

10-1993

octC1993

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octC1993" (1993). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 1294.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1294

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.

CHARLOTTE,

the night is what it is it is
unkind in its way but quiet
it is quiet as a swing on a windless
tree and nobody near
nobody is like you and you
have a ceremony of accuracy
like a golden t-square held
hatchet-wise to measure
even the sun in the sky you are
accurate as they say you have
raison you have the measurement
and it is right for you to be
right. And what I have
here or anywhere is for you.
This is for you, small
and only a little like you
like a telescope offered to the sky.

18 October 1993
for Charlotte

DROWNING

I thought it was a grain
it was the tide
talking in my sleep

a tale of mirrors and remembering
all the high bitter things
I ground it fine

and ground it again to catch
the groan of the heart of a grain
to yield but it was water

rose and fell: a water mill
until my hands let go
and it took me to itself.

19 October 1993

THE CREEK IN THE TIDES

Or set one's sights on what is natural
fishing a creek in Abu Dhabi
a place of money

selah!

Learning from animals, the men of old
got some sense of this place they came to
—everything strange as a tree to a penguin—

*Nothing touches something so close
that something else can't get between:
theory of hellgrammites under rocks,
theory of jealousy, causality, the dream,*

of just deserts and tiresome gravity.
How many of us were here in the beginning—
look in the woman's book to answer.

Strange beginnings birds.
Featherless fall.
Rowdy country
side and back
music pebbled beach.
Touch was supposed to be our gospel
and wrapped in goatskin head of a king—

but were too long in where we'd been
—noise round signal wrapped
a biosphere of sensuous mistakes—

We saw a tall blue heron stand near the path
—something special about that water—
muscovy duck.

amnis, a rill in grass,

anas, a duck.

How we project our fears on politics

—Senator Fangoso doesn't even know you're alive—

and wrapped in goatskin
our two hands
meet and marry

our breaths also
—steam blue in cold
morning— do

till smoke drifts into smoke,
what difference?
And water into water pours,

is that not lyrical and shepherd and peace?

How loud the sheep in fact
are, more a blat than a bleat,

almost a cup
cracking on a wooden table

(what you hear is the sky)

let the light in
because all you are is a house.

The men of old gazed at the fish heaped up
beside the salt creek, fins agitated, women hurrying
with golden instruments of measurement,
gulls pouncing,

they looked and said Something
is wrong here,

if not with this place
itself then by dint of our
interaction with it
it is spoiled or spilled, we can't be sure,

there is pale murder in this air
something blue and something red.

20 October 1993

STEPPING ON THE FALL

stepping on the fall of small
red maple leaves on the wet path
the sudden light comes up from them
to meet my thought

and this red you can't see for all I write down
red red red red
but it is red and wakes up the mind
wakes up the mind to remember it has eyes

and the eyes run both ways in
to the red sprawl of the sky itself dancing
the sky set dancing
by the red of a light over the edge of the world

not here, not here
on this punctuated earth
where the Japanese ornamental maple trees
let down a carpeting of individual reminders

red flare goes up on impact
the forehead stops a red glare short of the windshield
the car folds around the tree
and then the red ---a man saved by color

alone--- folds back up into the sky
the red sheets up and down the sky
wet path wet eye the mind's continuous
can you see me looking at you from the sky?

20 October 1993 14:39

BEING CLOSE TO OUR ENCLOSURE

look, inside a hand
almost closed, a leaf, a little
red one, wet,
stuck by accident or grasp
or the accident of grasping
we call it to be me

21 October 1993

Not my hand
not someone awake

Portuguese bread in the oven
after all night rain

Of course when I wake before dawn
I stare dumbly out the back window

of course the pallor of the linden leaves
shines yellow and seems morning

and morning is a seeming of some other kind.

