

11-2005

novB2005

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "novB2005" (2005). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 830.
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California on the deck
sweet thing happens to the air
as if these fallen maple leaves were
blue gum eucalyptus where they ride
down Walnut in Pasadena
o god the names of trees
and their bark is white as birch almost
and their smell just over the hill
and a man like this one maybe
waiting over luminous left grasses.

5 November 2005

=====

The dark comes towards us
across the waters, last gift
from the sun now torn
and shredded beyond a cloudbank
over blank Jersey. The river
holds some light here and there
and mutes the rest. As if
everything we ever see
is already a memory.

5 November 2005, Yonkers

=====

Dim magenta dusk
folding into the west.
A parking meter
like a skull
on a stake. Watch over.
Guard my car
o vanished hero.
Your bones are steel
and your eyes are dimes.
They are filled
with the dying light.

5 November 2005, Yonkers

=====

Epictetus:
repercussion.
No blame.

5 XI 05, NYC

=====

How many cups of first flush Darjeeling
do I have to drink with milk and sugar
before I see Everest rising all by itself
out my bedroom window? Jomolongma
they call it in Tibet, and the goddess
of life itself, Tseringma, lives on top of it.

5 XI 05

=====

No matter what, I go on listening to
Mahler, and old Meyerbeer's operas,
as if when the Jews finally got around
to writing music they really got it right.

Every gesture a dissent. Every act a song.
Did they get it from King David?
And wasn't he thinking a little bit
of Bathsheba naked as he pranced
before the Lord? Wasn't the lady
hidden in the music? How can you dance
for only one, even the biggest One?
I wonder what sort of dance he did,
David, in the shadows of the temple,
leaping up before the golden cherubim?
Was he a Fool amusing his king?
A monkey sportive for his Man?

What is a dance anyhow but a body
trying to come to terms with what it hears,
trying to come to rest through all the
turmoil of music, of desire? Homeostasis.

Balance. Dance your way healthy—
the god in the shadows above the Ark

dances too, a shadow flickers
from the dark abyss the way a candle
flickers from the perfectly ordinary light.

5 November 2005 / Amtrak

=====

Black river

bridge lights

cars few.

Midnight in Newburgh

over there.

 The streets

run up from the shore

a little like Lausanne

but less. Much less.

An ivory moon unrisen.

5 November 2005, near Beacon

MIETTES POUR MOINEAUX

Thoughts about morning
so many on the roads
a summer rightness to winter wrong—
but winter is all thinking
bass viol some strum
most bow – the plurality
is the kind of world it is –
the minority what happens in it.
That is fair to say,
like the euonymus this morning
blazing redder beside the red fence
we have come from the other side of here
to be known, like the last sparrow
on a crumb of bread on the sidewalk
even I could translate into French
easy as incense finds its way up
thus, thumos, fumus – relationships
pervade us, I can't breathe
without offering this fragrance to the gods
the smell of my breath the only offering
they really want and here it is on paper even
so you can breathe it too on its way to heaven.

2.

Ransomness amok among the numbers!
Save some sense for me but not my sense
I'm tired of wanting what I want, dereference me
among the poltroon navy of the obvious
till I can't tell one wave from another and
your breath –“whoever you are” –is in my mouth
more than mine. Then we'll go out for lunch
because we didn't eat properly yesterday
all hurry and palaver and chicken pot pie
--Flemish on my mother's side-- today
a quiet table watching birds negotiate
and naming them as best we can – that
is an elm leaf, that is a crow – to get rid
of all that grammar in our heads – grammar
is all about desire, who does what to whom,
that's why language text books are so sexy deep,
you never learn a word till you want something,
to chasten silence with tumultuous homework,
postpositional affixes of Old Basque nouns –
now I know you – in yellow spicebush shiver of deer.

3.

In defense of meaning let me say this.

4.

