

10-1994

octB1994

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octB1994" (1994). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1238.
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THE SYMPATHIES

Now the stairs have brought me home—
what a long night of mezzanines!

So often waking and here I am, cup of hot water
and first frost. Walk past outside

in the namable vestments of their office:
strangers, neighbors, women of the world.

The stride of morning! I seem to be heavy
with exclamations, is it fear?

Look out there, stupid, where the gold is,
the exasperated leaves of maple trees.

Some days I wake up and think I am a car
going by and going by, windshield dazzled with reflections.

13 October 1994

Is this enormity or is it that rage
a woman gets whose shoe a stranger touches
tracing his monogram, his nation's flag,
in dust on her toe cap. I am a monosyllable.
You forgot all the times we walked
hip against hip along the road to Eleusis
and jabbered in the latest fashionable tongue,
Lydian, Lycian, Hittite, Coptic, Goth.
No language is native to people
who truly live in the body; we did,
the nightmares came sloshing round our feet,
tide-wise, wave-wilful, surf, scurf, salt.
You left me with salt. I sent a blue slave
to carry you a fat candle with no wick,
a scroll glued shut, a window with no wall.
I told him: wait for her to declare herself
then tell me what she says. He still
has not come back, so I take it he lingers
in your shadow, and you keep silent.
What did we want from each other
and why was it important what we did?

13 October 1994

Harvest the wind. Don't
sit listening to The Woman
With No Shadow and reading
your thirty-seventh Maigret mystery,

go out, harvest the wind.
The wind has a tenor voice,
claims to be king of the world
because it is the only one who ever moves,

always moves, the wind. The wind and a hawk.
But that's the music again.
Stand up — even a rock
can do that, the kind you have on your desk,

a special stone, black, written in
by jests of white and grey,
explaining everything. If you could only read
that instead of literature!

Lift off from the intricate cushions
soft as Proust! Love outermost,
be gone! The tenor crooning of the wind
decodes the agony of cities,

everything decays. This rock is your Lucretius.
Harvest the light, invest the wind,
eat the sound of words, remember
dreamless sleep and be at peace.

14 OCTOBER 1994

ELEGY

Martyrdom of blue sky. The attenders
all round me,

bleating clear.

Sit down to write this, sore feet,
think about David Rattray,
plan to outlive him. How. Have I already,
is there a tree in the middle of the sky.

The answer. A few pictures
of how to begin. Every October this
exposition of sheep. Rams. Ewes. Lambs.

14 October 1994,
Rhinebeck

Closer than
who cares

staring
at some wall

do you understand
I wanted to touch you

just to have knowledge
lightly

of your skin
thereby to know

what it is like
to be you

only you.

14 October 1994

Five knives. One scrawl
of a small god's name.
Child, you have forgotten me.

15 October 1994

Palestrina saved music from the Church
and vice versa.
The Vicar of Christ. The Opportunist of Orpheus.

15 October 1994

Dry autumn. Complain
a world into place.
God is dead and the Lady
won't listen, how

wield the instrument of Prayer
in these bright days?
Pray to the shadows
you see on the wall

moving quick to dead music.

16 October 1994

The clock keeps.
How do I know
another. Spin
of a maple seed
arriving. Things.
Touch each other
on their way to me.

16 October 1994

THE APARTMENT HOUSES OF THE 17TH
ARRONDISSEMENT

Honey doors and some
close looking to the river
hounded by embankments

a city eternally escaping
all it is.

Skyline.

The things you see so vastly
when you're alone.

In any of these houses
you could be at home.
And that and that alone
is the terror of the situation.

16 October 1994

The assertions of this music
are old, some kindly
schoolmaster who tore up the tunes
so we could learn to count,
Webern. Schönberg and the drear
of those who credited as truth
that mind can hear without hearing,

there are no ears. The tonal
conscience is much put upon, the grief
of melody, the namable,
the cliché. And then Bartok
understood that energy
is what held one tone to the next,
and feet set dancing, and some Gypsies,
and a bear. And all our provenance
is woodland, streamside, taking
a dump at morning by the rush of leaves.

Then comes a song and we are sure
someone amuses himself in the air,

an air is not enough to breathe. Be more.
Be what says me to you
for I am a shepherd of your least occasions,

snake on a rock, your son.

16 October 1994

MELUSINA

who comes to you in the dark water
that is your dream
and explains your body
into water once again
from which such matters rose

and no one rests content
till they have to water come.

16 October 1994

[Listening to Mendelssohn's overture to Konradin Kreutzer's *Die schöne Melusine*.]