21 October 1993

Everybody wants a piece of fruit:

Aries apples
Taurus grapes
Gemini cantaloupe
Cancer honeydew
Leo orange
Virgo watermelon
Libra pear
Scorpio banana
Sagittarius strawberries
Capricorn grapefruit
Aquarius cherries
Pisces plums

Give everybody what she wants
the hurricane is coming soon.

What we need is people keeping a lot of different alphabets,
fruit in their mouths,
alternative histories,
new ways of making friends, spiritual soviets,
sweet confusions. We need sweat.
Palm trees of Cork City
and the little palm I saw in Leicester Square
while a little snow nubbled down in March,
we need a government committee to avoid war at any cost.
And things may indeed be drifting our way
but who will we be when they get here, and why?

21 October 1993

We wear
till we are worn.

Autumn music the hum
of men dreaming
up names for the colors
the hush of wind through leaves
the hard silences of women

and the Emperor is dying
and once again the empire drifts apart
it is only a dream and not the longest dream,
but the fairest, it is the fairest,
smoke haze in the birches at Shi-ling.

!
Noon came late today
(he wrote at dawn)
and the shadow of a blue heron
fell across the sun.

That way we know the Emperor will die.

(Musics for the Death of Teng Hsiao-ping)

22 October 1993

SHEAVES OF SHORTCOMING

Slobber on it
a sock in a family with dogs
and yet it is pleasant to suck on a cookie
as we call it, while the mind's away the teeth
lazy.

And she stretches through the afternoon,
remembering this and that
and turns to see me standing in the door
as if I were a part of the glass that forgot its message

remember when you had time to be bored?
That's just it, I'm nostalgic for ennui.

And I have nothing to confess,
just a holy mess.

23 October 1993

Every few years we go to war
like a man recovering from a fit.
We think we are sailors home from the sea
who are just commuters standing in a crowded train.

23 October 1993

DREAM KIND

The one chosen
presides over a battalion of socks
waiting for you in your chifferobe
while the solar basketball
dunks through Her net
and so forth, one more time.
I mean everything myths.

And they know how to lie better than I could
at their age, and do it prettily,
with their paws hardly fluttering in the tell-tale
way says I am making this up
to please you
you who have no authority but the Question
and you asked it and I am afraid.

I'm not sure this sweater fits me
either, too big or too snug, not sure,
it depends on what it's supposed to do,
isn't it, you slender miracle
a parsonage in Gypsy Spain,
carrying your sumac trees around
to give pleasure to the Earthly Powers
brave as chipmunks in the afternoon,
pink raptures of light, a belt
holding a stack of school books
tight in the endless fable of our clichés.

Or is there an end to it really
and I know it? only I left it
say in my other pants, or the half-moon
bright all the way home
she says I didn't see it my eyes
fixed on the deer weren't on the road.

24 October 1993

Could there be the same
waiting inside the same
way it waited in the other
to be me when I was born

a handle on the air a name
turning into meat her look
came out of the corners
of the room the light died

and there were only mouths
and what they do
the word's the least of it
yet it has some final is about it

no other muscle squeezes.

24 October 1993

I have no one to keep the days
I have to keep them for myself

this one at least, this certified today,
early Brumaire and a fox in the near woods.

The sky is truer at this season—
truer than what? the old high school

chemistry teacher asks, the kind of old man
(kind of question) our culture supposes

to be philosophy. Whereas the sky is blue
just happens to be true

and rimes with the only other thing you know.

25 October 1993

One will always have something to say
a stick in the woods
something gnawed white by beavers
stick in the black ground
sheds light at dark of the moon

a stick of light
and you see the crimson a little
and yellow a lot of the leaf fall
canopy of information
and one white remark.

26 October 1993

Who chooses these things these times
these dimes a parson's daughter
thrifts away by armpit and by lacy glove
lifted to the *néant* behind our several acts
in this lunacy, the independent
nature of the mind projected out as matter,
the State without a Second, the Government?
There was no limestone. The awkward mountains
arose from what was left. A "heap" is history.

