

12-2012

decB2012

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "decB2012" (2012). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 290.
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AN EVENING IN NORTH GERMANY

Symmetry at such small cost
just ask the Turkish driver
what's the best place in Hamburg
yellow flowers in such cold
hard to credit travertine
could show intimate detail
keep weather in your pocket

are you sure it's not plastic?
evidence of artful fix
pearls around her throat painted
damar from the Carib coast
we all hid what we needed
but what about you and me
I lost that blue long ago

now I have to bother girls
to lend me some of their hue
arrogant after-carriage
it squalls the trombone you heard
we play house until Messiah
leads us to the rock garden
where roses know how to talk

simple enough. so clear each
part of it, the whole obscure
drove me to another speech
where men were fighting with knives
but why I never figured
their language made them do it
the dog couldn't even bark

we're at the mercy of talk
all we know is dangerous
friends tend to keep you waiting
slowly drifting to the north
to seize my primal color
asleep in the dark courtroom
whose judge drones lucidly on.

4 December 2012

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But were they too waiting

and we it was who came

late to the table

all out of breath

apologizing in gasped clichés

while we tried to find the right

place to sit or stand?

That it's not only

we who are always expectant,

always pregnant

with some alarming consolation,

shadow on the windowpane

voice in the doorway

we have always known?

I ask more questions

than the dog

asleep by your footstool

in that old painting,

Greuze is it,

in the Leipzig museum.

Listen,

you can hear the summary
judgment of its breathing
dim in the hearthlight
even a dog can dream

and you were sleeping too,

5 December 2012

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It takes three to play
four to put
the fish in the net
five to cook our food
so nobody's hurt
and seven can eat

But only one
to sit and think
what all this means.

5 December 2012

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It feels like the preface to something
car rolling into empty parking lot
the sun baptized in this quick little stream

under a friend's new house
who is my friend?
describe Future Art right now

know more than you're supposed to
in school we had to play a game
boxball in the cellar pin k spaldeen

girls and boys together.
What is a girl?
Why are there two kinds of us?

5 December 2012

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Twilight
of the master race—
the *Herrenrasse*
is actually made up of *Frauen*.

5.XII.12

TAUTOCHRONE

close to the end of the edge —
 no more séances
spirit-dabblers
why have you forgotten the dead?

We made so many
in this lifetime, this cruel we
of the birch tree meadow,
forest of beech trees,
 we made so many dead,
don't we even want to talk to them,
to learn what it is
 that we have taught them,
where is our Ouija board now,
the linked clammy fingers in the darkened room,
the voice from nowhere?

 A hundred years ago
the dead were rarer, more precious maybe,
worth seeking out,
 risking sanity and reputation
to have converse with them,
 the curious prose style of the dead,

the solemn vagueness of the not quite gone.

Of course they're confused,

 how can they know
much more than we do?

 But didn't we, even so,
give them a chance to talk
to tell us what they knew?

Tell us at least
about the great moment,

 the 'distinguished thing,' the extinguishing,
the door opening and closing,
 the last step.

Do they even know that, or are they caught as we are
mornings, waking from hectic dreams
that keep us from seeing the road outside,
crows in the bare tree.

 And they may have
birds there too.

6 December 2012

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Who are the gods of the other trees,
pine birch beech ash maple?

If I speak for myself I'm big ego.
If I speak for us all I'm presumptuous.
Therefore to speak an agent-free language,
where thoughts think themselves
and things happen and get noticed
and language lets it all

I'm assuming everything has its god.
Or nothing has.

Which would you rather live in?
Poor Hitchens got it wrong —
it's not atheism that will save us from religion
atheism is the last stand of monotheism.
It's paganism that will save us,
the many gods will free us from the one.

6 December 2012

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Grip it upside down
and let it dry out.
Then fill it with new ink
and write the truth for once.

6.XII.12

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They all look alike
they are people
they buy things from one another
slowly they decide what words mean
slowly they speak.

It goes on every day.
Other animals are puzzled
but have too much to deal with of their own.
The people walk around
as if they own the place
and soon they do, as soon
as they make the word 'own'
and spread it all around them.

6 December 2012

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Rotor, rounding, saying what?
 Die and born again,
 no passive voice of die,
 no active voice of being born,
 what we do
 by ourselves and what is done for us, to us,
 the language tells us,
 or tricks us
 into believing
 that time is an agent
 we say time passes,
 but like Giordano
 sneering at the zodiac I ask
 aren't we the agents of time,
 don't we pass it,
 pass it through our skin and hair and eyes,
 pass through its
 mild astringency,
 its cling we call remembering?

The funeral cave at Alopetrypa — why
 do we think they honored the dead bodies?
 What did they learn
 that love had not taught them?

To cling to the matter of what I was

I give you this bone

I am silenced by a new person.

How do you spell me.

Why is the spruce tree conical

the pine tree irregular, a free verse of branches?

Why is a pyramid?

All beliefs come back distorted

like passages in books we remember wrongly,

competition of the towns,

bones

of beasts and men sprawled on the rock face —

no women's bodies were ever put there,

they are hidden in secret places,

O love, the compassion of your glance.

All the things I let myself forget

life after life —

I need protection when I go out

a dark blue cloak,

a strange kind of light

that turns my shadow red —

near the end now

when I fumble with the fetters,

want, not want,

I know only the affinity.

Browne reminds us

it is not that the magnet draws iron
but that metal and lodestone attract each other
that taking notice of what is there
is also a reciprocal.

If I leave now
I leave a great thought
in the lurch —
 so stay, love,
until I can tell you this,
whatever it is,
something of you and something of me,
a resemblance or recollection,
shadow of a passing bird.
 It is true.
And you have heard it before.

7 December 2012

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As if according to his desires
light began to wake in the meadow —
though it was hardly that anymore, was it,
with all the saplings grown up and what looked
like juniper grown up and shadows
still intriguing everywhere. But light
it surely was and he was seeing.
So the dream was over finally, like a door
slammed and he could still hear the echo
but no clue as to what had been going on
with him for him in him in that lost room inside.
A forgotten dream is the only absolute.

8 December 2012

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The YouTube you just showed me told me
what I never knew I knew.

I grew up on Slim Gaillard
and never knew his name. The beat
was criminal, the quack
of the guitar inveigling, his words
taught me to make my own

I had first to learn all the others,
the so-called real words, ones
that adults knew. But not you.

The you I meant would only make
sense of the loony noises I would make,
moon talk and jive from Jupiter
planet of fat men in love.

8 December 2012

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Glossy new asphalt
in drizzle.

 Shimmer
in wet trees.

Wherever I look
seems a quiet glory
a house of air
to live in. The sheen
of everything!

8.XII.12

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The causes of waking
the batter's ready to be poured
beaten again just before
and the doorbell ringing —
in those days they had doors —
and we go back to the movies
sly Christians sneaking in
to watch the appalling lucency
of twelve foot high seductive faces
whispering to your hypothalamus
and the sun was still shining when we came out
and every sight seems bathed in sin
and the world is beautiful again.
The bottle of blue perfume in the drugstore window,
the girl with the useless umbrella waiting for the bus.
Everything makes us shy with pleasure.
A dog trots by and that is almost pleasant too.
But dogs belong to the legal party, agents
of the Pope and the police, dogs know
what you're thinking. And guilt comes down like evening.

8 December 2012

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The only thing that really belongs
to us is the blank page —
everything else could be anyone else's.

8.XII.12

end of notebook 351