

12-2004

## decG2004

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, "decG2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1408.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/1408](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1408)

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).

=====  
But who was watching  
when the furrier  
brought the fox pelt back to life  
and light came back  
into those jet bead eyes

and who was watching when the sailor  
reached out one soft hand  
and abolished the sea?

These things are how we came to be,  
how things vanished and came back  
and every animal you see  
bears a history of transformation  
it wants to but can't tell.  
Unless you listen.

That's all I ever tried to say,  
listen to the sheep speaking from the wool,  
the cow's quiet sermon from your dinner plate,  
it all changes  
and everything happens to you.

25 December 2004

=====

miracles everywhere  
like a slip of  
tummy between sweater and skirt.

25 XII 04

## ADS

My dreams have ads in them.  
At intervals will appear  
a teaser for another story  
outside the one I'm dreaming,

to be shown later, one  
I remember was about a woman  
in the Royal Family who soon  
would be on the streets.

Walking them, that is.  
But I forget the feature dream,  
only the ads are clear.  
Because ads

structure our experience  
of what we experience.  
They stand apart, call us  
away from the story

into some sort of real,  
ironic as Brecht,  
save us from emotional  
entanglement with what we watch—

they pulls us  
from what we want  
to what wants us.  
Thank God for ads!

26 December 2004

=====  
Spicy fish paste yum yum.  
Shark is how it starts.  
We begin to eat carnivores.  
By the time we get to cats and dogs  
our own biology will change.

Homo homini lupus  
we used to say when I was young,  
man a wolf to man,  
walking on the frozen Seine  
and watching them come in

wolves, bears, boars  
all the way from the Ardennes  
and we ate them every one  
and no one knew the difference

between what we kill  
and what we build.  
The blood tower blunt  
against the winter sky.

26 December 2004

[I was seeing the Tour Saint Jacques as I wrote – but afterwards remembered the Tongue Tower at Thonon, where you take the steamer to Switzerland.]



their hair still fresh from their shampoo,  
their eyes still in some cases open,  
open blue eyes, amber eyes,

and all I can do is sing.”

And she is listening, she whose  
green or hazel eyes have brought  
so many lovers to this dangerous salon,  
a little marble house  
between the Queen of Hearts  
and the Knave of Swords,

sorry, the Jack of Hearts I mean,  
because it's now, America,

our own terror, our own unlistening.

26 December 2004

**On the way out**

a door is just a door

we are waiting for the spirit man  
who comes to tell us  
everything we don't need

“leave this behind you  
and that, leave your wristwatch  
and your sleeve,

your basket full of brown eggs,  
leave your hair  
and leave your hips,

all the blue destinations  
you cherished, the dog  
and the Lexus, the hat

and your fluent French,  
you wont need those,  
nobody talks there,

nobody sits down,  
nobody bites. You can leave  
everything you know

because in that country  
there is nothing known,  
no waking and no deep sleep

it's all like breathing in a quiet room.”

26 December 2004

## WINTER POSTCARDS

They tell me so much  
but why do I listen?

So I can tell you  
who would rather not hear.

I have been here long enough  
that I can understand almost  
everything they say.

When I try to answer  
they don't understand me.  
The whole thing is just like poetry.

26 December 2004

## ALTERNATIVES TO SYMPATHY

A red ribbon tied in your hair.  
An empty sports car on fire.  
When the producer finally calls  
tell him you don't need the money  
but send it anyhow. Buy a camera.  
Write a script. Ask a pretty girl  
to show you around her town.  
She'll know everything you need.  
Don't forget to mention her  
(misspelling is ok) later  
when you write your memoirs,  
*Fellini in Flensburg*. It will never sell.

26 December 2004

=====

Wouldn't it be great if I could eat glass?  
Then I could see clearly what's inside me.  
What would I see there? A seagull  
blown against a winter sky,  
an island under heavy rain,  
an old man with a guttering torch,  
two girls launching a canoe.  
What else could live inside a man?  
The lions have hidden in the hills  
but a solo wolf howls by the railroad tracks.

26 December 2004

=====

Almost finished with this day's work  
and it's one a.m. tomorrow.  
I master time that masters me.

26 XII 04

=====

A spill to light a candle  
the single candle lights the dome.  
Light comes from what we do.

We get the spill  
from crumpled pages that we wrote.  
We get the flame from fire.

26 December 2004

## THERE ARE AMPLITUDES

at least I think that's the word  
the simple-voice of after-dream  
murmured in me as I picked  
my way to waking. This pen.

I should tell you to begin with  
who I am. I am the one  
who wrote what you are reading now.

That's all I know  
about our "sweet encounter"  
as the saint calls it  
who did most of his praying  
in poeming, so that we  
as we read him (always  
going on about Thee and O Thou),  
we become for a little while  
the God he prays to.

Someone is writing to you,  
it must be you, since you're  
already reading it  
though you wouldn't know me  
or San Juan from Adam's  
housecat as they used to say  
in Kentucky but here we are.

Together. In the intolerable  
almost abusive clutch of grammar,  
forced to be I and Thou to each other  
or else slam the book shut

and go out for a walk  
where a red-headed woodpecker  
is bothering a tree in the new snow  
but it's not clear and never will be  
whether it's me or you who's seeing it.

27 December 2004

[We can't help but be *you* to each other. But the Germans till recently said 'they' when they were speaking to 'you,' and even earlier said 'he' when saying 'you' to majesty. How great to come up with a third party to dignify the relationship, to take the pressure off, the terrible burden of youness. So you and the one you talked to could triangulate towards each other, ricocheting off that 'they' who were no one but you. As for 'you,' they could say that only to pet animals, small children, your best friends – and God. Since they couldn't imagine, and I don't want to, a third party to our conversation with Thee o Lord.]

=====  
The green calyx of the amaryllis  
is beginning to open. Red  
shows inside the lips.

Everything is an animal now,  
it's winter, everything is frail.

A little windowsill  
this side of the snow. Animal.

And like Ishmael I alone am left to tell.

27 December 2004

## THE DISCOVERY OF ATLANTIS

The sea did not rise the sea sank.

Leaving the island of Atlantis  
joined to the mainland.  
Part of the continent ever after.

That is where it is today,  
you could walk there if you started  
out in the right place.

And where would that be?

You could start from Konya  
or you could start from Tirgu Mures  
or Sankt Gallen or Rouen,  
and the east you'd be looking for  
is not necessarily compass east

any more than Turkish Delight delights  
any Turks, or only Turks.

There is a deck of cards that shows the way.  
Fifty-two ways plus One.  
The Path of the Joker.

Going my way?

When the glisten is gone from the ink  
I too will be gone,

tomorrow, at last light.  
And leave these cookies for the fox  
who will make offerings for us all  
to Ganesh,  
    who walks on earth  
secure, alert, benevolent:  
Lord of Sudden Fortune.

27 December 2004

=====

*after Hugo*

Tomorrow, once dawn  
has come and gone  
I will be with you  
where the cliffs are forever  
saying goodbye to the sea.

27 December 2004

=====

*for Irina Slutskaya*

But how did I wind up  
skating on ice?

How did the grass  
freeze beneath my feet,

my ankles strengthen,  
my heart lose count?

How did I get so nimble  
and the landscape stretched away

in a permanent December  
till I was everywhere else

fast and nimble and full of joy  
light as a flag in the wind?

What country's flag?  
How many times will I turn

before I fall?  
And who will I be then?

27 December 2004