

8-1993

augE1993

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "augE1993" (1993). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1284.
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Have I come so far to look at the sun?
There will be teachers of this in the evening
the commentators who withstand
the plain sense of the offending passages
and trope the helices instead with gaudy blemishes
of analysis, whirlpools of theory
sucking wisdom down the sink. The gurgling
counterclockwise of our lost hope. Bandanna
over the eyes. Spearmint reveille though,
wake up to ordinary mind, the single permanent,
the blue permission. The sky. No journey
is too far for that.

24 August 1993
Cuttyhunk

S E L F

An island trying to secede from the sea.

24.8.93 Cuttyhunk

The ambivalent is still waiting for me.
A port in any call, a gale
waiting for the coast of France—

I have seen you many times but never enough
though always satisfying — best of countries!

to be the shape of the weather
or to be small. That's where it is possible.

Or here a tree and there a mackerel sky
over the channel. Rumor ruins islands.

The Japanese are on their way
out of the hazy sun at eight o'clock

our fears zero in on me, the quiet
is the only value, hush here and everywhere,

that's all a place can offer, the silence
of hearing yourself think,

the excitement of meeting yourself
and listening at last to what you have to say.

24 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

The presences are near but never
here, the absences are never far.
We have come to the ocean that
washes the definitions, first clean
and then away. Antigone sleeps
her arms tight curled around
her sense of being right. Virtue
is something I'm finding it harder
and harder to understand maybe
there is a cynic or a sinner in me now
that blurs the honest face of virtue
where she sleeps, confident in piety
while buzzards pluck the newly dead.
Civility is all, I think to benefit
the living and forgive the dead.
What else is our freedom for but
conquering the minds habitual
patterns. The dispositions. And she
who is always right and always able
to score a moral point over the mere
ordinary people who have to work
hard to make it all the way to supper,
she sleeps serene in bitterness, glad
in the embrace of will, her only lover.

24 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
Feast of S.Bart.

THE PLEASURE

Redbird, the angry spirit holding the flag stretched
wide in the summerwind

so that small Italian planes
skim down to meet their ensigns over the narrow channel
not much more impressive than a flock of swifts
zipping up from the turtle pond, crazy the way they do,

suddenly and unaccountably hungry for the sky.
Like those, these for the earth, the snake-skinny
isthmus out between the waves that do not read,
do not remember, do not even care, but always come back.

24 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

RAIN IN A YEAR OF DROUGHT

Like a miracle
the sound of rain

I couldn't believe it, the delicate
tinkling of bones,
toes, sparrows inside clouds
or how to score it,

the release, the at last,
the soft, the down spiring
minarets of praise, the pale
honesty, all relevant,

falls to on a cool breeze
wake me over and over.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

Imagine anything easier, a falcon
hunting, a little snake in wet grass,
even a wind looking for a rock.
We are lodged in connectedness.
If *free* meant a thing, it would be not to be.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

FOR HER

Stickish vines from the round stones of the chimney
tap the wet window screen
the deadpan lunacies of Dickinson
make the world better
a pair of jeans on the washline walking in wind

25 August 1993

Cuttyhunk

THE CLASSICS

You never know
how long forever will last
it may be like milk
sour in its clean cool glass

it may be arguments
about the *Antigone*
still worth fighting about
after two thousand years

a story (is it *any* story)
is a permanent grit.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

J E N N Y

I still don't think she was beautiful—
remember what I told you when we walked
the low road and the high meadow
up to our ankles in the spring,
it was the light of intelligence made her
noticeable, not intellect, not beauty.
Quick to take advantage, generous
with her body, quick to evanesce—
no wonder it worked. And you
with your pale fleshly doubt, with dark
expectations and big eyes, believed me
no further than you trusted me, zero of a man,
my lies like stickleburrs, my piggy truths.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

All these hysterics take the form
of a quiet dog waiting at the door.
A bite in rain. Walk to the rocks
where the tide is coming in—
an absolute measure like a cubit
or an autumn or an owl.
I walk inside a body not my own.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

ADVERTENCIES

Eccles cakes at the island bakery
as if distance never was.
All islands are the same,
a gull comes home.
A spiral whisker caught in a swift's nest,
a child cries loud enough
for all the neighborhood to relax.
It's OK now, we can be loud,
it's morning, that funny thing is light,
we are alive. Coffee and so forth.

25 August 1993
Cuttyhunk

ON BARGES BEACH

I'm sitting on warm sand
the waves can reach my toes
if I don't move soon
I'll be caught by the tide.

If you're caught by the tide
you'll be late to tea,

late for the wind,
the moon will whirl you
into the violet sky

and the waves will keep repeating
your name like a drunken friend
trying to find you in the dark.

Up to your shanks in water
you see a far sail, a white
isosceles you have to solve

the world is full of fatal mathematics.
Don't turn on the light
your feet are still there
but they're not yours.
They belong to the sea.

25 August 1993
Cuttyhunk

A PIECE OF MORNING

To wake before the sea breeze
when everything's still still
only the sea breathing
to be heard, soft scour
on sand beach
then a deeper flurry
among rocks, and a bird
just one
malarking on a rose of sharon.

Will I understand the day
when it comes
all this sun glare on the sea
all mine, the population curve
erased, a sudden spike, it's me,
an identity proposed
by false analogy with a bird

a bird by hunting and a wave
mauve flowers and a game

a gull lost in the glare.

26 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

CALLING CARD

Name me, I cerebrate.
Unusual advantages my eyes
a breeze be warm
a breathing out

from name the mouth and nostrils who
is leaning out into the air of the day
days too full of certainties
bound to the old soft wheel
fragrance of an unknown woman a tree at night.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk

MR NUNEZ

To make believe the breeze
and then it's here
as if the world could read,
some dew on the fisherman's car.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk

Up sun to these events a family stirs
First the dogs of it then the clogs of them
Shuffle on deck and the sun sneaks through their clothes
—a body is only a dream of opacity —
Then the cups get into play and all
The ancient planetary symbolism begins, shadow swords,
Hair on fire with sundisk, deep-breathing the news.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk

WINDS

Agitated, like a forest by the very wind
that doesn't move here now,
the fur of the monster reminds the audience
that their own passions have to be set aside
if only to watch the story to the end.
Art interrupts action again. Viburnum,
first planted on the island in the 17th Century,
happens to blossom now. Movies
take a long time to end. We wait in darkness
eating salty things, holding hands.
It is a kind of life, this observation,
dull as salads but a man's whole life,
we guess, is just one mood. Followed
somewhere by another.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk

M A Ñ A N A

Mañana comes
hot as a string
weedcutter
going crazy
in the sun haze

the red & white
pea tuniyers
give a Polish look
to windowbox

if I remember
aright a zax is
a slate-cutter's tool
build me blue

my Onteora!
walk me in shadow
under the sea
my sole cloud.

Despondency
of words!
Just grass
& passing.

27 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

TO EXAMINE IT

as if by a mollusk or a sparrow
so many words
leaning on the crutch of time
to help them heal

and no diseases, actually
no one is sick
but those from whom the word
has passed into silence

then they get to hear
what is not language
and understand it all too well

the miracle of grief.

27 August 1993, Cuttyhunk

