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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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## **DAYS OF THE PRACTICE**

**Woke stiff as Ötzli  
in his leather body  
babe-bent beneath the ice,  
be fetal, be morning, be ready  
for the pain to be born  
the pain of being new  
again, of being you.**

**This is the practice.  
Every waking an abortion too,  
something could have been but didn't  
or you didn't let it,  
world full of blame**

**you could sleep all the time  
in starfish splendor  
and let the dream milk out  
of your sleeping self,  
squeeze out the beautiful phantoms  
who march on the runways of the world  
glamorous and sleek while you  
lie there snoring, faint smell of onions,  
reeking of cigarettes you never smoked.**

**That is the practice,  
getting across the border  
with your mouth full of language,  
while the train from Montreal  
stalls in an endless field of snow,  
this is the practice  
getting across the border  
with your dreams intact,  
smeared all over your body  
to hide them from the law.  
One human body  
can host a million dreams.**

**Unaccountably the music slows.  
This too is the practice  
pain in the bone behind the left ear  
all the symptoms of reality  
the sky greying over but no rain.  
The day of rain: good for girls and turtles,  
to hear the word that seeps  
up from the soil. So many  
of us are sleeping there beneath the ground—  
how long since I've held a heart in my hands  
how long since I sat in the opera house built by Garnier  
and watched the dancers far away below me  
and I was each one  
each leap each glide knew itself in my body**

as I fumbled through the bodies of the masked ballet.

The practice. Make

a sound

softly but big enough

so it fills the concert hall,

globes itself around all the listeners,

every one,

how long has it been

since I was everyone?

Here the Roman legions march in

in any opera,

coarse men speaking reasonable words

and every soldier is afraid of women,

afraid of that single word that women know,

the word it kills a man to hear.

And aren't you?

Something has happened to the sky

the sky is part of us too, this decision,

decision is part of the practice,

falling in love

or refusing to, standing your ground,

being alone. Being alone

under the apple tree,

yes, *that* music.

**You have only one mouth  
to sing with, your tragic song,  
mountain goat slain on the rocks, the wolves  
snickering in the culvert,  
the dream  
is always a woman,  
don't you know  
even the simplest thing?**

**9 January 2013**

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**I know the answers  
to so many questions  
but you don't ask them**

**and why should you  
you know already  
or else don't want to know**

**and yet I know  
that somewhere poised  
almost at your lips**

**is a question—you hardly  
feel it yet but you feel it  
that if asked and answered**

**would set us both free.**

**9 January 2013**

## **CANZONE: *Donna mi priegha* 2013**

**It's easier to do**

**than tell**

**about but**

**because a lady asks me**

**I will tell**

**what little I have learned**

**about how not to fall in love.**

**Avert your eyes**

**first of all, for the love-fall**

**tumbles through the eyes,**

**the pain of it**

**comes from looking,**

**and looking is so hungry.**

**the lover looks so hard he can't see,**

**his mind lost in sheer focus—**

**so turn**

**your eyes**

**modestly from her eyes, from his eyes,**

**so when she's not present**

**you have nothing to remember,**

**and never imagine,**

**never think about her, him,**

**never in the watches of the night**

**fantasize on the shape or feel of her, or take**

that *morose delectation* the priests  
warn us from,  
imagining this and that  
and doing this and that.

This and that  
will slay you every time.

Remember you can be yourself all by yourself  
and be free,

don't need anyone else to be.

Do not enter the terrible prison house  
called being in love,

walls you build  
with images and recollections,  
you block the daylight out  
from every window

since all you see is her face,  
his face, the special one.

The one it hurts to know.

So turn.

Turn inward and away.

And every  
night before you go to bed  
let yourself  
imagine just this one thing:

that the one  
you are so caught up with wanting, not wanting,





## **INSOMNIA**

**You can't sleep  
because they aren't  
ready for you  
on the other side.**

**9 January 2013**

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**A gleam with no glasses  
goes up the road  
listen to her shine  
off what must be a car  
clean car in sunlight  
trailing a footnote of pure light  
to its uphill tract—  
that's better, I can see now  
but can't see them anymore,  
all time is lost into now  
and the car is gone.**

**10 January 2013**



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**Sleigh bells in the sky  
or is it sly Stravinsky  
clanking irony**

**when I just want  
rhe sweetness of it  
after all  
coming close to the only one?**

**10 January 2013**

=====

**What in your language  
is the closest word for God?**

**Thing that can't be measured  
that is always there?**

**I know a better word  
a crow flies over no one's house.**

**10 January 2013**

=====

**Have I begun to watch  
the wind walk in the doorway**

**what a rich and thingly world it is  
but how much passes me by—**

**o the meanings of things, of each thing  
by itself and the dance of them all together**

**how shapely the spruce keeps itself  
how yew grows every which way**

**and the sky since I last looked up  
has turned out to be perfectly blue.**

**10 January 2013**

=====

**Our pale eyes not apt  
for such entanglements  
as hunting on the grasslands  
of a cloudless planet  
lonely as a clarinet  
we northern lastlings,  
glum survivors  
of a Viking time,  
my body is only good for feeling.**

**And we know the easiest thing to feel is pain.**

**10 January 2013**



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**I hear voices in my house**

**who can they be**

**woman voices in the upstairs**

**who is there**

**woman voices not complaining**

**not explaining**

**make me glad that I have heard.**

**10 January 2013**

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**Who knows how much the word will weigh today  
when statesmen stammer and Damascus burns?  
Does it even matter what they say? Doesn't fire  
start itself and feed on us forever till we're all used up,  
word and oxygen and paper testaments, all  
kindling for a chemistry we don't begin to understand?**

**11 January 2013**

=====

***Gott allein genügt* it said  
on the radio last night  
no gender marker no context  
*God alone suffices* the schoolboy  
in me immediately said out loud  
and left me marveling  
at the compact enoughness  
of the phrase, the solid  
certainty impossible to  
misunderstand. Or understand.**

**11 January 2013**

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## **EPITAPH**

**I have been closer than old  
wilder than here,  
a tune I couldn't tell you  
and that too led me here.**

**11 January 2013**

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**And there it is again, the beginning  
like the first flakes of an evening snow  
catching lamp light, so we know  
we do not think alone.**

**11 January 2013**

## **WHAT I LEARNED THAT YEAR IN L.A.**

**So much coming. So little silence  
for me to milk. Cow  
size of the night sky over the basin  
she has grazed on human daydreams  
all day long in every language  
and fattens on the sleepers in the valley  
now yield to me. Because the words  
we write are from silent people's dreams.**

**11 January 2013**

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Sometimes you hear the voice  
you don't want to know who it is  
it is everyone

and it is especially  
your mther's voice  
speaking from the ground  
and from the clouds at once  
for she is everywhere  
this voice you sharpened your ears  
to listen for but half the time  
forgot to hear,

and what you do  
hear so often forget to write down.  
And even then you botch, and call it  
music that you're doing with  
what she was trying to make you hear.  
Later you call it meaning, written  
through your passions one by one  
and each blurs a little more the few  
words that finally came through.  
Try harder. Lie there and do nothing,  
*naught* they used to say, name  
of that digit that makes all the other  
numbers possible. And you  
are a complex number too, you need

**other people to solve you, and you try  
to do that for them too, and all that's fine,  
but what you hear when you let yourself hear,  
that isn't complex at all. It isn't anything  
but a voice saying, and what it means  
is no business of yours. Just write it down.**

**11 January 2013**

**End of Notebook 352**