

10-1993

octA1993

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octA1993" (1993). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1292.
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HORTONVILLE

It is still
inside me

the kingfisher
poised

for fifty years
waiting to fall

one lip of light
and he's there

& back again
in heaven my
soul in his beak.

1 October 1993

Sign upon sign
bed magic
a loss of sense
upon innocence

bright barrier
a riddle
posed between
two thieves

in Armentières the bivouacs
smoke in a dawn sun
after the year's first
frost. Centuries!

1 October 1993

THE WARS

Gamsakhurdia Sarajevo
Srinagar Romeros

I think I will find
every war
discussed inside me
what my childhood

holds, the times
incompatible,
Russia in Finland,
old Ad raving

against the Confederate
foe, my father raging
against the Republicans
in Spain, voting

for them at home.
War is strange names
pronounced stiffly
at breakfast

as if the radio
were in our mouths.
Like everything else
hate has a history

written in me,
so hard to find
the names of efficacious love,
pronounce them in me

out loud move
in their service
as if I also were
something love could say.

1 October 1993

THE AUDIENCE FOR POETRY

I didn't mean to have a low
sense of the audience for poetry.
It's only that the wind changed
and the bellies of spinnakers spanked against the sky
till the boat sang — we've heard it,
hush of hurry under the bows —
and you know that this place who gloriously are
all alone on the bright bay
is yours by privilege and high minority,
glad on the ocean of money.
And thus I manage to offend
the only ones who understand.

2 October 1993

Yet to speak: the gay inspection
of our lunacy.

Words in isolation
never clumsy, it's the neighborhoods
that go to hell, not the houses
on that planet,

the word is interesting
ever, an obelisk —modest—
on the banks of the Seine, a sphinx
in London
or have they come up with something better
there,
where some even more civilized river
hurries to inform the desperate sea?

4 October 1993

So we are waiting
near the ambulance
for the last report

—he said the sun
shone brighter there, he said
the elephants beamed
a kind of light
from the hoses of their trunks
and swabbed the sky
with something cleaner
than old tired light
of suns and public natures

he said the light
sustained him
better than coffee and cigarettes
he said the wind
found its way to him
and he died.
But we're waiting still,
the ambulance drivers
have something to say
how they watched
over his body
and smoothed their skirts
nervously and smoked they saw
a great ribbon of luminous whatever
reach out of his chest directly
caress them with an eerie
and not pleasant coolness
and be gone.

Then we let them drive on.

4 October 1993

AT LAMA NORLHA'S MONASTERY

Worn out with leaving
I love you. Silence
around the dry pond
with so many flowers
nowhere
in this region are there so many
so bright. The ordinary
law makes sense here,

water seeps into the ground,
an eagle passes hugely
silent overhead, low
into trees.

It is not like
someplace else, not like itself.
Those blue flowers could be pronouns
in a sentence
you really want to hear,
faces on the TV news
joyous in a bloodless coup
that turned my mind back
into the capital of itself.

No self. My hair smells like hair.

5 October 1993

1

Myself among the giants
and me only with a little stone
a little stone in a web and a whir
as I throw it into the dark

2

and the dark goes with it
and the light's not far behind
and what is this I see
neither dark nor light?

3

I wanted your mind to be
and be in place of mine
I was proud to give way
since way is all I has to give

4

way or sway or come away
it is not light so much as waking
not waking so much as being awake
not being so much as being there.

6 October 1993

People do get tired.
Not of doing but of stainless steel,
fair weather, the manicured
lawns of hospitals. The sun.
People get tired of paper also,
and of spring chive grass and chemistry,
it feels like gum or sawdust when they wake,
it feels like dry inkwells
on antique school desks
you buy on Third Avenue for more than my father
earned the last month of his working life,
old oak with initials intaglio'd coarsely
the way they did in 1923
when you weren't born not at all
and people were tired then as well
and money continued to do us no good.

7 October 1993

Riding with it and getting
invented by it as you go —

some way like that
to move in honor
up the line to where it began —

but the beginning was only for the sake of now,
aleph was born for *tav*,
Christ made the world to solve it on the Cross.

7 October 1993

THE SAILOR

for Charlotte

Am bold
man wave
Roc of fortune
sun shape

I am a scintilla hé thought
off that anvil

lost into now

Hurry grrr, elegant pains
of middle passage

to be hot for what happens to me,

lot-crazy, spic & span
the decks of me!

A sailor is all offering,
wind apart, all headland
in the process of interesting erosion,
swallow me.
It takes some skill to be as bad as this,

Snaggle-shanked the apple trees
shear over the far hill
toothed by worm deer
easy fallen the specious promises
of a lasting language,

an apple we could ever eat!
and he knows it,
fears it, falters and eats,
delicate arounding worm-bites

and lets the core fall
to do what those things do,

I also am seed-scatterer
to what known end?
I have loved to lie on beaches
and let the foam find me
on the animal of coming in

inexorable seduction of the tides
and the sun hits on me
and I am married to the day.
Bay. Where I keep
my sandals (schooners)
my golden griefs
(tempestuous epyllions
of seedy ruins
girl by girl in the dawn light
seen to be stars)
(theory of muses)

runagates inkstains
I misjudged this permanent,
word, and I stayed.

8 October 1993

Thrilling in or of it
they praise
the by-ways of me

not the music I cut
through the interminable forest of not feeling,

just the odd
clod tossed off a spade's edge,
a book review, un dédicace.

9 October 1993

