

10-2014

## octC2014

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, "octC2014" (2014). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1342.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/1342](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1342)

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).

## RESILIENCE MATTERS

1.

The throne of G-d  
lion-claw finial  
footed on human frailty

like old poetry  
left out to bleach in the sun  
like hair, or in rain  
or cold dew, we also  
lasted, true after all  
in our fashion and forgive.

2.

Lived through so much  
fresh horrors and the news  
of them *uguale* as Pound said  
to the mind of whom?

The *man* (bi-sexed,  
not aging, voluptuous,  
muscular, chronoboric)  
the all of us are.

**Or call him a woman  
and be done with it.  
we care too much  
about easy differences,**

**the real distinctions lost,  
who sprawled it now  
dew soon in the morning sun?**

**3.**

**And then we turned back  
sought cave mouth,  
darked our daring  
deep inside,**

**following the roadmap in our bones.**

**6 October 2014**

## FROM THE OLD MILL

The genome has it,

what I don't dare

like a street

I know too well  
to know at all.

For my body  
is made of streets.

Crescent

went north from Belmont  
past Pitkin with P.S.159  
(Danny Kaye went there, mother  
taught there, fourth grade  
was mine there when my brain  
still worked)

eventually, Atlantic  
Avenue crisscrossing Sunrise  
Highway to Liberty Avenue  
(Law-Ran Diner some Saturdays sauerbraten,  
father's favorite anywhere) or  
easterly to the Earl, pronounced Oil  
14 cents to get in, to see moving pronounced  
moon pictures, or just the show

thence

by commodious trudging north  
past streets of no consequence to this history  
(Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Tartini, Cherubini)  
to the grand romance — Jamaica Avenue  
where Crescent ended in parkish places,  
dogleg to that uphill questing snaking road  
up the ridge of the terminal moraine  
through the cemeteries Jewish and Gentile

o the mausoleums I have known,  
the ghosts that spoke to me as I ascended  
over the Interboro below then  
down to Bavarian amenities of Ridgewood  
(our nearest A&P, a real cheese store,  
hard gruyere from Finland, a taste  
never dies away from the mind, a bookstore,  
Kierkegaard's *Der Verführer*, don't  
ask me why, all the way to the  
Passionist monastery, odd Italian  
priests who wore hearts over their hearts

but mostly my nighttime was arena,  
the Grove for Gorgeous George,  
Antonino Rocca, torsos of strong  
middleaged men, Lord Carlton)

**and that's where the bus ended  
my lifeline to the other and run home,  
my first job in the library of Saint Agnes  
and what did I know, the passions only,  
are passions enough to make a book,  
a life?**

**or at Jamaica turn he other way  
into Queens and the eponymic district  
past Dexter Park home of the Bushwicks  
and the infamous Franklin K. Lane High School  
(who was he?) filled with imaginable girls  
not to be seen in my local soda fountains  
all the way to Gertz Dept. Store and the end of the el.**

**El. So many things ended  
then or came down. El.  
Bab El, the gate of god, and learn to talk,  
and only talk to pray,  
this is prayer I'm doing now,  
this kaddish for the boy I was,**

**you know that if anybody does but  
what prayers we reckoned in those parishes,  
Santa Fortunata, Blessed Sacrament,  
Holy Trinity of the Capuchins,  
bearded men in sandals  
just like the artists who welcomed me**



**6 October 2014**



=====

**Lorn activity  
mass grave Iguala  
tell me something  
horror I don't know  
crime creeps up the arm  
from words we read  
papyrus or devices  
doesn't matter crime  
exceeds itself no  
horror someone  
doesn't yearn to exceed  
louder than the highway  
roar not far from here  
everything bleeds.**

**7 October 2014**

=====

**Each voice  
a tree**

**so much music  
everywhere**

**the light itself  
a language of.**

**7 October 2014**

## **CASTIGATE**

**or is it musth, a frenzy  
or desire as  
strikes mammal male**

**hormone, defeat this  
with a common street.  
Be decent.**

**Castigate  
the animal you ride inside—  
dualism will get you every time**

**tide, is our besetting, soul-besting  
sin. Wheat a minute, genetically modified  
triticums, no wonder glutens do  
us harm. How can we be theologians  
in Big Pharma time? How can we believe  
when things themselves  
reach out to harm?**

**Once  
it was all about touch, the queen  
nestled deep among her attendants  
all winter, 93° at the core  
the beekeeper told us,  
once it was all about keeping warm**

