Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

**Recommended Citation**
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1414

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.
Walking under the wing
the Beethoven the million
revelers in fur hats
the endless midnights
the joy that comes to
remember us, the change
in the weather, quiet
subwats, the river
roaring calmly past
under the ice, the actual.

We are so close to the
beginning again, a cloak
around your shoulders,
smile for the camera
so hard for me to smile
I am permanently happy
so this glum face of mine
is my smile all the time

so I delight in the tumult,
New Years, ative city,
what nice people Americans
really are, innocent,
trusting, kindly, ready
to kiss and be happy,
a land of why not and let’s
try it, a land of sure, 
sharing not so much but 
eagles overhead, fireworks 
from China like everything 
else, wolf fur on your collar 
bow wow don’t make me laugh 
it is all starting up again 
and we are newborn as can be, 
naked in our smug clothes, 
I mean snug, nice people, 
prompt to forgive, quicker 
to forget, I love you too, 
and yes we will all be siblings, 
lovers fiddling with locks, 
nice people, maybe even me.

1 January 2018
Blue remembers us. 
I don’t know what else
it knows how to do,
the sky. We have been
in war and forgotten much
in the depravity of capital.
Winter comes along to show
sheer cold beauty it bids
us understand. Outside
and inside the same, the left
hand quiet in the lap.

1 January 2018
A NEW YEAR

It's only risky
if you see it as different
from the old.
It's all the same,
it's you all over again,
you the victim, the promised one,
the only hope, the recuer.

1 January 2018
But all the important things haven't been said,
tea to dunk cookies in.
the cyclotron, that asteroid,
organic kale. No, wait,
just the moon in my hands.

1 January 2018
If I knew
how to be closer
I would wake.
Get up, go
outside where it all
according to legend
is waiting always.
And there you’d be
silent as a scarecrow
sumptuous as Saturdays.
But I wouldn’t know your
name again, so the sun
would whisper it to me.

1 January 2018
We live in numbers. Dangerous. Numbers accumulate, numbers kill.

Forget them. Don’t count. When is not important. Rome just fell, we still speak English, sort of, I have barely been born even now. Wait your turn, i’m almost finished. Or am I you already and I am done?

1 January 2018
The overture
is longer than the opera.
It has to be —
it has to do all the work
when there's so little
to say or sing.

Open the door —
all the rest is anti-climax,
late afternoon, dusty cactus,
your old aunt’s living room.

1 January 2018
THREE SAD AVOWALS

Snow on roads then salt then cold
and everything is white with remembering.

*

I know so little by myself.
Language knows everything for me.

*

The secret of power
is paying attention.
And that is its terrible cost.

1.I.18
Maze with no middle
ouzzles with no outcome.
Modern mathematics
elegant solutions to no problems.
Null problems.

    I am the Minotaur
Imroar, I rage,
I have no labyrinth to hide in,
no path to the center of myself.

1 January 2018
Something I meant to remember will have to remember me instead. Now all I see is what I see, sun, snow, cars, caravans, comets, cat pawprints in the snow, big ones, catamount, empty cages, birds, walls crumbled, rpof holds firm, all I can think about is spring, save me, Lady, before I remember.

2 January 2018
Something about suffering.

2 January 2018
Released from dread
one falls at last asleep.
Sleep is a waiting room,
you hear strange voices
through the lawyer’s door.
Doctor’s door. Priest’s.
Somebody in there is
always talking about you.

2 January 2018
So from the fall
forms everything:

a castle on a cushion
satin offered to a queen
throned on a water-lily

*art abolishes gravity*

the castle shimmers, shakes,
lights in the ballroom

the queen peers in
through the ogival windows
and sees herself in there,
all of her selves, dancing
with all her others,
a bishop is standing alone
solemnly blessing the dancers.
She smiles and hands
the castle back, and floats away.

2 January 2018
THE BROOKLYN RAIL

An aquatic midsize bird. *Rallida brooklinica*, native to the shores and marshes of Long Island. It is a year-round resident. Its flight is swift, and has the unusual characteristic of preferring to fly into the wind instead of with it; in like manner, when on the water, it tends to beat against the current. It is skillful in discovering likely feeding locations and nesting places, so other shorebirds will often follow it to profit from its discoveries.

