

3-1993

marB1993

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "marB1993" (1993). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 1257.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1257

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.

MIRIAM

Be ye open according to my word
she says and the sea divests itself of difference.
Waveless, it easily falls to one side to let them pass.
Pharaoh is Jehovah. Escape from this one despot
while you can she cried and all the people fled
dryshod through the Sea of Reeds, then mounted
without effort the red rocks of Asia. In a dream
of comfort and gossip and music and progeny they climbed
thankful for every thing that came to mind.

And Miriam stood last on the African shore
holding a fruit in each hand. Against her cheeks
she pressed them, one sweet, one astringent.
The problem with the world is only women tell the truth.
Her brothers go on quarreling with lies and guesses
conquests and religions, all the vague murderous future.
Forgive all your names into silence, and be safe! she calls out—
beneath all the horror to come a woman still is waiting
who knows the only benefit is letting the mind come to rest.
This woman with a mango in each hand.

8 March 1993
for Charlotte

IN MEMORY OF JOHN CLARKE

the spiteful bedrooms of our differences
consumed half a century we have to try
to peel Virgil off Livy and as for Homer
he is a scandal of rapturous forgetting

cant we get back and ungulate that mudstone
Oregon coast it hurts to write your name
in such a medium every word is truth
enough for the *quirites* you alone knew

the Rome before the Caesars and the Popes
(the fallies and the papas and the blinking
sickness of der letzte Mensch) absurd
philosophers go back to your rosary beads

(*ach, Kant zurück zu deinem Rosenkranz*)
it is not thought that clears the world
it is what clears away the thought
into the rapture of pure thinking

the few that actually did the work
with their plough the *mundus* consecrated
in your honor on this day Four Tooth declare
a bronze trowel to unmason

all our bad buildings.

8 March 1993

A LETTER TO THEOLOGIANS

There are always imperfections the hope
my followers is that the sheep will bite
before they yield their blood the wool
will scratch and irritate the viking neck
the blue will bother you. I am the sky.
You have wandered underneath my coat
for fifty thousand of your years and I
have had a never-failing entertainment
watching you distract yourselves from truth.
And how strong you are, strong as Americans,
clever as Tibetans, industrious as Japanese
at all your prestidigitations. Your endless show.
And you're good at it — you distract me too
from time to time, and over these millennia
I have come to share certain of your feelings.
O woe betide you now you have taught me lust!
And hate! And affable indifference, like an English
judge watching a thousand tribesman die.
And from my roiling spirit time to time
I let some copper-plated instrument shoot down
to blast a hole in your latest politics
and then you turn and look up here and cry Alas
the Person in the Sky takes vengeance on us now.
Whereas personless I join you in your play.

9 March 1993

for Charlotte

When does a word become available
when you can tell it from the weather

nothing is over till the cloud has spoken
and they do and they do and no one listens

how do we hear what is always speaking
the train drops seeds the seeds grow weeds

the world changes from these scant necessities
the tribune of the people loses confidence

words fall out of the books at last
ducks skim black onto the river landing

a whale tooth stands on my table
sea-otters sleep on the waves of Puget Sound

are we safe yet is the dream finished
that every morning wakes us up

there seems to be someone talking in the window
it is the light talking to me saying

if you can hear me you are finally alone.

9 March 1993

If I hold the dream of names in my hand
and swing it like a piece of ashwood
from the alley between Haring Street and Brown
with a blue penknife and the smell of oil
in the shadowy garage with its windowbox
full of the dark pansies I loved
and all the other prerequisites of childhood
shrouded in sunlight like Lenten statues
in that most beautiful pansy purple satin
in a church on fire, if the heavy cap pistol
goes off with a smell of cordite and my hand
remembers some other life when this was real
and death came without hatred or intention
the way the waves flood up the incredible
white sand at Rockaway Nora laughing forever
she runs with me into the future a French accent
a blue lake hidden in the mountains a woman
leaning forward to me whispering her man is gone.

9 March 1993

THE EARTH & THE WORLD

Maybe there should be commentaries on all this. It would take forever, and that is its advantage. The world cannot end until the last footnote is written. This is the *shastra* tradition, the world is a bauble held aloft on an inexhaustible fountain of commentary. There is nowhere for the water to go — it remains in the system. The world is the world, it is up to us to keep reminding it of what it is. Hence all the rumors of Vanir and Æsir, demons and sciences and other unlikely things, viruses and poltergeists, cannibals and archangels, molecules and martyrs, all the lies we tell to keep the earth interested in being not just itself but being the world. The world. The world.

9 March 1993

!N«(f-]n!

Listen to the wind
it doesn't mean anything
listen to the words
not meaning anything
the sound is like light
it falls past us
busy with happening

9 March 1993
Clermont

THE THEORY OF IT

for Charlotte

Let it be sunlight
I don't like to argue

Say your mother ran a restaurant
your sister smuggled spices

We are caught between high tide and low tide

unequipped with avarice
the rock loses everything at last

with the advancing sea
we become something like sand

a phone call a stray terrier

By means of insolent propositions
we are protected from language

the brain's capacity
to hold the mind hostage

in the shallow meanings of words

Let a word unsay another
this is poetry

to unsay the world
until there is only the world

Let it be afternoon snowfall
predicted by a television screen

a child grating cheese —easy!—

and a traveller

hurrying when he hears barking in the woods.

