

7-1994

## JulC1994

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "JulC1994" (1994). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1228.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/1228](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1228)

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](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

---

And what if all this is seduction  
I was going to say, but between the *and* and the *what*  
a mower came, a dog and a phone call,

a friend's mother in the hospital, who knows why,  
crows calling, breakfast to be made,  
waffles for Charlotte a bagel for me,

a second cup of coffee and start again— seduction,  
all we ever cared about is *that*,  
this wanted and this wanted place

haunted by us and our desires, a staying place  
where we can't stay, a going from which we cannot go,  
breakfast and green leaves and last night's dream

and music music music. She laughed when she came in and saw  
the single word written on my page, an ampersand  
my epitaph — be grateful for the interruptions!

15 July 1994

## AN ELEGY

We are artful enough to supervene  
among the breakages. Hard words,  
like cheese for breakfast and the mist  
walking down the hill towards you.

You know a wind. Oh be careful in the road,  
there are so many stayings.  
Come between me.

When you walk in,  
the grace of your pleasures comes through the door,  
the also door we need so much  
to forgive the world and go.

Could we go in the article of touch?  
Could the extremity of attention at  
the same instant be a letting go?  
The demonstrations

are what is needed  
to explore the margin of your map, mariner,  
where your skin's wet with a salt beyond all oceans.

But touchly we stay. A sound like a bass block-flute  
comes also in, a spinal ceremony, it leads  
sensation up and down the height of us, as if  
we were getting married in the back of the head,  
and shadows brought us flowers where we stood  
guessing at God in the long verb of silence.

Old music with us, a radio remarking, a room  
remembers everything ever said in it,  
no wonder everything is old.

But there are agreements,  
aren't there, a mask of three-eyed  
sweet-breathed custom easing us  
into the celebrated actual. This god-face we put on.

We sign the document, every hand  
a Caesar with the power to decree. This new  
thing (the Romans called a revolution), this new thing  
spoken out of the music of us, this only  
is the new. And then the room hears that too—

don't go with the listening, what is heard  
makes old,  
    go *into* the listening,  
stay there where the thing is heard  
and endure the weather of the mind without discussion.

15 July 1994

## EAST OF THE TACONIC

Can we see what is comparative  
a riddle (I mean an apple  
the road into Massachusetts  
up in Shaker country  
folding slipwise into Pittsfield  
to meet a friend and being distracted  
by a lake a Mexican restaurant a minor league Mets

Still, one got there about the time of the apple blossoms  
and much the same way, following the Vocation  
of Nature, that silly priesthood of the inevitable,  
  
the sweet flowering field that teaches us to die.

15 July 1994

---

But hosta brings hummingbirds.  
Purple flowers that spike up fast  
two feet above their waxy shell-like leaves  
and hang there like tired monkeys in the sultry air.

And the birds come. Everything is wrong  
with what I said, and I heard whirring  
almost underfoot, they don't care,  
it's how I go that touches them,

a whirring. And then the flower's gone and comes  
again, strangely, weeks later,  
so they call it Phantom Hosta, the ghost  
rises up and does business same as ever

and the birds —not so many, this isn't Brazil  
though it has its blessing — consult it still  
for all the wisdom nectar tells them.  
I wish I knew this flower.

16 July 1994

---

No two paths the same but strange  
how real paths are like one another

you can tell it in the eyes the quiet  
transformation of what used

to look at you wanting to eat you or  
or run away and now sees you

just sees you and is content—  
and for a moment you are their path

and they are yours and you go  
and the path runs steadily through,

the real one, the one that goes.

17 July 1994

---

Ponds and puddles I seem to be spilling  
these days, little waters  
ornamentals accidentals—  
I want to hear you singing this

on sultry days the natives sit  
in plastic basins full of tepid blue  
and read the papers or attend  
to the wires that bring to their heads

news of rhythm to instruct  
their frightened hearts in some other beat  
but what they think—that sink  
of fear!— this time of year

the sun is kept turned on all day  
and timid birds hide beneath the eaves  
of fragrant garages until exhausted angels  
put the light to sleep.

That's what I want to save you from  
with my difficult water, my sumps,  
lagoons, meres, tarns, and frisches Haff  
from which a knee-crawl journey

over soft sand and beach sea and pebble  
brings you on all fours at last  
to the one authentic ocean. Simply,  
sing it to me.

17 July 1994



**IN THE TEMPLE STANDS THE GREAT BRAZEN BASIN OF SACRIFICE**

Will I be this goat too? Color  
of the beginning. Some heat, a fervor  
in animal

—imagination.

Young men of indeterminate valence  
stepping cautiously in poplin windbreakers  
past pool halls, bridge to Oakland,

who can know  
the fervor in a cold young man,  
the fabled “heart” of him,  
the steely zipper?  
One makes do with what one can.  
One makes love with one’s past and future selves,  
what else would interest such a me?

One makes love with other people’s opinions

and they weigh down your clothes.  
In early evening, when the lights are still new,  
winter in a warm climate, when there might  
have been rain and the wet  
streets reflect the scarlet tail lights,

lights of those we leave we run to,  
hurrying, retreating,  
into the city of final affinities.

18 July 1994

---

Don't have to do anything.  
Let the mind  
slide right out of here.  
Let, let, that's all right.

Gracious cloud cover.  
Trace of union.

