

2-2008

## febB2008

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, "febB2008" (2008). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 615.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/615](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/615)

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).

= = = = =

What kind would it be or tell  
a hill from a habit  
you wear to baffle my address?

It can go on, the truth  
takes pity on you, the field  
feels you walk across it

bearing the weight of your character  
sealed on pale impatience so that no  
awareness ever bothers the grove

but anguishes you, because a guess  
comes to stay too long in a heart  
a soft way of doing things is lost in rain.

6 February 2008

## DEVON

Only at midnight do I realize  
I could squeeze my eyes shut  
and see the countryside my body came from  
in all those other islands, moorland, grassland, hill.  
The far places I carry in my skin.

6 February 2008

= = = = =

If I waited for it would it be a train?  
If it came, would there be thin ice  
sheathing every twig and gleaming  
even with no sun? If the sun  
rose at last would resemblances  
end?

That is what one thinks about  
staring out the window while knowing  
uneasily but certainly things going on  
need one's consciousness in the kitchen.

7 February 2008

## LAUBEN

Can it even speak  
when so much rain  
has fallen through  
the strings of the lute

the hollow belly  
full of tears  
but whose?  
in the arcade

a man is standing  
between the arches  
symmetrical, yes,  
but no music.

7 February 2008

= = = = =

A person's name is hidden everywhere,  
the secret signature of what is mine—

I find it in a key, Paul Klee, the color  
yellow, a porch around an old pale house

its shutters half open on late winter rain,  
I am wherever I find myself least looking

and later waking up another day remember.  
Not things I like but things that know me,

the ones waiting there just for me  
a cup of music waiting to be heard

(green shutters half closed beyond wet pines).

8 February 2008

= = = = =

But let it listen to me again  
close enough to all it is fresh  
habiting in the blue telephone  
to wring a cloud out  
when your lap is so dry—

but he feared to say more.  
The river was waiting,  
the momentary eternity of suicide,  
what even any single little act also portended  
terrified him, the soul  
tattooed, a moment's whim  
turned to a permanency.  
No relenting once a thing is done.  
Everything is permanent and everything is loss

he thought. The lap can wait,  
the cup can shatter on its own.  
I will make nothing happen  
ever again, he thought.  
I just want to listen,  
isn't that the only thing that can have no effect,  
the ear a whirlpool in which all things are lost?

8 February 2008

= = = = =

Slower than before the miracle  
unwinds. Creaky weather,  
it could be almost spring  
like in English once, daffodils  
on Magdalene lawn in snow.  
It could be anything, it  
could almost even be now.

8 February 2008



= = = = =

*...will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit*

Give a thing a chance to cry out  
its mother's name before,

before what, before you taste it,  
kill it, drown it in the sensation

of suddenly becoming you  
and not itself anymore. Pause.

Only reverence breeds eternity.

8 February 2008

## ODE ON THE DEFEAT OF CHARLES XII

There were motions.

A top  
spinning in the night  
an overdose of alphabet

cured by one clear wish  
breathed along the lap—

the same one  
they used to claim  
nestled our destinies,  
lap of the gods—

the verbal object stands for no abuse  
any more than a cloud

over Poltava  
ruddled light deflected from the dead below  
when north was beaten and the south

had everything but wood.  
Kitchen matches,  
prosperity of infantry,  
the simple pleasures of the poor  
infect the ruling class

that cigarette, milord,  
in your clean fingers  
mostly  
we are addicts,  
choose.

Weatherspout  
the stream is full,  
there's almost color in the sky,  
chaste my report  
above the battleground  
of every night

we die by dream.  
Attack on Saturday:

the Russians will be sleeping  
the fountain's all night rush  
will veil your footsteps

broken images lost on the way to poetry.  
On the way to being, itself,

in Martin's

one of many

senses of his word

(I held in my hand, modest skinny writing,  
brownish as it happens

from age or my eyes

guessing

in the dim room, book in my hands

from him to her,

the flyleaf stained,

signed with no more effusion than his name,

because everything is dedication,

every book

and every battle

is for you,

we read in Nostradamus that the King of the North  
retreats, the Kings of the East all come in threes,

Genghis, Tamerlane, and who next?

and from the South what appalling monarchy of faith  
trundles towards so many Gettysburgs?

We read nothing of the kind,

those are fancies,

Sabbath morning paranoias,

conspiracies no one ever breathed, did you,

guesswork,

shriveled mouse skins in a pine wood

and all we do is gasp out Who? Who?

There is no us.

Despondency.

You wouldn't even give me your address.

