1-2007

janG2007

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/666
Excitement is a walk.
Knowing is being there.
But what is running,
my Viennese? Always
stopping to eat. Currywurst,
sharp mustard, rough
stone of the Opera House.
Cold wind.

25 January 2007
Bread is a map.
Dogs follow you,
it is bad luck
to see something
red, bad luck
to speak, worse
to be spoken to.
You think too
much. I need a cup.

25 January 2007
It is bad luck to be someone.
You could have gone all the way
without a hat. Your aunt
would warn you over and over
about the rocking chair
the way you moved it
when it was empty. Scaring.
About the parrot whose eyes
somehow were sewn shut.
It was magic. How can such
things be? And why?
What is being kept out
of the world when we can’t see?
Later a man from Brazil
told you the same story.
But he had only magic –
no brick fireplace like hers,
no faux-log fire, no tiny
quivering actual blue flames.

25 January 2007
1.
So many names
where did you get them all?
Where shall we put them all?

I will sit here watching
till the last one comes in,
I will not bother counting them,

it’s enough that one of us knows
and this one is you.
I will know it when it comes

because it will tell me so.
Because things do.
The seagull above my head

screams its name again and again,
signing all the astonishing caprices
it sonnets in a cloudscape

we can barely make out down here.
Everything says its name.
I breathe it out too, the one I mean.

2.
Can we do it
together? All these buses,
mulberries, euro coins,
hard to keep the colors straight.

What country were we in
when we began?
Or are we there yet,
cornfield full of miracles.

3.
Hop on the train then
see if all these rails
can find it, with all their
remorseless convergences,

o symmetry! They
persuade us all the time
that where they go
is where we want to be

unconvinced, we wander
through a fallow field
that looks like any other
field. The sky. The bird.

4.
Then it was night. The conspirators
–bat, hedgehog, worm– consulted
with the mirror and the church bell
and knew that this time they will win.

No dawn for you, little thorp,
little thatch on sleepers’ rooves,
no noise of horse’s hooves
will ever rouse you.

Then they slept too.

26 January 2007
The article comes late to language. Before that we had to know how many of a thing the word intended, a dog, the dog, dogs, all dogs that ever were. Latin had none, Russia has none now. What to do? Dog. Enough. Barking not too near. Fear. Wheel broke on cart or all the wheels on all my treks and we will never get there. Where?

26 January 2007
Am I ready for the anything
he asked and examined
himself distracted by what seemed
from the marble sky some dust
was sifting down quiet blacktop
“Commuteless morning
in the fact of thing,” he
reported to himself, displeased
by this display of wordy brevity.
“Only the natural knows
how to be long. It has a right
to repetition. We must take
brevity as the soul of art,
the human thing, the contradiction.”
By now though the snow had forgotten.

27 January 2007
1.
The acrobats have finally come
and we are undecided.
Nimble they may be but o so bodily.
Don't know if we can bear
such bare manhood, womanhood,
enterprising in our public space
where hiding is normal, where God
has a cross or two set up to mark
where he died. But these are alive!

2.
Everything is a different shade
of the same color, like night
but full of light. What can
this picture be? Did they see
this way in the old days,
in greys and blacks, did the world
inherit color only late in life
like an old man called to the throne
when his grandmother finally died?
Or is this playful world we see
around us just one more trick?
Local technology? Nobody can
remember before now. Did they
have red back then? Or blue?

Maybe we are weary now with choosing
and the traffic out my window now
just old snapshots tricked to jerk along,
pretend to move, old flipbook, no more
natural than a church organ or a hand.
And will we get past color some day too,
like telegrams and typewriters, go
back to the racy world that Atget shows
when muscles had to do the work we set colors to.
3. 
Hurry. Speculation 
breaks the mirror 
and lets the ghosts out 

they speak Irish 
and hurry by themselves 
and for themselves 

drink our milk 
and bite our shoes 
and leave strange 

ribbons in our trees. 
Hurry the horror 
the mirror the quick. 

27 January 2007
LISTEN A WHILE AND THEN FORGET

This was Mozart. This was ashes falling in Aunt Celia’s grate, a story she told about Indians, her nose, a parrot, a blue flame. This is Chinese food. This dark commodity is pigeon’s blood use it the way we use parrots listen or a magnifying glass. It is not time to shave or forgive. The wounds of recency never heal: once young always young. Even you old to begin with die immature.

About Time really nothing is known. It’s just a file name for all our forgetting if it is even that. This is Mozart in the sense of pay attention but no one knows who he is or where. Where is his house? About Being nothing is known. Only atheists need Sunday, that pale highway where nothing happens. God’s vengeance on human experience. Again and again. Again is made by weeks. By measure. And all we have to measure is us. No actual pigeon was harmed in this house.

28 January 2007
Biber, No.15 C major

1.
All the measurement is done.
The sun is ready to infect the day
with the dream of seeing. Illusion
is not the worst of it. Remembering
is worst, the ones who are not alive
and wondering if they ever were in me
deeper than enough so all their losses
could be found in me.

