

3-2007

## marF2007

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, "marF2007" (2007). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 681.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/681](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/681)

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).

= = = = =

All the chances of.  
And then another,  
sweeping out the street  
and not worrying.  
Always sell the future  
for the past, you're safe  
on the curbstone  
in between. Between  
gutter and commerce  
a man stands free.  
The common shore.  
The possibility of now.

22 March 2007

= = = = =

It's not hard to press the crimson button  
it's just hard to know what it will make happen  
always imagining that one thing leads to another  
but how can we be sure, does the flag  
make the wind that flaps it thus proving  
to a man indoors a block away that indeed  
the wind is speaking? Or like the golden  
screw in the joke people were always telling  
at a certain hour of the night, what might  
happen if you unscrew it, they used to burn  
the flag to irritate the government, bad move  
I thought since we had more right to it  
than any short-lived administration had,  
we are the real Americans, all of us,  
we should have shoved the flag in their faces  
if they had them, if they weren't just  
smirks in suits. Last blowjob in Saigon,  
they used to have a subway in Baghdad.  
Many an amenity left at the side of the road.

22 March 2007

## FATE IS CONTAGIOUS

Nobody's birthday happens today.  
There is a silence round the pericardium  
like a stroke waiting to happen  
upstairs where such things do, a glimpse  
from the bone cliffs, then sundown  
sudden as a clam. Why not, if  
they can be happy they can be quick.  
Memories can fade, spiritual counsel  
fail. On the slightly shabby seventh  
green three priests are playing through.  
Numbers and things, the twin tribes  
of what we know. Gods, both of them.  
Rivals, squabbling we hear next door.  
Divide and. I keep looking in my wallet  
for that \$2 bill the leper passed  
in Washington D.C. to terrify senators  
—it should have reached me by now  
but so many things get lost in the mail.

23 March 2007

= = = = =

What would happen if I let him be me?  
Violins? Discordant colors squeezed  
out of their tubes to lie alongside  
one another uncomfortably, penguin  
in the jungle, a man with no hat?  
Could it just be that, an absence  
where customs demands presence,  
a mere incivility raised to a cosmology  
like Marx on a bad day at the Museum?  
What can I do with this identity?  
I keep trying to make people happy—  
it's like building the roof before the house.  
Sometimes there's no right way to do things.

23 March 2007

## MARTYR TO MATRIMONY

*If I may mention it again, you  
knew full well at the time, that  
you were marrying an idealist  
and philosopher!*

-- Amos Hoople, 1927

There isn't always a plunger in the fountain pen  
and sometimes the ink-sac has dried out.  
Dried old boiled stringbean stiff behind the couch.  
The dog did it? There is no direct flight between  
the capitals of Canada and the United States,  
isn't that interesting? Sometimes you never know.  
Things that you expect unaccountably elude  
their legendary destination, cup and lip, notorious  
for the slippages between. Or so says Rilke  
in that century's most beautiful poem, if I may.  
I was born back then, and know it. Most of you  
were too, but came clueless to the new  
as usual, millennium, manifesto, runway in Milan.  
The sparrows have scattered what little wit I had,  
watching them rugby round the fallen seed  
below the squirrel-proof feeder. Fat chance.  
Christian Lacroix's spring line is something else,  
like a bunch of hollyhocks rushing towards me  
with lust in their fluffy hearts. And music  
from Estonia on the internet, mewing  
strange noises the announcers make, how coarse  
I must sound to them. But nobody's listening,  
just this endless music. I stretch out here  
on the daybed and wait for the end to come.  
It starts as a corn or callus and before you know it  
the priest is at your elbow smearing you  
with nice-smelling oils and ashes. More mewing.  
Only this time it's your native language  
that you get to hear one final time.

