

2-2001

**febC2001**

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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Now the evening  
is alone with itself  
alone as a stranger  
dancing at a wedding feast  
with woman after woman  
strangers to each other and to him

the bride and groom left long ago  
at the fuzzy boundary of sobriety  
and are asleep on the jet now to Curacao

and you're still dancing  
you're still dancing  
and the light just won't leave the sky  
as if it were drunker than you are

and knew it was time to leave  
but knew also that everywhere is home.

11 February 2001

## AU CREPUSCULE DU SOIR

you're still sitting still

and the darkness keeps trying to leave the house  
to run free in the street  
to darken the city

as if it were much more business-like than you are  
and didn't know it had time to linger

and didn't know either that  
once it leaves it can never come home.

11 February 2001

## **novels that are appropriations.**

What I think about right away, and certainly what interests me most, are the actual expropriations/penetrations of other people's texts, like Kathy Acker's *Great Expectations* or *Thérèse et Isabelle*, or Tom Phillips's *A Humument* (or my own *Mont Blanc*). Then I think of those which, almost like historical novels (and why aren't historical novels thought of as appropriations - maybe they should be; then Post-Modern would start with *Ivanhoe*...[build an essay on this, small — address my dislike of the historical novel) like Vollman's *The Ice Shirt* or Yourcenar's *Hadrian's Memoirs* or *The Abyss*, which use old materials in present formal contexts - Quignard's *Les tablettes de buis* are like that, or Tom McEville's *North of Yesterday* or whatever that's called. Novelizations of movies, musicals and videos would have to fit in here somewhere, and Powers' *Three Farmers on their Way to a Dance* appropriating as narrative the August Sanders photo, or many of the short stories of Guy Davenport, like "The Airplanes at Brescia" (expropriating Max Brod's and Kafka's diaries)

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Alternatives to the foregoing would be the following muscatels  
Proffered by an encomiastic benedick to a feller needs a friend  
Everybody is better off for being outside sweet chemicals  
The hosting of the fairy folk inside your consciousness  
And the tapdancers sprightly naked on your tongue, do tell.  
I am too tired to understand the implications of explication  
But if you insist on asking, why then I think that what I have said  
Is a demonstration of the existence of non-human sentiency  
All round the rocks and rills of this philadelphic wilderness.  
They think and keep their tongues and we do otherwise.

12 February 2001

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## THE CAPACITIES

Revise. Reboss.  
The convexity  
Upon Achilles's shield  
Shows you the world

You are at the core of it  
Everything slopes away  
Into the terrible  
non-you distances.

You are sweet at the core  
Like air, funny looking  
The distortions  
Of intimacy bewray

The proportions of your face.  
It is like the Bible  
Lost in translation  
But we get the point.

Here is someone  
At the middle of the world  
And watching carefully  
From behind the glass.

Brass. Shield. Shine.

12 February 2001

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To have betrayed no one.  
To be a brass scale  
Balancing feathers against the weight of the air.

12 February 2001

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To move beyond superstition  
Perch in a bare tree  
And use the whole sky for your mind.

13 February 2001



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A line can be remembering  
Then it touches another  
And they forget together.

13 February 2001

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How a line meets a line  
Can be road kill

Can leave a faint flush of  
Blood in the paper

After the crew has hosed away the evidence.

13 February 2001

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he's trying to talk about the sky  
but it won't stand still.

13 February 2001

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We can go through space at will at various speeds  
We should be able to go through time with similar willed velocity

What is the common factor of space and time?  
The human experience of extent and duration.

So in the realm of experience the throttle stands.

13 February 2001

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How long we have to wait for privacy  
Like a sword it gleams  
And cuts us free — at fourteen, fifteen?  
When that incredible moment comes  
When you seem to be actually alone.

13 February 2001

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It was a challenge to be continuous  
So a roast beef sat in the oven and sap  
Rose furtively in the more responsive trees  
Willows mostly willows. Words do not naturally  
Go with one another — like poles repel —  
And it takes a lot of breath to hold them together.  
This is what the Muse explained  
As she danced around my living room  
Shedding her silver feathers everywhere.

13 February 2001

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Because of the difference I mean the one  
that poured into the psyche from alluvium  
you know, that stuff that rivers leave  
according to the students of geology  
(old fashioned eyeglasses, baseball caps,  
safari vests, pepper mustaches)

the mind gets muddy from what it knows.

