

10-1992

octA1992

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octA1992" (1992). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 1321.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1321

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MIRRORS¹

A mirror is a triumph
made exclusively of surrenders.

1 October 1992

¹This was dreamt as a sentence on the night of 30 September / 1 October, and I woke with it in mind. See Notebook 202, page 52.

Pondering

to the day
a mind to weigh
event against transparency

this art these feebleness
and yet to shine

sheen on the river beyond the Quai d'Orsay
local proof of the ultimate machine.

1 October 1992

AS IN A DREAM

As in a dream things don't budge when you touch them

— and for three hours I try not to add to that:
lights don't go on when I throw the switch

and the dream never ends, or never begins,

because I don't want to write down
what I know so terribly well already

the light that is nowhere when my skin feels the dark
and my whole body is passing through the template of desire

to turn into or be formed into that pattern
on the other side of the skin

the Red Woman who waits inside a man.

2 October 1992

Do you think I'm going to behave the way you do,
a bowl of soup, a cinder block, late summer blue asters,
or be as natural as a house or a radio
or be nice the way your sweater is, and the lifeguard
already drowsing over *The Gnostic Gospels* at poolside,
do you? I know the whole history of soap,
I know where an animal waddles off to die
and what the cherries tell the migrant workers
that makes them laugh so hard in the bitter orchards
just on the verge of the sudden nightfalls of autumn.

2 October 1992

drung.du

Before you & at your feet

& offering to you what
of its nature must be offered because

Offering is All. The class of existents (ϵ)
values the situation. (Off the chart.)

The situation is what is called a
Star. The star basks in the light
reflected back to it off the radiant

scintillant laminated banks of mind.
Enough of sentences. The world is at your feet.

2 October 1992

Extravagance of ordinary horns
a woods "in trouble" all
the enterprise of island song

sung from under the ground up to
that peculiar zenith of the alchemists,
the Sun at Midnight

searing our bleary eyes.
We drinking Vikings of an empty sea
hurrying to the deep home

we fancy in the leaf.
We think it's in the shadow,
the closed lips of the light.

2 October 1992
for Nicholas Maw

hearing the oboe entering with that heart-breaking song in the slow movement of Schumann's second symphony I know that the agony of the one set apart from the many and torn thereby has never been so clearly spoken

this voice is blind Oedipus, and Pentheus who sees too much

2 October 1992

special words

to be blessed
by the many

anybody feels the meaning

directly

transmission

to link

the mind the universe

not hidden to say

Text derived from T'ai Situ Rinpoche's *Relative World Ultimate Mind*, page 69,
chosen and proposed as an invocation before my reading (*Sentence*, Part 3, & *Bliss*) at
the John Cage memorial weekend organized by Music Program Zero at Bard,

3 October 1992

ΗΣΥΧΗ ΔΡΟΜΕΝΟΝ

remembering John Cage

Silence is not something to suffer,
it is something to do.

3 October 1992

De Æternitate Mundi

Siger ate ashes
at the thought

of a perishable world—
impossible.

Juxtapose
everlastingness.

We are here
at least for ever.

3 October 1992

By merit rescued from the fires of London
1666 a pilgrim consciousness unfetted by
the swift talbots of the Time Police who
like all sunsets dog him down.

What traces do we leave. A smell of shit
behind us in the privy and a rose
left rambling by the October dooryard
for no season that time knows, no splay

of dignified espousals round the wedded town
that gives its citizens such scant repair
and you, you lucky Devil, wait traceless by the moon
until the blue lamps of the copters swivel

searching some lucklesser. Why did you last?
Who did you lick the metal-tasting skin of
so amorous that their least reward was this
presque-perpetuity that torments you now,

indian summer in alchemical America? You are here
again, and we are the blundering summonsers
who try to call, via my voice, you to incolate this sphære
again, a coffee mug weighty in your cold hands,

behold, you can feel again and soon be woman.
For you survived the insolent differences of gender
and know nothing of what it means to be a man,
only this moony promenande against the weather

until you reach your servitors down here, chief am I
of that phratry, waiting, ever waiting for your lumen'd
Grace. Welcome, sparrowhawk, welcome, sweet sheet
flapping in the flesh-wind till we name you Friend.

We have needed your inspection since the ghosts
rowed down through the interstitial fluids of our unwrought
craniums and left us puzzled at this piece of history,
churches and charters and suicides and banks

and none of that to eat, none to plant next winter's rye
or welcome even this gaunt spider flyless on the porch
to the last solemnities of summer prancing in ground ivy,
all gassy-smelling and particulate our energies—

we call it art and hurry to defend as if some battered castle
waterless and long-faminois by siege and yet and yet
we value so though it gives us nothing to sustain
this parceled life that animates its shimmering reforms.

4 October 1992

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

for Gaston Leroux and Rupert Julian

1.

