

11-2013

**novJ2013**

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "novJ2013" (2013). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 73.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/73](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/73)

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](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

## REDACTION

Change the record  
the music  
is telling too many lies

Think of all  
that has been left out  
the name of his mother  
the town in the desert  
the well-water still on his lips

The way the wind  
whistles too many names  
of people we'll never know

*listening is the deepest grief*  
some keener love

Go back to the beginning  
or just before it  
the little snow  
had not yet fallen

But you didn't remember,  
the wind is whining

Every orifice  
is speaking

Be careful  
there is no gender here  
cloudless sky  
bare cold light

the touch of metal

Sex without gender

it meant, the metal

the matter the metal.

24 November 2013

= = = = =

The chair sits me a little low.

This is a famous

sentence about the world,

something everybody understands

how easy it is to sit and listen

even easier to speak.

No wonder there is such silence—

nobody likes easy things to do.

24 November 2013

## WILL

A man with a yew  
tree near his morning window  
and some wind afoot  
has no need of music.

Women, though,  
seem to know better,  
ignore what just happens to happen—

they want the iron  
wedge of will  
to strike the hidden  
gong in the heart of things.

24 November 2013

= = = = =

*(in lieu of a graduate school recommendation)*

It's the will that matters.

Some

of the most untalented people

I ever met turned out to be

able to will themselves

into artistry and power and grace.

Don't ask me for names.

Look close at their works and you'll know what I mean.

And don't give me boxes

to check the percentiles of their qualities.

No evaluation. All

you need to know

how the will is, how strong, edgy,

hot. The will

will win. Be there

when it hits.

24 November 2013

## ART HISTORY

Amy was hung up on the frescoes at Dura-Europus  
I gathered the earliest representational painting  
to adorn the walls of a synagogue thereby evidently  
violating technically the second commandment  
if I'm counting correctly but lord how she loved  
those lions and flowers and whatever else they had,  
I never saw it in pigment and truth, only pictures  
that looked like other pictures, you had to see it  
in the context of culture and time she explained  
and she lost me in the dream that art makes me dream  
that's the real history of art, those blocks of stone  
floating in the Netherlandish air that Michael  
Maier made me see in his emblems, the naked virgin  
Botticelli posed before the judges, the pale corner  
of Matisse's piano lesson (Pleyel inside out, remember),  
the face of almighty Christ all that left of what Andrei  
Rubilev painted, have I left anything out? the stuffed  
animals in South Kensington, the view across the river



to Lambeth, where the sheep used to be landed,  
and Blake lived, drew women and sheep and angels,  
angels just like those daring sinful Jews had painted,  
the shapes were different but the flames are the same.

24 November 2013

= = = = =

Do you have any medicines left  
and if so why and what kind and how many?  
The Roman governor has a headache now  
never mind his poor wife. When his  
head hurts, we hurt too. Take poppyseed,  
macerate in unresined wine, imbibe  
a dram or two. Sometimes it helps to sleep.  
The people in charge are always like him,  
his wife always suffers, and we, the citizens,  
are married to him too, we belong to the Over—  
loyal and complaining and enduring his pain.

24 November 2013

= = = = =

Let me be a choirboy again I never was  
and sing the words they taught me to believe  
but I only believed the music and the candlelight,  
the organ wofing and the rain rattling down—

the words were doors that let the light in  
and I believed in doors, a hundred thousand doors  
and no walls to work them in, no *through*  
in their silent being. I was an alto  
among the boy sopranos, ashamed, an outcast  
already, mute troubadour, an island with no sea.

25 November 2013

= = = = =

Once you build a house  
everything else comes from that.  
A small white house in the woods,  
shallow woods, winter trees,  
sunshine winter bright, smile  
of an insurance man, wood,  
metal, plastic, stone,  
the whole world full of work  
and transport and misery  
so I can have a roof over my head.

So I will grow my fur out again  
and go deeper into deeper woods,  
no shield or shelter,  
just sit beneath any given tree,  
a quiet sapling's strong enough for me.

25 November 2013

## **THIS KNOWS YOU**

and it should.

There are papers  
littering the lawn,  
flags of a country  
where I was born—  
*sylva*, the material  
world, cornfields  
from sea to sea.

I was a mountain  
man by the sea,  
can't swim, can't  
climb, the time  
is all I can negotiate  
and I have no time.  
End of complaint.

Go out and plant  
people like me  
in the meager forest,  
listen to us when  
we come back  
gibbering, palsied  
with imagination,  
pallor of the dream.  
We will be your bears  
wolves peacocks  
wolverines your toads  
too close for comfort,  
language sputum  
messing up your feet.  
Reasoning this way  
I talked myself out of a job  
and into eternity.  
Only the waitresses  
in country diners will  
listen to me now—

and these I will make  
into goddesses of the  
proximate before I sleep.

25 November 2013

## THE ANTITAINER

What mineral wealth in lostness  
bring a cracked geode to the eerie Mass  
citizens quietly discussing their affairs  
—discussion leads to diseases and foul weather—  
the elements are kept in balance by our peace  
in pace nostra curabitur mundus  
he said and vanished in the gaunt grey mountains  
all around Innsbruck snowy peaks  
hidden cameras see us deep inside the rock  
we think are emeralds and cobalt and gold  
this diamond ring I brought from a low cloud  
for thee alone! words on old radios keeping warm  
the wax I model with is softer than your arm  
that ringing noise can't be the telephone ice  
melting maybe did you say Sonny Rollins  
or was it on the further side of Portugal  
where the black sand sticks to white thighs?  
I am the Antitainer, I subtract all your fun



and compact it in my own nucleus to peace  
peace! until it rests secure a sapphire on your palm  
among all these soft crystals music only O  
Venus love made the world stiff enough to stand.

26 November 2013

= = = = =

The sovereign peace  
lingers an hour  
in the morning snow

the crystal  
of time, the crystal  
is the scope of mind  
renewed, shapely,  
                            thought  
chilled from the vague  
rumors called philosophy—

this  
    is definition,  
hot heart, cold mind, true hand.

26 November 2013

## THE DAY SKY

Going up  
and down the stairs  
is stars enough  
for this astrology

the shift of knee the lift  
in thigh  
to dance against  
gravity or with

each little step  
a stile  
up over into a pasture  
you remember,

a cow ago

a field of dandelions

yellow phase

neutron stars

the size of anything

is just its dream

our fantasy

everything fits right here

God's hand on the banister.

26 November 2013

## WINTER SCENE

Snow on shed roofs  
grass; asphalt  
clear.

Difference  
in the properties.

No wonder  
children grow up dumb  
taught not to wonder.  
Watch out for grown  
men playing flutes.  
Watch out for kings.

Try to know  
the nature of each thing  
to forget yourself  
into pure being  
if anything is.

26 November 2013