23 March 2007

*After some time (30 min) light yellow solid formed. Heating stopped.*

-- Linus Pauling, observations, September 24, 1935

So that's all it was. One came  
into the world a few minutes later,  
warm enough, naturally  
scientifically even, greedy  
for that solidity one takes for gold.  
Everything that glisters, is.  
Or amber, yellow sapphire like the one  
he sports now on the pointing finger,  
or citrine that makes women wealthy,  
or chalky sulfur from Sicilian mines  
pure yellow. Heating stopped  
and breathing began. Orpiment.  
Pyrites. The double yellow line  
down every consequential road.  
Follow the color, said he to himself,  
I will I said, and he did and here  
the several of them are, sulfurous,  
aureate, yellow-livered, scared.  
After some time, all Paris will be  
terrified. Thirty minutes later  
our rescuer will come, taking  
for the occasion the form of a big  
yellow angel strewing coins  
from a yellow dogskin satchel.  
We pick up the gold and follow,  
isn't that a river, a church, isn't  
that Franck organ music, aren't we  
the ones we thought we were,  
born of woman, in a bed someplace,  
on a day or in the night time hour  
with numbers all over, haven't we  
in some way become part of it all,  
whatever it turns out to be, or  
have been by the time we leave it  
if we ever do, if there really is  
an out built into the system.  
Sages have doubted it for ages.

23 March 2007

## FLEXICODE

*for Susan*

Another possibility is that  
thanks to very gradual  
inspissation in the presence  
of proportionally augmenting  
quantities of atmospheric  
oxygen the stuff gets  
thicker the taste changes  
so by the time we have come  
to the bottom of the flask  
and open another the  
fresh one tastes entirely  
different, thinner, less  
concentrated. We think  
we have been deceived  
as usual by the merchants.  
But how will we ever know?

24 March 2007



## L'HEURE BLEUE

Things that seem to be waiting for us  
to turn our backs and then they're here  
not necessarily pouncing but definitely  
here, weather is like that, or light, or even  
when the light goes away the curious  
emptyish music of light's absence  
thrills us like a perfume when  
we're not even sure if we like women  
or that kind of woman or anybody at all.  
Bodies are much too mysterious for us,  
we're waiting for some simpler condition  
as presented in hymnbooks and cartoons  
when we waft around leaving harp hum  
all round us as we move, and say  
wise things and prance among clouds.  
A body is a terrible weight to carry  
on into evening, alone or with others,  
nimble or not, just the weight of need,  
let alone want, let desire, let alone shame.  
Soon we're sitting at a little table  
almost alone with our guilt, with only  
a transparent spouse or lover to distract.  
A glass or cup stands before us, and yes.

24 March 2007

## MUSIC FROM FRANCE

Always the excuses, the uses  
of things to waylay other things,  
a pirate ship skipping on the pond.

And there you squat, controlling  
destiny again. It's all in you,  
all ready to come out and be world.

Action. Will. Deem. Dare. Do.  
Salvo after salvo the little ships  
contend. Suspended in your attention.

They have come here from far countries  
to amuse you, stop collecting stamps  
and pay attention. They are in you

ever, trying to come out. Only your mind,  
that wretched little sieve, gets clogged  
and keeps them out. Let mind loose.

Be flume. Flush. *La Création du Monde*  
is on the radio even as you speak.  
And surely a man like that would know.

24 March 2007

## **BARON OCHS TAKES THE LAST TRICK**

Isn't it time not to wonder  
what the authorities are up to?  
Time to let the government  
stew in its own...well, not juice,  
maybe turned milk, tainted  
wine. Time to let them be,  
and move on to the real politics,  
you and me. The each of other,  
like a special card that trumps  
all the rest. All civilization  
(call it Democracy if you must,  
depends more on the shape  
of your mouth, what you say)  
begins right here. You and me.  
And then some. The Declaration  
of Dependence is what we need  
all these years. When you're with me  
no night will ever seem too long.

24 March 2007

## **COUVADE**

the husband squats  
goes through  
the incandescences of childbirth

must make the pain up for himself  
must yield  
something into daylight

what comes from all  
what comes from any suffering  
a twisted knee

a squalling memory.

25 March 2007

## THE ANNUNCIATION AGAIN

Stalwart, like a merchant from the Yemen  
crossing the Hadramawt on foot, carrying  
one particular jewel, like no other  
in the world, say a twi-natured alexandrite  
of immense size, emerald in one light  
amethyst in other, worth a fortune,  
snug in his pocket, needing no camels,  
enduring the thirsts of that strange country  
flesh-colored rocks burn in sun  
and no water for a thousand years  
to get to the narrow straits of sea  
where one city is where someone waits  
he has in mind to offer this stone to

he comes down through the parching air  
half-choked with the musics of desire  
all round him, gasping at this world  
embedded in the agony of nature  
to spill his single piece of news,

how far

he has to go to make her hear, impatient  
for her answer, but not daring just this once  
to hurry her, or hurry anything. This  
has to be done just right, no room  
for anything but everything. Her narrow  
waist. The fertile doubt in which  
he has plowed his information. Quivering  
of light, restless birds flustered at the window.  
No glass. No feigned transparency.  
A thing that is just exactly what it is.

