

1-2006

## janB2006

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, "janB2006" (2006). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 723.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/723](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/723)

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).

## THE MIRACLE

But where the marble lay  
a strict transaction: this  
must be a man, and this his arm,  
and that a woman  
looking at him hard,  
afraid of it stretched towards her  
and nothing but desert all around.

First he tried it out in snow  
heap-modeling quick in the mild  
morning till he got  
the sense of it in his hands  
how the shadows of the thing would fall

so then he knew. Went to the stone,  
bringing his knavish apprentices,  
their little friends, a cow  
to give them milk and keep them company,  
some hay for the cow.

From town

every week a caravan supplied  
news, whetstones (forgotten at the start),  
water, wine, hay for the cow.

Fast they worked and in one moon  
or a little more the Man stood,  
the Arm stretched, the Woman  
shrank away. But then the miracle:  
from her reluctancy a fire  
leapt out of her belly  
and entered him. His arm fell  
to his side, his stone eyes closed.

Ah, sisters, stone can move,  
stone knows how to *do*.  
It is we who ail and aimless and amble.  
She pushes him aside, he falls,  
she strides. Desert no more.  
It is green where she goes.

5 January 2006

## EPIPHANY

Showing. Showing forth. Showing in.

Showing how. Showing you. Showing me.

Show me: show me showing you.

Show me showing you showing forth.

Show you showing me how. Showing  
who shows who to show or to show forth.

Show to shoe how. Show how to show.

Show you showing me. Show you.

Showing forth is showing how is showing you.

6 January 2006

=====

Want, I want you in Malibu  
with the big royal palms on the upper cornice  
esplanade whatever it is  
in fact I want you with one of your legs a palm tree  
and a rat running up it and the other  
leg one of those rare staircases that link  
the lower roadway to the upper where the trees are  
where the glitzy shops and the phony Montreux hotel fronts  
there, and on the little humbler steps  
that take you from the lower level to the actual beach  
there is a sea there not just to look at  
and suicide dogs and a dark house with a man in it  
and the man is not me, want,  
I want some of this to be true and some of him to be me  
and the rest of you to be you  
and the palm tree sturdy and noble in the quick sea breeze  
spoken of in a famous poem by Mallarmé  
wishing to arrive at this very cornice  
and watch your thighs press together as you cross  
your legs at that ridiculous sidewalk café  
and all the poems suddenly come true.

I want you absurdly. This is because  
the half moon is riding over the Hudson again  
and it isn't snowing for once  
and the stars, but that's only an excuse,  
I want you because of the candle flame  
precisely and because of the rutabaga peel  
I scraped into the steel sink three days ago  
with a high-quality vegetable peeler  
and the ox tails I cooked with it, you understand,  
or probably you don't understand,  
I've forgotten your name again, it's almost  
New Amsterdam and wooden sidewalks  
and canal on Canal Street and fences and hogs  
and it's also almost like somebody else's childhood  
inconceivably tender and boring,  
I want you like that, I think it's you anyhow,  
though as I say I keep having this weird  
problem with your and anybody's name.

6 January 2006

**CABIN FEVER—**

when a small  
enclosure  
feels hollow  
in the heart

and wants us,  
yearns out at us  
through its grey windows  
willing

an arrival,  
a penetration.

I have been there,  
I have felt it

so often as I traveled  
woods especially  
and old farms  
the hysterical buildings

ramshackle  
with thwarted desire

the lonely enclosures  
harem of wood and dust

and sometimes I have tried  
to be their doctor,  
push in the old door or  
at least stand on the porch

and settle for an hour  
like a man smoking  
at ease in the evening  
at home with his house

but I am not theirs  
as much as I want  
to belong to everything  
I have no right to them,

no right even  
to my own desires  
no less absurd  
and desperate as theirs.

7 January 2006



## BLOOD

But will there be  
a word left  
to say so?

1.

After the Trafalgar cannonades  
the drowned men torn sails  
scarlet awash the infamous scuppers  
what is to be said?

Every day a war, a victory,  
a cortege. The fallen.  
For a day or two  
the dead are very loud

but then they sleep  
deep as the living.

More war! he roared,  
the sun is too bright, the snow too clean.

There is a power that compels these things—  
politics and money are only shadows of its claw.

2.

