

4-2003

**aprD2003**

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, "aprD2003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 897.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/897](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/897)

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).

## ON THE ROAD

To find a way home  
after all, to be the sun

welcomed unseen by rhizomes  
through the veil of soil

no contact is ever direct  
in this cosmos called Media

not just now not just modern us  
but all the world we ever saw

wherever it gleams is gone  
nothing immediate that

is the first fall from simple  
knowing from ordinary mind

we can barely imagine it  
what once upon a time we know

to know another not as another  
to know without distance

to be all knowing and no thing known.

14 April 2003

## **MODERN WAR**

1.

To mark it makes it.

The label

is the thing.

The map is the territory after all.

That is what the tyrant studies  
and sends his sudden armies to erase  
a line on it and draw a new one  
an inch or two to the right.

2.

A king sends men and boys to die  
for the sake of fields and deserts  
the king had never seen.

Now it is different. Girls die too.

14 April 2003

## **DISTANCES**

Rubbing my lip I smell my fingers  
and smell me. Strange that I have to use  
my hand to know what I smell like  
as if when I touch myself I touch somebody else.

14 April 2003

===

I'm saying that mediation *is* root ignorance. *Ma.rig.pa*, ignorance, like the word ignorance itself, is a privative, defines by saying what it is not. Taking the negative away we get *rig.pa*, awareness, which must be the fabled Im/mediate, primal knowing, knowing before division, before that ordering we call the World.

14 April 2003

=====

All the downtowns mean me  
where the orange is and race  
pronounced rage and 200 years  
the length of America is 3 old men

for I watched the sun stand  
on the top of the hill in St George  
unbearably bright and all the old  
comparisons —sword, furnace, knife—

insinuated themselves in my brain  
and I said No, I would be obvious and dark,  
I would be a stranger, would belong  
to the deep oil green water of the bay

the deepest registers of silt  
from which you grow dreams and artichokes  
silly as Praxilla I would be and vague  
against the tax codes of the actual.

15 April 2003

## WHAT THEN

You buy things for a purpose and what then.  
You press on the door to open or close it  
why are things so approximately obedient?  
Write a statement using the word 'integer'  
and sell it to the government. We pay  
attention. I am the government again,  
a pale boy in the cellar  
on an old pickle barrel  
empty and upturned  
on what had been its shabby  
does he compose  
miracles of illegible prose  
and those too I buy, I listen to myself  
raving in the basement,  
I have a nice voice for swooning,  
the tea must be ready now,  
the morning lasts sixty-seven years  
and I'm still the only one awake,  
I walk from room to room trying to figure out  
the vastness of this house and where are they sleeping.

15 April 2003

---

Do you need a footnote to read me?

Here is a sock to keep your need warm.

15 IV 03



## SEVENTY NINE DEGREES

And suddenly it's warm as summer  
and the sun casting down portolan lines  
the wasps follow through the curves of light  
to find new nests. Who rides the air?

In nakedness is only strength. Mila,  
Milarepa, naked to your enemies,  
so naked they pass right through you, lose you  
in the tumult of their rage. Be naked.

Something relents, as if the war is over,  
but wars don't know how to end.  
And so we call the angry sea Euxine,  
friendly, to strangers. Language  
tries to tame the world it made.

I sat for hours across from Saint Sulpice  
knowing everything is there and nothing found.  
A copper line marks the middle of the world —  
and the Wise still measure distance  
from that vertical. It comes down the wall  
and crosses the floor like light.  
Which is the backside of shadow,  
pale and undifferencing, reaching for you,  
the light stretches out to you like a baby  
as if you really are the mother of the light.

15 April 2003

## **DREAM ADVERB**

reducing all  
things their true  
dimensions  
oversimplifyingly.

16 IV 03 as dreamt

## **PERSEPHONE APRIL**

The little girl the revolution  
the daffodils again here you are  
you came for them here they are  
peace of the first morning  
among the small blue flowers  
that always look like your name  
idly scribbled by a waiting  
woman I always hope is you

I am jealous of your other life  
down there, sometimes I think  
I've got it wrong and this is hell  
the flames are flowers the auto-  
matic unfolding of the seed the deed  
of karma ripening since hell is  
nothing but consequences  
and here we are summer  
uncontrollably begins

and this world where I can touch you  
when you bend to pluck blue flowers  
is the underworld of a mysterious  
white radiance over now, when  
true dreams stalk the distant earth  
and time makes up our minds.

16 April 2003

## **ITE, MISSA EST**

If there is a permission  
there is mission,  
if there's a sending  
something's sent.