But to be after the event,

a dolphin lured into the Grand Canal

and Rilke watching,

or Pound

at the same slim promontory  
under the big white church, our lady  
is salvation, is safety, save us from the sea

and the city,  
watch the long-muscled rowers,  
remember, remember,

Lord God above every  
blessed thing is just some squirrel stealing seeds  
and this dreary neck of the woods  
a suburb of heaven,

where we lower classes live: the Living.

We.

Who are left here when you're gone,  
your pale aristos sobbing in heaven,  
we don't know how to call you, text you,  
tell you,

every place is exile and every language foreign  
how are you still part of us in all your distance

o great King or Queen.

But we are not of you,  
you have no use  
now for us,

any us,

that squishy pronoun,  
exhale of a leaky tire,  
a failed balloon.

Ennobled by defeat you lurk in my mind  
with your mind on something else.  
Someone else, could be, with marble dust  
stuck to his lips.

How much do you have to hurt me  
before I let go?

O stubborn victim,  
the heart a hearth  
where all the scraps  
of blank or scribbled  
paper burn  
indifferently agonizing,

dear heart I love you for what you could have said.

9 February 2008

WENCH WHATEVER.

A spiel of sanity  
embedded in my carnival

—a voice from the interior, plummy,  
somewhat jungled

*etwa verdschungelt*

it *has to be* one woman after another,  
we don't come in ones  
she said, any more  
than you do, the spaces  
between one instance of me and the next  
or you

are just space—  
precious for its own self,  
exiguous, exigent, free.

Fall in love with that,  
the empty red heart-shaped box  
of no one's candy,

fall in love with absence  
that's where the honey flows  
squeezed by night  
out of the prison of the hive.

A girl's just wax, just like you  
and either of us, any of us, can be coaxed  
to look like anything you please.

Please choose—

lovers are the last morphologists—

if you pull of my mask  
you'll only see your own face again  
but this time it might be smiling.

10 February 2008

= = = = =

Make it go faster, daddy.  
Make the carapace sleek with rain  
and the wheels wobble a little  
with the eagerness of my hand pushing it.  
We are in a universe of little toy cars  
rushing across the table  
shoved by unseen hands forever.

10 February 2008

= = = = =

Some things spoil when you look at them  
some when you taste.  
Some sleep uneasy in the cupboard  
murmuring, even mumbling in the kitchen  
while you try to read  
along the crooked line that's called a book.

Some things spoil when you say them,  
some when you don't.  
A house is a dangerous place,  
like a mouth, or a moon  
over Italy that any minute might fall down  
and drown in that insolent lagoon.

10 February 2008



= = = = =

Think about the other one, the sink,  
the morning, on the windowsill  
and all that steel blue air: Manhattan.

Water in the basin tepid, kind  
and the city off your shoulder out there—  
all history comes to a point

here. Touch yourself there.

11 February 2008

= = = = =

Set my song to music, would you?  
Set my heart to common measure  
make them belt it out in chapels  
with their minds on something else  
the preacher's handsome jawbone  
honey hair of that girl sings loud  
right in front of you praise the Lord.

11 February 2008

= = = = =

When you're driving by day or by night  
and thinking of someone or not thinking,  
there in the triangle formed  
by your legs and the steering wheel  
between the thighs  
there is peace

a white thought  
quiets  
    everything down there

the car rolls  
    obedient  
so many obediences  
rule us our machines

obey the driver the wheel the road  
the intention to get somewhere the goal  
to carry somewhere to bring  
someone with you wherever you go

the machine makes this one and that one  
be together  
in the going      in the quiet triangle  
where it meditates for you  
as you go  
    no matter where your mind

the mind of the going holds you safe,  
the perfect meditation with no one in it,  
the perfect psychology with no psyche anywhere,

the meditation   no meditation  
the going   the mind  
no mind   the road   the road goes.

12 February 2008

## HISTORY

The lassitude the blue certainty  
sparrow law as flight but her  
gold gossamer anyhow  
stay close to us  
even where we are not sky.

Just blue.  
Just seizable raptures at a fingertip,  
a placid rocking on the table  
something plastic  
with the soft dull luster of its kind  
how can so soft a thing be brittle  
I touch you?

Everything hallows the head.  
See close, a bird on the wind and a wing on the bird,  
I change places with myself  
(I dance)  
we let the throat come open with no  
word (we sing)  
we waft a special incense  
to the nearby gods of earth  
(we breathe)  
and all the rest is politics.

Verstehen Sie?  
Bloom fountain, valley of rifts,  
skull mountain. Scanderbeg rouses  
the mountain again.

History  
is blue with pure you.  
Like bruised meat. History is meat.  
History is never what happened  
or what never happened,  
what's left of what you hear.

12 February 2008