

2-2011

febD2011

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febD2011" (2011). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 321.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/321](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/321)

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).

## **PRAYER**

Send the location  
to the space it's supposed to be  
then I'll find it there  
if I get where I'm supposed to know  
my legs are going—  
a long slow green hill down  
to the thin crossroads  
my robe playing in the wind  
I have been trudging for years  
now I am almost there  
if there has gotten there too  
to be for me and my sandals  
if no one distracted there along its way  
or told there to be another place  
another time where I can't come  
o let now for once be now  
and this place at hand  
I see now over the slip of the hill.

13 February 2011

=====

So it feels to be among earth  
in a blue day walking alone  
none of it ever easy.

13.II.11

## **FRAMEWORK:**

an iron coatrack  
from the garment district on wheels

Skin: bathrobes (blue, buff, spotted)  
draped over it

Action: it rolls towards us very fast.  
It is invincible.

Try to film it before it devours you.  
Reality is the hungriest of all beasts  
especially in dream, that art form  
marooned in your imprisoning sleep.

13 February 2011

## THIRTEEN

Thirteen men  
and a woman walking  
the woman is a town  
or a tower outside town

thirteen men and a woman  
talking in a little room  
the woman is what they say  
when they whisper eagerly

thirteen men in a boat  
with a woman on a lake  
the woman is not the water  
the woman tells them what to do

thirteen men listening  
to a woman not talking  
on a road between  
a lake and the city

thirteen men  
stare into the sky  
the woman is the sky  
but the men are listening.

13 February 2011

=====

I don't have to be nice anymore?

Then how can I be me?

I am the one who means you well—

trust me and you'll find

pain enough in my tendresse.

13 February 2011

## **OUR LOVE: a Valentine for Charlotte**

Why should we be as any other is?  
Movements in the air declare  
and listening is all. Said it all before  
but listening changes the word heard  
depending on its own when and how.

There's no why to it, it just is  
and then it hears. Movement  
makes things mean, a mind  
has to come and see and stay and still  
keep moving.

That's where you  
come in, the particular  
once would have said flower, now  
no flowers are one says a self  
a certainty a person almost understood

but this is more than there could be  
in any simple is, it simply is.

14 February 2011

## A VALENTINE FOR CHARLOTTE

Longing to write something different to you  
that really says something special about you  
after all the wonderful things about you  
that everybody knows but maybe doesn't tell you  
enough I wonder how to. Being good to you  
is how I mean to live, trying to bring you  
things you like and letting them tell you  
how very much and why I love you  
and make that telling different for you  
from what I write for a living and make this word just for you.

14 February 2011



## THE POPULATION

Every person you ever met  
lives inside you now  
each one at the living center  
sun of a planetary system built  
out around him or her  
all through you. The more  
contact you had with them  
the more space they take up  
inside you. So the totality  
of all those systems amounts to  
your body—the cells of it  
all through you living,  
each entity, each own world  
is present in its distinct  
location in you. Man in your wrist  
a wife in your knee. Forever.  
You meet them and they are you.  
You are an archive of your encounters  
and all of them are who you are.

14 February 2011

= = = = =

Because of enough  
there is more.

The prepositions are  
a little like serpents  
not necessarily venomous  
not necessarily not.

Between words travelling  
weaving with green purport to  
link. beget, expel, belong.

Mill on the Floss Catcher in the Rye Call of the Wild—  
never read a book that sneaks a preposition past you.

It'll be all relationship and no material  
no meat in the platter no stuff.

Prepositions nuke stuff.

14 February 2011

[= = = = =

Will I ever finish my work?

*Quando fiam uti Kelly done?*]

14.II.11

= = = = =

There should be joy in the system  
and a taste of truth  
like storm in the forest  
lianas slumping over tigers  
and a painter watching

because there *is* a girl back home  
and we are never done with  
coming on to one another

until the moon breaks  
and all that juice of indoor mistletoe  
slops down on our glad heads  
and the skull inside the skin rejoices

for every skeleton is white  
and even a child untutored can  
in any graveyard hear them sing  
soft tunes to bring the moon to life again.

