 May 1995

phonics

When we were waiting by the river
some personages known from France arrived
beating the lobster waters with their hands

and we're wet too,

scatter men now from here to there,
sick as Vikings, hurrying inside the flame,
a king on sufferance and something steel,

a king gone up to die
is not unlike the whole sky.

10 May 1995

Saint's board, a trick
of four by fours now war
is over. Is it ever?
Rock in basement
hewn, holy. Hauled
out in commoning dayshine
so. Heap here,
sit there, watch what we do.
For we are various
beneath the earth
and stalwart upward
mound memory in light.
I want to know who
lives down there and
knows my name so well,
their flags striving so
hard in the dark.

10 May 1995

