

7-2013

julH2013

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "julH2013" (2013). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 405.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/405

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LABELING

To carve a word on things
to tell what they are
(in my childhood the little pats of butter incised BUTTER)
or (more likely) to whom
they belong. Is language
to start with just to claim?
a flag hoisted over matter to express
some dubious sovereignty?
What does it mean to [making something one's] own?
To own. (As if to self a thing or me it, or you it?)
To contaminate its suchness
with our self-delusion?
Goldfinches fly fast past my window —
and suddenly I am ashamed of saying 'my'
and only excuse myself because I love it,
house, window, finches, trees all me —
a better me than I can contrive

but if this owned thing has a name
then I must have one too,
because I am claimed by what I see and who I meet —
because we own each other
and the law sleeps.

(22 July 2013)

=====

1.

But so few the semaphores lifted
brave over the stumble
there are children on the moon of course
waiting to be born
and we are all their mothers
(loud cloud of a cool day at last).

2.

What should we gather
of being outside
the air is different in an unowned place
hence land unparceled
or by the streams communal
and be in a place as present as the place is
intending nothing but presence
to be no more there than a hawk overhead
and never less.

3.

None of this sounds like me
this is someone else's etude

playing in the park
holding my thumb over the water fountain's spout
to force the arc of water higher —
you all know how to do this
you've done this
this is a child's first art,
tantra of the little things all around.

4.
So it turns into scripture after all
the way everything tends to become religion —
could it be music we heard
or was it tomorrow getting here early,
clearing its throat?

(22 July 2013)

=====

**And all these *mois* determine me,
the selves the persons I impersonate
sous les coulisses de mon âme
these me's these months
which are moons waning only to wax again
pale Desire loathed and worshiped by all Blakes,
a gouge in the copper of my soul
each one, chaque, each shock
to the wanting system graved toujours
where the heart keeps its diaries,
day books, forged statements of account.**

(23 July 2013)

IN THE OLD DAYS

[1946]

**Touched a box
made music come
someone's dead
and hears his song
his voice unpacked
in the warm wood
across the room
my father cries.**

(23 July 2013)

=====

**Kairouan and nevermind
history is better off without you
we exist as numbers
in a boring book —
and you with such pretty eyes.**

(23 July 2013)

=====

**They sang from far away
but knew how close they were
weird birds on phone lines
seen best at dawn when
they wake up and remember
no song ready yet,
just remember.**

(23 July 2013)

=====

**When you write
make the letters
far between
let the spaces in
let the spaces sing.**

(23.vii.13)

=====

**If you open a word
who knows what you might see
Cagliostro's fatidic circle
a language made of bees
green shelf ice off Labrador once**

**every word a dream
open the door it is and dream it.**

(23 July 2013)

=====

**Calmed into waiting
after a night of rain
one great tree across the stream
leafless, almost dead
but who knows,
who knows?**

23 July 2013

GROUT

**Would you call it grout
the stuff that holds us together
keeps us apart,
each of us a tile, tessera
maybe, to be technical,
on a dome in Monreale
or the bathtub wall?
Is it a substance the tiler makes,
lays on with a slender trowel
in his musivary cunning, master
of glistening surfaces that keep their color?
Or do we exude it ourselves
a kind of ectoplasm
from contact alone?
What is it made of?
If we got rid of it
we could get really close together
but then we'd fall apart.
I wonder at this mysterious substance.
Maybe Rudolf
Steiner or Paracelsus has a name for it,
like the sweet sticky
stuff between the upper and the lower lip.**

24 July 2013

=====

**Honored class
of strivers for Sappho and Apollo
take a thing and know its name
and write down quick
all it makes you think.
That is a start.
And sometimes the end as well,
an image caught at first grasp
that teaches you all it knows
before you let it go.**

24 July 2013

AMOR FATI

**Make love in strange places
then you'll always remember.
Always when sober
when it's really you.
Do with a clear mind
whatever you do.
And always love
what happens next.**

24 July 2013

=====

**Hide me from myself
where No One finds me
your drunken daughter
your god-crazed son
then I will learn
how to answer the rain
in its own language
give lessons to the rose.
Till then I'm just in the way
of everything I really mean.**

24 July 2013

=====

Lyric mumble of the woods at night
I hear all morning,
my nerves connect with leaves and branches
something lovely always bothers me.
In the next yard I hear
the stone lid slid off an ancient tomb.
Everything is always ready to reveal —
just write it down
seal it in words and send it to friends.

24 July 2013

=====

**Moving is the matter
I insisted like a pain in the back of the neck
under the ear as if it listened
too hard one day and heard nothing
but the giggle of migrant birds
here for the summer then gone.
So moving must mean me too
Where it hurts to sit still.
Listen to me, I am my dead son.**

24 July 2013

=====

**I need pictures
please color my trumps
stand apart like numbers
leave spaces between you
then draw those spaces — these
are the people I intend
strange distorted symmetries
just like your friends.
Paint me the space between
until I understand
who the ones around it are.**

24 July 2013

OMINA

**Sometimes the shelf
won't let the book come out
you reach for**

**pay attention — everything
has something to tell you
everything loves you
and all there really is
is wood and stone.**

24 July 2013

=====

**When I'm doing what I'm supposed to do
it's hard not to feel like an impostor even so.
(These are problems are soul,
guilty childhood.) Not just impostor
but one dumbly pretending to be the wrong person,
whatever I'm doing it should be something else instead.
Guilt pervades the weather even.
Omar has no wine to comfort this.
Little man, he says, don't you understand,
all this doing is just fleeing being.**

24 July 2013

(OF POETIC METHODOLOGY)

**He couldn't write his way
into a paper bag.**

24.vii.13

=====

**Everyone must speak
everyone must write.
Judging makes it hard to hear
criticism blinds.**

**The critic effaces his text,
replaces it
with anything else but what it means.**

24.vii.13

=====

**A small plane
grinding through the clouds.
A goldfinch comes
to seal my book.**

24 July 2013 (end of notebook 359)