

5-1994

mayD1995

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "mayD1995" (1994). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 1221.
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FULL MOON OF VAISAKHA

Watering the shoe so
the world will grow

In the first week I will walk
over the future to be sure
and in the second I will walk
the past to see that nothing's left

Then when I'm sure the coming and the gone
are both swept clean
in the third week I will walk
into the endless now

Where you are waiting for me
wearing my clothes.

25 May 1994

As if raised on a thunderstick a quiet tree
endures its own
unpiecing into flower

vague or amber pink a smile in shadow
and then in perfect grey of rain
it gives. The smile deserts the tree.

Sight beyond control
fills the sky with feeling.
Even my deaf ear can taste this.

26 May 1994

Balanced last midnight at the precise
boundary between two scents
the rhododendron the lily of the valley

stands the doorway of our house.
What do the Arabs know of Araby?

26 May 1994

PICTURES

Lifting a life out of all these lives.
Old snapshots. In every one
I am dressed for my part in some absurd amateur production,
embarrassed, embarrassing.
No matter how close it comes to the present,
the past is always ridiculous.
Who are these people? Who wrote these plays?

27 May 1994

Note 7 to Brian Kim Stefans 27 May 1994

I grew to dread falcons, by the shore
—BKS

wdnt you know it
that's the line that hit me
(dropped on me
suddenly
from the turbulent grey sky of the Sestina region)

that exorcism, is it, of a cloying
poem (the one of his I never liked, why,
and John Martin gave me
for a wedding present once
a framed boradside of it, magnificent,
a glad bother,

and marriages like that did not last,
the shore is always where the sea is busy
with that schoolgirl learning subtraction
thoroughness she has,
Amphitrite, a maybe mother,
queen I guess of steep-hipped sea birds
who waddle on land but slice

through wilderness of air.)
The shore is always falcon enough of its own.
The beak is always working us over.
A bird drops out of the air
then drops through us
and down through earth away,

but the sea is always at it.
Like poems at the back of the mind, ones
you don't like too much
but stay in there, like this and like that, an endless
zoo of comparisons from which nothing is safe,

I'm sorry about Joe Brainerd's death two days ago
it is to be assumed that he is still, or again,
laughing in the light. Or at the light.
The way a sestina is finally
ridiculous as an opera house or a seagull

but I would hate, hate, hate to live without them.

27 May 1994

As if the work had a simple measure
the way a door frame nestles a door
or a wall stands. *There are degrees
of perfection, & we live.* That's what the old
shepherd kept saying in my head,
the one who'll do anything to go on.

1.

I marry you in noble instances.
There are birds there, few here, river same,
forest some, the train. I have tried to coax it
and I have tried to sleep. This last night
I managed the latter. The Mesmeric Union
sends for me, and Mary at the bank, and Kim
holding a flag without device, just passages of color
like a tired pianist trying to forget.
There, I've said it again.

2.

Union of the sooth with the need since we
sort of speak one, language
and we have rejected the identical God
and we sell the same dusty grains and engines to the world
and the same sun reddens my neck too. Union
of the living with the dead, the desire
with the deed, of stone
with animal (= a bone), of books with fire (poetry).
Some accommodation must be possible.

3.

All leaders are glorious, all armies
feathery with valor and a snarl
of sunlight and they kiss metal pieces.
Breathe on me. I still want
to hear Gruberova sing Elvira,

not some minor league team from Indiana.
There's a Taj Mahal in every town
if only you can find it.
Let down the roof on your convertible,
trade in your false teeth for postage stamps,
tie a broom to the bowsprit and fly away,
the adorable measure of the common day
still keeps reminding you of what you forget.
Just pay attention when they snicker in your face.

28 May 1994 KTC

AN ADDICTION

Not to be consistent. Write Greek e's
like my father and round e's like me.
Or me's, since how can I tell
which one stopped—a heartbeat ago—
being you?

What I remember
of drunkenness is falling into the arms
of something that had no arms.
A startled Invisible Man I was
suddenly outlined with snow.
Everyone could see me then. The terror
of wanting and not touching and nowhere to go.
And everybody knew what I was thinking,
no way to hide, they laughed at my tumult of desire
since only drunken people want and want and want
in a world all round me sound asleep with having.

The last time I was drunk stood on an iron bridge
over the Harlem and hated what I felt,
the poverty, envy, jealousy and lust
that hid from me the glory that I *knew* was here,
not fame, the pure glory that is purely there
welcoming, behind the sun or wet in the moon's lap,
certain, splendid, meaningful and true.
Ready to jump I stopped and reasoned
if this is the *veritas* there is *in vino*, give me lies,
the merciful sobriety of city mornings. No hope,
no fear, just people on their way in light.

