

1-2013

janL2013

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "janL2013" (2013). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 371.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/371

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.

5.

Answer obvious the question less so
day of rain and the five quarters of the sky
speak Irish to me swiftly honeychild
because the land of Goshen is not far now
on days like this you even get to hear
the horses neigh and the neighbor's radio
sings Irish too there is your old dream
of bodies mking sense of one another
only ever is a dream a plausible mistake
human grammar was not made for this
hawks nest on banks you hear them scream.

6.

Learning to write with this wet stick
and every rock has a different heft
and every aim a different throw
learn witchcraft from the youngest nun
lift your will and thread it through the needle
and everything you stitch will stay together
all the other pages are gone from the book
so rest your hand on mine and read me
there's still time for prophecy while we live
every morning a Gethsemani we take
this cup of what we've got coming to us.

7.

Tear each note in half and hope
loop the first overtone of each half
on a laundry line from ear to ear
your brain is someone else's backyard
you can hear them speaking French down there
till the note grows ever smaller, slower,
coming through the all-too-meager silences
I wanted to sing this just to say something
anything to break the news of my disappearance
before you read in the newspapers about
some man lost in the jungle and think it's me.

8.

But they were more interested in the weather
their bodies drifting vaguely after picnics
maybe bonfire on the shingle beach a roar
of orange flame at midnight and no more
be careful of the minimal it works on your fears
repetition causes old-age dementia so knit not
neither tic-tac-toe and wear your warmest coat
every night is winter my opera's getting cold
worship women but never let them know it
I was wiser when I was young and the flag
had redder stripes and all the stars had eyes.

9.

Well you could get there horseback
but not in time to cancel the execution
of the Emperor Maximilian a grief
you've carried all these years horse
or no horse do you wonder I'm upset
wouldn't you be if the Archon
of the local universe had it in for you
and all your weather smelled like
radishes forgotten at the back of the fridge
or you could walk like an Abrahamic hero
all the way there over crumbling texts.

10.

I keep forgetting you're a girl my little son
you get through the trees as fast as mist
breathed up from the wet ground to meet
the morning light the way the bottle breaks
and all that wine maketh red the maple
in the season when children go to prison
but you are free you dress in gnostic hymns
you worship the wrong father that's me
but they forgive you still believe in them
you play handball with their portfolios
and no one knows the formula but me

29 January 2013

11.

*Kunst kommt von können, nicht von wollen, sonst müsste es
ja Wunst heißen . — Karl Valentin*

But I could still hear her far as I ran
it was like trying to outrun my own legs
shadows under the trees a smell of car
that blend of all things hot from going
did you ever pray for it at midnight
the clarity of being at the end of wanting
“art comes from being able to—if it came
from will we’d call it wilt” and able was I
once, you hear the music now and understand
there is more to now than being here aloud
the coiled rope the sleeping animal the clock.

29 January 2013

AFTER

**There are miracles among the dead
some of them are too busy to remember
but some see the shadows of their former lives
the way we see mist rising mornings
from an autumn lake, the one behind our house,
a pond with dam and reeds and beavers
all that frozen now and quiet. But the dead
are never sleeping—maybe that's the first
thing they notice, the unrelenting consciousness
of whatever they brought with them
that turns into whatever they find. A small hotel
maybe halfway up a mountain, where France
leans onto Switzerland, geese and many goats,
we watch them carry candles in the windows
and all we can do for anybody is go to sleep.**

29 January 2013

=====

**Little prisoners in a yellow bus—
their day belongs to someone else
(The Man, the State, the potentate)
and that's the first thing they're taught
when the bus draws up to the door.
Nothing is your own except your sleep.**

30 January 2013

=====

**You hear the music it is far
meager longing of a misty day
most of it is close most of it is here
already where the eyes are
vigilant all day, blue
from sky watch, brown from earthsight.
Look in their eyes and know.
What does this one know?
Kor-ten steel rusts so far and then
no further—rust is color, rust
is skin, rust is the region of the weather.
And what do those eyes know?
A region is where something reigns
or rules, where we live
the atmosphere has teeth. And look
down here, that broken branch,
how small a thing to have such marrow!**

30 January 2013

=====

The fog

**(a suspension of ice particles or water drops in the air
diminishing visibility to less than one kilometer)**

is beautiful.

