

1-1995

janC1995

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "janC1995" (1995). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1155.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1155

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WHERE THE GOLD COMES FROM & WHERE
IT GOES

Glad tip of fountain pen in winter light
from ever-renewing sun above the barn. Glint.
Cloud. Glare. Pine. Ever-renewing fact
of fact. Headache, to say the least.

This glory comes at my expense:
spirit in a leap of shine. The pain. Round me,
comforters, your hands quiver at the nozzle,
alert. Retread biblical satisfactions,

that high porch in New Bedford that churches
sailors' wives over that so sheltered harbor.
Sea-wall. New-delivered of live children,
remembering the occasion from which this

person rises. We met by moon under that dismal
freighter from Funchal, wound-studded Portuguese
flag in aching bragging colors, bandanna
wrapped around the damaged sky. *Made love.*

And we were we. Our shattered sea,
all the slapdash privacy we quick together,
you lend me your meek veins, I tread hard
the chemical of dawn to make you pregnant.

Prophesying woe. Faux. Renaissance and sickle,
a Tajik flag unrepentant red. The signs of things!
For I was roomy and a radical, I moved away
from the city into space, everything I knew

turned into now. And wind and fog, and those
empty-fingered counselors the trees,

adolescent energies, Yosemite, fish breakfasts,
iron. I'm talking metal absolute,

I will name them all for you some day,
some opalescent afternoon in Overlook I'll tell.
But till the story season (snake sleep, kachina
watches) my silly lips are sealed with your own salt.

25 January 1995

[D E A T H I N I D L E N E S S]

surprise of the Saxon — scintillant the sun was
in the broken woods — badger-striped — the pools
were good to look at — where the sparks did not fall —
a tired man could assassinate a borrowed mood —

what language tells us — Romans
did not play cards, watch television, knit
and yet they know a world of idleness —
every pastime was religion once — we preserve

our mysteries by artful profanation — baseball,
mah jongg, bridge — the values endure —
a sword's worth more than any diamond — tool
over symbol any day, no fools, ces gitanes—

so there we were, Germans in the woods
with Romans bothering and gypsies in the trees
—not gypsies, of course, but they did gypsy ways
and gypsy deeds — blue-eyed as forget-me-nots

and each one his private little god in pouch
or snug beneath her breast — feed your divinity —
and the Romans never understood — they thought:
these women are just leaves, these Celts are stones

these Cheruskans rushing by are horsetails, flies,
wood smoke — the smelt of iron the sweat of lead —
the sun is sugar — and the Romans died
of all our sweet diseases in the secret woods.

26 JANUARY 1995

OUT WEST WHERE THEY EAT SNAKE

Normal, not some gnomon cracked
along the shore of the Ohio
where I didn't know you, sister
spawned among the Maumee, you
gave me your clay. You gave me
a terrace on the bay. Time of day.
But mostly clay. Mud. That finer
thickening that holds the hands
together under so much light.
Barbarian interlude in any trees,
glaciers recede, Algonkin manners
sluggishly come to civilize
us again. Fat Chance, now portage
up a snarling river. You showed me
a postcard of where it went—
blue bascule bridge and a town
wrapped up in iron evening.
There was a hotel with a sign on top
winked on and off you said and said
ROOMS in red. This town
I later tasted on your skin. Turn
of the century again, now what do I do.
Start with Christian Science. Turn left
in Katmandu. Wrap a Liberty silk
around your neck and later
lend it to me. It will smell of both of us—
and that's exactly what a river is,
nothing excluded (ever) but what stays.

26 January 1995

I can hardly reach my words through the thicket
of sleep where that animal is always waiting
the red one with intricate footwork he calls me
with his body alone the moves of him slantwise
in leafy weather, the hold of his horn and the still
suddenness of sometimes even his word. The word
of a man is undependable. That is why the ancients
so valued *a man standing by his word*. Consider the image:
mouth and arms and legs aligned, nowhere to go
but what *he* says. Where *he* leads.
Consider your own heart: it is boring
because only, only one, like the single
novel you find when you're stuck for a night
in some unloved relative's house,
about an architect in love or shrimp boat
captains squabbling about a belle. A heart
will never leave you alone. No wonder I hide,
no wonder I try to run away inside
to flee its continuous inspection, to a room
below any possible house where silence
runs its own encyclopedia. Look up Knuckle,
yours, and gnaw it till you go to sleep.

