

2-2010

febI2010

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, "febI2010" (2010). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 469.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/469](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/469)

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).

= = = = =

She wonders where the water hides  
when it's not raining here  
her wonder soon creates a sea  
to store the weather in

then she dreams a storm  
and down it comes, and through  
the snow she lets herself hear  
the hammer blows of carpenters

hard at work building the sky.

23 February 2010

= = = = =

An old person winds an older watch  
but the time is always new—

new is the little animal that hides in now,  
put your ear to the clock and hear it mew.

,

23 February 2010

## LYRIC

ought by rights to be  
on octaves strung,  
strings  
of beast-gut quivering  
in the ancient air

round sounding horn or wooden  
hollowness to voice the sound  
out loud,  
so lyre is emptiness  
(of sense, intention, gospelling)  
must be the horn or shell  
to amplify the tone, no word  
does a string sing,  
something though  
maybe words grow out  
sudden from those hollow tones  
that make us see  
images in the mind's eye  
void of anything but themselves,  
naked children playing in the rain.

23 February 2010

## AMARYLLIS

Let the bulb stretch back to life  
winter after winter.

Crow calls. Fear of blizzard,  
something on its way  
coming to perplex my argument.

Tosca summons him before God  
then throws herself into the sky.

Women are so literal  
sometimes.

                    They too  
perplex my argument.  
I try to say nice things to people  
but I keep thinking about pennies,  
old ones, how the copper  
tastes in my mouth  
when I am a child and hold them  
as if I too had a secret to declare  
worth all the stuff you hear in church  
something that I could just spit out  
if I wanted to, this taste, this kiss  
to the world. Part of the taste  
is copper, earthy, actual, true.  
And this taste too is germs  
I should not be tasting but I do,

the crime of risk, and this  
taste is money itself, the furthest  
space you can actually touch.  
All these are parts of what I want to tell,  
and there is more, but she  
is tired of listening to my silences,  
my mouth is stuffed with pennies now,  
maybe with this money I can reach  
around the world, can touch her hair,  
buy things for them to eat.  
All of them. In the crows calling outside  
I hear every hungry mouth bewailing  
how little I have given, how little  
I have to give. Forgive me,  
no one to hear, forgive me, no one  
is gone. Memory is another kind of bird,  
the kind that knows no winter.  
As long as there's a door  
for her to come through I am safe.  
No actual money has been spent  
only the taste of trying to tell the truth.

23 February 2010



= = = = =

Someone looking  
for someone else  
will find me  
and I will be their Grail

I have the same hope  
a piece of wood has  
or a stone someone else  
will build a house on

a pool of water  
from which people  
might drink or see  
reflected their

own face or the stars.

23 February 2010



## 43.

I am waiting on a door  
a kind of food

a floor to stand on  
a sky to come from

to start again  
where you never were

or beside the fenceposts gaze  
there is no horse you hear the hooves

something beats the earth  
you are close only to closeness

prayerflags in the snow a lesson  
color theory Albers in white trees

*rosa-purpur* from Goethe's mallow  
color of being present to yourself

color of not forgetting  
mauve tint of *Dasein* and a river

a man stood up  
before the word was ready

then it was and then he was  
we are spoken

a winter mind they said  
all stored with springtime

no names please we're islanders alone  
if you fall in love what breaks your fall

something always coming down  
all my secrets you have sent away

to be someone else's mystery  
to be oneself boring as the sky

to be someone's heart sound asleep  
a dying banker groaning with desire

too many animals to have names or numbers  
let me just call you you forever

and you can be whoever you want

I love you also when you turn away

24 February 2010

## 44.

I wonder what I'd make of myself if I'd never met me  
I'll never be as beautiful as the dome of Hagia Sophia

stretched out inside my chest the inside light  
and stray birds make their own way through my space

how long is this song going to forget you  
for whom the world was made

marble images rot in acid rain on the Acropolis  
but the dome remembers the glory of her pelvis

things nestled inside one another till you reach the sky  
wherever the center of the world is

like a man watching laundry tumble in the washer  
a brick lying on the road by Bagdogra I feared to touch

who knows what ground that brick was baked from  
what blood or sperm gushed into its clay

a thing like that never dries out  
a thing like another thing forever

I am in pain only I don't know it  
the book fell open all the words fell out

they change language as we speak  
a lullaby in Danish made me cry

give the little cat milk it's all we have  
give the mountain darkness the dark I loved with with.

24 February 2010

## 45.

To run all the way home and not be there  
to know something and not know you know

to be someone else's hand  
what is it like inside your time

I don't want to make love I want love to make me  
there is a letter written on the moon by whom

never trust a question there are too many answers  
bus off the road in hill country fog

nobody hurt but nobody happy  
too much singing the snakes hurry away

he dreamed he drank ink  
she dreamed she brought him a single word

Roman armies hurry through fog and rain  
all the words turn black inside him

a noise like a horn call comes from the sky  
after bars close you hear them smashing bottles

soon it will be dawn again

what will the old moon do

is it a dark bird trapped in the attic

a wolf in my backyard come just for you?