Inside me

it is bleak

**(an old word that meant either black — sounds like it still —or white— as we
mostly use it now — i.e., void of color)**

in me, a dull

resentment

of going to work

but the bleak

of this soft fog makes

the bleak in me

shimmer and show

good signs. I may

come back to life,

disperse myself in this.

30 January 2013

=====

D.956

**The sadness of Schubert
sings beneath the bright
like the sodden earth
below the sparkling stream.**

**Both are given. And we live
with what is taken away.**

30 January 2013

MYSTERIUM

Things waiting for their envelopes (birds)
to carry them past the zenith sideways
into the universe next door where you
woke up last night and called me
just once my name called in the dark
and maybe I heard and maybe I dreamed
and maybe I'm next door now like any
random animal outside the house
stirring o god I know they're there
I feel them muscles of the night itself
moving ever closer to my door
I try to persuade myself they're just
deer or catamounts or wolves or
anything simple and motivated
by ordinary appetites but my heart
knows better it knows a different
kind of fear the kind that children
associate with what they have the sense
to call mean people mean man mean lady
and they know that in the distance
from their own innocent animalness
that the meanness occupies the whole
mystery of evil arises and comes close.
Can the birds save me? Can they carry

**any relevant part of me out there
beyond the chancy constellations
into the well I wish I knew what's
out there in the eternal roar of stuff
fountaining out of nothingness
at no one's bidding. Maybe yours.**

30 January 2013

=====

**I dreamt a man who wasn't there
and woke feeling that his name was Brown
ancestor figure Victorian savvy master
of the size of things, with children
many, his influence profound on science
art and evidence, dark-whiskered
man of the Midlands not a painter not a poet
not a scientist or priest, just a man
who wasn't there when I woke up,
not even in the history books of casual aesthetes.**

31 January 2013

KARAOKE

**Students pretending to care
about what they are pretending
to learn when all the while
their beautiful minds are alive
in other places with other things.
Only distraction shows
the real track. Follow it out
of all this music and be free.**

31 January 2013

=====

**Things are not always together.
Wear white shoes. And things
you never knew knew you know you
because now, our time together, now
is a dry mouth full of seed-cake
aunt-sliced soon to be coffee-sluced
or tea or any cognate relation, the day
is made of many yous and spirit messengers
from the unseen world guide vagrant
thoughts here and there through
all your minds, thoughts nimble as
pickpockets plucking something out of
nothing and finding meaning in it
alas, a smile in someone's teeth or a seed
hunted loose by the tonguetip,
your own food does this to you!
The miracles of happenstance—what
the priestly caste sums up as 'heaven.'**

31 January 2013

=====

**Open to anything
nothing on the mind**

**he needed his breakfast
and the world came in**

**What kind of cave
was his anyhow**

**more light than shadow
more skin than rock?**

**A performance of Hamlet
in another language**

**watched in his dream
and all he understands**

as usual is their eyes.

31 January 2013

=====

**The last day of January
is the first of March
bright cold and the wind
wild sudden in the trees
I heard it before I understood
what was happening.
A Schubert sonata, Number 18
played by Pauline Ossetia
in Leningrad though all
our names are different now.**

31 January 2013

=====

**Babulous famous but paparazzi know
more about you than there is to know
and surely more than you do. Alas,
we are all celebrities. We all walk in light,
on red carpets of envy, cherishing
our polished aluminum images,
we all rule Dreamland with an iron rod,
we all dream in infinite harems. *Haram*,
forbidden is what it means. No one
can get in there but you. We dream alone.**

31 January 2013

=====

**Only once in Pittsburgh and not long
but I had friend from there and saw the movie
but never learned to dance in a normal way
but knew enough to jump around the room.
What kind of sonnet is this anyhow? Children
are taught to count using my poor fingers,
curveballs wear out my poor rotator cuff,
time is chopping my river into weeks,
o the shriek of wounded water, the sob
of atmosphere when we breathe out
vicious words—we owe it to the air
to tell the story and make it the truth.
Or if not the whole truth then some
gracious lie that makes somebody happy.**

31 January 2013