

10-2009

octB2009

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octB2009" (2009). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 584.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/584

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ETZNAB

the knife,
I wanted
to avoid the day

the day is a quarrel and a knife
the day is lover's fighting
the day is a night.

I wrote
the wrong day down. Once
you have said the wrong day
you have to live
what you have said,
the day is wrong.

The phone starts to sing.
The birds have decamped
one wakes to silence and thinks
that is what autumn means.

One wakes and thinks.
Then nothing is right—
what *is* going on with music,
who allows them to make such sounds
and teaches us to let them in,

sounds, wounds, and do
things to us, in us,

in me, what is going on in me
that music does?

The ears

those wallflowers when the body dances
a local earthquake

a voluntary heart attack syncope music,
music is searching for something
why is it searching in me
what makes it think I have
what it's looking for or that it needs?
What makes music think?

Now I mean any music, lotus honey, any,

now

I happen to be listening to the eerie
more than eerie first
movement of the Shostakovich violin concerto

how does it happen that I'm listening
how does it happen that I seemed
to choose this and not another?

If I don't put the music *on*
some other music, old stuff, comes
up from inside and rubs itself

all over me inside—

where

does that music live,

hiding, biding in silence till—

or is that music always humming?

So I have determined

that music is a knife,

in whose hand?

At least I know it's not an adverb

it is a noun a hard noun

in an unknown hand—

is it that music is a welcomed suicide?

What I was I am not now

now I am what the music says

think of Rembrandt's Anatomy Lesson.

I am the cadaver. Music is the knife.

4 October 2009

Day 13 Tijax

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This will be on the contrary
the day you go to the country
your new friend will drive you
in his peculiar Russian sedan
past hay stacked along the river

it always seems so lazy here
you should learn from it
how to idle into the work
and get the work done
a whole book breathed out on one breath,

the water carried from the well,
the words written down
the sea securely wet—

and he will
have brought a good lunch
lamb rillettes in the Moroccan style
to reheat over his little spirit lamp
bread he woke up prompt to fetch
and an easy wine,

make the best of it,
it's food, it's free, it's sun, it's Sunday

it's all by yourself with a friend in the country.

End of Act I. Now

the entr'acte begins

where all you have enjoyed

goes to confession in your head

and your captive priest inside

frowns over your pleasures,

reminds you of everything that's wrong,

everyone who is not right.

You're close to tears when

Act II starts

beneath the tree now talking

all talking.

It is late in the season

to sit on grass

but you do, he lies beside you

telling you all the things you knew already

but need, really need, to hear again.

Why is there nothing new to know,

you think, why can't I have

a different father, a different sky,

why can't my lover have a different face?

4 October 2009

NACHSOMMER

A bird

flew out of the night.

Nachsommer. A bench

by a fence, leaves

litter it, easy

to sweep free.

A hand. A handkerchief.

Sit. Nachsommer.

The lime-tree leaves

are yellowy, the lawn

is scarred quick

by the shadows of birds

quick healed. Nachsommer.

Ready to let go.

You stare into the woods

like a painter

sketching a nude model.

The unknowable visible.

How big the world is.

Nachsommer. Arguments

you're still having

with your lover continue

with God. Nachsommer

a buzzing in your ears.

Despite the breeze

flags hang limp,
you wonder about things
like these but not long,
Nachsommer, no wonder,
no worrying
at last the whole thing
takes care of itself,
the little hill
is just a commentary
made long ago, long
conversation. Lazy you,
to speak so little
among so many words.

4 October 2009

ANCIENT HISTORY: a corrective

the Philistines were Irish they worshipped
the sea and anything found in the sea a fish
a seal a woman half-woman half-seal Dagon
the sea was a man with his daughters
who taught them to touch. Take. Rise up and go
and be gone. Philistines were pilgrim no need
for only one god a while they lingered in Palestine
gave the land the trouble of their name and there
they consorted with Jews and slept with Jews
Jews wanted to be a settled people had traveled
through every desert to find a land to settle in
that would be just the land their land delighted
in the goat and the long-flourishing olive tree
wanted the dirt of the ground their ground
the fertile the mother the owned. Philistines
hated all that, a hand on the plow was a hand
in disgrace, they wanted ever to keep moving,
taking hold of new things and letting them go
and sleeping with new people Dalila lady of play
came to bed with Shimshun son of the Sun
and from such dalliance the Jews caught the terrible
nomad sex disease of Irish who couldn't keep still
ate Egypt and Europe both Gauls isles at the end of the world
while the poor Jews tried to just stay. But she had cut
his amber hair, all the wheat of their earth was cut down,

so the Jews too were off on the march forever,
the same disease, the Philistines paid Shimshun
to tear down their useless temple and were gone
leaving the Jews with nothing but the world.

4 October 2009

MOURNING DOVE

but why?

Why not nuthatch

he comes too

walking upside down

the way they do?

We do?

But dove.

In grey with blush of mauve

or pink

deciding or decisively

a dove.

