

10-2000

octB2000

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octB2000" (2000). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1086.
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Eventually get around to getting born
before the ferry slips heave wide groaning
open against the long green barnacled trees
whose trunks become this palisade
to snug a fat boat into its dock beneath
a cantilevered sky. City means nothing moves.

8 October 2000

AUTUMN FLOWER

Irradiate aster neo-belgica the blue
Is purple the yellow's orange

Only the names of things are true
Cloud withers over cornshucks cold

8 October 2000

extraordinary after is all the pipes
swilled down the musics who
could have been listening

we set this harmony up against the world
to be a wall
complex and fine
to keep the barbarians inside
this heart of mine

and let them out in tiny sorties of the actual.

(Mahler. Schönberg. Berg.
And what has this past sixty years given society
after those brave testimonies?)

temper rays with pools

receive anger into sprawled permission

the only hard thing
is being new
and that's so easy

8 October 2000

First frost or I mean
something at last
anybody can understand
anybody could have said
as coming through the door
even the wisest would
say it is raining
tonight it isn't the skies
are. Orion. Frost.
Where every crystal fact
seems the end of something.

8 October 2000

COLUMBUS DAY

Suppose he really was a dove,
A bird bearing Christ on his back or in his talons

Do doves have talons those delicate sharp
Tickly little toes they clutch us with

Man or branch, him, him carrying him
And he comes swooping low out of some clouds

Looking for land to land on, some devious branch
To sit on and preen, some plump seed to peck at

Not this soft-shell ocean of forever around him.
Finds nothing, floats back to the ship

And they sail on. Tries again another day
And comes down on a dinky islet

Awash with shallow tepid waves, junk
Floating in the tide, mango peels and copra shells

And mangrove pods like rubber swords.
So here I am, he thinks, this

Is what passes for land in the New World.

So here he sets his burden down,
Christ, tiny, puissant, tumbles
From dove back onto American soil,

Intolerable whimsy. Grows big
Instantly and dark and fierce
From the touch of American earth,

No more ivory-jawed hollow-cheeked sufferer,
Gaunt malingering Jesuses of the Prado —

This is Jack Jesus, Paco Loco, stalwart,
Tough as a rope of bull kelp.

Dismisses the dove with a flick of the wound,
Danke schön, Vögelein

So back to Spain with the bird,
America is a tiny island with Christ standing on it.

Nothing else. All the rest of it,
Juarez, Jefferson, Jack Spicer,
Alamogordo, Corcovado, Neruda
down to my own little white hand
writing this out, all of them
are just dreams stirring in the night of his mind,

glints of his bare thinking.

The dove is gone. The island
spreads its land out slowly,
a girl with her first ball gown for the prom,

sensing her senses fully this first time,
spreads out the green silk around her,

land is the thinking of the sea

until it becomes what we think is America,
all the usual suspects. For Christ's sake

why did he dream up these?

Every thought is issued a pair of feet,
then shoved off into the infinities of difference.

this is called Ruling the World,
Listening to Christ talk to himself on an empty beach.

9 October 2000

THEY'VE MOVED THE LINES OF LONGITUDE AGAIN

My mirror has the wrong face in it
And now I'll never know the time.
This one is alive, and seems friendly,
Solid but nervous, nothing like me.

Furthermore, my eyes see his face
But his eyes don't see anything
Unless I also am glass, like a clock
Protecting time from what happens anyhow,

The great secret, it doesn't mean a thing,
It's not even a real number. No man
Has an hour in his pocket. Blue
Is what glass always seems to be to me,

There must be a hidden reason for that
Buried deep in the calyx of some rose.
Meantime I live with a stranger, he lives with me
Muttering to each other one more morning

What shall we do today with all our
Intolerable difference. Which one of us
Gets to eat my Wheaties? Who will remember
To take out the garbage? The face in the mirror

Stands at the door calling for the cat I don't have.

9 October 2000

PLANH

Why don't I have a cat
You have a wall
A wall is bigger but a cat is warm
I think I need a wall
To keep my cat in when it comes
Why don't I have a wall
You have one and there are cats outside
Shouting at one another
Go bother the moon like a wolf I say
But there is no moon
Why don't I have a moon
To melt in my coffee
To set down on the floor by the wall
So the cat will lap it up and give light?