It looks to be a rose come late to blossom
after three nights of frost. Can such
red things be?

I stand accused
of marvelling out loud.

17 October 1994

for Charlotte

That I met you at the door
that we lifted
each other

higher than the stamen of a lily
lifts above the *kelch*
I want to say, some German word,

chalice, calyx, cup.
And took a cab north into the rain—
and now that whole city's just
a shadow leaning on the wall.

18 October 1994

Shadow on the mouth. A child sleeps into speech.

A mother is the one who will not listen.

Did you shake your clothes, take your medicine, wake up in time to
dream?

Go to cruel. They wait to torture. They give you nothing to think and
constantly keep you from thinking whatever is your mind's own
way.

Keep the child from thinking.

In school I believed only the wood of the desk.

Far down the block, some body is singing. All you know is, it's a
body, not yours, nervous enough to be loud, its loudness is your
cross.

His body, the most important body, was made of wood.

The shadows on the sidewalk, they too know something. You can't
guess yet what it is. They have been there. They have touched.
You don't want to guess.

It isn't so much that you want to know. You want to have always
known.

They have touched every thing you mean.

What a shadow can do on water.

18 October 1994

IN MEMORY OF THE *NORMANDIE*

When things are fallen on their sides. Pacquebot all my war lay rust
hull up. In the slip, burnt and capsized. Hull. Slip.

Things don't work right. There is a skull in the petals of things.
Looking out of those dull eyes.

There was a fence to keep people in cars on the highway from seeing
the traffic in the harbor. Fear of spies. Troop movements.
What is permitted to be known.

Seen. In her slip, fallen, half sunken.

The saboteurs. Sad glimmer then, a sort of pilot to the dark.

Rust works and works, the skull loses even its color, the fallen bone is
on the side of history, some dumb tale.

To tell or keep. The tally.

My war was all green and harbor and too short, my war was iron
fences, fake hills where cannon, emplacements, slept like bears
in a winter that had nothing to do with weather. The only
weather in those years was war.

Everybody's life is a long getting ready for an invasion that seldom
comes.

Hence island ones we.

Piety doesn't help much if the god is wrong.

Secular occasions we brought our bright rosaries.

At the end of the pain some said: Our prayers did not keep the pain
away. Others said: Our prayers let us survive the pain.

The beads were made of horn, and polished till light shone through.

I, what am I? I was the one who spoke if there was some calling. I
was the one who felt if there was touching. That's why wood
believes me.

Rose from stumbled ecstasies in one long furl of light. At the full of it
was dark. I am a parody of thinking.

Dust on my side I lay breathless, listening.

Salt on the rim of the plate. Salt rose, salt cinnamon. Rhythm
persuades. That is all it does, and that's enough, to kill.
Death's servants come, polite as circumstances allow, to take
my life.

Or I am a cup full of no one.

That's what I meant to answer. Is it too late to say it now?

No one I call you.

In the dark I feel for the book I dropped beside the bed. The poor
little secrets language knows.

The meat key opens the leaf door.

Candle without a wheel. Crow without compass. Clock without a
kiss.

If I looked into the future a bare hundred years, I would see a world
vivid and intact, but a world without me in it. I would long be
dead but still now would be seeing this, this now of pure seeing
and no me in sight. This is what I mean by knowing.

This then that is now.

Will it match the blue flame of the range, with a yellow sore about to
break into pure heat?

The core.

Carry memories in the skin alone.

19 OCTOBER 1994

S L O W W A K I N G

The night was long and full of battle
and now this yellow leafy morning
in bright cloud, the musical
intensities of rising light, falling
sun scales, wake a fleshly flower

of what has been. The mind leads the body
through these woods. We are pilgrims,
the books tell us, but they do not write
where our Compostella is, let alone
Jerusalem. To be a pilgrim is to leave each place
as soon as we recognize we're there.

Sometimes we stop. Sleep. Mind too slow.
Then we go jerusaleming stress by stress,
relax on stars, firegrates, little stands
where they sell clams. Falafel. Waffles.
Consolations de la vie humaine.

The night was long and I can't get into the day.

20 October 1994

PERILS OF TRAVEL

“In the Town Museum of O———, we saw a cabinet full of dusty shelves flatly and meagerly bearing up to the grey wintry light filtered down from the dome certain dust-covered objects of many shapes and sizes. Unable to identify them, we sought guidance from the case’s label, hand-printed in faded ink, only to be told that what was on exhibit were the various contours, habits and occasions of dust.”

21 October 1994