

10-2001

octA2001

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octA2001" (2001). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1059.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1059

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.

BORDERLAND

For all the certainties there are seas.
Bridges, ocelots of rust across
held in mid-leap above
all those images of fire inside sleep.

We were packing for a journey. Boxes
insisted on the angularity of things, a curve
is something wasteful, merely natural,
a wound on the economy, a peach.

Pack well — our luggage carries more of us
than we bear in our bodies, we idle
in airports lately, we survive.
But where is the hard drive, the teapot, the Spode?

Seas created the original distances
prairies compromised into roads.
Deserts or grasslands the world can walk.
But I was dreaming and I knew it, we were nobodies

on our way nowhere, no more than a poem,
a tender negation, a Hallmark card from hell.
Because when we wake there's all that staying
left to do, the compromise called love,

the slow agony of caring for the other
like maple leaves turning scarlet, yellow, then brown.
The journey was all around us and I tried to wake,
to know you're sleeping is not the same as waking,

knowledge, beauty, terror, tenderness, just stuff
happening in dream, I screamed but the room
was quiet, even the sound became a paltry shape
stuffed in the hold of that cargo ship of images

bruising up the narrow rivers of
we'll never know the country anyhow,
earth is just a shadow of the sky
we hold on for dear life a while then have to let go.

1 October 2001

THIS IS THE EVENING OF THE PHOTO

This is the evening of the photo
a triste documentation that answers
Schuyler's pretty love song
for so many, language itself
turns out to be love lyrics
from a sentimental musical.
Soldiers say nothing but sailors sing
— that's got to tell you something.
It is the photo's turn to explain me
to the world, maybe it will do
a better job than I can, fearless
as it is with pixels, chromes,
values, resolution, all that virtue
eludes the non-committal bard,
this elusive swain. Life
is a house, and there are rooms and rooms.
Pascho, said the archangel on the rocks,
'I suffer.' All suffering comes
from trying to give away to lovers
something you don't actually possess.
Showed us the arts and métiers he meant
us to inhabit, so we could share
our carpentry and science projects
love after love. When we talk
about the Greeks we mean their syllables
the fleshly measure of their highfalutin thought
so we have some traction while we hurry
over slippery marble in the Turkish bath.

1 October 2001

As I sat by her deathbed it wasn't clear
Which one of us exactly was dying.
The things I said, I remember this
Almost with shame, made it sound
As if I were the one going away, the one
Who had to give reassurances of a return.

Death turns out to be an occupation
For us all, like a game I suppose
And I always hated games, where we take
Turns at being it. At closing our eyes
And seeing what's there when we
Start noticing anything again. If then.

2 October 2001

things being natural again
the walkways of northern Massachusetts
below the Dogtown massif the endless
profitable guesses at a meaning
lurks in the scanty evidence of sense

I can't believe your whys — and the mood
breaks the way the moon sets,
just gone, nothing left
of all our rapt surmises

the silliness of art sneaks in
with all its greed for clamor and for cash
Rumpelstiltskin postures in the mirror
demanding the world recite his name

who am I who am I who am I

somebody must know.

2 October 2001

Touch
Is a litany
Whereas the text
Says.

A touch also is a word
Spoken
Into the audient body.

2 October 2001

Liking less what the day says
or liking less what lets me hear or no
what I let in

a sour disposition and a blame
I carry to propose

Grasses start to fade
and I am distracted, start to worry about the trees.

2 October 2001

a touch also is a word

and like it can be misunderstood
or not understood at all
reinterpreted translated

repeated to yourself in dream.
it can be forgotten too

a word you know you know
but can't bring to mind

remembrance
of having a feeling
but how did it feel?