9 October 2000

answer me quick
before the light falls
out of the sky

the last moment of the day
the light is heavy

the sun is weeping then
it says in the old books
translated from lost minorities

dark eyed children sitting on the stoop

9 October 2000

A tree in one place a tree in another,
that should be enough to tell a story.
All a man has is the field he stands in
plus the sight or hope of another. Every
love story is a ghost story too.

Saw

Gide's *Symphonie pastorale* at the Waverly.
Cigarettes later. Women to see! All my life
that naiad calling, subways jolted us together.

What can a tree do for you? All the women
in my life came from out of town. Strange, true.
You have to walk high, otherwise the poems
slip out of your pockets and no one loves.

Then I moved to the Pacific, lived in a house
built out of shade. Palms on upper esplanade.
A heart turns out to be a thing like money,
never sleeps, shuts up tight as a bank vault
and will not listen to reason. A heart is money

and I have spent it all on you. A glass of birch beer
in sweltering twilight might be ok for a swinking
farmer but not me. I need Plato on the rocks.
I need imported cigarettes, rolled lapels, a suit from Barney's.
It's all right, somebody else always pays for it
like taking a cab home drunk and falling asleep,
you wake up solitary upright on the curb.
Somebody paid. Somebody takes care of you and goes.
Someone is always paying. And I find myself
alone again with a rather complicated tree.

9 October 2000

Learn the other way of being where I am.
Be like a fridge door weighted with memos —
am I remembering this or making you up?

Outside the window blackbirds and other landlords
specify their various desires. Genetics in a nutshell,
we tend to become each other. That's why Beijing

seems so far, or why water shifts back to its norm,
the solid frozen crystalline condition. The rule
to which I am a frivolous exception, running around

never mind the pain in my poor right knee.
I can remember when Bridgeport was the end of the world.

10 October 2000

Does mercy work by the counting numbers?
Is there a ceiling for eagles, a perimeter for cats?

What are we trying to accomplish
With our book and compass, skilled obscenities?

Do they give us hope of heaven, that forgotten
Miracle of somewhere else?

An else that happens to be here. Only here,
A firefly in a snowstorm, a hand on your thigh.

11 October 2000

well I've been sitting here playing at the keyboard
reviewing and remembering my betters
those angels who said the words I still hear echoing

what more could they do
they set up a garden and put fruit trees in it
snakes to scare me and a naked woman to finish the job

sometimes I call them by her name
and all their fugues and sfumato and elegies and epics
are just the shadows of her body as she turns to me

in old auditoriums you used to see their names
carved in capitals above the stage BACH
SHAKESPEARE HAYDN BEETHOVEN

sometimes with their heads and torsos in stucco
all of them looking like her too
their long periwigs their graceful arms

11 October 2000

Now there's a chance for order
don't ruin it with your resistance
to analysis. Analyze everything.
Then the priest in the pulpit
knows what's under the table
the boy knows what's under the dress.
He was a carpenter after all
and that means something, the nails
that hold the sad old words together
the blood that is always young.
Think about why everything.
And let it think about you. Be happy
the way only cloth can be
totally intact totally in contact.
Breathe for me, I am almost wood.

11 October 2000

And of course I'm thinking about the trees
That turn into you and me. We are folklore.
The solution for our problem has not been born
Though the first movement of Dvořák's Third
Explains more than just music. Listen
Like Caliban to find your way out of matter.

11 October 2000

That there would be some music —
you'd want a muse for that

Her Majesty the Mind
Whose nine graceful moods of dance
These are,
 Crimson bodied, nude
 And all but transparent,

Her substance precipitates
As Senses in us,
 She is what we feel.

12 October 2000

TO BE IN THE WORLD IS TO KNOW EVERYTHING.

Who are they and I know them
the glint of skin between the clothes
as if somebody were home

I know this person I have never seen
know every thought, the least velleity
in that brain reads me I read?

To be in the world is to know everything.

Pity those then who consult the dead
the only ones who are truly ignorant

who have to make up the truth
and then some other truth and one more

using nothing but the ceaseless talk of poetry
that mad stuff poesy they used to call it

when halibuts flew and lovers were true
and I know right now what you are thinking too.

