11-1992

novD1992

Robert Kelly

Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1331

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.
for Charlotte

There is something to be said for a clarinet
   (Carl Maria von Weber,
       a wind you want to hear

warm wind
   so gentle all
       the way up my spine

from the mines at Falun
   where a crystal wife
       is waiting for me, a wife

waiting always inside the geode of the mind
   o when shall it crack open
       this hard fruit

to find your light
   all round me anyhow
       already lady

if I could see it so
   there is no distance
       no departures into the mythical darkness

dungeoned in guesswork
   and nothing heard)
       everything is here

everything is ready
   the stamina of being here
       with what the world is sounding
voice of a lake
    a spritely (which used to be spiritly)
    concord

with (everyday)
    our goings on (life music)
    our immense staying.

18 November 1992
CENINEN, A LEEK

three of them in fact
waiting in the frigo
getting dry

should I try
to make a vichysoisse
the last

was a disaster
I think the broth
had lost its energy

or was it simply
salt it lacked,
the sacred ego

every beast possesses?

18 November 1992
NOVEMBER CAT

in mem. Elizabeth Stambler

There is difficulty. The grey cat the color of the day slinks across the grey macadam still hunting for prey. I am not late for a funeral, at graveside a woman reads inaudible words, not even the heart can hear them. A book. A box of ashes in a little hole. Death in our world is mostly a matter of the weather. Is it better to leave all that we desire to scurry into its licit hole while we prowl, prowl, full of vigor and purple and magnificence and never forgive the world at all for being too big for our teeth? My teeth. An enemy is dead and turns into my closest friend, I stand in a miracle of clemency supposing she forgives me in the article of my feelings. I forgive myself — who else is there to forgive? Blackbirds' cantilena, leaves susurrus, learned words and dim apostrophes. We belong to no one, not even earth.

18 November 1992
Your call-name

(of a dog endowed
with family history, the Fancy
knows its own)
is what they call you

summons from, that legal horror,
that we can be called

and from that declaration
never be free.

Tell me how we can move left
left of the government

where no one can summons anyone
but everyone can call.

Here, here is my name,
you find it in your mouth.

19 November 1992
WAR

Decision that proposes
a wolf at nightfall
chewing on the bridge

night tallow rough-hewn
granite heaped
to hold the chain down

believingly a broken stream
weather slew it
a doctored cavern

we are caught in the world
without spin we fall
sightless into every object

19 November 1992
Then bent as the veiny lion's virtù
a glance over the endless tawny savannahs
teeming with prey, these creatures
have their own names, Christian,
they have their cities you read as shadows,

they have their smoke. Wait on the cold road.
It is a strange pleasure you tend with your steel.
A noisy pleasure, a crude remark
explodes into the trees and birds flock up
in terror. As the animal you missed
disappears in the trees you feel forgiveness.
Let it be that way, though it is only the air.
Let it be that way, though the animal will die
and you will die and the yellow leaves still
cover up a planet where no one has ever been.

19 November 1992
for Charlotte

frost shines on everything
I go to school
like every morning of my life
and here you are:

what I am looking for, have
looked for all my life,
resting here
kind as grass, calm as sunlight—

this is the Dilemma of the Morning.

20 November 1992
THE BASKET

All the togetherings
at one now

plaited like straw
most intricate
only fire can unlace

and leave
ash coordinates

azimuth of grief.

20 November 1992
for the Day 13 C'at
THE PHYSIOLOGY OF WILLIAM BLAKE

1.

There is something pouring from the left fundibulum down over the suture and athwart the supra-orbital hard place the rock is looking for when it sings and it hurts

like the cliffs and scars of the Yorkshire coast cold as metal under the winter drag of clouds from Iceland coming to dine on your last remaining warmth

in my head. You are the image of loose clothes. You. You are an idea in the mind that won't stay in the mind thank you you are muscles you are mauve you are mine

I think but what is an idea worth an idea is worth a hand and a hand takes the pain away. Ridge over Neander Valley where it hurts like that and (now we know it) the ice

the ice comes back. Parallel patterns, like a crow in flight.

20 November 1992
Gruesome if forgotten, the sulc is now. This cleft or cleaving, like an Orkneyman slicing cut plug. It grew there once, but the red screelings yammered and accused honest Christian men of colonizing.

