

1-1993

## janC1993

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, "janC1993" (1993). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1249.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/1249](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1249)

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 PLACE IN THE CENTER OF THE BRAIN

Call it a collection of mysteries  
a sunboat come back from the west  
crowded with all your wives  
and all you hear are church bells—

like Little Italy with baskets of sea urchins  
on Bleecker, oil drums full of fire.  
It is always winter except where you are.  
Only you remember, only you wander  
this aluminum planet fearing oblivion.

The pain in your leg is an example  
of understanding something. Know me  
while it lasts. Call it a skirt tied  
snug around some statue's hips,  
a good child's vision of modesty.

*Eye dear*, we pronounced it, we  
wanted to see all of it, every bit except  
the dead man in moonlight and his wife's eyes.

16 January 1993

## IDENTITY

And what is wanting to be me while I want?  
Isn't the craved-for sensation  
itself some other body's vagrant wish  
that animates itself in me,

pretending to be me?  
Isn't the cerebellum  
the rectifier of desires and the amplifier of passions  
from everywhere picking them up  
via the antenna of the skin?

Is any urgent mine?  
Is wanting  
anybody's?  
Isn't it just a sensation  
longing for a house,  
a lust in love with being anyone at all?

16 January 1993

## THE IGNORANT

We do not know this body thing we use  
even after all these winters watching finches  
and all the summer nights by the inner harbor  
waking beside them in the absolving dawn.

16 January 1993

## MONORAIL

*A soldier's passion* an opera by a bird  
encapsulate the singable fury singable lust  
there is no music that does not encapsulate

does it your dark flute  
do you feel the words do to you

entering the body passion Conquistadors  
who needed to find us we were fine in the dark

long ages of her S  
    looped around this caitiff neck  
torque or twist of gold  
by what she simply was  
ensorceled me  
what need had she of grammar?)

drown in a book.

17 January 1993

## IN LITTLE NIGHT

Alone in my kitchen with the microwave  
I stare at its blue time.  
Is this called studying numbers, mathematics?  
The only light in the room says 2:17  
pretty blue. The snow's light comes in too  
and that is its own kind of azul.  
When I swing my eyes the numbers linger,  
multiply, a field of never ending increment,  
I'm tired, I remember your body  
pale as a summer day beneath me  
when I was a cloud or a sound.

18 January 1993

---

Whatever comes to mind  
is worth singing to silence.

For that is what song is  
a journeying and far dispatch  
of what arises  
as the mind

or in the mind  
that can (finding the way

the very old way  
right through stone,  
Arnaud's way, Latin's way)

be said.  
Hard research this speech  
gape mouth answering bright empty world.

18 January 1993

## THE AXES OF THE CRYSTAL

1.

Don't worry about how far the water is  
there is a crystal (but not the thing you mean  
you see in New Age windows, a thing  
to wear or carry, a thing to buy, a thing with influence).

It grows below an ordinary hill,  
this crystal, and speaks, and what it says  
is ocean anyhow enough for you. Water is  
the after-breath of speech —that's why it moves—  
every spoken thing has its boundless consequence.  
But in a reasonable world it would be still—  
ice. But our world instead is perfect, full of pain,  
hence change, hence escapable, or at least  
you want to. You really want to. And this  
is what the crystal has to say.

2.

O the *axes* and *angles* of language!  
Because crystals have measures of their own  
and cleavage one of them — how meaning divides  
among the listeners, ever growing less  
in clarity, dreamier, and every speech poured out  
does not fill every vessel equally.  
Nor does a message linger in the atmosphere  
but hurries off to babble in the plasma of the Logothete  
leaving behind skeletons and carapaces: words.

3.

At the Fraction of the Mass (the *klasis*)  
the Priest (Christ's alter ego) demonstrates  
how far an understanding can be divided  
and still be understood. A chip of wafer.  
It is a lesson in the molecular, a theory  
of pure theory, a bird hovering above its shadow  
to become one substance with its accident.  
It is time gushing up eternally as space.



Limitless orgasm. A piece of bread.