15 February 2011

= = = = =

Be needy, be greedy  
examine the five-dollar bill

this paper is worth more than itself—  
be like that, just give yourself away.

15 February 2011

= = = = =

And when we finally get to Rome  
more killing, more tearing people in love  
away from one another. Upriver the white sow  
sleeps on the muddy banks and lives forever,  
our motorboats and Indian canoes  
struggle upstream and float back down  
and nothing changes. Trees full of poison  
we think into their sap. We fuel snakes  
with venom. Our hands can't forget  
the slippery feel of blood, life  
of the other, the murdered brother—  
Romulus *was* Remus. A man kills  
the lover and the brother in himself  
to do what a nation means to become.

15 February 2011  
(listening to *Les Troyens*)

= = = = =

--Show me please just one glimpse of my former life, or any of my previous lives.

--Look out the window—anything you see alive out there you’ve been. They have been you, each of them has said ‘me’ and meant you. Look at what that life out there is doing—you did that too. And they, all of them, may be like you now, someday.

--That doesn’t tell me much about me, me in particular.

--It tells you everything about ‘me’. ‘Me’ is a motel in dangerous country, with pretty scenery and sinister townspeople. You’ll check out soon—what then?

--I guess that’s what I really want to know...

--You don’t know where and what you’ve already been, how can you know where you haven’t been, where you haven’t even existed yet?

*But there was no window, and the conversation dissolved into someone’s own head, like any dream.*

16 February 2011

= = = = =

There could have been more. A trench  
dug around the camp, footsteps deep in mud.  
The birds are back again. “They had left me  
I thought all alone.” “Not you alone  
but all of us.” “And now I’m me again!”  
“Exactly.” It fills up with water in the night  
there must be a spring. At least  
we have water but we have to let it settle.  
The silt sifts out. “Boil it, do you?” “Some.  
Fire is expensive. We take our chances.”  
“Most people do.” “The birds  
are back this morning.” “Yes, you said.”

16 February 2011



= = = = =

Will they tell me what I need,  
a word's a thing and on it feed?  
Will they roast the sheep again  
and lay it gently mounded on  
saffroned rice in my once gaudy tent  
so that I eat with one hand  
and think with the other? Calamus!  
You also loved me like a son  
and took my hand as we were dozing  
on the banquette at the back of the old  
last train to Hartford, where tents  
are few and the sheep are still alive  
if there at all. Calamus, a fountain pen,  
a band of youth, a gay dream,  
journey, all the ingredients for crime  
or other love. I am some pasha  
of something, fingers greasy with fat.

16 February 2011

= = = = =

Everything says different. Stars  
are made of sparrows, the ones  
that fall by day. The alphabet  
was the biggest accident,  
he caught it, she taught it, we  
interpret it all night long.  
Five thousand years we get it wrong.

16 February 2011

= = = = =

What do we even know  
from the way it began?  
A tree full of itching  
stags come down to rub on it—  
who benefits? Spinoza  
in a dream reached up  
cut a cloud with a knife  
and it bled and the blood  
squirmed into letters in a book  
but who could read that book?  
They were in the alphabet  
angels use when they scribble  
secret billets-doux to demons.  
I waited all day for the answer  
then it came: a thin envelope  
postmarked in Hell—“remember  
everything I say, never trouble  
to understand it.” For a man like me  
that in itself is a kind of liberty.

16 February 2011

## POLONAISE

1.

And in the great palace  
Polish women dance  
there is a special contour  
to them, a special color

the whole world clad in skin.

2.

A man can rush through the dancers  
crying out language  
without rising from his sickbed—  
we are all invalids  
stricken with desire  
moveless in remorse.

17 February 2011

= = = = =

If ever anything were left from  
all the pictures I have seen  
I would take one hone: Orion's  
belt, a star at the tip  
of the strap—café  
in Zurich, beautiful  
people leaning on the bar.

17 February 2011