7-1994

julC1994

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation
http://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.
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 wonted 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
da 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
E A S T O F T H E T A C O N I C

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 op
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 accidentalss—
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 in 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 $\text{fy}([-\cdash\ast])$

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!


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
WEATHERTOP

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
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