19 January 1993

## THE CAPTIVE

Try to find where in the body pleasure is stored  
—the thing we're always trying to release  
and when it's loose we keep trying to retain.  
What is this animal that's only mine when it escapes?  
What is this soft cage I keep it in?

19 January 1993

# INAUGURATION POEM

*for Charlotte*

Caught in images of national order

like Robert Duncan watching pigeons  
wheel over the twin Italian steeples  
of St. Francis's church at the foot of the hill  
and calling them doves,

                                  caught in images  
of coffee and Cadillacs  
                                  the amazing  
scaffolds of daily experience

on which this glad mind scampers.  
Joyeuse Garde, the knight comes home,  
caught in images,

                                  through perfect darkness  
Lancelot steps up from the lake  
guiding himself exactly step by step  
by holding her bright body before his mind  
and following faithful that, he knows full this.

2.  
A strip of colored cloth  
enough to tame the dark, why,  
it is an arrow, a long arrow

(all bodies are one body)  
it is an arrow, a long arrow  
its barb hid in the hand of  
more than an archer,

the Lama waves the arrow

gently round the sky,  
five colors stream from the feather of it,

the birds follow,  
turning the sky around.

3.

Over our house now, Charlotte,  
the birds

                  which are not doves, or are mourning  
doves with mauvey breasts  
and blue jays. Crows  
that speak the Dawn Language  
better than the sun for all its light.

Birds for the comfort come  
a bare tree yields  
into the quivering air

a stable place, a branch  
a heap of seeds  
fallen,

                  a crowd of images  
our only nourishment,  
squawking and sweet-talking on the empty tree.

4.

The arrow clutched in this more than archer's hand  
goes further than any merely flung from the bow.

A cap of snow  
on a snapped  
off tree stock

under snow wind  
vague blue of sky—  
"a child's eyes wander into sleep" says William  
Jefferson Clinton getting  
inaugurated,

vague of all our answers,

destinations,  
America *has to be* always beginning,  
has to be an endless immigration.

5.  
Into this place  
the dark  
where the images  
repose  
and rise  
to life again,

naked trees,  
to dispose  
the fundamental  
neatness of the world,

the twigs of it  
around him,  
nestle restless  
in the foreplay of sleep

until the shouting window  
reminds us we have slept  
and wakened into enormous light.

20 January 1993

BUT WHAT IS

is when the dark comes  
and then our philosophy is pure  
fingertips and fear

V

A day  
is what goes away.

A night  
is a color of fright.

V

Blue Norway spruces in the snow  
on Uncle Benjamin's lawn blue Xmas lights—  
  
marrying outside your own religion  
is what the night is.

20 January 1993

## VISITING THE TRAVEL NURSE

*for Charlotte*

Our friends are having trouble selling their house  
A *renga* while these salty eaves drip ice  
And I am holy something like a bull who horned  
Inside the delicate cerebrum of a better race  
Admiral Anxiety is a wheelwright of waves  
Anybody who travels is an admiral  
Words go on rhyming with themselves  
Better leave your luggage home and bring the dog  
Nobody loves part-songs anymore the moor is cold  
Relentless congruences of social attitudes  
Until we call perfect strangers friends  
Blackbirds are back today a mallard and his mate  
Womped a clear ice pond in Hyde Park  
Imagine the yellow documents this exile's King  
Or priest is he looking idly past the waterfowl  
And penning his memoirs it's a funny world  
To have an identity of your own slim hiped  
Princess of Wales in a dowdy print haven't we too  
Seen something like a city owl-like fluttering low  
Filling the whole sky coming towards us at evening  
Parks and towers and gates and burning ghats  
Everything wide open with a ruby light a guess  
Of majesty a sheen of sudden rain commotion  
Delayed travelers press to enter before nightfall  
Rubbing their injection sites immune to every fever?

21 January 1993  
Poughkeepsie

LET PALE DISEASES CEASE PLAYING  
DEATH

Not much is more remarkable than waiting  
Waiting is the long probing beak of a shorebird  
Curlew or snipe. Waiting is also another  
country but that turns out to be another story.