2.
That doesn’t say it clearly. Help is a house
in winter. A hand inside my hand
perfectly fits. My fingers drum on the tabletop
as if impatient. But the only thing
they’re thinking anxiously of is wood.

Let there be thing
when I come there

let the shadows at least
look like names I know

heads of hair I spot
in a crowd and cry out

there is Mary now.

But the song doesn’t run along that street
it slowed down near the ruined temple
and watched children playing ringaleapio,
What else do we leave them to inherit?
A self-portrait painted when he was
one hundred and three years old,
just his face on some hide
a god had ripped off a myth, a man.
The song stops there.
Veronica buries her face
in the soiled cloth
and his face soaks into hers,
To see him these days
we have to look in every woman's face.

3.
Can I come over
after the day is finished
and use your house
to clean my dream?

You are the one
it told me, in so loud
a voice I couldn't tell
if it meant me

who listened or you
to whom I speak now,
couldn't tell who or whom,
just like with music.

4.
We were talking about the sun.
The unknown star.
It has risen.
A bird on a branch
is big enough
to blot it out.

Branch of my tree
deliver me.
When you see your friend
outlined against the morning sun
you know this is heaven.
Sambhogakaya Christ
between two thieves:
disciples, that means,
those who take the
teacher's words and run away.
It has begun even without wanting to
and it has taken me by the hand
and it has led me up the street
past the butcher and the dry cleaner
the flying red horse of the gas station and
it has crossed me to the far pavement
drug store vacant lot where it is winter
and it takes me and my sled to slide

and it pulls me up the long street
to the school and leaves me there
finally among other people there are always
people there but it does not tell me
their names, it doesn’t tell me yet
that names are important, only the street,
the street is important, never leave
the pavement, it left me here and went away
so far away I can’t even imagine it
will ever come back and yet at nightfall
I am somewhere else, does the street
do things like that by itself? It takes me
home, I am an afterthought of architecture,
something to lend scale and motion
of a place, only place is permanent,
there is no place in the world without a place,
place must be the one who leads me,
place I mistook for my mother’s hand,
the place is a hand that carried me
and carried you too to our inconclusive
but exciting rendezvous, all silk
and hurry, it led us together and apart,
it let the sun out of the sky and chained
it down at night, it gave me a voice
but no will, what I do is what it
bids me to, the bakery, the hardware store,
the public library, the firehouse, the old
tired salesman beside a spotted window
full of very white dried salt fish.

28 January 2007
I am at that bright
place known beginning
sun in whose eyes
through a red flower

(just like the 20th Century
beginning, red-flowered,
when Left meant right)

but now it’s just me
nobody is talking to
a few vessels
left out on the porch overnight

as a prudent housewife
sets out her lamb stew
to cast its fat
risen to the top thick white in the cold night

– we have been living here
long enough to guess the weather,
nothing more.

Sun on roofbeam
like a new bird.

Cat at door.
Some or all of what I say
is on the brink of the imaginary,
the beautiful unexciting imagined place
where things are quietly just as they are
and no girls with eyes like raccoons
leap down on us from the moon.
I have no cat, for instance,
but the sun as I said is shining.

29 January 2007
The shot-down duck
came to life
in the hunter’s fridge,

wing broke, leg broke
but alive, I heard it quack
on TV, a brown

marsh duck,
two days in the freezer
woke and spoke.

Refrigerium, a limbo
a place to be renewed
on the edge of life

until your Easter come.
Poor duck, Saint Duck,
somebody says somebody

is taking care of it now
in a sanctuary, holy place,
where all its pain

hides in our vocabulary.

29 January 2007
Sailing not through a time
but long demand, diamond
for an enquirer, hold this
(and every this) between
your hands and see.

I like the way the lawn
is spelt today, every
consonant in its place
snug as Slavic and my
breath free to scatter
them and through them,
‘them’ being all there is.

All of you. Axes
align the light, otherwise
we’d never get to see
through all these trees.
Diamond. Now frame
carefully in mind a query
you want this oracle to solve.
Let it dissolve along your
alveolum like a tune
you know better than to
whistle in this stuffy
solemn church of the world.

Now squeeze the stone and see
the vast machinery from which
you stood too long aloof.
Go, ask anyone for help. Don’t
let pride stand where greed should
run. Ask, acquire, focus, demand,
aspire. Remember Alexander!
Though neither of us is able
right off the bat to remember why.

This quiet sun that all life gives.
But it could time.
It could become: this quiet sun
that’s all life gives.
And that would in turn be true and good enough in such dark wood.

31 January 2007
Not much horizon
in this valley in a valley.
Bare trees in snow
augur a receding.

Towards the unbounded
that light itself
demonstrates and denies.

Morning. Fragile
winter sun. All
the branches busy

with white writing.

31 January 2007