

4-2004

**aprH2004**

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, "aprH2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 845.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/845](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/845)

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).

<late><late> =====

Nothing left in mind  
so some other source  
must rise

a fountain deep, a well  
a woman standing by it  
fetching or washing,  
the long doctrine of water  
discoursing all round her

and she speaks too  
but what she says I hear  
only as sparkling light  
on the water's face and on hers  
reflected and reflecting

so whatever she is trying to tell  
all I know is who she is

the woman, the woman on the other side of words.

19 April 2004

=====

The taste of anything lingers on the line  
after you've hung up. Something is there.  
Hear it in the buzz, the hollow  
around your head when you listen.  
It is big, this room you're in  
or is in you, some things are never clear,  
just here. Here. For a while  
you thought it was the taste of the one  
you were talking to, or listening to,  
since the other voice did all the talking.  
And your mouth filled with silence,  
all you weren't  
willing to say  
made your mouth  
water, like food.  
Listen and swallow.  
It is very young  
being now now  
spoken to, not  
speaking. Or very old.  
Another of those  
unclarities,  
uncertainties: friction  
that drags the sun  
up out of the dark.

Leaving you no wiser.

It is like that now

around you, listen

to your messages

the machine says.

You do. You go to bed

with that strange taste.

20 April 2004

=====

*after Maura Cregan*

“It went on swimmingly, it went on agreeably, freely, amusingly,”  
naturally, simply, unconsciously, fatally,

words are fatal, words go on,  
I was dead and didn't know it.  
Of all forms of death, the worst is dying.  
The worst is being dead.  
And then I knew it—  
there I was, kaput already  
just a micron or two away from  
the texture of your body  
as you're swimming in the pool lagooningly.

You swim swimmingly. I lurk closely  
consciously, ridiculously, uncommunicatively, deadly.  
I am deadly, words kill and words killed me,  
I cannot touch you or anything you touch,  
I cannot eat food, they say silence kills I say words kill  
I say everything kills and it is strange being dead,

being dead means eating dust  
even here in this swimming hole  
under the old willow tree

with pretty fish and darning needles  
stitching the water,  
even here in water I taste dust.

It does not please me, it runs through me  
with a current of its own, dry all that I wanted,  
dry all that I meant. But somewhere in your head  
you are a little bit aware of me, I don't know how,  
I don't know how you know me but you know me,  
I swim inside you for lack of any other sea.

20 April 2004

=====

My upper lip

cruel, effeminate.

My lower lip

voluptuary, hedonist.

After I bite

I swallow.

I grew a mustache

to protect the innocent.

20 April 2004

Olin

## THESE DAYS

What does it mean that I am not dreaming  
and who am I asking?

I am walking through a hollow city  
and whenever I turn around  
there is nothing behind me,  
nothing, just pale space,  
like Lisbon in Pessoa but no Lisbon,

I am walking through a crowded city  
in which I am the hollow  
a shapely absence moving through the streets

hungry, I am hungry.  
I am moving through a city  
that is never there when I look up and out  
from my reflections, my tumultuous interior obligations,  
stumble out of the cave of myself and discover:

The cave was a street.  
The street was empty.  
Everywhere I turn is empty  
but the emptiness is beautiful,



phantoms,

I am haunted by what I do not see.

In the morning these days

I get up and sit outside and breathe in

the sun and other nearby stars

and let them float inside me

while I wait to remember my dream.

But there is nothing left to remember.

21 April 2004

<late> =====

It is always isn't it  
the rock. Break  
or inhabit, there  
is a natural an affine  
relationship to your skin,  
the grain of both  
meet or mesh,

a hydrography, a system  
of rivers streams and aquifers  
always speaking underneath.  
This place predicts my life.  
Therefore I have dreamed the way  
down through the permafrost  
into the freezeless kingdom  
of the only one who.

20 April 2004

<late> <late> =====

A bread  
a bread baked  
in an oven  
I don't believe

the wheat never grew  
the miller never ground  
the water never entered the dry meal  
the yeast never came

yet here is the bread.  
A big loaf like the head  
of a Soviet pianist  
formidably passionate.  
This bread aches for your teeth.

This never wheat this never mill  
this dry flow this never-arising

bend low over the drinking fountain  
and gulp. Get ready to be bread.