This way to Matter ⇒ .  
The camp of material objects  
item by item  
round the campfire  
breathing life into us,

we breathe the life of things!  
The bugles of our infantry  
whimper under bird song!  
Time to rise and wrong.  
Things waiting to be done.  
But leave them to forgetting.

The mind's clear mineral's  
more worth than minding "my wheel,"  
mother, sing to the All-mother,  
All the Way Past This, whose only  
skin is *this*. We crawl  
mindly into her arms.

For there is no place but this.  
But this is mineral as water is,  
or flame, that chemical behavior  
from which we live.

18 July 1994

*fontaines*

Clear vows held here. A promise  
is a share in someone's life  
the wise can see.

The garrisons of light  
stir even before dawn does,  
we servants of each other,

exalted  
as temporary rock, spindle-steepled, a hope  
for heaven.

But heaven's here.

19 July 1994

# BUILDING THE **fy**([-<sup>-</sup>\*])

1.

The declivities possess a power of arousing ascent.

We stoop to the ground of our renewal.

Begin. Slope and slide, a stupa  
is kinetic. A kid would want one  
in his back yard.

Mind, it teaches body how to be  
and be more than. Feel, and be more than it feels.

20 July 1994

## MORNING GLORY

Trapped in a tribe. Look around:  
hope is in your hand. Feed the birds,  
every utterance comes in two parts.  
Two fatherlands.

There is too much resentment to fit in one small world.  
Pithy, pointless — instruction manual  
for a lost machine. Think of the things.

Think of things. Waffle irons. To read  
by the light of an oil lamp  
in a northern country. By semaphore  
to understand the crows. Your crows  
walking the tree-tops the way they do.

And being excited on the way home from town  
and the soaked meadow after thunderstorm.  
Sometimes nothing works. Then the seed

(“...has a very hard coat and better results will be obtained if the seed  
is soaked in lukewarm water for 24 to 48 hours before planting.”)

will have problems of its own. Faith, it's a wonder  
anything grows! Yet everything does.  
And the blue oil that feeds the lamplight  
solves all the words, dissolves them, all  
images in the world latent in the meek emulsion.  
Vanilla power, taxi to the moon, care, caress.  
A good soaking's all you need.

21 July 1994

## THE COLOR OF HAZELNUT

We carry the colors safe in mind. And why?  
Because mind, being no color, is a sponge for all.  
Desirous! Hungers to take in!

Same with form. Forms.  
Circumstances. Families. A good espresso  
en forme d'une noisette comes my way.

The sequences of life on earth  
culminating in me. That's what  
every me thinks. And rightly in the sense  
I am a desperate imaginary center  
to all that mortal infinite circumference.

21 July 1994

## WEATHER TOP

they called it when the grey hat  
sat on the mountain  
and for two hours yesterday it teemed

in Woodstock we sheltered under a leaky heavy canvas canopy  
by the stream (“almost dark now”)  
that gushed and rose half a foot while we stood a quarter hour

watching the rocks go down.  
I think it was more than weather,  
it was a god offended into thunder and appeased

so let down rain.  
It cooled the terrible wet heat of this whole valley.  
We stood around with musicians and some vague nice people

who never made it all the way back from Kathmandu.  
We kept out of the rain.  
We were covered.

We had coffee and a brownie. We bought a book and some bowls.  
We talked about the dark deities  
who keep us safe. Not always are we wise.

We read the signs on the wall and handled things  
and put them down. Down, where the rain  
still came. A heart

is a strange thing to have. *Orage*, a rain storm.  
This is only a test. One day  
the beauty will not stop.

21 July 1994

## THE DRIFT OF INCENSE

By common measure  
the hymn proceeds.  
Every praise  
is an agreement,

no surprises  
in deity. But from  
the altar  
what we don't

decide  
arises  
unpredictable  
and goes.

22 July 1994



## THE GAUZE OF WEATHER

Tempests perforate wet aimlessnesses briefly.  
Hot a lot. We are solved.  
Shirts sop us up. Little also big  
provisional planet. Loss of merit,  
from pride. Too proud to correct  
the obvious malfeasances  
of this stuck local mind, mine  
own persistent weather. Who  
am I when I'm not thinking?

23 July 1994

## SYMPTOMS

1.

Starts repeating arias from opera.  
Smells like soap. Enjoys  
the secret privacy of showers.  
Radio was a step in the wrong direction,  
making the Government  
indistinguishable from Art.

2.

The mind is wasted on opinions. Can't keep  
my place on line, ice cream on Hollywood and Vine,  
to bring to Vilmos's up in the bougainvillea.  
Now why do I remember that? A flavor  
for the taking. An intimate boutique  
between the ears. In those parallels of us  
everything sells. Or I buy it anyhow  
and salt it down in vasty memory, that  
perfectly empty cavern.

23 July 1994

---

As if the answer were wrapped up in soft but brittle leaves of filo  
like strudel or spanakopita, you bite through crisp oily layers  
(life is made of contradictions) to get to the meaning, the thing  
like cheese. Inside, where you think the point of it is.  
Whereas. Once I was a soldier and slipped from war,  
once I was a ship and fell off the edge of the sea, once  
a bird I was and the sky lost me, lost me, you still  
hear me cry over sea-crash, wave-fall, where am I,  
where am I? You see silhouettes of birds against sunset,  
you smell the breeze and something bothers your throat  
and you're crying, and it's me you're crying for, me  
you don't know, the lost shape, the message no one ever sent  
you're reading now with your eyes full of tears.

23 July 1994

