

12-1994

decD1994

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "decD1994" (1994). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1239.
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Readjust the clock the kettle's
ready to boil the sculptor
is finished with the trees

her skin like milk he said,
too exhausted to be original, worn out
with watching her,
with wanting her,

and is there any
enterprise they guard
so self-promotingly
in the historical-preservation-ring
as the magnificent sycamore
at their gate they've nailed a Posted poster to,

and here am I
complaining of that beauty,
great blue-eyed tree!

So after a walk in the mist it's morning.
Tea would have matched the taste of the weather
better,

its edge, it's all edge, not coffea's
blunter instrument
(worn out with wanting),

bâton the knave carries
into the forest of meanings
until he's lost in the cups and the hearts and the
acorns and the bells—
musicologically speaking,
it's only morning.

18 December 1994

THE EMBRYO

smart as a ribbon cut
to open a door — into what was never and to be —
a music of that sort — eggy and implicated —
teach guilt to see — backside of the moon
the comfortable vocabulary — I mean for you
to hear so well — a great mind caught in masterplots
small brightly painted urn full of sugar substitute
enough to exonerate color from causation — pause —
adorable interminable Parsifal — the wheat
in context — Fillmore and forgetting — a bridge
out of her open window giving everyone what little she had
and it was everything — to get there over waters —
and be in the promontory of trees — escape — mind
hurrying down the cellar stairs to what it thinks it stored
deep in the changes — pure red silk — belle heaulmière
— who is she now that memory taints her? —
forgive me for caring — godown or warehouse where
her properties are kept — the details that defined me
banks of the river — ankle bones in hot white sand —
hundredweights of none too fresh potatoes — kale
sprouting out of the Catskill snow — enough for me —
not the woman in the window but the window in the woman.

19 December 1994

People I don't think I'd love from the sound of them
move into the next cartoon and fight. One is Biff Syllable
(born John Manderson Sillabell on Martha's V.)
who always knows the right way to irritate Miranda
Happenstance (used to be Gluck) whose soul
has that Genesis elevation over mere personal behavior
some so admire in that operetta called History
— Biff and Happy squabble over toast — say silly
things about the Welsh you know, flash smiles
from teeth that glint like credit cards in the gloom
of travelers' cafés — is that knives I hear?
Or local zabususa music on FM? — live band on Thursdays
— did you come here to visit the museum? —
I came into this life to hear the low wind
blow through grass reeds, marsh and cool my face.
I came here to touch you, why all this business about names?

20 December 1994

Hazard

hazard it
a word is
ready for you

we have all been,
come speak it
waiting so long

21 December 1994
KTC

It is late
but it has been

and gone
and here it is

late as it
is again.

21 December 1994
KTC

The habits of remembering
make a simple story
I confuse with me

and then with you.
You are me.
I know you

as I would be known,
full of parks and promenades,
ducks and dragons.

If we pay attention
a fax comes from the toaster
saying “every

single thing is deep”
and has something to say.
Message me,

I am your man.

22 December 1994, KTC

[The quoted words are from a teaching by Chamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche at KTC, 21.XII.94]

YEAREND

Or is it just beginning
this oval animal this year?
The foci of ellipses
are solstices. That makes
the round year
into the Emperor's cigar,
Solomon's, who watches Balkis
sprawled on her tummy in the nursery
watch the imaginary stars that light the night.
For all things are visible
in a saucer of ordinary
earth, carried in from the garden
and when no one is looking
taste it with the tip of your tongue.
Then everything is known.

22 December 1994
KTC

Imagine nothing
but do it fully.

22 December 1994
KTC

All the opportune identities — the man I was
among the Bostons and the Bays — it is just time
since I've been anyone but me — know your enemy —
silhouette of a Messerschmidt fighter — dive bomb —
strafe, from *strafen*, punish — these engravings — wax
that is the mind — my brain has ear wax — bees
light up my empire — Teutoburg Forest in the rain —
suddenly the armbands come out looking for arms —
belong belong — apparencies of anger and of blue
— I heard everybody's name but yours — imaginary
flags — my signs — heaviest wooden information —
the gleam mahogany — legitimate disclosures —
aren't the bridges bigger than the beaches? — coherent
incomparisons — ligatures ad libitum — *lubet*
it pleases me that you do not understand,
in time I may cease to do so too, then will be free.

22 December 1994
KTC

Query — or a deer — not seen — in the dinge
of moonlight — they're all blue by shadow
except the eyes — their eyes — no color except light
— all night we hurry north — the dark rhyme
is complete — the circles close in me —
and in the silence above the word a waning moon
still largely shows — query, where were we?
we were home — and who is she? — in silence
it is said —

23 December 1994

The kindness of the Lama
all the Lama
and the intelligence of tears

woman of my sky.
Coyo, star, *riki*, snow.
Asteroid five kilometers up,

mountains of Peru,
Nuestra Señora de Coyoriki,
Our Lady of the Snowstar,

for we are feeble and restless,
we feel safest
worshipping a great stone,

a stone she is
and came down from heaven
the way the snow does,

saying nothing,
asking nothing,
yielding springtime,

after the heavy waiting.

23 December 1994
KTC

The occasions answer us one by one however
multiplex we have been in asking. The marmoset
leaps around his little cage as if to please us —
antics, we say, from antique, the zany
faces of the eldritch comedians who leer out at us
from Catullus and Euripides, naughty Taormina
bronzes, loudmouth Neapolitans down to our
day. What do we know of monkeys, Socrates,
little men with four hands and not much to do,
mortals, not much malice, not much love —
are the gods like that too, beloved? Do they also
slip beside up among the satin comforters of prudent
lecheries night by night whenever? The tarpaulin
flaps in the rain wind. Their wind. Ship
under sail sounds, doors rattle. Every instant
an emergency. Every single thing the heart of humankind.
Far out at sea a bell with no buoy and no boat,
just a sound left alone on an ocean, a heart
beating in the sky. We hear exclusively
what we have become. Martyrdom of mind.