13 February 2001

**VALENTINE**

*for Charlotte*

I used to think it was because he was beaten to death  
The way pounding heartbeats that tell us we're in love  
Could kill us, because love is such a killer

## But why Valentine?

All the martyrs were tortured  
And there is no torture love spares us,  
Metaphor or meat, the pain  
Is what tells us we're in love. But the pain  
Dies down, the heartbeat grows more regular,  
Turns into music that we live together  
and martyrdom becomes a joyous witnessing instead,  
currency of actual exchange. The heart

has other gospels then to chant, the day, the night, the quiet  
rapture of the evident. The evidence.  
But why Valentine, Rome, soldier, beaten, Christian, stubborn, dies?  
Because we die for love? We die anyway,  
Love has nothing to do with it,

The pain is lyrical, the pain is life  
And dying is just outrageous silence. Why Valentine?  
They say the Lupercal was now,  
The wolves trotting through the streets at night,  
Whores and lusts and revelers, but that was rowdy  
And love has not much room for rowdiness, needs the quiet agony  
Of closeness, the quiet ecstasy of you.

So whose arrow is it that shoots through the heart?  
Valentine was not a bowman, was not pierced for love,  
Did not feel love's healing anguish and uneasy language,  
Cheesy scenarios of do you and do *you*,  
Love's terrible heartache that tells us nothing,  
Even Valentine heard nothing, but he was stubborn,  
love is stubborn, that must be the story,  
we break each other's hearts and go on loving, go on living  
with neat-plumed arrow in plump and pretty heart

and wonder where the feather's from to fletch the shaft.

14 February 2001



## ALONG THE GRAIN OF ST VALENTINE'S

*for Charlotte*

It's not easy to say the truth, not easy  
and not much fun, among the Disneylands  
of lies, heart's opportunistic taradiddle  
when heart is used to mean the real thing

the engine that runs all, the twenty-one gun  
salute to feelings, the throb of more.  
God gave us lies to tell and a Devil  
to whisper bleakly of the truth,

the thing that's so hard to understand,  
the simple presence that we share. We  
particular. This we right here,  
no random congeries, no universal bund,

just you and me. Because that is where love is,  
the particular morning of stainless steel,  
roses, the morning of bread, soap,  
shadows of birds pass the windows.

Our windows. Je repète. I love you  
in the quiet of yesterday, the strange  
soft howl of tomorrow, a sense of animals  
padding round the house. Just now

which never ends. I love you  
in the uncertainty of eternity,  
the everlasting grammatical complexity  
of this simplest of all sentences we are.

14 February 2001

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I prepared myself for the way, put on my white linen coat, girded my loins, with a blood-red ribbon bound cross-ways over my shoulder. In my hat I stuck four red roses, so that I might sooner be noticed amongst the throng by this token. For food I took bread, salt and water, which by the counsel of an understanding person I had at certain times used, not without profit, in similar occurrences. *Chym. Wedd.* ch.1

And what shall we do with that salt those circumstances  
And who used bread? Is your bread the same as my water

In that we must live on both? And these four flowers  
By which I hope to be conspicuous, an ape in amber,

A flute in France, and this red ribbon makes my cross,  
What then? That is a kind of Coleridge question,

If I dreamed the sea, and crossed it, and found you were  
And we turned into ourselves and spent twenty years

Growing the vibrant species of our destinies, what then?  
Why then the dream would be no different from my shoulder

When you rest your head or just your arm against me,  
No different from your mouth asking: *and do you dream*

*These days, not necessarily of me?* All dreams are you.  
I am enrolled in that necessity. Hence the red cross or what

Ever it is that crosses my skin like wounds, like railroad tracks,  
Like rivers, like deer footsteps in the shallow snow came overnight.

14/15 February 2001

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iron    the feather  
made from itself  
oxide flaking off

under earth a tool  
to search heaven

this comes from there.

spilled from bracken shadows  
stretch our feet towards  
ratchet river sunspoiled dawn  
can't see can't see

all which remembered even  
tidescale by seem  
to be what a man is not  
woodmetal meaning lasting

15 February 2001

RAGA ASAVARI

(on the rudra veena, by Asad Ali Khan)

sewn pages distinguish for me all the blue old books of England  
gilt crowns their covering spines I slowly animate the beast I am  
to stand around in Cambridge bookshops flirting with the saleshelp  
themselves haughty and beautiful and far  
beyond the shabby market of my means I tried I tried so slow it goes  
I never got anywhere with them and had to wait  
for other queendoms to inherit my bliss from or blossom  
tardy in the middle of soft nights oh it's all right an avenue is all I am  
a habit of leaning slow against the sight of them

as if they were lamp posts and I wept in darkness.

15 February 2001

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Measure the tame  
Of je t'aime the m  
Of the same, the middle  
Letter the alchemist of sea

An old owl leaning on a tree.

16 February 2001

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you can't help it  
when the condensations begin  
it is a flower of itself – or a fish  
speaking eggs along the bottom of everything  
as much as she can

16 February 2001

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everything gets shorter when you're alive  
which is why epics and operas are so grand  
contradictions of experience  
a four-hour minute a flower  
with a hundred thousand petals you have to touch and count each one.

16 February 2001