25 February 2010

## 46.

Lock your backyard against the light  
the turtles are tired of the roses

I named myself after a stone  
you named me after fire

why do we have to dig down to get dark  
isn't your sleeve dark enough or the cup of your palm

this nowhere that I call my mind  
stocked with fraudulent identities one real friend

the passenger finally wakes up beside you  
stretches a shy hand into your distant lap

you know the journey has some meaning then  
it made you most of what you are

there is a little boy though in your other eye  
study the mirror and remember

all those Irish songs the Talmud tells  
you really should listen to the weather



hour by hour communiqués from the absolute  
write down what it tells you and solve for  $x$

the bridge over the Arroyo Seco in rain  
rocket ships and Glendale and nothing serious

the otherworld we see in dream belongs to us  
sometimes wonder if sleep is worth it.

26 February 2010

## KAPUZINERGRUFT

To say risky things about the Emperor  
when all the emperors are dead.  
And even the frail old lady  
who lived so deep into our time  
through all the horrors we replaced  
her gentle husband with, she's here too.

What can we say? The old one  
was kind to the Jews. Even now  
a big photo of him in the lobby  
of the old synagogue  
guarded by armored police.  
Enemies everywhere. Those  
who tore empire down  
did the work of masters  
they could not know,  
the dark images inside  
come to life. Democracy  
made Hitler—that's  
the tragic open secret.  
Free men choose their masters.  
Vote to be slaves  
because we are already mastered  
by the angry animal inside.

We write our wistful poems, Kraus's  
gand fidgets beneath the desk,  
we sneer and choose and choose.  
I remember ten years back  
standing in this Capuchin Crypt  
in mild obscurity, almost alone,  
sad, ignorant as any Ishmael  
among these kindlier shades.

27 February 2010

## 47.

Knowing is so much less than going  
doesn't it seem to you midnight all day long

pleasure peaks and angst lies low  
and you are all your hands can hold

everybody on earth one at a time  
a gold ring fits so many fingers

the fattening simplicity of everyday life  
read a book for god's sake where god hides

she opened her cloak and showed the dead pope  
the horror of blind is trapped with all the old images

we are trapped by every image  
pay gladly for this bondage

in hell they have a scale to weigh each image  
everything you see will look out of your eyes ever after

there is no end to this beginning  
I walk in a cloud of some apartness

never belong to anything

not even your own body

snow limned on every tree limb

netherlandish morning low with light

greenback politics blunt the butcher's cleaver

deep down the well you see a fallen spoon.

27 February 2010

## 48.

Don't go walking with the dead I beg you  
stay inside with me safe among the words

the snow is full of dead men to and fro  
they want to lead you where the snow comes from

they lead you where the snow goes  
midnight a car starts up and does not go

in fear I call the operator to hear an outside voice  
I'm afraid of voices just inside my head

what if she says something crazy too  
intimate detail no telephone should know

or there is no voice left in my machine  
century after Tesla still can't bring the power home

the door they went through isn't there anymore  
the snow was the same and the blue night held it

they walked quick where the road turned  
only simple words please god only simple words

they vanished behind bushes not there either  
at this nowless hour no now no then

anything worth saying is worth keeping still  
I called her name softly ashamed of my need my fear

then louder not caring who heard  
there was no one near I called and she answered

what if even hope can't shake the dream away  
I heard her breath beside me when I woke

but the terror of losing her was still intact  
fear is its own language and no dictionary

to find her again who was right beside me  
I had to get up and out of the room

I had to go downstairs and stand in the light  
dark is so frightening because you see so much in it

light showed the godly limited actual things around me  
who do not move when I look at them

any object any hard thing is an enduring smile

I reach out to trust a cup with my hand.

28 February 2010

**49.**

What are the other animals doing  
where are the ones who gave us their lives

gave us our lives shouldn't we thank them  
what could prayer mean but being kind

kind to people no matter how many legs  
or wings their minds are my mind

their minds are all we have  
as we stretch up and try to eat the moon

though you can fondle it all night long  
the moon eats us all

take a big breath and bite the light  
swallow darkness darkness has such a clever taste.

28 February 2010



## 50.

He wants to live in the hear house  
where all the nymphs of tell attend him

the ear is one long marriage  
every morning is a prophecy fulfilled

he listened deeply in his laziness  
everything was spoken everything got done

there are things like flowers with eyes  
animals are things with deep roots.

28 February 2010

= = = = =

Can it remember the picture  
before it was taken  
when there was just a woman and a terrace  
and no transform of energy into image  
had happened to her  
or to the one who saw her?

But now the image is a man's deepest word  
something he blurts out to the beautiful  
anybody who comes hear,  
anybody he can bother with his voice.

And sound is also an image

or the world is the image  
of a sound said before.

28 February 2010