What, by whom,  
to whom? Thingless  
it happens, it all  
wheels around

it is complete  
it is almost gone  
but you feel it  
still. Nothing

we can name.  
Missa est, it has been sent,  
no one remembers  
who came or what departed,

something was with us  
and has gone, something  
feminine by grammar,  
and we must go now too

because she's gone.  
No one remembers  
what the word means,  
they have been saying it

so long, old word,  
the word forgets  
what it means,  
the mouth forgets the man.

17 April 2003  
Holy Thursday



---

Cowbird on feeder  
glossy black so early  
brown head, little  
devil face mildly  
choosing seed.

Everything is  
the time it takes.

17 April 2003

τελος

All I know is not all I am.  
That's the goal of poetry  
to say,

I am the stupid raspberry  
hidden at the intersection  
of the spiny awkward cane stalk and the day,  
ripe, frail, actual,

and more than that  
you know as well as I do.

18 April 2003



## **PASSIONATE ENGORGEMENT**

Maple syrups swells the tree  
let out this dulcid evidence!

What kind of a word is that?  
My kind, half made up,  
half found in some broken Spanish,

the kind they talk down in Texas  
waiting for the moon to break.

18 April 2003

## HOLY SATURDAY

**There** is a tone and  
waiting to begin to talk  
*you know* is not a telephone  
a different interfering  
medium departing  
because *they lived here*  
upstream lip of the island  
obsessions truth tables  
remembering vague  
and no talk yet, yet  
the human hum pervades

**Call** it broken  
*call was lost* because  
angular resistance  
word under shadow of  
satellite wind  
ate *your message*  
sent to their deaths  
there is no  
cure for survival.

**Still** wanted to hear  
exception to rule hill

six inches deep leaf fall  
strange kiss finds your nape  
*character* your mark  
upon the otherwise other

**It is** *without* you this  
one world is one  
learns to live in  
or doesn't depending  
when yes and no  
are equal honest  
some part dies

**It may** be the day  
between dying

when memory  
is betrayal

and nothing arises  
having nothing to hope for

oboe drone  
outside the tomb  
called tomorrow.

19 April 2003

## HELICOPTER HABITS

easy take off easy land  
but sluggish travel  
do I think like that

or drift comme zeppelin  
over the tide flats  
of what someone else  
brilliantly conceived  
but let fall to earth  
as endless gay marshes

thought itself  
salty almost sterile  
*pré salé*, good  
only to feed sheep?

19 April 2003

## ABOUT THINKING

1.

Thinking another person's **thoughts**  
is using their damp handkerchief

you must use other **ways**                      (*voies*)  
to get inside their thinking

2.

Thoughts are pornography.  
Thinking is making love.

19 April 2003

## **YOU RUNE**

On the rare morning when I wake up wanting to be somebody else  
it is you I most often want to be

Mostly the way you think and react and strategize and rage  
partly the way you carry it around

And a little bit the way your shadow has  
of lingering a little bit behind you after you've passed

doing something back there then catching up with you  
whispering the aftertaste of everyone you too have been.

19 April 2003

## HOLY SATURDAY, SITTING IN THE NORTH

Or I could learn to read books again,  
braid paperclips, rub idly against the wall  
like a pig on a fence post, watch my tea get cold,  
think about Jesus's body quiet in the tomb  
in the dawn cool of the wrong day  
and wonder where his consciousness is  
right now, busy with all the fallen  
and the lady of blue flowers, and her somber  
lord who rules the roost down there,  
the one who always looks like someone's brother.

Consciousness. Isn't it strange that my language,  
a big language, never found a simple word for that  
the way it did for mind or soul or heart,  
soul comes close but soul is too sanctimonious,  
soul has no eyes, the way that Christians talk,  
soul's a sort of godly sponge you need to keep  
squeezing out to keep it clean. Consciousness  
has no out. Consciousness just witnesses  
and bears witness to what it witnesses.  
No more than that. I am an idle man,  
I think, and he is down there witnessing  
and making real and making free by witness,  
and how can I come to this awareness by  
witnessing with the same mind? He's  
making tomorrow and I'm sitting around.

19 April 2003

=====

Something always  
and then happening

the together  
the transliteration

of a barely pronounceable  
name of God's what

this world is  
aren't you?

20 April 2003



## NOSTALGIA

Aspartame afternoons in old Albany  
waiting for the light to change  
I'm as miraculous as the next man  
except that I know how to make green  
lights turn red as I approach,  
I know how to make dogs bark and bite,  
I know how to make avalanches find me  
after the meagerest snow. When  
will my martini come? The big one, the one  
in the funnel-shaped stemmed glass  
with the slain olives impaled along the flank  
and that wondrous oily sheen of gin  
quivering beneath my finger tips  
while we argue about etymologies.  
At last the traffic light turns spring,  
I go, hurrying towards what we used to call  
a watering hole though no water waits.

20 April 2003

Easter