10 March 1993

TROLLTALK / 1

Let this thing be seen
and then the white columns fallen by the road
and the ducks passing

there are miracles wrapped up in a leaf
steam happens from the stone
there is a dream called fire

no matter no matter
mouths are always remembering
women taking long walks along the river under bridges

all right I admit it
it is under the arches of bridges I live and my kind have lived
since Caesar went back to Italy and left us alone

yes he was here too didn't you know
but ran out of ink that day to record it
and left Manhattan Island as his mark

troll talk the granite and the schyst
why can't I remember the simple thing he told me
about flour and water and a fingernail and snow?

10 March 1993

THE ACCELERATIONS

for Charlotte

The way if it happens fast enough you hear a song

is it of it
a melody
of it

what speed says *I am gone*

in a black flash gine beyond anybody

It is the way he gets his mind to talk to his body
with his body

beyond the vocabulary of meaningful action
the pure act of moving

Where would be enough gold to pay a bird to fly?

ah Bellini purest of Africans
the voice sinuous
shape of the throat
free of the poitrine

the body cancelling itself in leanest skill

λιγυαοιδος

11 March 1993

The time is now is after all is mine

There is no one but this snow
sun along branches
nothing aching

Nothing to be saved and nothing lost.

11 March 1993

XOCHITL

a mountain bares its flanks to us
all day long all day long
never gets tired of permitting

but are we elegant
in taking

take this permission
without
one step off the earth embrace
utterly the air

who can bear this permission
who can look a mountain in the eye

11 March 1993

FIRST BLACK BIRD

for Charlotte

my wife's amber
objective

the generation
white epaulet

bird back
red like
a scar shows
only when it flies

inversions
interpret
pedological investigation
I stand on Cx

the subjective pressure
like a lemon peel
left by the side
a pretense

I live elsewhere that where I am
the first
is back

white scar
along the instrument
of coming

liriodendron tulipifera
preposterous
(*pré* pasture us?)
I will look at this tree
in the morning saying
absurd and absurd
to think in a couple of weeks

flowers also

from the salt meadows
I guess my best
fount and origin the black
alluvium

timothy my father called no one at all
edible tubers the rat
knows all

the scent is safe in silver

after
a broadcast (short wave)
from what must be another decade
but the blood is fresh

coagula

[that was 11 March 1993]

are the strange?

as by a board a valiant
or a bucket

at last a silver cup

all the connect

all the light strings gathered
in a star you sit on
wheel wise spun

arms out
in a sandstorm world

the snow relents you

wind finds your wound
my mocking hostile people called "Sitting Bull"

you answer weather

along this luminous network
travel to every end
and every one
enmeshed in your dream design

you are not waking till you see the yellow lines
god amber
moon's Baltic basement resin

drip from one belly to another
the Upward Course of Glory
old Jew with intricate kindness
charting the links between

and between and between
all of us
letter by letter

a cardinal in the snow

[12 March 1993]

[continues]

is there anything left time to tell
quick Nairanjana of the transformation

a vow a vow by water and cut hair

the strands of it looped away into the Arabian Sea

where do things go when we let them

answer: when we let them

a continent infested with tigers an isthmus in moonlight

caught on the spurs

spokegrass and marrow

people shopping
shelves bare before the storm

[12 March 1993]

for Charlotte

The character of it
changes as the blue
turns white and the eye
that has seen so much
looks inward

the sky turns inside out.

This is what he showed me
when I lay under the red wall
dreaming of not doing
after doing all day and all day

and she came along above me
so that I saw her shadow
before her form
the way it is with birds

and I saw her legs before her body
her body before her face

and then the sky went further
away into its white self and the snow
makes everything an intrusion on itself

it's not something you can hear
o isn't it I asked her
with the kind defiance

you look at weather with I also
looked her in the face at last
unable to forget her body

and he said it is time for you to forget
each other as the light forgets you—

and the starving Somali child
when the United Nations relief worker
said You have nothing
said I have the sky.

13 March 1993

The Mission

As much as they may castigate the sound of Mexicans having fun
the Salvadorans those somber San Francisco people have a tune
of their own a black hat tossed in the midnight air
when nobody is looking a kind of Lutheran abandon sometimes
when they manage to forget the dying and the being born
and all the pains of going out and coming in
and just sit down on the slopes of the American volcano
and enjoy the bodies of their princes their princesses the food
tumbling in named platters and mysterious all too ethnic tureens
sopped up with all the infinite varieties of corn O Teosinte O Maiz
thou art the blue stockinged maiden who brings us all we need!

I am thinking about them now moving in dim clothes along Valencia
on the way to tripe or beer or making out
because I want to cheer myself up in all this howling snow
and the fear of power going out and telephone gone and all
left with no heat no water and no words pouring in

but I don't want to get too cheerful not too much mariachi not too much
pistachio green and raspberry flags all over the snow
Corn yes Corn
yellow and red and blue and white
and the green shucked leathery husks to steam my tamales yes
but not that insolent music that unhinges the hips
and strums on the lute strings of the spine
until we in our wastrel lusters start to dance
even here where the flour is sifting endlessly out of the hand of the sky.

13 March 1993