**to breathe the light back into things,  
breathe the light back as story—  
nobody tells such  
stories as we do,  
that is who we do.**

**Castigate doubt  
that poisoned fountain  
whose waters leach beauty away— [ 7 October 2014 ]**

=====

**What we offer  
of, out of, ourselves  
into the imaginary  
world turns it real.**

**We are carpenters  
of breath,  
what we hold back  
will never be.**

**7 October 2014**

## **AS IF A STATUE**

**Her breasts  
in a night of fireflies—  
her hand quieted her body  
two thousand years—**

**how long one night lasts!  
Lasts as long  
as what she gives,  
a raven calling in the woods.**

**7 October 2014**

## **U-BAHN**

**She's on the subway  
he sees her by the door  
she's reading a book**

**he has spent his life  
writing books so that  
one of them could be**

**the book she's reading  
now midway between  
her eyes and her lap**

**where his eyes hold.**

**7 October 2014**

=====

**Such things as waiting for  
are round our throats already  
—it was raining lightly—  
and the trees had lamplight  
from the full moon**

**Alexander, Iskandr, lay there  
looking up at it  
and wanting that too—  
so he invented India and went there,**

***Luna in Terra*, our moon on the earth,  
and found there stones lucid and lustrous,  
fire rubies and yellow sapphires  
only kings can wear, and one great opal  
in which he swore he saw his mother's face**

**or was it Venus, sole ruler of the world?**

**7 October 2014**



=====

**Voigtländer lens  
old camera phase  
darkroom fugue  
cancrizans in light and dark  
red the light  
my true love's bloom  
across the ascendancy of mere gender—  
out from one slim pine  
a single monarch butterfly leads our way  
flirt of wing, the root of color,  
sky-boots on your heels  
fugacious!**

**8 October 2014**

## FROM THE OLD MILL

### *Day Two*

8.

I am what's left of me  
after,

    after I don't know what —  
something changed,  
something changes

                            and the almond tree  
flourishes where the golden  
apples of the West once

but I don't know what those are either,  
were,

    the tall masts so thick at base  
even a big man couldn't get his arms around them,  
even though he can reach across the sea.

And so the ship of me stggers on  
by stormlight and crosswind  
wondering,

    what if you needed  
more than numbers to define a day,  
a date in love's calendar,

caldera,  
change all the words,  
the winds,  
and wait.

Suppose I really meant today  
or it did,  
more likely,  
it knows the shapes and times of things  
as no man can,  
especially the kind I am,  
a traveler who never leaves home.

9.  
So it's not a question of where I saw you,  
the bus in Paris, the black river in Osnabrück  
where the Treaty of Westphalia had just been signed  
a few centuries before I looked up and saw  
was it you on the banks of the Hase, or under  
the waterfall on the road down from Darjeeling,  
how modest you always were in the offering,  
the offering, sometimes you were unsteady  
on my feet, sometimes you lurched  
when you stumbled on my glance,  
I was always looking, no wonder, always.  
It's a matter of looking,  
looking for wonder.

It's really not as simple as that  
but it is.

10.

Can you cauterize a memory, drain  
the sad sepsis from the blood somehow,  
set the leeches working on my temples  
(like Stalin on his deathbed) to suck  
the putrid memories out  
of what had been  
so sweet, so sleek  
in the beholding, in the holding?

11.

No such suck.  
What happens  
happens forever.  
That's the rule.

The school is strict  
we labor in, to learn  
year after year some  
lesson we never

get to recite, memorize  
formulas for sciences

that will never exist  
this side of the long eclipse.

12.  
Have I told you enough?  
Too much! they cry  
but sometimes a true answer  
can be a lie.

13.  
If there is no measure  
where are the nights stored  
you gave to me, Venice,  
Vienna, everything is white,  
stone and sparkle, la vecchia  
all places much the same  
in being where you were  
you aren't,  
                    chestnut trees on the Limmat,

or in mild distance from the Donau  
Prine Eugen on the hill  
no matter what, his palazzo  
tedesco that cries out good to see,  
good seeing from his bed  
stretched out and lingering  
after all those interrupted wars

waiting across the formal gardens  
where summer strums its orchestra  
cooler than the city, shade, up there  
in the oldest zoo. You'll find  
me there too, uncaged  
by accident, unlabeled, left  
for you to figure out  
what I am by size alone  
or sounds I can't stop saying.  
Making. I wish this house  
was my house, then I would be  
safe inside a story, not cold  
autumn afternoon having  
to mke up my own  
from slim pickings of  
the opposite of memory.

8 October 2014.