25 March 2007

= = = = =

A smattering of snow  
left to understand

pronounless, the parsers.  
Fretting hemlock bark  
an animal. Fresh

green spikes – crocus  
rising. Walking around

cold encyclopedia.

25 March 2007

## A TRIO BY KHATCHATURIAN

Walking pain home

With much expression  
Walking under the wagon

Rubbing your back on a cloud

\*

It's so happy to be happy again  
It wears black and has insides

Muscles gleam sun  
Far away a sheep summons her shepherd

\*

Market manners  
Cold hands of spring

You can hear a brothel  
A block away, the piano,  
The sudden silence, the single  
Startled cry

\*

Everything sounds as if people  
Said it out loud  
Distinctly in their sleep.

25 March 2007 (Olin)

## *Gesetzlich*

according to the law  
or law,  
a word  
out of the St Mark's Passion

*spoken on the tone:*

recitative. Then the chorus.

Playing the role of the congregation  
we praise God.  
We are astonished at Jesus's healings.  
We say Crucify him!  
We hymn Him to death.

We are the chorus,  
we are the responsible ones.  
Gesetzlich, the law  
and its book  
from which we come.

No original sin except Being itself.

*man ist selbst schuld*, says Bernhard,  
everything is your fault,  
one is guilty just by being.

The law restores us  
to our terrible places.

The passion according to Saint Mark  
performed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1731  
and lost. Reconstructed in our days  
from the meters alone.

We wear what fits. We sing  
what we have heard sung.



Recycled melody. Brave  
musicologist signs  
Bach's name to the chorale.

The chorus  
the unforgivable consensus,  
it is we who made things as they are

and maybe we did the best we could  
make from a leper world, a stone supper,  
dead water and a hawk,

a hawk who is the closest  
bird to heaven, a hawk cries.

25 March 2007

## woman night stuff

he'd carry out every morning from the office, Empire State Building, small suite looking north, west.

not supposed to be there overnight, or be ok, but not sleep, not live, who was she, not always the same.

one was this: with her lined face held bravely to my camera, told about her brother who was 'cut out' for the murder of a Chicago policeman, or was it priest, a murder that on the witness stand he claimed he couldn't remember:

"one man is much like another," he said, and began to cry.

26 March 2007

[dreamt]

## OLD TIMES IN SING-SING

Warden watching the movie goes on  
giving the incarcerated fresh ideas.  
Often a priest waits in the shadows,  
jolly-jowled, appallingly Irish, oily  
with empathy. You wonder why  
men about to die bother with Confession  
since they're on the way to the one  
place (in theory) where everything is  
already known. Heaven is knowing.  
But here they are, whispering in corners,  
moping down endless corridors that  
do all at once come to an end. The door.  
The chamber. Great pause. The lights  
flicker. The movie ends. The movie  
still goes on, nothing ends, when one  
man dies we all die, we fry with him  
in the chair, suck in the gas, endure  
the hangman's last caress. All  
the deaths are dying as we speak.  
Christ is still on his cross forever  
and Bruno still a torch on Flower Field  
and this little tiny life we play with  
is somebody else's death.

26 March 2007

= = = = =

Someone else's anything.  
A hurricane in memory.  
A stalwart cross. Crimp.  
Category. Kant  
recited in Jerusalem  
by Eichmann. The end.

27 March 2007

= = = = =

Elegant as spores  
the ideas of a good century  
recur. Proliferate.  
A pretty lady from a balloon  
showers her citizens with poetry.  
Terza rima slithers through the surf.  
Abandon me, all ye who entered me.

27 March 2007

= = = = =

Too nervous to be long.  
To belong.

27 III 07

= = = = =

Hawk in spring  
high  
from sky west to sky east  
across the whole temple  
never once flapping his wings.

27 III 07