

10-2003

octA2003

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octA2003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 913.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/913

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THE TOKEN

It's the handwriting lets the wall
stand. I am here for the sake of
what I bring. What message
do I bring? It is here, all round you,
written in the grain of me,
easier for you than me to read,
read me, and someday tell me
what my life is supposed to mean.
Messengers are always the last to hear.

1 October 2003

SPEAK RANDOMNESS

a child chafes her knee
for what?

 what strange
hurry to be where?
there is always,
and always some member
of the press corps near
to tell us what we think we saw.

Things that happen to the skin
are the deepest things,

steeple wounds, so obvious, a tower
in a distant town
you'd know from anywhere
the hurt inside

that's you, nursing a scraped knee,
not quite in tears,
tears dry, skin
recites its healing runes
incessantly,

 Immortal
palimpsest! the old ones
would exclaim,
living monitor where even
light leaves its darkening evidence.

1 October 2003

PRIMARIA

with its simple flag
its modest consulates

penguin in full flight
ocean of air

1 X 03

LOVECRAFT

Other languages, to link the morphemes of the imaginable unknown into the barely sayable. Did Lovecraft *hear* his eldritch incantations, or did he compose them by typography alone, what looks weird as a token of weird sound? The graphemes of weirdness, consonant combinations not found in English, in the safe Western Languages, they look scary, Etruscan, from the crepuscular phase of language, language before it was human. He used the eye sense to convey pictorially the weirdness and *nausea* of the words his characters overhear. He tries by over-writing to induce in the reader (more especially the readerly reader, the sage friend he yearned for all his life) the same sort of vertiginous unease, disorientation, nausea, horror that his characters are experiencing. Death by prose. It is effective, disturbing — not least because it is so easily ridiculed by those who don't experience the horror — just as fugitive accounts of meetings with extraterrestrials, angels, phantoms, ghosts are greeted with derision by those to whom unhappy voyants make their incoherent confession.

1 October 2003

OK ORIGINAL DREAMING IT

1.

I know that luster
quiet pilgrim to whom the church comes walking

I know that skin those
blue jay eyes were my serenity

(the Russian horse asked Why
the cowboy always answers My)

document broken on the table
a river spills out and drowning men

the child makes out the words along the edge
simultaneously feels the mass of its own flesh

thighs and buttocks enduring gravity
the child learns the body of study

house of prayer the god of attention
bid-house for wake-folk

my fork fell off the table daddy
give me one more word

2.

because I live by etymologies
narrow spokesman of the widest ocean

a woman waits (for me?)
at the capstone of the Roman arch

because I chose to sprawl on the steps of the arena
loaf in the sun I hid

the schoolgirls on their intimate field-trip
thought I was a slate-grey lizard

motionless with fear but their teacher
took me for the shadow of a swallow

poised high overhead in that unnerving way of theirs
but why couldn't it just have been not me

just the lizard the schoolgirls in their blue skirts the shadow?

3.

the body sticks to the chair
the way the words stuck to the paper

we imitate what we have read
until our life weaves its new text

from all those scraps of overcharged attention
when the words we were reading suddenly meant

4.

the body sticks to the chair
the way the eye lingers on the word

till it falls through the letters
into the tumult of its history

the cavemouth behind every word
dragon gorge and serpent cavern

the frightened eye moves away
lands on the next word and tries to weave it

to the last, to interweave two terrors
and so learns to read instead of seeing

5.

what if we never read the words
what if we just went in?

Notes:

1.

I, we, it, they, she — forgive these animals who hurry through the park, the pards, and set the trees in motion with the greedy wind of their attention, I, we, they, me, we howl our habits, our golden eyes lurk in the woods we think we see.

2.

Each word in a text a separate and plenary experience — on when it's turned away from the 'reader' or been exhausted does the reader recoil — full of the experience of that descent upwards to the hidden Chariot, whose flight darkens the story of every word. Then the reader stumbles back outward, onward, to find the next word — a consolation, a debriefing, a theorem, a kind of God standing in the gravel of the way, to show the way.

2 October 2003

SOLOMON

But do I do what the deal is
or do I slip beneath
the Seven of Hearts the next
card in the deck as ever
eight years between oases
and each *in time* turns into desert?

