

9-2009

sepB2009

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "sepB2009" (2009). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 577.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/577

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.

= = = = =

Where the things are waiting
in the bottomless hotel
for us to give them names

ash curtain
foot of a fox

the light went through us
like a crucifix
made of plastic glow-in-the-dark
and dark the body was
that was on it
and that passed through us too

ash canna lily

what the moon left

written on the rock.

5 September 2009

PLACES OF MYSTERY AND HUMILITY

There was a lady kept a dragon
she had shaped from fine steel wool
and fire, it stood in her vestibule
glowing red hot wires at its snout
discouraging visitors—
she had too many of them already,
they came to her in sleep
and told her things she might forget
the next day—nonetheless
she'd wake up as *someone*
who knows something—and the look
of that is what you'd see whenever
you looked at her, hardly even
noticing her face, handsome as some found it.

5 September 2009

= = = = =

Bent over the table

Spinoza labored.

Pens have points,
must keep them sharp.

Words wear them out.

Words wear us out.

To write words sharper than your thoughts—

then thought must follow,

think beyond thinking.

5 September 2009

= = = = =

Is silence after English
the same as silence after French?

How deep does any language
gouge its world?

And when it rains
what is left to run in the channels of words?

5 September 2009

= = = = =

We all have the same name
but spell them different ways

there is a string for instance
hangs from the sun to this ash tree
imagining me

I could climb it if you could.

6 September 2009

= = = = =

Nothing shocking
just the same
split open seeds
the sweet juice.

6.IX.09

= = = = =

Not trying to be
just being. Not hearing
a song just singing.

How strange your hands feel
as if they and they alone
handled moonlight,
could make even you listen.

6 September 2009

THE SUMMONS

Wait the arise the.
Scull on Brighton reach
the letter. Once
send it by mail
are we still allowed
to read the words
stored north of the moon?

Words own light showing through—
they are what isn't dark.
Something carrying.
A paint brush slapping varnish on the door
impatient for me to answer it
all right I'll change my color
I will be a protestant no more
but go at last with the god who goes the wind.

6 September 2009

= = = = =

Poems published by well-known poets
during the long years of my own childhood
seem ancient beyond Homer,
strange, terrifying even. Make me
feel I am in another world, later, lost there.
Or lost here.

A book by Yvan Goll, say,
soft covered, red, published in Brooklyn
where I lived, when I was nine or ten,
there was a war, there is this book,
how incredible to hold it in my hand.

How short childhood is
how long it seems,
how few of all my years
count as childhood.
Yet everything was folded in them,
ready.

6 September 2009

= = = = =

Asking for truth is asking for trouble.
Play safe and make it up
the way the gods did so long ago,
we almost forget our delight
when they unveiled us the whole blue mystery
cornfields and waterfalls, a hawk overhead.

7 September 2009

= = = = =

Sometimes a secret torrent
tells. Sometimes quiets down
the way late summer streams
murmur in their sleep.
And all of it is true.

7 September 2009

= = = = =

Slow today
like a hammer falling from the sky

coming to meet its anvil
that fell to earth before the earth began.

7 September 2009

= = = = =

But I don't want what I want.

The pain—annoyance, really—
of having it, having gotten it, having
to have it still. And wanting more of it,
appalling. I will not. Looking at it
with sudden fury, then being afraid
of it going away. *It stays with me
as long as I love it.* Objects in space.
My life's a painted Dutch interior.
But all the books have words in them
and all the stuffed birds and foxes
are still alive, all verbs are in the
imperative, all nouns shimmer
pale with putrescent desire: a painting
of a crowded table. One more thing
to put on the table and regard.

7 September 2009

= = = = =

A stroke, one of many
from which the character
is found: man
standing by a lake
mourning his mother.

There is a dictionary
that explains all this
without ever revealing
what exactly it's explaining.
I have never been good enough to anyone.

7 September 200

PLEASE, NO MIRRORS

If I don't know how I actually look

I can go on looking how I think I look

a dark man burdened with desires.

7 September 2009

= = = = =

How far are we from close,
from cloud, from being?

Put the speeches in, or else the play
will founder in its own integrity
action action action.

Love is a way of bringing
conflict into calm.
Love is a farm where thistles'
purple beauty overwhelm the corn.
Adversity is all.

Apart from that
there is only the ocean
ceaseless, the boneless
nattering at our shores.

When I look out there
I think we almost are.

8 September 2009

= = = = =

Did you know that crows can cross the wood?

Did you know that wood can cross the river

on its back smiling at the sky?

Did you know the river hardly notices anything we do

so in love is it with its all-consuming image of the sea?

8 September 2009

= = = = =

To know these things
is like having drunk a lot of cheap wine,
you sense a queasy ecstasy
but you know it will pass

and you'll sit glumly looking at a piece of wood
thinking This is a table a table
there must be something both of us are for.

8 September 2009

= = = = =

But the name of the day
is a secret name
shared only with the oak leaf
and the hard green walnut
she plucked off a low branch
by the river and he scraped
with his fingernail and pressed
against his hand. The color
of these things. Days. Words
we tell each other. Now
he can read his skin and know.

9 September 2009

(Richard Gartrell and Crichton Atkinson at Clermont)

MOONTALK

His escort waits for the moon,
he falls into her arms.

We are north of knowledge
by a little lake
where an old rowboat
half-submerged
is the house of wisdom.

How glum to be smart,
sleek to be wise.

So weary listening—
the moon keeps it up all night long.
I hear him on my pillow,
I squeeze the pillow
around my ears,
still can hear him:

What the Moon says—

1. Be noble as a brass clock on the mantel. Shape of an elephant, dial in belly.

2. Be beautiful like an old piano keyboard's yellowed ivory, sleek and softly stained from being. And being touched so much.

3. Forgive the priest for his religion, forgive the animal for letting me kill it for meat. Forgive me for looking into your window so many nights and doing nothing, nothing at all about what I see therein.

9 September 2009