The sulc is now. The ditch or fosse a hole might bend castlewarding among the somber green. November.
A groove in the earth or pit or trench. A groove is now.
It runs athwart the mind precisely differencing what hurts me from where it hurts. Girls live there and gillies and vague gulls on myopic horizons. Hear them. Everything I knew I knew from sound and color—crossed city streets by sound alone. Are you muscle?

Are you dance and Africa and shake? How far a pilgrim? Slut Pocahontas they say. I find the sluice of her right down my middle. The grease of autumn game. A bare smell a kindled likeness smouldering outside the camp,

Adirondack march pronounced as best you can the simple purport of our tribe’s exogamy, grab her who can. I never talked about anyone but me. This was my song the others (that world of men) thought was some attitude

but I thought nothing, nothing, do you understand? My only mind was body and it spoke. Lath and beaver pelt withy-built and rawhide shrink-dried around the frame. O Lord Jesus look my knees, round and juicy golden oozes.

20 November 1992
[A section of The Physiology of William Blake]
3.

And so with America, hymeneal, hiems
harrying vegetation from from blue-green
Labrador the blessed. This was my left cochlea,
tu sais? This was madness when it stayed inside
but music public. This was an arm laid in your lap
most gentle, its elbow mid-thigh, its wrist
coincident with your slim knees. O consciousness
is where we walk and as we sit and this we twist
turning our bodies glad from light to light.

20 November 1992
[A section of The Physiology of William Blake]
The arrant
or what fits
inside the box
is almost flat

flows from night
to Philadelphia
like a cut-rate
river

I hear you
crooning
where people lean
against the pole

hear you stalking
where the stamina
of living men
controls

such things as sleep.
Heart beat.
Take my pulse.
My shoes too tight.

20 November 1992
I am reading about Napoleon on St Helena to prepare myself for the long defeat the fatal convalescence, the month with a full thirty days and each year has twelve of them and every day is yours.

Whereas we belong to everyone. Till now. When this noble little tyrant struts in exile on a ten mile rock waiting for the world to come to its senses. Like any artist, waiting for his time.

I am reading about Napoleon because I too will have a season to myself, to brood and plan and measure shadows scuttling down my wall and pray and give myself wholeheartedly to that special kind of lying called remembering.

21 November 1992
I heard something waiting at the night
and the book wouldn't let me

I heard someone running down the light
and feared to read the word he said

I heard the moon climb back behind the sky
and we were both weary of showing showing

ourselves and ourselves and nobody looking
except poor hungry wolves and children with no eyes.

21 November 1992
for Charlotte

I ask myself how it comes to be so new
all the time this love of ours and
why I always feel inside me strong
inclination to say it and say it new?

It surprises and shocks me that
all the great love poets never
got around to mentioning you
and I look in vain through all their songs

of good times and hard times their
lovers gave them and never
find your name, sometimes maybe
the shadow of a woman’s profile as she

turns as if to look at the ocean
reminds me of you on the headland
staring over at Gayhead with your heart
smooth as a gull soars down to sleep

but that’s just a resemblance and they never
speak your name in all their busy recitations
the history of love from alpha to where are we
now in the alphabet, lambda? omicron? somewhere

where they have never reached and it’s left
to me in my handiwork to find you and say
something true that will last till tomorrow
and do it without the help of all the poets

the great ones who loved so noisy and so sweet
all over the pages of half the books on the planet
and still never came near to saying who you are except sometimes I think that lost poem of Homer I get a glimpse of from time to time where he sees for a moment between battle and sea storm the clear face of scareless Ariadne watching the sea knowing the worthiness of her lover is never the issue only the worth of love itself unmeasured and free—then that image unlightnings from his broken book and I'm left in free space with you to say you somehow in beauty you are beyond the changes.

22 November 1992
4. Suppose they are causes
the soft winds of the antrum thoracicum
where the heart hides, the literal.

Suppose they are conditions:
the receptivity of furrows
spiked through the doughy medium

you live in it, it lives through you
and the two of you are buried in one name
on the hillside in the south of France

between the snaking Rhone and a sad glacier
unmade by August. These cantons
are hollows where the rapture hides

and all it needs is a finger or a tongue tip to decide,
decode, the frequent ecstasy of living systems
spellbound by your touch.