12 October 2000
Red Hook

If a stone were a star.
No. If a star were a stone
and all that blazing we see from earth
was really *falling*. We talk

and that is telephone, always,
no matter how close you are
you are always *there*. And I am here.

And this also is falling, I think,
like a new schoolteacher in town
trying to wake the dead, the way they do.

Falling. Through the resistant atmosphere,
with friction, catching fire,
blazing towards earth, down,

we are the essence of what is down,
everything that falls is on its way to us.

Wait. Wait, schoolmaster — eventually
your dimmest pupil will learn some share
of the wonderful nonsense that you teach,

and the more words he has the further away from you he'll be.

12 October 2000
Kingston

Will it be a ball thrown from the sky
Finally teaches us how to spell?

And all the eels around Amsterdam
Get counted by diligent philosophers

Whose results disturb housewives as they sleep
Tormented with dreams of slippery things.

12 October 2000
Kingston

So tell me this in all deciding
comes a sparrowhawk and vexes
little people with wings
I know not their monikers
but they do taste our seed
and run therewith to make
other plantings of this
there until the world is one
I thought and so the big
raptor tended to displease me

set as I was on everywhere.
Is this the ethics I was wrought
as cobberboy to entertain
myself with wits of angelry

or is the green world no
responsibility of mine? I ask
before the throne of Hesht
the skyly personage of earth
I mean the soil itself
shows her cloudland plain
just any piss or puddle
on the ground will show the moon.

We are one animal I think.

13 October 2000

OCTOBER SONNET

What would the world make of the world if the engines
stopped running that run the trees and all we had left
was the sly chemistry that makes the eye move to the right
when a favored-gender instance passes? Brutal it seems
but it is gentle, sad as Jacobean poetry, sensual as piety,
rosary beads knotted round a nude's throat, and whose
fingers get to pray them, and to what divinity? Shudders
are still welcome in the evening of letters, shadow
of a burnt-down steeple still visible across the page
where all the dead roses leave their scent and rustle too.
It is so difficult to be a man. I feel like a hunting knife
With stag-horn handle, created to kill the thing
Of which I'm made. Horn beads, amber beads, blue
Shadows we fill with the crimson meat of our love.

13 October 2000

What does it mean, this old typeface,
That William Baskerville set Catullus to,
An eye tune that we get

To feel the presence of long after,
All I need is one glimpse of it
And *Da mi basia* comes to mind,

Deinde centum, and let the rumors
Of the old men now that I am old
Not break the shapely line of music

For suns will set and others suns will come
But of this chance of love
There will be no more mornings ever

And what I do not kiss today
Will stay unknissed forever.

13 October 2000

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NOON IN SODOM

Come out and let us know you, it is
the time of need be going
because the answers always
flourish, are you

the one I need to find, the one
who is truly listening?
Yes but to what, to whom?
What story are the laggard leaves still telling

midway through tenth-month and not scarlet?
Of course we stand around the bolted door
wanting to fuck angels, they are
so much more beautiful than people,

so much less demanding. Come out
and bring us chocolate cake and coke
and stuff us with forgiveness, I wanted
what was difficult and no one knows

how shabbily I settled for desire,
the thing that wants itself in me
to utter, and I have been the shallow prophet
of that smallest, truest (in one way)

deity, and all the other gods
have left me, left me with the shimmer
of the angels, the glitz of their novel presences,
arriviste beauty, satin too smooth to snag the heart.

13 October 2000

טחוהגדבאēēëǧğĩĩłłŋōōřřššũũűűááελθϕζξξæžōøþγϣ†ƚηω⊙†‡†

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Customary animals, be blank as news.
Nothing waiting for us, a crow feather
Jabbed into locust bark, be accurate

As air. I saw the fog coming down the road
But the upscale moon was clear
And then an hour came that rimmed it

But by then it was clearing down here.
Christ, the stuff we have to keep in mind
Just to get through one night, stairs

Are wood, bed is soft, wall not. In that time
Between waking and getting up
The world is made. It is terrible then

That feverish cosmology every day
And no way to stop your thinking thinking.

13 October 2000

PIETÀ

They took him down from his cross
But by then it was too late.
He had seen something from up there
That would not let him live.

They poured wine in his hurt mouth
And stuffed bread between his teeth
But he shook his head and would not eat
Because I have seen what I have seen.

13 October 2000