So here I am three decades later leaning
on this slender plow (prow?) that leaves a dark furrow
no wind or rain or music will efface
because it speaks in you. The wake is permanent
in this strange water. Premise: a word

spoken goes on listening, and lasts. The cabin
where the word lives is in the purest mountain.
Sometimes on top and sometimes deep inside.
Whatever you are, this word follows where you go,
in you like a faculty of listening. In you like tears.
In a dark room, for instance, someone suddenly
looped over the doorknob a string of artificial pearls.

29 May 1994 KTC

1.

The shape of attention
is more formal —shapely— than
the shape of what's attended to.

And so we triumph over war,
love and mystery.
Everything except death

which seems to have a shape of its own.

2.

Insidious measurements.
There was a king then I forget
a fall from on high to a condition
of diminished opportunity
—where death looks like felicity—

and the mad have made their contract
with the earth itself, no human
interveners in their accurate dance.

The slope against which it is to climb
from time
to time distracted by the smell of fresh bread.

29 May 1994

I was sitting here in the food court at Price Chopper
drinking their hot weak coffee and
wondering why it all seemed so familiar.
The people, the thick people, the eyeglasses
on the little boy. The eyes that rove but warily.
It is the market, the shouq, the bazaar,
the kermesse, the Wednesday market
in Thonon and all the market towns of England
and the knife vendors of Darjeeling and
no matter how many roofs they span over it or
middle-management levels it is the market still.
We come to it and are the same. I am the same.

29 May 1994

A little offering
This body
Into that mind.

30 May 1994

C I N N A B A R

's the name of this tune.
My sidemen
are rhododendron flowers
some purple finches blue jay squirrel—
business as usual
in the ballroom of the Hotel Samsara.
A dove's here too—
color's a pretty
reliable guide— a grey
mourning dove in fact
temporarily silenced by breakfast.
Sun coming over the highway,
must be summer. Northward
travel of the primary,
remember all the ancient wisdom
superstition agitation what to think and
what those leaves are growing at your feet
to bend and eat the satyr dances
of all our ancient guidance.
The tradition
is spectacular—
drink comfrey tea.
And remember me—
or do something else
just as well
as I do this and that's me too.
Whenever you get it right it sounds like this.

30 May 1994

GLASS

Here I am sitting facing you again
they call it confronting
my hands are in front of me
my wishes behind me I am looking into the small
aperture where the future is stored
in the back of the breadbox behind the dry cookies
and the packet of raisins came with cereal
you never opened and ate preferring flakes dry

o I am looking straight at you again my seemly companion
I suppose all the while you're a Greek philosopher
i.e., interested in everything, but what if I'm wrong
and have been all these years and you could care
(as they say in Terre Haute) less about
all my dreams and explanations (Indians of the Great Plains,
the Coptic vowel system, Piranesi's staircases,
the logwood bubbling over my spirit burner,
my peach tree, my alkahest).
You have your own city and never mind me.

But I mind you, you're all I have to mind,
I bring you all my chickens and you
(in this respect only like Suzie Rasula in Indiana
who cut one artful into pieces and cooked in several forms
so that one chicken served seventeen)
do what has to be done. You market. You bagnio
steamy with intrigues. You serene twilight.
You empty sky.

Whatever you say
I want to hear vocal music,
not the words, just the striving—
Bellini, Berlioz, Rossini, Verdi, Wagner,
Puccini, Strauss, the body leaping
out through its own mouth up
into the preposterous world of the actual

we inhabit so dumbly all day long.
And it sings in me to stay so.

And if you're not interested what do I do then?
Me with all my doors and entrances,
my fountain pens and coffee mugs, I ask you—
is there an order in this evolving
so the yellow bus becomes a family car
like those Oldsmobiles that creep before me
neatly bearing smug retirees slow
and then the ambulance, the hearse, the scow
and there I also go, me with my loves my
interesting velleities—that go nowhere,
library of cellular desires. But to will is all, that's all.

31 May 1994

“the Oberammergau of America”
Christ dying in puple light
while Meyerbeer’s march from *Le Prophète*
convulsed the auditorium,

one wept, one does weep
at such things, that simple death
meant to revive us

we live forever
it seems
in some fashion

Ceravolo, Brainerd,
Spicer, Olson,
Blackburn,
how are they different
having closed their books

except for us to open.
A cartoon of a man on his deathbed
worrying about a comma.
Tomb of the Unknown Poet
crushed under the bridge at Mostar,

what do we know of anything,
even the best of us just fantasy-mongers,
the silly narrative of Dante waking the dead.

OK. I have said some names
I honor. Steve Jonas
never had a chance. Listen to him
if you get a chance. He knew
how to make Pound’s text listen
to us. In those days they called that Jazz.

31 May 1994

