

12-2008

decA2008

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, "decA2008" (2008). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 663.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/663](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/663)

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).

= = = = =

**Your mind is on welfare**  
but your body rules.

The screws in this proposition  
are interchangeable.

I am a coldhearted  
man I am a hearted

man. Your mind is cold.  
Your body is a heart.

I am the welfare you're on.

\*

Interchangeable hearts.  
The parts of anything

are shameful. I am myself  
ashamed of sunshine.

All things are naturally far.

\*

Let's see how much they know.  
However far they go

there is a leash called memory  
tied to their tails.

Everything else moves backwards  
only I move ahead.

\*

But what do they know in their hearts?  
Sentences beginning 'but' are more likely to be true than those not.

Soon we will have enough to prove something.  
Distinguish the grass from the lawn.

The heart from what it knows.

1 December 2008

= = = = =

Far as they are  
they try to be close—

wet lush green in sunshine  
then wet brown leaves

under blank trees.  
One country borders on another.

There is no such thing as a lie.  
Or nothing in between.

\*

But most answers, like this one,  
are obvious. Retreat forward  
until you reach safety  
behind enemy lines.

Now you're here. Heartbeats  
all round you, some of them yours.

\*

A coldhearted man and a plow  
and a wet field.  
Give or take an ox.  
A man and an acre.  
How dare you even be true?

1 December 2008

= = = = =

Someone always watching.

The soft determination of live waterfowl—  
they move but who knows how

But I know how, I have seen them  
walking along under there

the air you think is water but I know is earth,

the gods live there  
speaking freely  
upward and outward  
through our sometimes obedient skin.

1 December 2008

= = = = =

Sneeze before breakfast  
doctor for lunch  
graveyard for supper  
motel on the moon.

1.XII.08

= = = = =

Watching

the sun  
rises  
again

the words  
are bare  
trees.

2 December 2008

= = = = =

Everything is inside now,  
the carpet and the trumpet  
equals at last,

                  one touch  
gently meaning everything.

2 December 2008

## **FIFTY SENTENCES FROM AN UNKNOWN\* LANGUAGE**

1.

Portions are edible on certain days.

2.

Luminous behavior in the forest tolerates no religious explanations.

3.

The animal over there is for a reason.

4.

A species is a local insanity in a world of stars.

5.

The actual has no mother.

6.

When a man condemns himself he becomes a door, but when he accepts the condemnation of others he turns into a wall.

7.

What the ancients called God we know as a flashlight in the woods just past midnight.

8.

In the middle latitudes animals to milk mean bliss.

9.

Lifting beyond the barrier means a sleep from which you awaken with a sudden roar, you animal.

10.

Because of flowers they did this to me.

11.

In some maidens the valleys are singing.

12.

Marriage is a pigeon on the roof top, a raindrop on the windowpane.

13.

In this factory when they make a milky opaque glass the workers weep.

14.

This hill used to be a hat.

15.

We condemn ourselves to whatever comes into our heads.

16.

The habit of fear is called thinking.

17.

If we all quit, we'd have a chance.

18.

Centuries ago the sea said or did something we still don't understand.

19.

To call it music without calling it music, call it by someone's name.

20.

Harmless, in the woods, watch deer drink where the stream pools out under a pale rock.

21.

Where the blue people gather only one voice is heard no matter how cold the skin might be.

22.

The magician in the market place can't find his glass of milk, on which all his magic depends.

23.

Sparrows in the hedge make morning nervous, many.

24.

Summer sky on a winter day means the dead are watching as they try to smile.

25.

From the day he was born he was never alone even for a minute and his only reward for all that unending *accompaniment* was to be king.

26.

Never be alone means there is another island where you actually are.

27.

Nothing like a sea, more like a cathedral, it is made of air.

. . . 2 December 2008

---

\* Maybe not an unknown language, but a known language on an unknown planet – do they speak Latin on Jupiter? – because it is *place* that makes language means what it means. We just listen.

= = = = =

I woke up this morning and realized I wasn't who I thought I was. This was even before I got to the mirror. Or whoever it was.

The mirror has nothing to do with it.

I realized that the person I thought all this while  
I was slowly growing to be  
was not me at all. Not at all.  
I was someone different. Unknown, exciting even, the way death may be.

2 December 2008

= = = = =

Why does 'realize'  
which really means making real  
just mean thinking something?

Plato at the tiller  
all these years  
no wonder we're where we never are.

