

10-2013

octA2013

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octA2013" (2013). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 67.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/67

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.

THOSE ARE MY STEEPLES

**you're climbing,
in the grey sky over my Greenpoint,
Riga, Talinn, New Bedford.
I step from pinnacle to pinnacle**

**up where I am safe from people or
anyone but me. I am the steeplejack
of the particular and I am always,
I polish the crosses, the finials,**

**the arrow tips, the lightning rods,
I ride the air and never come down
and I am there to heal the sky
when my steeples wound them,**

**I lick the cloud to heal the wind,
it rains on me to feed me
that supernal wine of emptiness
and then I fall over and over,**

**steeple to steeple and they fall too,
lights opens the door and every doorway
is full of morning, I sob a while
trapped down here in the gravity.**

1 October 2013

=====

**Why do they die in dreams
sometimes, people we know
and maybe don't even much think of
or about yet there they are**

**dead as Lenin in your dream
with all grief and solemnity
as if they were your brother or lover?
The tears we shed in dreams**

**come from a different lake,
on that planet dreams
insist on coming from,
muffled in nakedness, vividly unclear.**

1 October 2013

=====

**Nobody wants just to sit there
talking on the phone, engine running,
sun in his eyes, bellowing,
bellowing. Yet he does.
He is. He is the stranger
idling by your house, a house
of no interest to him
you hope. He bellows
into his hand, your house
is part of the landscape only,
he is alone with his message,
you can hear every word
but shred them in your ears
so when he drives away
(he drives away) you are clean
again, no language but your own,
Now you can start shouting,
the trees will filter you out
and the whole system will be safe.**

1 October 2013

=====

**Prehensile ball aptitude
but a ship is passing
its shadow on the bedroom wall
like the outline map of a country
your father told you about,
now you have to fill it in,
show where all the cities are,
the mountain range, the lakes,
the principal rivers watering the plain.
It is a test, like everything.
You will fail it, like everyone.
A shadow is like that, it needs you
to be wrong.**

1 October 2013

=====

**Keep it simple as that deer
stops when lucky on the berm
before plunging across the highway
looks and waits I wait**

**that way for a sign from you
that you understand
or don't but don't care
since we are beyond**

**the cognitive aren't we
out there in the mist
that slides down the mountain
looking for us I think**

to keep us safe in confusion.

1 October 2013

TAXONOMY

What do we know about the earth—
we stand on shimmer
and we listen sometimes to the messengers
who come we suppose to tell us
what it's like inside this house
we linger at the gate of all our lives.

We think.

Day 3-Serpent
on the calendar. We suppose
everything knows better than we do
how to live in this place.

The name of this proposition
is Nature.

Ecology
formalizes it, painters
used to try to summarize
all that is knowable.
A skiff on a lagoon,
storm at sea, cows at pasture,
Monadnock in moonlight,
a valley full of sunflowers.

*

**In the class the professor hands samples of rock
around the room. Olivine.
Lazurite. Dangerous
asbestos that peels
like oily thread, obsidian,
mica schist —
we built Manhattan
on it, boys —
granite from new mountains.**

**There are no girls in the room—
They know already all that can be known,
he laughs, we just give them names.**

*

And all I want to do is to look at the sky.

2 October 2013

=====

**All I'm doing
is what I'm supposed to do.
The grammar of the thing
is older than I am.
A tree. And then me.
It sounds across space
like a window opening.
Ghost train. Wooden
semaphore arms clacking.
Morning flowers out of the night,
morning has a fragrance of its own.
How can we live so long
and not know these things?**

2 October 21

=====

**Ask me why anything is
and I'll tell you something else.
I'm good for that,
was born without a hat
so the sky fell in.
Born without shoes
so I know where I stand.
I was born without language
so I know what you really mean.**

2 October 2013

=====

Getting closer and then

not so sure.

Thin ice. An hour

I can count on.

You gave me this instrument

it is all I have.

The horizon is my house.