But why?

Their sounds sound plaintive

hence mournful. They sound

what all doves mean:

I'm in love with you

I'm in love with you

and can't get enough of you

I love your clothes your grammar

your innocent pronunciation your hair

I love what I can't even imagine

because I'm just a dumb bird

with a coo in its beak

thinking about you.

Projection.

Why should the shape of a person
in the middle distance
mind the mind for days and days

like an earnest nanny none too bright
shielding the child mind from
anything but itself?

Sunlight and shape.

shape and bird. But why?
They fly around all day long
crying why why? and who who?
some fly at night
why this? why me?
why did you
happen to me you
wonderful catastrophe?
I mourn the beauty I behold
I mourn the body in my arms
by why?

A body is nothing but a question,
a bird nothing but a god-
messenger bothering your lawn
nothing but now and you
what are you going to do?

4 October 2009

WOODPECKER

pick on wood.

Picus. Mary Butts. Redhead.

Hers. Hard. Hide

under some soft cloud

pecking at my house. Heart. Heard

pecking. Bothering

everything I know,

all I know is a house, all I know is wood.

It comes to pierce

the knowing and pluck out

the thing known. Devour.

They laugh as they fly. Me too,

a giggle in the sky. Acres

of miracle aloft. Overhead

hard to the house wall, hammer.

Again. A girl out for kicks,

a soft samaritaine. Mull me,

ponder. A head like tinder

comes to mind,

an idea

explodes off the branch perch

and is gone.

I leave no traces

on the air

when I have flown,

no trace of what I've known,

only the wood I knew

the quick interrogations of the beak—

nameless invertebrates ingested

headline of my loud act.

And you

do that in me too,

the spineless

part of me, my unbone

you ravage with your singular noise

boils up out of memory and,

just and.

5 October 2009

UNRECOGNIZED

The opening tide

the land bird

—its colors tell—

borne

caught in warm updrafts

knows over the island.

I mean the river.

I want to inhabit

the opposite of space

he thinks.

Tatterdemalion

comes to mind,

is he a girl

to sprout such vocabulary?

Tell me about the girl—

is she the one shaped like a shadow

of a cloud cast on a cloud

when you fly above them

on your way to that other coast

and will you ever come back?—

that kind of girl.

Get back

to the bird,

some colors in trouble

up in the early but assertive sun—

we have survived another night,

some fabulous recency

kisses me now,

tongueless, breath on my brow.

Wake. Inside every

interpretation every treatise even

there is a hidden word,

the true scripture,

pronounce it and go free.

Jakobson disclosed to us

not the meanings of the words

but what we mean by saying them—

what (he might have played it so)

spirit expends to speak its flesh.

Leftover oatmeal in the pot

divine protein still

makes the child know,

the little porringer I had

with pink flowers, a zinc socket

it rested in they could

fill with hot water
to keep my porridge warm,

the passion
of a little animal though,
a street in the next arrondissement though,
where an unfamiliar black bird
resting a moment on a tree stump
is enough to take my breath away.

What breath.

Things

don't have lungs. Things do have tongues
to tell the sky a thing or two,
the sea, for instance, is all tongue
and swallowing.

The bird confused me,
I thought it was a shadow but it flew,
it was the size of some familiar bird but wasn't.

The things we talk about,
the glamorous mistakes. Hear me,
I really am what you mean,
I mean I really am the one you mean
as long as you mean anything
and the land keeps talking
and the weather answers.

The land.

You stand—money
is a mercy isn't it—
on a piece of it you own,
big enough to get us into trouble,
their wind in your trees.

6 October 2009

WHIN

or the bother
of it, that things grow, pluck
mean at the sleeve of
who goes.

Mountain. Muckish.

Along the barren foothill the growth
goes up. The exiles
stood here bidding farewell
to these spiny bushes their home.
But the sea for all its salts
does not dissolve memory
and the life-cells of the traveler
carries the memorials of whin.
And when I found it
two hundred years later, what
was I to make of this pain
this little pain evangelized my skin?

6 October 2009

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And if there were one
who would it be?
I'm trying to say *jackal*
or long-eared fox, or calm
water buffaloes in the Camargue
though quick to rage

I'm trying
to say animals
with you in them
like a sky round a house
or a house round a man
speaking to you.
Or trying to.

None of this is easy, you know—
you are far away
and I have fallen into my space
with a dull sound
like “a hardboiled egg cracked on zinc”
as the French poet says.

We know our metals at least,
bismuth for the belly
gold salt for the joints

and silver puts the cock to sleep
and no one wakes.

An egg cracked on the sky
more likely
with luminous consequences.

Alba, the white
comes over the hill.

I like to listen to people like that,
sorrow-treaders, traders
in hemp leaf and olive.
toss a sheep in for good measure
Too Old To Eat
and let him (ram)
grunt along beside you
year after year with best wool
Peace, it's wonderful.
That's what I call good weather
and that's what you call the sky.

6 October 2009