Solomon is my appeal
against the arrogant jurisconsults
who rule time, who measure kerosene
into American jet liners
who fly to imperial chancelleries
masked in ancient Eurocities,

have what you want but have
wisdom with it, mulberry and pear,
who cares, door open on a melon,
deep white musk of alternate
theologies you name it he was there
a king in a kilt a knave
in his hearts he had to get out
the nice thing about deserts is emptiness

3.

one day he stared in the well's eye
down there where you see the sky
better than over

and he asked

But where does all my power come from
church or barn, is it me or is it mine,
does it run through me like batteries,
does it walk somewhere else when I sleep,

there must be another wisdom
that knows what wisdom is

and that's the one I haven't mastered yet
along with all my wives and wills
doves in the courtyard dithering in dust
seem to know as much as I do
so I am humble in my majesty

since I am a thing in a paradise of things.

3 October 2003

THE CONUNDRUM

And then in darkness Homer fumbled with a line:
Does it sound like poetry, or does it just sound like me?

3 X 03

ALL THE PICTURES ON THE ANARCHIST WALL CALENDAR ARE OF THE DEAD

If however all the famous
people are dead we all
can be famous later we suppose

so death is one more weapon
in the arsenal of feeling good
“one day they’ll remember me

who now don’t give me the time of day”
and then he sneezed three times, as if
angels were watching and could provide

audio-visual animals to track him down
assertion by assertion
into the undergrowth he said where language

lurks, but he’s wrong,
there’s just squirrels and ivy and opossums.
I know. I used to live here too.

4 October 2003

THE PHEROMONE SANDWICH

and crossing the street
to get in our out of the sun
lean on the barber pole
till he comes out to chase you

there is no reason for a smelly old bus
the rest of the world is right here
all the time,

Fresno just around the corner
in case you wanted something
or go and speak Armenian in your sleep

Great teachers come down from the mountains in rain
water streaming down their faces, eyelashes
loosing rain drops, smile or gravity,

they keep coming towards us all our lives
teacher after teacher till we tell

because I love thee I have found a way.

4 October 2003

SHE THOUGHT:

Making love with him would be like making
love to a ruined cathedral. Or a swamp.
Or a glacier creeping on you in the night.
Or a fallen statue. Or a bird
in the middle of the sky, a hawk
maybe with a strange high cry.

4 October 2003

RED SOX

Watching a Red Sox game
is like talking to a hard of hearing
psychoanalyst, all your
repressions and anxieties
come into play, your guilty
knowledge of causality,
you did it if they lose,
and they lose, the bat and ball
have nothing to do with it,
it's inside you the game
is running, you hardly need
to watch, you know so well
the fate you're fleeing,
the nice men in white clothes
are all phases of your odd
strengths, your unaccountable
failures as grounder
after grounder dribbles past you
and blue October finds you weeping.
Because it is always
October where you are,
you go home hoarse with explanations.

Or,

Watching a Red Sox game
is like watching a Passion Play
they've put on for a hundred years
in some quaint village. You know

how it's going to end. You know,
but keep hoping along the way,
the beauty of what could be
distracts you from what will.

5 October 2003

SAVING TIME

as if I could preserve it
confiture de temps, like Proust,
an amber jelly with green glints in it
and store it in beaded glass
jars way back in my cupboard
to take it out at midnight
when I'm full of doubt
and nibble a tongue tip's worth
of morning after all, new
wind, the sea not far.

5 October 2003

CHRISTAFARIANS

a northern island full of them
what are they I didn't know
in my sleep they seemed like Christian men
no women among them

buy why the -farian part, no cannabis
in sight no Emperor no Africa no song

bleak boats in cold surf
sails furled or no sails,

no words or nothing said.

5 October 2003

MILANDERWORT

is a straight-stemmed
milkweed more erect
than others — you tell it
by the feeling when you pass
as if for once it's you
who are crooked and it
alone is on the level.

You feel that often
in the woods
haunted by old habits.
Every moment
you expect a ruined chapel.
Paltryweed, seminox
and blue camenias
under tall larches,
a shadow moves, a
shadow has breasts

for such dark milk
you travel all your days.

6 October 2003

FROM THE CUFF

and what protrudes
we tell time, we read the arm
from wrist the character
is told, the pulse
reveals your mother's health

veins understand the man
salt is not good for the soul

6 October 2003

ARROGANT

A message from the moon
you had no right to tell me

I was happy in moon-deafness
I didn't know what the light had in mind

I was so busy praying I didn't listen

sometimes the tiger is so busy hunting
she forgets to eat

what we speak is mostly what we hear
plus something else. What is that?

that is the widow's portion the bent
coin we bring to language

that pays all our final debts.

6 October 2003