And then on the other side a coffee cup
with Peter Longo's Café Blend in it,
not the best but meet for Sunday morning
that hollow churchless time when the sun
worships the quiet earth it leans on
and we begin planning the day around
the color of the trees. Maple mosque
shouting with amber, wind does all the work,
we just breathe a little, the little Bic lighter
remembers the candelabra of Versailles.
Link think. Underground airlines
hurry me to the feel of the place, *genius loci*,
the genitals of this simple place, here,
the Landlord's daughter always brings me home.

6 November 2005

THE NEBRA DISK

sun and moon and stars

and what are those other things

the gold gonfalons

that stretch along the disk's horizon?



the curve of what transcendence

doubled in the wind of what

no longer visible star

bigger than the world.

An animal is always

and always at the center of itself.

A picture of an animal has the power of an animal.

The wolf on the wall is the wolf in the wood.

What is this image of the sky

the sky of?

Who lives in this house?

... 6 November 2005

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arrogant animals

we are

spirit spindrift

some ship goes down

a yellow linden leaf

last one on its branch

flaps in my face

the flag of time.

6 November 2005

PARIS

Revolutions come and go
and no one notices but the dead

the symphony is over
and the guns are out

but no one listens
cars burning in the street

the Place de la République
remembers all the vain rebellions

and sanctimonious popinjays
still rule from the Palais.

6 November 2005

=====

You want gypsy
music? here I am,
ashes in a blue sky
and my tongue out
to lick the wind,
I keep thinking honey
honey so much
honey the moon
gets fatter every night,
what I thought
was my hand in your
pocket hoping hard
the heat of money
was my hand in your
hand and you
kept asking for more.

7 November 2005

HISTORY TAKES A LONG TIME

that's the problem. And things
once you get them going
never end. The Crusades
for instance, cars burning
in the Paris streets. And Toulouse
again aflame with heretics.
That's the problem. The answers
keep coming, Rome
is still conquering Germany,
Islam still conquering France,
it just took a lot longer
than the Caliph thought,
hundreds of years more, so what,
history takes a long time
and always keeps coming,
Nagasaki is still growing for us
in the mushroom vaults
beneath karma's bank, interest
daily compounding, swells
to answer us slowly slowly,
that's the problem, we think
well that's the end of that
but it never is, nothing ever
is over. The war for instance
never ends, the cathedrals

are never finished, soon
they'll set Notre Dame on fire,
the Tower of Saint James
is wrapped in arcane scaffolding,
soon the burning cars will roll
through all the streets we used to love
like Florentine triumphal floats
flaming with the everlasting fuel
of what we do to one another
and never know how to stop, never stop
till the last flag and uniform is ash.

7 November 2005

BORDER CROSSING

Till touch the thrum
or sink beside bourne
wanting out – so many
documents to go through one door—
the strike, the transom, the jamb
and where is the mountain now?

Vanish suns. Scuff
of a handle on a hand—
things hurt. They ask
the schoolgirl to decline some verb
of her own choice,
all choice is losing,

lost. People
can be quiet inside the words,
words talk and the woman sleeps
dreaming of punishment. Scrape
of a toecap on the stairs,
some come.

Some stay.

Some doors work one way.

Urgent blossom the florist cheat delivers
green wax paper on the 11th floor

don't I want to know any history
is time just the taste of an apple
changing after a week on the sideboard
in the cold room sun clattering.

8 November 2005

RAISIN

If it were more precise
it would be the raisin
the chewy kind backed in something dry.

We can't tell time any more
we have no hour glasses
time used to be a shapely thing
symmetrical top and bottom
the hour stands.

Now time runs away from us
a line of numbers reaching past Cleveland
into the American inane
and nobody can tell what an hour means
or where it ends
Casper, Fresno, Okinawa
trying to catch the vanishing sun.

But the raisin is in my teeth.
I am big as a mountain to it
if it were a man.
I pause, lost in the metaphor.
And the raisin itself began as a sign
of something else before,
evidence of a process, a growth, a decay,

a westering. And then changed.

Time is an idea

and like every idea vanishes

as (as Benjamin says) constellations vanish into the stars

from which they rose

and stars in daylight falter towards pale signlessness.

8 November 2005