27 October 1993

Will I enlist in it, the color,
the tropic or peacock blue of it,
half-bruise half-ocean. The sky in me
that sends me mirrors home from Mexico
mirrors from Formosa mirrors from Spain.
Christ, everything wants to be me.

28 October 1993

for Charlotte

Her footsteps overhead,
she's just getting up, stands at the sink
and already she's in the sky,
the natural Ascendancy,
cloud-stalker, over my head
in love with her, where she
how she goes.

28 October 1993

What got him in the morning nerves
a wolf prowling round her neck all night
softly, with fire eyes. How to wake
from a sense of being a destination
for some far-away lover's obscure crusade?
Chew this knuckle, victim. Sit on this counter
as if you were a book being perused.
And there again far off you overhear
the interesting psalms they often
hum on their pilgrimage, always
coming closer to you. Are they the pains
you never understood, so busy were you
with listening and seeing and adoring?
I saw them on the Russian River, walked in them
under Bridal Veil Falls, stood up to my ankles
in the moors of Massachusetts. And they
were nobody but vacancy in me, a gap
sleep left in my chest and morning failed to fill.

29 October 1993

A P P L E

A strange thing about this apple,
it is the original
the world is back in your hand

strange about this apple I give you—
it has the taste of Eden in it,
knowledge given and withheld and then

the secret suddenly blurted out
and the leaves hear it, and the soft hairs
on the back of your wrists

rise to receive it. Here,
something comes back to you
when you taste to it,

not a guilt we shared but some help
we can give each other
getting out of this walled garden,

a taste alongside of the teeth.
Things guide us if we listen—
I guess I'm always saying this,

this taste, this memory. These gates.

30 October 1993

Handling cabbage in the morning
like a man readying a bouquet
for his beloved, wondering leaf by leaf
will this make her love me more?

But the cabbage has to be cooked
but when she's not around, she hates the smell,
I peel this vegetable you despise
for you, my darling, while you're away,

me with my brassic inclinations
trimming the firm big head, unleafing
its compact mysteries, wedging it
into the big pot with onions and celery

and we'll see what happens later.
Cabbage when it's really overcooked turns
sweet and rich and unctuous, like quinces,
able to take in and turn all that time to taste.

30 October 1993

This time to stop the flurry
hurry in the heart says *Do this*

there is a long sense in love
comes later and does not look—

in early days
eyes tether

or time's unease
increases measure

till measure is
all that's meant

and a room is infinite
to cross

and birds outside call
louder than the heart—

what want are you?
want her to want you

tiny clammy hands
inexpert except to squeeze



so this waking's more like
coming home giving and forgiving

not a man with a pencil counting his dishes
his spoons the green bottles in his *caves*
white bottles of Meursault
counting the wagtails on his lawn
counting (have I tried to?)
pores on the back of his hand.

Pores important. Little portals
poison exits and what comes in?
How close we are
to discontinue us.

Strike a match
or squeak a wet glass on glass—
the little alphabet of noise we read

a brazen shield that clatters to the ground



I think about Petra Kelly
some stories we never hear the end of
Sally Kelly on Blackwell's Island

we have put her living in the tomb—

Do not suppose the tumbling down of anybody's house
the break and ruin of all named things
is the end of a story

death is a distraction, the fall of the house
interrupts the teller
not the tale.

Uncoiling through our dark responsibilities,
Petra, forgive them
for knowing so well what they did.

How deal with martyrs
and other inconvenient witnesses—
make them a news icon
give them a prize or a docudrama
then click on the next icon
and they disappear.

Petra, the people who killed you
are after all of us too, and Sally all those years
grieving between a river and a river

and no one to listen.
And your poor general—
no officer shoots himself upon the stairs.

31 October 1993

I took a window
of clear weather
and walked a mile

then it came
and turned me round
walked me home

sleet in the apple trees
not so cold
I couldn't stop to watch

no ducks swimming in the reeds.

31 October 1993