2.I.18
Silence at the other end
silence on the line.

Take pity on me, darkness,
and make some sound

*sound lets us see*

It was as if some disease
had called, and picking up the phone
meant catching it,

having it, being what it turns
a person into,
always waiting and no one there.

3 January 2018
What does one red car on a snowy field represent? I’ll have to ask Emily, first explaining what a car is and that’s beyond me, really, but she could thoroughly explain the snow.

3 January 2018
Something quiet
in the forehead

a thought sleeping
breathing quietly

all around it
a sense of waiting

for it to think.

3 January 2018
Weather was always here
the fear is new

* 
A man alone with the weather
--that is tragedy.

3 January 2018
ROMANTICS

...are disposed
to be protective of something,

protect their emotions
their beloveds their homeland
their language

hence soon become paranoid.

Now that I see what I’ve just written
I wonder if there is any opposite to romantic,
someone who pushes beyond
all these affections, protections —

someone who might say to me
if you care so much about language
why do you keep writing it down?

4 January 2018
Wait till it’s over
it’s only beginning

when it’s well underway
it’s almost done

each of us has
our own road to walk

we’re almost there.

4 January 2018
Gloom in discourse
clouds sift snow down
into the strong wind:

a huge white sentence
shouted out at us

I went to the wrong
school to understand

what all this whiteness says.

4 January 2018
I am my landscape
that’s why it’s hard
for me to smile or show
emotion facially.

Do pine trees smile?
Does a brook ever frown?

Whatever it is I feel
I have to say it,
I have to write it down.

4 January 2018
Measurement too is a flower,
the fingers of number
hold the pertal of each thing,
fold them, test
the tensile strmusic of their meat.
Word. Stone. The distances themselves.

4 January 2018
I have been neglecting my duty
to study the clouds, guiding them
around the skies of my mind
in from their own blue neighborhood.

A cloud will tell you all you need to know
but you have to lead it indoors,
an honored guest, a pasha in your parlor,
the room made just for talking, your head.

Now the cloud stretches out, prophesies.
This one up there right now is telling me
something about Europe, the Urals, a man
weeping on a hillside, trying to be true.

5 January 2018
Keep talking —
the birds are listening
down in Costa Loca
where I left my dream.

Parrots and cormorants,
best of both worlds,
and crows, the lords of heaven.

Can you hear me, friends?
Is any word worth a feather?

5 January 2018
Listening to church bells
when there are no churches there

the cool lagoon
above the frozen earth
this afternoon
floared tropic clouds

church bells
blue in my ears
but no altar near

but a pirate ship
that sails beneath the sea
brings back
my captured gold to me.

5 January 2018
Think about colors when they’re gone —

in the black and white world of writing, where the chancery hand in legal documents calligraphy itself had to stand in for colors, cursive meant blue or violet, uncials meant red.

There is a green meadow in every open space, a meadow stretching out between paragraphs of prose.

5 / 6 January 2018
Speedboats of the 1930s
noisy on Memory Pond

how little thing
to make so big

and roisterers aboard
clad in white, caps,

with peaks, scarves,
long hair like the wind!

They told us the world
would be like this

when we were old enough
to buy our way in,

cars with no roofs,
more scarves, more long hair,
sand only one lesson
to be leaned: Give me more!

But now they all sail away
silent on a sea of money

and poor me forgot to pay
so play only by remembering.

6 January 2018
HOW TO WRITE

When mind goes one way
and hand goes slower
anybody can understand
the few words left there

before the door closes
and the horse runs away,
I feel your thighs
squeeze my withers

will I ever get to the hill in time?

6 January 2018
Far from any us I ever was that water goes.

The Hudson’s frozen over now, they walk halfway across it but fifty years ago young Gaffney drove his MG on it all the way to Saugerties.

Histories. The water, though, knows none of this. Or all of it, carries its reflections south all the way to the great sea canyon nobody knows.