2 October 2013

ELEGY: MONEY

In the workplace

fitted together we
as if mosaic
valley full of lilies
moneyed persons, ages
from newborn millionaires to
managed people,
cold tile of those stalls
where beasts do men's work,
and the stars glitter through unstained glass,
Cistercian clear, color
also is in idol,
bend
low before the color of any it,
color is true, color is you
before you were born,
isn't it?

2.

I have never been in Ravenna
all my exile's been elsewhere
standing still is exile
while the world goes
away from me
leaves me

but wise in owning
land in fee-simple,
this plot of earth
all the way from the surface
to the center of the planet
yours.

Mine.

But down there all those intersecting shafts
mingle and dispute,
who knows who owns the central fire?

3.

For marble also is a seed
from which inscriptions grow
or flowing limbs of
maidens fleeing satyrs or
the silenced tumult of a seated god
pondering an uncreated world.

Syntax is all,
and how the ruby ripens
and the banker has a body too,
and the broker, and the pale
hand that takes my money at the bank

they all have eyes that weep.
skin that once, knew how to feel.

4.

Justinian started counting.

From his day

(or his wife's nights,
those orchestras of penetration,
moonlight over the Bosphorus
mosaic walls damp from human effort)

till now

the rapture grows.

Government means money plus police.
The Army is intermittent, the police eternal.
Blake knew this, and spoke against Justinian
but not by name,

clear as he dared,

too clear, they
heard him, made him poor and called him mad,
sent the local versions of
sea serpents from the Trojan Sea,
the writhing avengers
round Laocoon:

Man Struggling with Debt,

any working man

would have understood,
 that image,
the man in debt,
when government replaces nature
the monsters are money.

5.

But money is a merry thing,
a mercy, sings too
come dance with me,
I'll take your house away,
you won't have to cook and clean,
I'll give you sequins made of sunshine
the shadows of pretty people passing,
a nice street to live in,
and no more mail.
No more deities morose in their Temple lairs,
I'll give you your self
naked in the wilderness
and weeping,
 and there will be no Moses,
not even one,
 to lead you away
and the lilies will be withered in the Valley,
and the harsh dawn
 will sweep the stars away.

**But you will have been,
and those tears are real tears
you shed,
you taste the salt of them on your lips.
Your own lips. Your own salt.
And nothing else
to bother you or own.**

3 October 2013

=====

**I coughed into the microphone
and the voice-to-text software
wrote: *If you dream in***

**what could it have meant,
in colors? in Spanish?**

**Maybe the cough reminded me
that when we dream we dream in vain.**

3 October 2013

=====

**Somewhere find the way in
as in a book you borrow
someone else's reading karma
dog-eared the page you open to**

**and now it's yours, fear and lust
bring you to this page, word,
the stilted conversation,
canned description, coin**

**of a vanished country
minted before you were born.
And here it is in your hand.
Art. Spend it if you can.**

4 October 2013

=====

**Suppose each color were a different night
you have to sleep through each
to know the truth of them**

**that's what the old painters did,
endure the dream of red
the violet nightmare on the way to dream**

**where light, mother of all colors,
absorbs them back into her white self
and scalds the eye with seeing.**

**Don't look at the light,
don't cross your eyes
trying to peer inside your skull —
trust the colors —
they are the real words It says.**

4 October 2013

=====

**The sun is same.
That is the likeness
of itself is everywhere.
In shade I hide,
knowing no better —
dark music arrives
quick blood of listening.
Listen again, yellow.
Leaves, orange, umber.
Name your children one by one.
Eventually
 the family is complete,
the fish swims to the table
the moose bellows in the yard.
This is the dispersion,
the dream called waking.
Hello everybody again.**

4 October 2013

=====

**In childhood
we solve all problems
by getting sick.**

**Sometimes we can't get better —
even when I don't have to go to school.
The cure outlasts the first the disease
and becomes the second.
I inherit trouble from myself —
the trees will not leave me alone**

4 October 2013