3 October 2001

der nachsommer nun

kommt nieder

wer?

fackelwaage

ernst vernunft

beinahe jubiläumsschrift

der eifersüchtige ehemann

neu entkukukt

weil niemand schlief

3 October 2001

Near her my God to be

And the ship sank
into the shadow of the ice

we are witnesses of grief
that also looks back at us

the measuring
goes on

can we come
close to knowing
what word there is to say
listen that says
I am listening to you

3 October 2001

COAL

I'm not sure it's there yet,
the coal in the chute yet, here
I mean, the leafy street
east of Nostrand and the cellar
gaping waiting for the barrels
of anthracite to be tilted
toppled so the coal runs down
the long black iron slant and why
don't we have that in our
basement, a facility
of entering, a penetration?

2.

later it was of course the coal bin
I chose for my atelier
when I was eleven
when the furnace had been converted
to the oil religion
and left a nice space dry
and dusty and half-walled
suitable for silverfish and me

3.

but enough of me.
Taking out of the ground
what used to be trees
and returning it to the cellars
of our conspicuous apartnesses —
that is delivering the coal.
Coal is black and amber
yellow and diamond
practically no color at all.

4 October 2001

Crows contending in the trees not near
nor can I evaluate their contentions

but I know that crows for all their clamor
never once tell lies, so I also know

being too far from what they're saying now
I'm missing a valid cognition of some piece

of the action. The sounds are fading now
and maybe really they meant to tell me only this.

4 October 2001

Close, cries of children in the street.
But there are no children and no streets.
The world impersonates itself. These
are sentences and we live them out.

4 October 2001

RONDURES

But why even bother to say so.
The place was full of your shadows,
but that's because by now
you live mostly at the edges of my mind,
as shadows stand reverently apart
a little from what they signify

and what makes them be. Thought
can't busy itself directly with you
because the hurt . . . what does the hurt do?
Shadow means the one who stands beside me
always, because the light is permanent,

beside me as if I were a little bit beside the point,
had drifted from what my body means
drifted even from the light that writes you
so clearly at the corner of my eye
sometimes. Seldom. Often. Always there,
always hurt. All the unacknowledged pain
seems more precious than the wordy calm
a glimpse of you knows how to agitate.
Mind at the margin, wanting you.

5 October 2001

Orthodox

Jews walking on the mountain

repression yes on
the other hand
snug symmetry
between the private
sense of personal
identity and their
social roles

an enviable fit.

At the top of the mountain
a lake
sunken in shattered limestone
the name means
Lake inside the sky

Why were they so beautiful?

The men seemed busy, the boys
quiet alert and active

girls slim and full of thought
the women seemed like the presence of God.

I understood Shechinah and Friday night.

5 October 2001

It seems to me I'm not really listening.
Dreams about going through customs
—what is this two-panel painting
I'm bringing from where? A Van Eyck
somehow legal to enter and three bags
to be pawed over by the douaniers.
How to get big bags in their little cages.
And always the matter of getting the car.
I suppose it is time to stay home again
and let the war go on without me
I who have missed so many turns to die.
And the perils of staying are all around me
when only the night is a nomad
my frightened mind begins to count the leaves.

5 October 2001

A curled leaf an animal
a pen to write down
the latest resemblances

and thou to read them
astride me in the wilderness
and wildness were the animal it always is

voices voices murmuring but are they words?

5 October 2001

and even if all books are one
that book is never done

eternity of the book.

But he fled with his rain and his raptures

spill seed in deserts
the way we do

and now it's actually raining
and water forms notions of its own
dissolving ink on paper

into mysterious apocalypse.

6 October 2001

Catching up with yesterday is a dumb tongue
Dust motes in sunlight might already be tomorrow

Who knows how many systems are at stake when anything moves
Inside the pod the simple pea inside the pea a complex starch is scheming

How can all that pattern fit inside the world,
The pattern of a hand fit in the hand?

7 October 2001

Little triangle
Down south
Not much traffic
Soft in sunlight
Could this be
Remembering?

7 October 2001

Scatter.
No fire.
Worry
All into
The morning.
Porch wood
Grain in sun.
Take me
Out of what
I've made.
Shade happens,
Infer cloud.
Let me go.

7 October 2001