

8-2002

augD2002

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "augD2002" (2002). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 970.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/970](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/970)

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).

## THE MESSENGER

Tight excitement wants to do.

But who are you

chesting in my east,

come to me as a voice

in night trees,

because the church is locked

but the organ's playing,

the dancers try to make it to dawn

but even summer nights are long

and things pierce us.

It was your voice, I swear it,

how can you dream a telephone

or answer a mosquito

buzzing in a little northern city?

Bars close, dancers drunk or sleeping.

Things settle down. Foxes

think about breakfast. Irregular nouns

form their plurals in ways you don't expect.

I dreamt a windmill

was busy in my hands

and deep inside a tiny peasant girl

sifted yellow barley on the stones

that turned her white as I watched

and the wind spun this pinwheel machinery

hard in my hand, like a breath

blowing a mosquito off my wrist  
trying not to kill.

And I held  
everything, and everything turned.

Was it a book or a broken cup?

Let me read you as if you were a thing  
then you read me and we are done.

Or one. Or one at least of us can wake  
out of the crowded imagery of God's own dream.

10 August 2002

## THE WAYS OF LIGHT

Staring at the postcard of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in Saint Petersburg I realize several things.

The Russians do not change the light. In the great lantern beneath the highest dome, uncolored glass lets the blue sky through. Sudden light, sky's light, God's presumed light comes through the artifice of wall. The walls themselves are densely figured, brightly colored, saints and angels, patterns and symbols. But the glass is clear. What a sacrilege it must have seemed to them, to chance the light itself, the sky god's everlasting, inexhaustible gift.

And then I thought of the stained glass windows of the cathedrals of Western Europe. The lost and secret processes by which a blue came, blue of Mary and the heart of matter, mother itself, bluer than the sky, and the reds that are more crimson than Christ's blood pouring down the cross. How strange the alchemists were, who made those shocking magnificences of colored windows, windows that revised the world, that raised the light to a higher power. Strange their art, or some stranger, never-named science behind it, al-Khem, the work of Egypt, the work that finds the dark heart of the light itself. How deeply alchemy made its mark on the Western windows, orgasms of light in dull stone walls.

To change the light itself, to inflect it with the colors of our will, a process we intuited in the secret chambers of natural event, we imitated it, we extracted it from nature's time, and made our own time with it and in it, our fire, what they called the fire of the wise, our own slow heat, we cooked the glass and cooled it at the chosen moment, the willed moment. We made the light our own.

So in those dark naves we grew a great glass rose, a godly sunrise in the west, *contra naturam*. Against nature our alchemy strove, our cathedrals spring

from our given places, fen of Ely, plain of Chartres, spring into the air as if we meant to rescue God from nature, that busy usurper of the divine Idea.

And this bright red brick Russian church, called by a local name that means "The Blood of Christ Poured Out," was built only at the end of the nineteenth century, by an architect, Parland his name, who certainly knew the windows of France. Here he was at the end of the whole process, Byzantium and Romanesque and Gothic and Cistercian, he knew how to hold them together, plausibly, fantastically, and knew that a Russian church is built to change the landscape, bring the people near the blood of Christ. And knew enough to leave the sacred light alone.

10 August 2002

## VARIATION

A leaf  
in the roof dance

hornet wind  
to remember  
some coming

a shadow  
holds nothing back.

10 August 2002

## VARIATION, 2

What I am hiding  
from you

I will not tell

sunsets

learning where

rivers turn

10 August 2002

as is

Things that are close  
are far  
enough

there is an absence  
built into  
the way

we are interruptions  
of someone else  
almost here never

2.

what can I do  
with your voice  
in my head

telephone abattoir  
a father's vengeance  
set against

miracle gravel  
bruises of  
our kind of.

3.

into the day

an hour

abandons ship

suddenly the time

of work is gone

and work undone

a lucid animal

explains us

with its fangs.

4.

beast

to be

as it is

not other

truthlessly

me

because it waits

in me

for something else

always coming  
up the stairs  
it never

knocks it always  
palms the door  
open slowly

it is all around  
my bed it says  
it is the night

it was wet there  
with the stars  
they suddenly

remembered me.