You don't have to go to Iraq.

You can look in your heart

and find the War God

very small, clutching knives,

teeth whittled sharp,

snakes for a helmet,

his eyes bright opaque shells.

When you have found him there

it will be easy to spot him everywhere.

When you have found him

there in your heart

you begin to know what to do,

to soothe that angry desperate rattling person,

to ease his pain too.

3.

When that god is healed  
of the long wound that is his will  
the world will wake.

4.

I have begun my campaign for world peace  
by bringing my lips close to your heart  
and whispering what I have found in my own.

7 January 2006

## **AFTER PARSIFAL**

*Wer ist dein Vater?  
Das weiss ich nicht.*

*Who is your father* the Old One asked

*That's what I don't know* the Young One answered

but what is a One? Young or old

what is a One? What is anyone?

That's what I don't know.

Who is anyone's father?

That's just what I don't either.

Why do I dare to say anything

if I don't know either?

Because there is a nude on the wall

and a woman in the bed

because there is sunlight on the snow

and the same sunlight on the wall in the window

even on my hand.

What does it mean to say same?

What is the same sunlight?

Same as what and different from what?

I don't know that either. Or those either.

I don't even know whether what just got asked  
is one question or two or even more.

That's how much I don't know either either.

But the sun and the woman and the nude on the wall  
and the wall and the house and the sun,  
these things are some kind of answer.

But I don't know the question either.

7 January 2006

## SONNET SEQUENCE SAD HISTORY AMERICA

1.

Something else to be busy saying  
what saying something SUN is doing  
because the broken BRACKEN out there  
among the lost tribes of amanita  
profiting from Santa's colors a blue  
shadow under REINDEER SEMEN or  
BOAR SEMEN shed a truffle grows  
white or black depending Lapland manners  
SHADE break TWIG break LINDEN  
break stream STREAM the ice STREAM  
flowing down under the river  
under the river an entirely different river  
under the earth a different earth  
the Aztec Eskimos of Lapland SWEDES.

2.

Portugal knew such WEATHER sand  
spiteful spiritual torturers HURT YOU  
because you consent to SUN the sun  
turns into the MOON AND BREAKS  
it was all about agriculture means  
drought rain TERRACED HILLSIDES  
WINKA Peru about the marsh elder  
about maize maybe about DEER MEAT  
I was born on that day what day  
were you born AMERICA Columbus  
Day THREE SNAKE you were born  
EIGHT CORN when you were a woman  
hearing a black CRYSTAL tell you were  
born halfway to the other side of now.

[7 January 2006]

## LANGUAGE

Examine the difference between 'it looks good'  
and 'it looks good to the eye'

Build a cabin in that space,  
never mind the little cut on your thumb  
suck it so it won't infect

Roof the cabin with branches tarpaper thatch  
though nobody knows what thatch is  
hanging down over the soffits

Make windows as wind-eyes  
let the wind in  
suck the wind so it won't  
infect the sleeping *quarters*  
of those you love

Name them

Roll them on their sides  
and put healing *drops* in their ears  
then swab them out  
carefully – somehow  
they can't do that for themselves



or their selves

What are selves

Clean their ears

pat them gently on the flank  
and tell them all will be well  
in this little house *made of wood*  
in the woods

where a flock of bluebirds  
famously gregarious  
will assemble *come spring*

and then we'll see.

8 January 2006

## THE MISTAKE

The poor man poured  
eye drops in his ears.

Later he found he could blin  
his eardrums and  
shut all sounds out.

All the Lamarckians  
stood around and prayed.

8 January 2006

## ROSES

on the table.  
New yellow old red.  
Sympathy. We tend  
to live in the spaces  
between colors.

Our natural home.

We could be defined,  
you and I, by  
the colors we live between.  
I between red and yellow  
and pray to blue and pray to green.  
Where I think you live.  
Like smart lovers  
we pray to each other.

8 January 2006

=====

The gravedigger Joseph Rothmayer a dozen  
years after he had shoveled Mozart's body  
into a common pauper's grave dug down  
and pulled out what he said was Mozart's skull  
and now somebody holds it in his hand  
somebody takes two teeth out and does  
a DNA trick with them and decides.  
But what is decided by such a decision?  
Lift the bone up to your bone and listen.

8 January 2006