

12-2010

decI2010

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "decI2010" (2010). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 296.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/296

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Is every city the same city?

It is when you're asleep in a room

in a silent hotel if there is one

and the hum of Whom

is missing. No one there—

so don't go, don't be there

especially don't go to sleep

cities are only there in stone and glass

when you're finally awake

sleep goes from one

hallucination to the next,

dry skin of mind

itches at dawn
is that roar the river
or the problem with your ears

blood pressure, ventilator,
healing system,
elevator, emptying dream?

waking up is breaking down
the fragments shape
a new hallucination

a day leaky with yesterdays.

29 December 2010

PAVOR TENEBRARUM

1.

at the eastern window
eager for light rise
let the sun itself
hide under cloud

I will take the steady glareless self
of light itself
in the dark of this
technically morning

I woke in darkness afraid of the dark.

2.

Latin knows that darkness (*tenebrae*)
is a plural, a population not a quiet single thing.

a multitude of beings who obscure the light

so I must be rescued from all these
by paladin Sir Helios our lord the Sun

for a maiden in her Tower in an old story
is the soul of a man in his body in the dark

3.

Let there be left of me enough to feed the cat
he cried and hurried into battle
carrying a carving knife and a candlestick
reciting the names of the known felons of the dark:
wolf and bugbear, burglar and arsonist, crazed
evangelists with sharpened scythes, lepermen
and plaguy girls. zombies, drunkards,
stoned guitarists, all the armies of the nations.
the mountain lion, rabid raccoon, the horde
of exiles stumbling towards some home

and nothing did his candle show
but its own gleam on his own knife

but that was sign to him enough—
fear is noble, fear is thin,
fear is eloquent and fierce,
the deepest virtue of the soul is cowardice.

4.

And there were pauses
when the light came on
as if it were a natural thing

and the Victorian flowers fell away

from the modernish pinkish gravestone
aggressively gouged with somebody's name
as if it were no one he knew
or could possibly know or ever be

impossibly foreign
corny typography
and the sun all of a sudden
was that dog in the sky

yelping incessantly
like a truck beeping backwards
or a man dying in a clinic

why do things chirp at us
he anguished, then slept again

or the light went out
or he dropped his candle
and the knife was enough to see by

his way to sleep

long enough for the color
to come back towards the flowers
birds insisted etc.,

he was cold around the ears
hence awake again
the crows were counseling
Get Up, you last remnant
of a Pre-Socratic school,
tantric outcast, importer of plums...

but some of the birds had better
identities for him in mind
and laid them at his feet like new-falling snow.

29 December 2010

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That day us gave us
all there is of us
to intertwine. To give.

After everything peace.
The pull is there,
our rope so knotted

it runs and runs
round noisy pulleys
to begin again—

washline of the spirit us.
Going away is coming
back another way.

29 December 2010

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Fraud comes
from pressing in.
From guessing
down below the skin.

Only the skin
is honest.
Our insides
do not belong to us.

Our insides if there
at all is just fierce
silent sobbing meat.
I am just a boundary

but I can speak.

29 December 2010

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I remember things.

That is an unpronounceable sentence, untranslatable as well.

The snow looks
blankly back at me
when I refuse to say it out loud.

Children learn this by puberty:
some things can only be said in writing.

(The breathy whisper of language in the mind.)

30 December 2010

= = = = =

I speak in spite of
whatever's inside me
oceanic urgency
to say me outward

to say me at the world
as if I meant it
but I mean me
the conscious

shell of me
or I mean bright you,
not the rudderless
turbulence within.

30 December 2010

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Tracks I don't recognize
in snow up the hill.
The crows come down
and sail away with food.

Hierarchy of beast—
whose right of way?
A very big box on the porch—
what kind, how big,

what's in it, who brought
it, how long
has it been here? Go
feed your flowers!

30 December 2010

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As if another had called me
and I listened

told myself

it is authentic, authentic enough, to listen
doing no more,

to the old, to what was old

when I was young

or was I never?

Is there ever a first time?

No, sad lover,

it is always again,

your virginity

(do you prize it, does it
shame you)

is only a trick of memory,

the way you forget your last

life's mother's face

until you see her eyes again

in a strange man's eyes, or a lion's eyes

when you waste some Sabbath in the zoo

consorting with those angry flowers

who always try to talk with you.

How could I have known

what listen meant

when I first said Listen
Aren't there soft thick books
with soft thick pages
and too many pictures
that warn children what will happen
to them if they listen,
what they will see, what will come speak to them
out of the dark if they listen
or don't listen?

Look at me she said
and I have ever since

tell me Lady when
I dare look away

I never have
to those lion's eyes

hold me gently still,

no lion, no me.

Eyes looking.

Eyes listening.

Whose?

2.

Could they be miracles after all
this bumping into each other on the street
this sense of old friends, this mere affinity?

I looked at her the first time
(there was no first time) and thought
she comes from my life, now who is she?

But isn't there someone else
I look at and see
somebody from outside the system
(the system is the same as me)

a messenger from elsewhere
with no message
but standing right there?

3.

Bear with me, Harry,
I'm after something here.
They do pay attention you tell me
that that gigantic sycamore on the green,
they cable its branches now
to help it endure its own exuberance
(earliest to shed its leaves
slowest to come to leaf)

you reassure me that they do,
right now, in Arlington,
it isn't all Xerxes and Caruso and girls in tweed skirts over dark tights,
it is the authentic animal uprisen in our days,

a high tree
and listen to me.

And that is hard.
That takes time.
And here is one more year
gone with Sylvester
while I listened,
with coffee and poinsettias of course
and lilies from Peru.

The king saw one sycamore tree on the arid plain,
came and sheltered under it
from the incoherent information, babble of sunlight.

A year is gone,
we're panting now
finished one more lap
around our orbit

why should you be tired,

you've just been living—
try listening instead
then you'll really gasp for breath

every sentence a flight of stairs
and the only truth
just out of sight at the top

quand vos venetz al som del escalina—
Danted let Arnautz say more than Dante knew,
that this is a stairway
and there is someone at the top of the stairs

and we climb
looking out loud

listening to what nobody
exactly is saying

a tree that can't fall down?
a staircase with hands?

31 December 2010

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I like best writing with fountain pens
because the soft scratching sound
they make is so like
the gentle whisper of your lips at my ear.

31 December 2010