24 December 1994

A face
crowned
with wings

a summons of hair
a glance
smooth as red

a face
that knew my thought
size

of the light
the smile
she caught from me

it walked
her across the room
even her arms were smiling

24 December 1994
KTC

Let some things be white.
Let the smoke of holy elections
float dramatically into suburban windows—
are the Joneses having a luau?
No, the Smiths are electing a Pope,
he will reign in honesty and white clothes,
there will be nations fed at his table,
brought a little further towards
freedom by his heart full of ordinary work.

24 December 1994
KTC

for Charlotte

A little while looking at the river. Encampment
of the simplest outside our window.

Temporary

 window, temporary wind. An eye
to watch the river with, an eye to close.

It sounds so pedantic to say: on our journey
to each other. A week here, a month there,
a new tie, a pair of boots. And knowledge
rivery, deep, moving always closer in the night,
here always and always going away and always
arriving and always gone and still, still,
a soft field for looking, a mile-wide mirror.
How much I have learned from you!

You woke before me Christmas morning
in our little wooden room that sees the river
and my eyes were closed until you bent down
to wish me happiness. The way we are.

25 December 1994
KTC

CHRISTMAS IN TIBET

The manger

is full of words,

straw words

(said Saint Thomas, dying
into that pure
vision that created him)

words among which nestles
the lucid unborn silence,

newborn and unborn both at once,
ever infant, the life
of all we know and more than we know,

each thing
(and there are things, things
wait for us to turn to them,

things listen)

has its own measure

(each thing has our measure)

as a tree would imagine Number

(winter is number)

as a nudity of purest yielding or a man
faces himself in a womanless mirror,
knowing the work day that's beginning now
is less doing than forgetting,

or we are gone

also from ourselves

with regularity

like the curve of the Great Wall of China
bending to honor the landscape
(a wall makes prostrations to the god it stands on)

and when we bow
even to the simplest or holiest occasion
that bow —plié— honors us no less,

man and woman, earth and wall, all
caught in one honor?

26 December 1994

THE GLEAM

of it is here. There the sun
and here the seen.

The gleam

on a silver ring with all the morning
behind it, focussed there
for me to see.

From the one source
through all there is
to the one point
where the reflection
happens,

light
carries itself to me
promiseless waiting,
talking till a cloud
stops all allowing.

27 December 1994

winter after heavy rain I watch the water
fall the rich foaming fall of it
my eyes unfocus in it
staring
 till I see a moonlight summer midnight
in a valley full of fireflies
a woman coming towards me with breast bared—

what does it mean to see?

27 December 1994

Each admonition to the serious is a joy. Wrong
flees all chronicles. Continue reading
like a woman with blue eyes surveying a meadow
ice still stippled here and there among her gazes,

everlastings they call them in Australia, paper whites,
yellow folderol, the flowers.

When was the prayer written?

When is the prayer said?

When she goes upstairs

to see about the roses

the grass at Thubten Chökhöring

growing in December,

new grass, soft hill.

Follow her kindly with your eyes,
her shadow falls upon your grieving
and lights such things, cars and shopping carts and sneakers,
we are dressed for a walk in the woods

(she bends and finds among the dead brown leaves
here two days after Christmas a new
periwinkle flower just opened, paler blue than usual)

but what are woods?

28 December 1994

A F A N

It is hard to imagine a fan.
Each panel of it folded up or in
hides its own part of a picture

or a poem, they wrote poems on them,
and each panel only a fragment of it,
a slice from the middle

signifying not much: that
is what we hide
so preciously, our private

slice of the whole text. It is hard
to imagine the whole of it
snapped open some day

by a huffy samurai or simpering
virgin at some ball
and there is it, *the thing*

that has been written
or, in pale blues and teals and lavenders,
Evening Falls On Yokohama Bay.

29 December 1994

(an altarcloth for Pat Meanor)

O parament,

uneasy showing,
veil to splay a gush
of silken velvet shot with silver

or hide a god
cloth of gold, the men of old
disdained to be different from stones

so from the altar or from their waists
let equal valenced swing
a veil full of surprises,

hard swung from this sudden morning
from high Ontario where
the wind is carved out in a quarry

hard and bright, to bear a message,
hard color or hard showing,
why do we wear clothes,

why dress an altar
and all the naked bones of stones
shiver somber-tinted under silk,

folds of the world?
A cloth we watch in beauty
that reveals the god who lived by hiding.

29 December 1994

Why is the world built of molecules
like boxcars stuck to boxcars?

Iron is heavy, water is deep,
fire ravel us to sleep,

for centuries I tried to be wood
I tried to trap the wind—

you see my arms move doing so—
and still there's no answer.

I thought it was love
it was only religion, watch my hands.

Why is the world built of boxcars?
Are we going somewhere?

30 December 1994

As if they were coming towards me and I had no idea
or the idea I had was one of those Great Ideas you read
about in books and I was worried, an Idea like that
is just the corpse of some hot thinking, I am leerier
of big ideas than of little rats, does that make me a
behaviorist? Certainly I want to behave. I want to sit down
right here on the banks of the river and look at you
until you turn into me and I turn into nobody.
Then there's nothing to keep the wind from blowing.
And this is what I mean when I talk about melody.

31 December 1994