21 January 1993  
Poughkeepsie



## WELSH DANCES & AIRS

*for Charlotte*

1

The same voices you heard beneath the dome  
whispering their alleluias round the vault  
woke you blithering this morning, angels of irrelevance  
lust abiding, stretching a point  
into one more fatal geometry the world.

2.

For I will go back and interview my traces  
how my mind is nothing but lore, folkless lore  
and my knee hurts, how on the marches  
I took my genetic spiritual form,  
flesh *is* fire, King David's cats stalk my yard snow  
this victimage! this celebrant  
of nuptials below the deepest shade, shale slice,  
dreams have in general not much meaning.

3.

The subtle analyst knows the few that do.  
That animal, that track. Out from the osiers  
and across a big field into hemlocks.  
Everything is speculation, and I am the mirror.  
Show yourself to me and know the answer.

4.

He made an angel call me on the telephone  
and speak in Old High Static— good sinner  
transform your commonplace desires  
into the furniture of immortal mind.  
I solved that by opening the window  
and there they were, all summery in their instances,  
and I yearned at the detail of them, I swooned  
in apoplectic accuracy, every blessed thing!

5.

There's no hope for the pilot of the ruined ship  
staggering again and again on the rocks through breakers  
as if one tragedy were never enough. He's safe  
now in the harbormaster's office, no one is drowned,  
not too many sea-fowl stuck in oil. His eyes  
are tired of taking chances. The sea is born wrong  
and all our journeys never teach it manners  
for all our straight lines. The sea remembers us,  
the sea hears everything we think, and acts accordingly.  
It is the ripple of us, and no more.

6.

What did she look like, Nineue,  
were her eyes vague as the Pleiades  
to an old man's eyes? Were her hips  
just smooth enough to slip through fingers?  
And she had no smell, or only the scent  
of some flowers she counted petals of  
to tell the future, she smelled of oracles  
and moved clear without remembering, naked  
as if she had forgotten you were there  
your whole life depending on what you saw.

22 January 1993

7.

What kind of looking if a sound can hear  
black cars parked at my doorway  
I never dream, a flag is blue enough,  
so-called solar winds to light the earth  
harness that wantonness display'd  
on summer nights and store as energy?  
Aurora. Release is common.  
What did she look like after you turned away?

8.

Always the ash sometimes ember never never.  
And that, given the sacred river, radio clangor,  
smiling white dog, geranium in a Chinese pot,  
that was enough. It is something red  
and people remember it. They fight about it  
till it turns white and sleeps inside them.  
Never till they die will it leave them,  
then like a gull dropping a herring it does.

9.

Striking a match to light a cigarette under water  
this wave my breath that wave thine answer  
what did she look like with her blue stone rod  
polished with hazel nut oil till it seemed the shaft  
sky used to impregnate the earth before language,  
a core of something he could barely get into his mouth  
the way it gritted on the teeth "I eat the sky."

23 January 1993

10.

One smokes another listens. Grammar  
has always been a mistake a looking back  
when the moon's trying to show you your way

but you keep looking up at her, her glowing  
kindly leprous face scarred from all she's seen.  
You stumble over particles you never know what to say.

11.

On this day they give stones to one another  
and hurry home to burn them on the hearth  
*the dog loves to sleep beside the fire*

in every valley there's a stone that won't burn  
and he who holds it is king for one full moon—  
tells nobody, hides his face, tries to be normal,

keeps the stone between his shirt and his skin, and lies.

24 January 1993

[MERLIN, OF NINEUE]

Some travesty of how I actually wanted  
or the thing I couldn't touch a miracle of being there  
and bending forward and touching a blue flower  
so that the supports of the sky those thighs  
were pale almost white in the doing of it the gathering  
of what should not have been touched and touched  
sent my mind's heart's eye's center into the spin of exile  
from which it will not come back yet I touched her  
I groped through the fondness we had of each other  
she groped through my desire for her to find me  
I groped through her flesh to find her  
and we were lost in a world without finding  
the both of us were and the charm was lost  
and we called the rock that covered us the sky

24 January 1993