What color are my hands? Whose eyes stand in for mine, we hurry to the island-of-getting-born, for any me. Any me sounds like enemy — is that clear water too, busy with eels up here and seals downstream
and what do they breathe beneath the ice,
I mean what do they dream.

People talk about the End Time
but here I am
and always will be,

sounds like enemy,
holds your hand too,
begs you to stay,

teaches you a little song
to melt all the ice,
lilacs and pussy willows

and a great city steaming in the sun.

7January 2018
for SQ

What do I know about any you after all these years?
A year is a short-haired mongrel can’t be trusted, bites randomly, sleeps when it should be on guard.
No point in trusting the years to tell me who you really are.

So take a sword to time, a machete to cut through all the undergrowth of endless days and furtive nights and come into this clean moment,

Om Vajrasattva Hung
I’ve heard you say so often, to cleanse your heart of enemies, and cleanse the enemies’ hearts too, forgive, Forgive, Because there are no enemies.

That much I know. How far you walk.
How well you see.

2.
The rest I have to guess.
Slowly, awkwardly, I climb
in behind your eyes

and see the world improve
right away, shadows keener,
outlines sharper, animals

move smoothly, their fur
glistens, a man’s face
looks at you and glows with light.

3.
All these years
you have been seeing.
All around you
people think they
understand you,
but they don’t see
what you see.
So they don’t see you.

4.
That’s none of my business.
When I was a kid I wanted to be
a troll who lived under the bridge,
safe in the stone arch, a pal to water,
under the thunder of traffic over,
alone with the intelligent alewives,
the springtime trout. And never
ever have to talk to people, talk
is so difficult, talking keeps a person
from seeing and hearing, talk is static on the radio. Remember radio? Water and stone and earth and roads and nowhere to go, people keep passing, murmuring, maybe even a little scared, talking is just another way of being afraid.

5. So don’t expect me to say anything much. You’re part of the physics of things, and I feel comfortable with you as I do with trees and stones, those nimble stones your husband conjures, as I do with water, with the sky. The clouds are my children, did I ever tell you that? Maybe it’s time I do.

7 January 2018
Caught off guard
I answered the phone

words flowed down my ears
I caught some in my throat

and sent them back,
some of them. Time passed

There was silence again.
Outside a solitary figure

vaguely masculine stepped
downhill through the snow.

8 January 2018
Every anytime waiting by your shoes
the message comes the mood demands
all ythe subjunctives quiver intensely
in the subways of thje heart — no metaphor
intended, the blue rails run in — hope
will get you nowhere, a decent city doesn’t
charge a man to walk along its streets,
picking ripe pears at the Korean corner
costs a little more than nothing but who
of all our citizens understands the dollar?
A curious word through Dutch from some
lost valley in the busy Germanies of old.
It used to be silver in a grandpa’s hand
dazzling the greedy child always hungry
for more knowledge that the world allows.
Permission is the rarest flower, pure white.

8 January 2018
When Columbus got home he kept a diary in Hebrew not always grammatical but who am I to judge, I who spell pigeon d-o-v-e, I who cast a smaller shadow than I should, I who stand a pagan in the shivering snow but still call myself a hero — wouldn’t you? Poor Columbus, we blame him for ourselves. And of course he was Jewish— don’t let that “Christopher” mislead you. Who but the Jews carried Christ into the world?

8 January 2018
Not the melody
but the intervals themselves
of which melody is made,

the intervals he knew
to wield the wild
space between mind and heart

between breath and being.
And in that rising ninth I heard
everything I love come back to me.

8 January 2018
HURRYING EAST

on a strange disease
the thought slept harder,

it smelled

of laurel on top of the head
and it brought shadows with it
uprooted from a forest past the sea.
Believe him — no reason to lie
except the fun of thinking it up.

No other longue has a word for fun.
So few words! How the thought
almost woke, racked with pity
for all those who would think it.

But does its work, says *Wake
Now in a million minds, Wake
and write this down — I am
what language is really for.*

9 January 2018
Waiting is like the cohabitation of sin with a sonnet.
Or a dance insidiously slow counting the syllables of time, the awe-struck silences.
Everything is beside the point. Inside this imperious moment a child crying for its mother somewhere lost in what’s to come.