3 December 2008

= = = = =

The weather is the only thing  
that needs our commentary.  
Everything else talks too much as it is.

3.XII.08

..... **SENTENCES** ...

28.

Taking off a shirt is the same as meaning something.

29.

The animal leapt from the tree before we could tell what it was.

30.

They walk on words and die of names.

31.

Fear is a planet without trees.

3.XII.08

= = = = =

### **The trial of Socrates**

still goes on—  
that's what we're doing  
all day long with our chalk  
our centrifuges  
our analysis of an unending text.

We are trying to save the life  
of a man dead two thousand years  
and this is good work that we do,  
wit-work, will-work, heart-swoon  
and deepest *Wonne*, all we can

is all we can. Cut down the tree  
a bird flies up. Rub out a word  
the girl begins to sing. Lock  
the door and Hegel comes in.

There is a wind in the tree  
that does not touch the meadow grass.  
I slam the book shut and a flower opens—  
one more person whose name I don't know.

4 December 2008

## SORROW'S MAP

The fallen tree lies on the crest of the ridge. Recent time and glacial time.  
Phone booths have vanished from the world.

\*

Things examine me. Because I am a pilot of the trees the sea stands still.  
Anywhere is everywhere. I alone am made of distance. Good-bye.

\*

Faulty engagements lead to lymph-soaked skirmishes, or is it milt, squeezed  
from aionian fish? Perfect-boned, prong-jawed, one last time  
upcurrent spring?

\*

4 December 2008

[*Sorrow's Map*, continued]

Who took your sparrow? You had it and all the furniture of the woods was  
at its pleasure, perch here or flee there, by hopping or by fluttering,  
who?

\*

Was there amazement in it? Passer-by, you wanted it to be sparrows, I  
blackbirds. You said white-throated sparrows, I said cowbirds. You  
said sparrows in the hedge. Loud. Beside the cars. No frost even.

\*

There is little tenderness in repetition. You are good with knots. A little  
tenderness? No, hardly any. Knots though. Careful fingers.  
Cunning. In the Bible there were suspicious of them, knots.

\*

Customary to be lavish with them, new-weds, post-shivaree, hungover,  
pocket full of silver and a ticket to the sea. Ocean bathing, a tradition,  
the absence of any namable disease, a pigeon on the roof outside the  
window. Hotel, hotel, oh old white wood. A window when the sun is  
gone.

\*

Not knowing what's happening is the best time to do it. Not knowing. Every  
afternoon the woods describe themselves. So much description. Not  
knowing. Never know. Describe, describe. Tell but never know.

\*

Those we have lain with lie awake. In us if not any longer in themselves.  
Even later, after the cemetery, after the courtroom, god's acre. Their  
bright eyes.

\*

But things were closer then, like the moon to the earth, every child has held  
it in her hand.

\*

There are more rocks in that place than in another place. Old rocks and new,  
on the seashore or on rivers, inlets, fjords, waterfalls. But there are  
rocks that look at nothing. And who knows what they see? And you  
hear those too.

\*

But there were other things to worry about, weren't there? The stars, their  
dwindling half-lives that we call Light. Nervous couples trembling up  
the sidewalk, we call that Love and the weird flower we call live-  
forever, blood-red when it fades.

\*

Of course they dream. What else to do against the rabid dark? Wake up  
while it's still night and no day will ever come that day. You carry  
the dark with you. The dark kiss makes a new mouth in your skin.  
Through which you scream.

\*

The dry, faintly hollow terror when the mind can find, but not hold onto, a  
single image. Everything inside feels like a prayer you forgot to say.

\*

They say the name but the wrong person walks in. Green clothes, a cocked  
hat, an arm out of the sleeve, a cat in the crook of the arm. Who  
wears a cat these days? So bright the green! Satin. Slowly I learn to  
be afraid.

\*

Was it time, or was there time, for all these questions he wondered. And if it wasn't, what was he doing wondering? Who could he ask if he could ask? We run through life asking May I ask you a question? And it is asked already. With every breath, maybe. And there's never anybody there.

\*

Woke in a dark room uncertain if the light that outlined the opaque window shade was coming or going. It felt not quite like now. Sleep left, though. And left what behind it, and for whom? Stared at even carefully the light didn't seem to change. Can anything ever change. The old dresser in the corner answered, Only wood knows how to. Change.

\*

5 December 2008