

9-2010

## sepD2010

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "sepD2010" (2010). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 101.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/101](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/101)

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](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

= = = = =

Be a flag, be quick  
to belong to the air  
move with it, a flag  
is always with, can't  
impose itself upon—  
if only countries  
acted like their flags.

But you can. You're  
a person. Already  
you have absorbed  
the souls of countless beings  
when you were born  
and you'll die and give  
your soul to countless  
beings waiting for the air.  
Right now you're just  
their pretty flag, sailing  
in the winds of time.

10 September 2010

= = = = =

Dear friend I'm trying  
but it's not easy to write  
when north is still west of me  
and I'm trying to hide  
from a sunrise that already  
hides from me—I'm trying  
listen but everything comes through  
shaped like my ears—I want  
to hear through another, to hear  
the thing itself, not how it  
sounds in me. O nervous  
system little god inside  
that holds all things in thrall.  
Our meat just gives us  
something to play with  
while we try to think.

10 September 2010

= = = = =

Things being behavior  
are more like chances  
than like things,  
molecules being sheer movement  
material collisions are miracles—  
what you bump your head on  
is no realer than you  
and you both are stars.  
The physics here is sketchy  
but the specious underpinning  
of the matter world shows clear.

10 September 2010

= = = = =

*for Cameron*

And we also are collages  
in the world

no place  
we have not been

when you get off the train  
in a new city  
it is as if you've never left

you've always seen that castle  
perched against the sun

that belltower

Croatia Vienna the Iron Gates

the monastery  
where you have always said your prayers

but they weren't prayers and weren't yours  
they were waiting for you

they said you

and you came.

You paste the buildings to the sky.

And there too we have always lived.

10 September 2010

*{in dream/waking:}*

Lying lazy Saturday  
not yet seven  
listen to the crows  
a field away  
a lot of them  
or in my ear  
right here.

11 September 2010

= = = = =

Lost nearly,  
as a tugboat slipping  
hawsers in mist  
tree tops out of haze  
descending as the light  
lifts—

    my great-uncle  
ran one of those  
around the harbor,  
cut off from the family,  
romantic, selfish, angry  
a boat in fog.

11 September 2010



= = = = =

The mist has come down the hill and silenced the crows  
so loud from six to seven. There'll likely be a sun in it  
soon, the way things go, it's hard to keep him down, that  
Yankee in the sky.

11.IX.10

= = = = =

Let me tell you everything I know:  
tell everything you know  
only after you've said everything else—

that is:  
tell what you don't know.  
That's the only thing words are good for.

Or otherwise how will I, listening,  
ever know who I am?  
We exist at the intersection  
of two ignorances,  
at the place called Knowing.

11 September 2010

## MORE BAGATELLES

He spends a lot of time  
waiting for trees.

I tell him that's silly  
a tree will come when it's ready  
waiting won't help.

I think I hear them coming now.

+ + +

Being there while being here  
is the favored occupation  
of the young. To make.  
And make the made place  
be there at the rim of this.  
And move right in.

+ + +

Bagatelles only today no  
sonatas no taut chaconnes,  
a chirp or two  
from a tired beak  
then sit and look at the river  
only there is no river.

+ + +

But keep the well running  
who knows how deep the spirit  
has to gouge before it touches  
actual aquifer?

*Deep me down,*  
*halt me up* the water sings,  
and who are those children,  
the water's sparkling is their eyes?

11 September 2010

## SAINT FRANCIS FLYING INTO THE SKY

up from midtown



great breath or spirit  
spurting wide-armed as  
if those were wings  
just because they fly

longitude of love  
latitude of conscience

blood sprinkles from his hands  
the pigeons baptize each other in his shade

everything is far  
except here is everywhere.

11 September 2010

=====

The involvements of sleep we let  
 tell—wings of angels? You heard me wrong,  
 angels have winds, not wings;  
 they breathe fantasies that the air consolidates  
 into women and men we walk among,  
 every friend a stranger.

Who was I when I began?  
*All life looking for the word I'm meant to say*  
 never worried who was meaning it,  
 just played with what there is and how it feels  
*where seeing is the same as being<sup>1</sup>*  
 and all we know of outside is the weather  
 and know nothing at all of what's inside—

we are pellicular,  
                         a film or flake of ash<sup>2</sup>  
 floating above a tolerant abyss.

12 September 2010

---

<sup>1</sup> *Schein und Sein*, my masterwork.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge's 'stranger', the flake of ash that floats above the fire in the grate.

## HEIDEGGER

Among the books in the Hannah Arendt collection was one I sat and read a while. It was signed by Heidegger (“Martin”) to her (“Hannah”) in his crabbed ungenerous hand. He lived in the mind more than most men of his time—from his handwriting, as from what we know of his life, all things outside the portals of thinking repelled him or scared him heartless. He was not good at it. He heard the snare drums of fascism out there, and mistook them for the peremptory logic of his indoor etymologies. Lost in his adoration of complexity he somehow saved himself from honesty, empathy, love—terms that have no place in his philosophy. And yet, and yet, no one in a century spoke that mind so well, or read so carefully the words of the long dead (Nietzsche, Heraclitus) while utterly deaf to the cries of the living.

12 September 2010

### THIRD SET OF BAGATELLES

Is this a diary darling or a poem?

Is this rain or is it water?

\*

The better crafted an artifact  
the longer it will last and the less it will mean.  
But by its sleek enduring  
may yet accrue congruous intelligence  
as it slips safe through time—  
the Grecian Urn is hollow from the start.

\*

So many witnesses  
and no crime.

\*

The crows are silent this morning  
they must know something of this  
and keep their distance.

\*



The tree looks at the man:  
what are you standing there for,  
that's my job.  
Each to each's own.  
Otherwise the sun rains down.

\*

How to help the world:  
stay home.  
*Siste viator domi.*  
Stay home, traveler—  
fulfill yourself  
by abandoning your function,  
revel in pure being,  
leave the distances alone.

12 September 2010

## THE URGENCIES

press back

the need to speak

presses back against the will to silence

will silence

I will not tell all I know

because then I wouldn't know it

knowledge shared is knowledge halved—

why teachers are such simpletons

even if they do wear blue a lot

and have soft hands

Keats told me this

one day in her tower,

only girls could keep him living

and the need to answer them

before they spoke

and do it in the exalted

shaping of the breath.

The promise. The vow. The poem.

Say only what you don't know

then nobody gets hurt,

the door swings open and you palaver  
safe through Antarctic wildernesses  
bare rock from the beginning  
scoured clear of even snow—  
this is the place you know

walk there towards your past future  
waiting for your word

Address the animal then  
the bird in the blood  
thrills to sing  
and make you listen to yourself  
while dew evaporates  
off morning cars  
and traffic –that conversation  
of place with itself—begins  
in the mumble of listening  
  
and that will be your word too.

13 September 2010

## MAGYAR

My heart is a sieve  
what's left in it  
at the end of all  
is the one I really love

*szeretlek*, of course.

13 September 2010

=====

The trees toss,  
the storm is coming  
even if it never comes.

13.IX.10