27 January 1995

CONFESSIO

Our revisions are in heaven. Orion holds them,
read them between his legs. The text of text,
the legacy. Spoiled with sparrows, one quiet page—

you see I have never doubted the Holy Spirit, whose red
robes are language and whose acts are us. Never
have I doubted the word's capacity to know

and tell me more than I know. I never said it said everything.
By nature it is open, hence formally incomplete.
Heaven is everything. Earth is pure listening. That said,

I have to confess how little I have said.
Trapped in the geometry of my desire,
my breath has been wordless, personless, all angles and argument.

28 January 1995

The cook in the kitchen how
soon a man finds an identity
in what he does, a woman
never, she finds in who she is—
and is wanting, isn't it,
like an Indian on the Arabian Sea
knowing and knowing
there are pearls within
but how to have them,

so deep within no need to reach,
they speak me white and lustered,
they speak me in the dusk of my body,
human softness, hidden,
bluish, like a new idea.

28 January 1995
KTC

As if there were something
closer than skin

or the ocean brought it to your door.
Read in the almanac
about the lengths of different rivers,
no two the same,
the lakes where they are born
and the seas into which they drift
hardly noticing the difference,

yellow into yellow, water is water.
A thought is a thought.
Feelings are just things you feel.
Or not things. They are weather
in a sky, but not the sky.
What is the sky?

29 January 1995

One of the few good things I ever did
I bought you a handbag in Amsterdam,
smooth thick leather, a little alley
off the Kalverstraat. Some famous tower.
All the flowers speak English
so I may do something good again some day,
feed a seagull or improve
the line of sight through dense shrubbery.
Canal or river. Trombone or basement.
So many choices. I am sick with calendars.

29 January 1995

How have I gotten so impatient?
My pen's out of balance,
my ink
speaks Greek.

29 January 1995

What shall we do with a sunken sailor
who walks the sea bottoms looking for his wife,
the pretty one who gives the blue light—

the Blue Rose of Forgetfulness
we sink our pretty noses in it
and the world is suddenly at war.

*Sometimes there are so many women in my heart
there's no room left for me.*

29 January 1995

COLTSFOOT VARIATIONS 1

How we bend to what is ours

fling among the flattened leaves
a breath of tomorrow

a bare foot
a bare foot timidly in mud almost
as if it were a crime to do it,
to feel with your skin

or know this air just once
forevering its way through all that fell,

the flower comes and then the leaf,

a hope meant music we sang by skin

29 January 1995

Measure the marches. Then warn
the silly woman with the tabard round her neck
who signifies *The kingdom's in your reach*.

Then the deer browse down the hill, a pain
behind the left ear — you blew a tone
too loud on the lawn — war is always waiting.

30 January 1995

Not a matter as so much a mystery
— leaves gather under foot
so you know oak's over —
as the mud beneath the leaves,

the mind is everywhere, a union
in the two cold elements
—the dry the moist the mind
is unrelentingly productive,
a thought of god or thought of food
no difference, just a thought,
the leaves are general beneath specific trees,

I walk there thinking of you.
The things I like to touch all leave their mark
but what mark does mind leave
on what we think?
Does my red taste different from you do?

31 January 1995

D A T E L I N E

This is the day of the dead in the long
week of the star. The rising sign
is a tree from which a crow has flown.
The moon is hidden wholly in the light.

Yet all the food we eat remembers us.

31 January 1995

EVERY MORNING AN INVASION

Elegant outpour. The spurs
were German silver the cock
on the church steeple new brass—
we tune the weather
and the horses come.

*Taste me, the invaders say,
I am better than your old new*

but no one understands such poetry
in a tired neighborhood like ours.

31 January 1995

What the crow finds
when he comes down from the sky

is what death yields him,
what the tree
manages to yield,

*yield, o
tree,*

these
destinies

nutritious histories of twig,
twined paths, an echo
or an acrimonious
cigar,

follow
the Havana aroma far

along the avenue of beech trees
smooth-bellied, held
high here since the Vikings—

it is the fates we need to follow,
it is the actual roads
that led us here,

there,
the other place, where the goose
wandered,
down and up and down
the implausible stairs.

31 January 1995