Following Evening

It is like a carriage. It runs away over the crest
of a hill you never really know is there
until you have to walk up it, you find
yourself there, it is summer, mid-afternoon,
and the sun lies on you, judgment and decree
and no hope. The terrible island of the body.
No escape from that. You move west
as best you can, following evening
into the cave five catacombs beneath the earth
where the king of dragons questions closely
every drop of water on the earth
and hears what all beings are doing, even
what they think in their secret nightmare
lusts, their bank accounts of merciless fears.
You too are inquired of by that subtle voice
that hisses like the radiator in your aunt's apartment,
the one who died one December day in her
brother's arms, whispering of the mysteries
of the Rosy Cross she feared had failed her.
Her brother was your father, of course,
your feet were too big, it has always been too hot
and Paris was full of people you didn't desire.
To go to the world and not want what you find!

2.

Mysterious Barouche

It was waiting. Is everything waiting?
She is an exile and the axle broke.
Seized at Varennes, she had little
life left in her, she and her husband
who survived that operation on his penis
only to be factored out beneath a bigger knife.
Or do I have the wrong king? Wrong kind
of mercy, to remember some bright details
of history and not have a single
friend to be good to, when all men are kind to me.
All I ever needed was to be honest to you,
you with the lake behind you and all that dying done
come back now with a smile in your aspiration
meaning to forgive your lumbering Lancelot
the thirty-three degrees of his infidelity,
riding in an ox cart indeed, among cauliflowers!
Deeper in mystery, the black carriage lurches
away from the Opéra. No one is in it.
We are waiting for the aspiring soprano
to finish the highest, gentlest, of all her notes
and carry her sordid paramour to heaven.
No devil wants him. The devil is too busy
using men's desires to decode the world,
a world strictly unappealing to His Majesty
the Devaputra ever-Mara lordly liar,
king of the rodent whimsy that rules all life.
Henchmen beat the unattractive aesthete to death
and toss his body in the river where he comes from.
Source of all her art and majesty the humect flow
beneath the pavement of her simple schoolgirl lusts
and all the simplistic fervors of her audience,
to hear, and by hearing understand! What nonsense
this, by such a man deemed worth dying for?
This was music, and it alone renewed the earth.

3. *I have heard his voice, Raoul*

Yet there have been evenings when I heard his voice
indistinguishable from yours or from the Buddha's voice
speaking as it does so often from the ground, Merlin
or some jack crow who waits for meat along my lawn.
I woke up worrying about the French word *gazon*
supposed to mean plot of natural grass. But the opera
is all Astroturf and riddles, styrofoam palaces,
dreams that fold back firmly to the dominant and sleep.
But underneath the building there are streets
and underneath the streets the Fact of Life continuous
from universe to universe, leaping all the gaps or chaoses
any number of philosophies propose to daunt my love
or keep us from murmuring our *toujours, toujours!*
The ghost voice is the only one that tells. By voice alone
we built our boulevards and chose cathedrals
to lift the carven gargoyles in the air, newts of fire and air,
Nagas lifted into the permanence of space, the merciful,
the uninflected. I have heard his voice all my life in fact,
as fact, the only certainty. This voice taught us to sing,
and by singing understand. Dragons hoarding eggs
beneath the earth. Wise women scorning to possess.
Emeralds and ottomans, a groaning harmonium
keyboard lit by tallow candles made right here on the ranch—
how could you fail to love me, you taught so well?

4 October 1992

I suppose the most beautiful painting in London is Piero di Cosima's Satyr Mourning a Nymph. It is in the National Gallery, and there is a dog in it. The image seems to ask the following questions:

Is she wounded or is she dead or does she sleep?

Who did it, if it was done?

*In the far distance, right,
behind the pack of dogs,
we see the west end of
Cuttyhunk Island.*

*Bartholomew Gosnold's
tower is clear exalted in
the lucid evening. At its
base Caliban is offering
one more unwelcome
sacrifice to Setebos.*

*The satyr is mourning,
yes, but his face is full of
wonder, full of that kind
of almost clinical
curiosity we often find in
twi-natured beings,*

*centaurs, aegipans, and
the like. He seems to be
thinking, through his
grief: So this is death, this
is the thing that mortals
always suppose shapes or
abrupts their little lives.
Am I a mortal too? Will I
one day enter this curious
tender stupidity that
seems now to hold my
love?*

*And will there be
someone to ponder at my
side when I, for the first
time in all my life, no*

*longer have the sense to
answer?*

*But all round him as he
thinks his grief through
the light is busy
answering.*

4 October 1992
for Charlotte

Some Easy French Botany It Took Hours to Learn

épilobe (our fireweed or willow herb) is called *le lys de Saint Antoine*, St Anthony's lily, because it grows in the poorest soil or on the chalky slopes of these mountains

it looks like our loosestrife, and bees make good honey from it too, that the Savoyards call *miel de montagne*

sureau our elder I think has two sorts, depending on the color of the berries:

black is tasty and they make jam from them, while
red is *vénéneux*

silène enflée is just our campion, yellow swollen

astéranche I do not know what it is

and *scabieuse* is just our scabious.

Serpolet is our wild thyme

but there is a yellow flower the guide calls *rhinant*, but says that in their patois of Le Biot the name is *karXaval*, the middle of the word a deep harsh throaty gurgle he makes fun of as he says over and over—

later the dictionary says (the dictionary is always later) that the word is *rhinanthé*, flower in the shape of a nose, a weed they say, *nuisible aux prairies, dont une variété est dite crête-de-coq*. It is in the family of the Scrofulariaceae. *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* calls it Yellow Rattle.

4 October 1992