5.

where did you learn  
to speak

the chemicals of names  
into my poor empty  
saucepan

set the spark  
inside the pot  
and watched me foam

into the myriad  
mornings of identity  
signing my name

to everything  
and calling yours  
out everywhere

a year and a day  
through the intricate  
silences of

ordinary space.

11 August 2002

---

You gave me everything

I gave you nothing

it seems a fair exchange

morning has such empty hands.

11 August 2002

## ONCE

you used to write  
down what I said

when a word was  
as good as a mile

and we went there together  
to a city the other

side of war  
the interruptions

were an oil  
we slipped against

each other easily  
otherwise

still hearing distant fire.

11 August 2002

---

Weapons are only pretexts.

Listen to what the sword sings  
or any knife  
its flying patchwork of edges  
needs to cut

and you need this curious incision.

12 August 2002

*(dreamt, woke repeatedly to recall)*

## TRACES OF THE PRIMITIVE

accumulation meant  
to solve. Solve me,  
a Lacan in Keynesland with the slope  
of personal desire graphing  
mute catastrophes in the public sphere,  
everything I want is bad for you

for both of us the fact, since need is anger  
and hope is a nun, a pale passion in the wish,

every transaction betrays. That is the answer.  
Pure money of mental salient  
in the grim evidences of denial.

I was the beacon  
from your balcony  
or liar in jeopardy  
or your last chance  
a fact, Mundesley  
over the North Sea.

Admiral Nelson. The desire  
for money is a private lust  
and innocent as lust can be,  
one is the first victim  
of one's own cupidity, live  
accordingly, he died at sea,

the poet Cowper suffered here

because this little town is the whole earth,  
we live impostorly  
breaking crusts with toothless millionaires  
or is that an old factory window  
smashing by itself to let the moonlight in

over the plain of ruined bicycles?  
And I thought this was a dream.

2.

Woke too early  
the rest  
still not up

by the time they wake  
to business  
I'll be dreaming

at the mercy  
of their greed  
I am too

tired to sleep.

3.

Put a star here  
to mark  
where the map ran out

wolf eyes  
where a car  
drove into the trees

its chrome pretenses  
catch moonlight  
I walk the other way

animals come  
in all degrees of carbon  
thank the road

there is always  
a way to spare  
in this contingency

4.

I think back on Farley's sister

pale ardent Madeleine  
she could have been the way  
for someone to get out

she was an avenue  
I think of philosophers  
in their dreary Bronx

looking up at their sisters  
rarely, I think of me  
remembering so many

and none of them sisters  
why couldn't a girl  
be a girl and a road be a road

5.  
it's only in the sketches  
that Church's pictures come alive

my god that Greenland ice  
a square foot of utter seeing  
later narcotized in oil

6.  
if we could move into the design  
itself and leave space free to *move*

just install a cloud above your head  
and call this shadow fall your house

sadhu privacy, naked in plain air

7.

inhabitants of flow

writing is like sleep  
except you never wake

only pass into the dreamless  
enterprise of everyday

8.

could it be a broken valve  
the English used to call  
the vacuum tubes that ran  
their nice old radios  
warm to the touch  
cold mornings all that music  
gone.

Valve, from Latin

valva, panel of a door

the doors all closed at once

9.

how many near me  
the grand design  
accommodating no one

in Asia saw no one  
worse than myself  
and story telling

makes us envious  
to live a life  
not ours not ever us

10.

so I will not think it  
and these  
are the desperate traces

of avoided thought.  
A park in Northampton  
to think of instead

meager and pretty  
with a peacock caged  
and a raccoon cage

with no raccoon.

11.

afraid to love birds  
as much as I do

it is the *cancellation*  
*of all other things*

they bring in  
on the wing

suddenly  
with color and a cry.

12 August 2002

## INSTRUMENT

This thing I want to conceive  
was a thought in the bush  
where nothing in particular  
waited for my head to empty  
of what it usually thought

and there I was  
baldheaded as a bad idea  
midnight all around me its sweaty hands

and so on, what could I do  
to answer  
the voice that didn't even deign  
to ask the least of things  
of me

though I was wearing my godly uniform  
and all my lusts were in their cage asleep.

12 August 2002