20 April 2004

<late> <late> <late> =====

Magna Mater

the cult of it

worked through city nexus

like subway

freight cars unloaded her stuff down there

in the bronze piazza

where never the sun came

nobody talked sense

all those Garamantes in the kitchen

conspiring against themselves

against the ordinariness of wheat

why wheat?

o Aphrica Aphrica

where it all seeds from

Sunland the bright black

where even the gods

(those closest to us of all species, commensal with us,

intimatest, we are mice in heaven)

are strangers

and nobody knows what to believe.

But belief has nothing to do with the gods.

20 April 2004

---

=====

#11

the risk  
the molecular habit  
of it, to come close  
enough to touch or  
tell is: to be captured

by the superior power  
of the other, the other  
is power,

every other and  
the sobbing or is it sodden  
doubt begins then  
when you look at your  
body in the mirror  
and say Where have you been  
what have you done

what macabre jokes

have you told  
all the ones you loved?

standing there  
holding a word in mind  
something in italics  
you want to tell  
so loud nobody hears it

a mad girl running through the trees.

21 April 2004

<late> =====

a different thing a glue  
that holds the roads together

owls and raccoons are shouting  
at two a.m. they sound like people  
but people would be dancing  
on tv or in Belize

and the admirals who run our dreams  
would be piloting madness  
deep into my harbor

from which by dint of Saxon magic I  
a Goidel from nowhere have  
for centuries kept myself sane.

21 April 2004

=====

There is usually a price to pay  
a phone that rings  
a girl to fetch it from the bakery  
the salmon tulips among goldfinch daffodils  
a Jew walking on the street alone  
a Jew holding my hand and listening

swans settle where the water is  
follow the swans

don't know much I am a furrier  
a coachman a cardinal a surprise guest  
my face shows nothing I say  
because there is nothing to show  
heaven is the land of desire  
hell is the land of desire unfulfilled  
in between is middle earth the land of need  
(in English we make a big mistake  
saying *want* to mean those opposites desire and need)  
war is the sickness of desire land  
rebellion is the sickness of need land

thus I spoke and he listened  
as I carried on till finally he  
pulled me by the chin and kissed my cheek



and maybe his lips brushed the corners of mine  
and said: I am not who you think I am  
I am not a man I am a building  
built of granite and I have stood here for decades  
since the Belle Epoque  
waiting for you to come by and tell me something

now I have given you  
stone's lasting kiss  
o foolish lover to think granite was a Jew  
to think a building big as a bank  
could walk with you along the sidewalk

*you* are the Jew and the walker and you are my ghost,  
you pass me every night in your dreams  
and never till now did you ever take my hand and speak.

22 April 2004

*The children do not want to go into the fire*

they do it because the god tells them. One two three.  
They have names but one two three will do.  
Because of the god and the other god. When gods  
get angry children go into the fire and mothers sob.  
Then mothers go into the fire and the fathers flee,  
they set up businesses in Paraguay, they speak Urdu,  
that is what the children feared, even the fire  
seemed better than that to them, along with the voice  
that came out of it, always towards them, a voice  
is what comes towards us, did you know that  
flames have voices? Not just those curious faces  
we see in the fireplace those chilly June nights  
on Buzzards Bay. Voices. What do we know of fire?  
Fire talks. Fire says

Come into me and be children

only for the littlest while. Even I  
am better than a father selling high  
definition TVs in Paraguay.  
Better than jungle, better than books  
with no words in them, like this one,  
they make you read at school.  
Every page says nothing, nothing,  
and this nothing you have to learn by heart.  
No wonder you prefer the fire, all  
three of you. In your story, one god

rescues the children, he said Sing  
in the fire, children! And the children  
seemed to sing. But it wasn't them,  
it was the fire singing, singing You  
know nothing about me and my song.  
And that fire also was me, and I am every  
voice you will ever hear, the voice  
that makes you children and makes you sing.

22 April 2004, Olin

<late> =====

This girl writes sideways  
weaves strands of beads  
into her hair: sandalwood,  
coral, turquoise, roundish  
things that remember stone.

The man thinks back on  
old desk sets made of bronze:  
ink well, box for paper clips,  
box for stamps, rocking blotter,  
pen holder. He thinks:  
things grow old to keep us young.

A nurse with affable hips  
hovers near him, closes his eyes.

22 April 2004