Until this body even speaks.
Lots of old books open to the double page
where the stresses of old Germanic verse

remind you of how every blessed thing
mirrors another and is mirrored by
the floating answer across the verse divide,

ovaries coupled in the dark inside.
Sit down on a chair. What you feel
the ancients called Egypt, and said a God

himself by mother flesh and wit was
carryied there to hide. Hide in me.
Hide in my touch. I am not to find.

22 November 1992 [A section of The Physiology of
William Blake]

5. There are the nearer stretches of the folded blanket
lofted softly from below over the sleeping man
which is only one part of the man truly while the other divisions of his exalted Discord (our earthly tegument) stand in the cadastral records of the night guessing the boundaries of what will come to be.

He is in love with what will not come. He is in love with the skin beyond his reach, jism spurt from unborn stars. He is in love. Say so. His arms by undersurface sense the wind that eases between planetary destinies—this wind shapes countryside, a mole in a tussock hears it and shuffles backwards in its hole, having had enough music. We know where music leads, all of us do, and the trains of his childhood slipped past little Jersey towns with a finality like clothing slipping off a person in the street who is left thereby completely naked. Nowhere to hide. The pattern of consolation. The unlined sky.

In breath like this his sleep arrives and goes. Documents resist his fingers, they are paper, he is rock. The knife he had to leave at the gateway, where the fallen angels rest complaining of a weather they can only guess it. Fallen angels have lost the capacity for pain. *My hand*, he cries, he sees it before him resting on the ledger where all the real estate of Uranus is docketed — only two more volumes and he's at the end. Corridor cleanly with quick wind. Elevator doors open and close. Time is running out of space. My hand is there too, dear friend, trying to keep in touch with all the transformation.

22 November 1992
[A section of The Physiology of William Blake]
6.
That the phone rings all day long
that the Blue Scooter wheels around Neptune
on its way to the Sandstorm Galaxy
where the bowl-shaped Chronosome
preserves the seeds of time, inert

until they touch our juices. Prime
our pump to the blood release. To use
the juice of number — exclamation
(tell a phone to ring, the hum
unbearable, low baud rate,
scant information given in such fire)

pour out the chalice your father handed.
It is morning now and easy found up there
yellow in silver, oro y plata. Stagger
down the catwalks of the arteries to
check the fletchy timothy grasses thick
tall and arrogant along the meadows my sweet hair
whose roots are corms or tubers good to eat
—blue starch of living systems— over the marshes
of the human body spanned by rights of mind.

What happens is seed fall, spring spurt, meek
rye vernalities of (why never?) vascular hope
priming (ever the pump) high-born speculation
into the faraway. Where soon enough our noble
stuff catches up. This is the answer to all previous
answers, you brief and precious human life, you flag

raised in revolt against the repressive dark
congested with political suppositions about
the less conscious mind in alternate texts
like animals or scaly fish or silver stars. Here.
Here is the answer. The seed gets in your hair.

23 November 1992
[A section of The Physiology of William Blake]
How can you know someone the
style across the room the make of them
a word still young
the way a bird in the sky
is anyone

complete and perfect in that text
but to know
someone is another sense from seeing
or from touching it is listening
inside when they speak

their eyes have such clear voices
someones have
the way the sky has birds

and tell is where things are
the temple of the world the all
the places that there are to go

we are inside each other across every room.

23 November 1992
7.

Are these the norms by which we know

centrifuge, a man whirling into time
and anxious to speak to God, the earth
expressed as space

who pours out
from his leathern bottle milk of goats
to be lapped in dignity by the Mundo
(is it one of the cathedral cities of Britain
of which I have seen only Gloucester
Wells the greatest of them, Salisbury,
Winchester, Ely, Lincoln and York—
how many have you seen, young Will
and how many did Robert breathe you
with the last blue engine of his lungs?)

by the Mundo — the earth understood as attentive
to our various intimate gestures (with whom,
by how, and was the candle lit,
did the cattle see you, and was the dog upset,

and the birds, the birds are always watching
inside the mind, inside the whirring aviary
inside this chest, the rattle of living and that other
rales, how many have you heard
before the staircase broke and you sprawled

in the moon pool among the nenuphars?)

are these convulsions in our every moment
the red track and the purple answers
the heave of breathing and the break of wanting
are these the norms by which we know our only earth?

23 November 1992

[A section of The Physiology of William Blake]