9 January 2018
Roebuck, remember? Robert Graves on stage at the 92nd Street Y swaying like a boxer telling the ancient story he was first to declare. Roebuck and the woman of white barley, memory unpieceed, haunted islands, the secret revealed, then lost again. Only the hidden meaning matters. Behind even this house a thicket where deer drift in snow.

9 January 2018
Things that matter most
in the middle of the night
when nothing works but memory.

Building that cabin in the woods
wildturkey peeking in the window,
birds are more curious than men

that’s why they’re able to fly.
When’s the last time you tried
to see through a bug-hole in some leaf—

what did you see that made you
look away? Answer my questions
and the bird will let you go back to sleep.

9 January 2018
The taste of it
rising through sunlight
like walking through Astoria
past Ritter’s bakery—
I remember his daughter

but we are the ones
for whom the world was made
thought by fear by desire,
yearning, sweet buns in the window,
cinnamon disasters

a memory is a jogger
running past, his T-shirt
has a word on it
he goes too fast for you to read,
her ponytail swings
long after in your mind
Darkness wavers,
the bridge lights up.
We cross today
to the other side of now,
purple lights at night

and midway on the span
a flagpole, flag
straight pointing
north in a stiff breeze—
ocean!

Get the numbers right.
Can’t do it by counting.
Smell of coffee too,
they roast it rarely,
neighborhood habits,
chalk on sidewalk,
walk on a heart
but whose?
Teach the child to repeat
“Someone else lives where I
used to live, and I live
where somebody else did.”
This is as good as going to church
or learning to play the harmonica.
And when it’s time for the toga virilis
he’ll need no sleeve to wipe his tears

memory’s monotheist.
Worship only one at a time,
don’t let one lead you astray
the hungry desert always waiting
choked with images

Everybody’s father
did something different.
Doctor, baker, garbageman, banker,
every father was master of numbers,
times of day, calendars, money.
Fathers of Friends are fearsome.
they rule a world
I had no wish to enter.
But after the first fatal cigarette
you slide downhill into maturity,
lost among grownups, the baker’s
daughter just a shadow on the wall.

10 January 2018
Miracles are real as the minds that witness them this leper has been cleansed many a time.

10 January 2018
The filling of the pen
Leviticus

Wayiqra

ritual purity begins
with speaking the heart

cardiophany

the words

reveal.

Purity
is a sound in the sky
a bird flying by.

Cleanse the wall
with looking.
Cleanse your heart
by speaking.

10 January 2018
My natural way
is line by line—
that’s how I breathe,
morning’s asthmatic,
afternoon robust,
evenings riverine, fluminous.

Blue words on a white page,
what beautiful weather!
(This is what I whisper in confession.)

10 January 2018
Is there anything left for me?
A bowl of dried figs poached
now to make them tender,
a pan shallow with water,
not a hint of moonlight, a cloud
like a dancer stretched all
around the sky. None of these
allotted, all of them seized
by sensory appetite. Senses
are the wolves of the world,
ravening up everything. Hear
the car passing much too fast,
a sound that breaks the law,
The law. Leviticus. Interferences
with natural attentiveness
to all that passes near us, all
we can reach and apprehend.
So it’s all for me and none of it.
Maybe Eden was too easy.
Maybe we’ve always been wrong.

10 January 2018
The Choros enters here
slogging through mud
they make iy look like dance
they sing, happy workshop
pretend there are birds
singing too, springtime
what does song have to do
wthj tragedy, the very word
means goat-song, the song
they sing when they kill
the goat for some god.
we all know how to hear it still.

11 January 2018
Things come back towards us,

where have you been we ask,

things smile (things always smile)
but never tell.

How could they have been so far away and then instantly are here not even breathing hard just so relaxed.

O to be a thing and rest content in merest being.

11 January 2018
Children in the air
floating towards their mothers
who leap up to catch
the favored one but
often have to settle
for a lesser fish,
some blinking child.

On other planets
all this is done
differently, with spoons
or flowerbeds
or even in the body
of the one who leaps.

11 January 2018
there is a blue box
when I type
it appears around each letter
and is blue