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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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## LATE WINTER ELEGY

As much of all this as we had cause to propagate—  
sudden as peacocks skirling on a mud wall in the mist  
— an arrogant energy that leaves people ready to earn,  
learn, yearn, burn and read newspapers, it is a fact  
and fact is life. Really sudden, like a child being born.  
Really propagate, like scattering known seed  
in a well-watered sunny soil. Like a woman born  
to an unknown family. Like an old flag.  
Who is waiting for me while I get all this straight?  
A distraught social worker, a dusty heliograph.  
Mind my mirror, is that my face? What manners!

2.

Elegant, a shadow elegy, low fog in the graveyard,  
I am comfortable sitting in such places, an angel  
cast in plaster, smiling as if those artful lips  
could press against mine in meaningful (soft)  
distortion. As if the sun had a message of its own  
the fog did not want me to hear. Spare me  
such clarity. Like a man born blind.

3.

Then there were three of us and a fourth  
sitting on the floor looking up at us wondering  
what we had been saying all the while  
and we were saying nothing we weren't  
even wondering what she was thinking about  
us because from our point of view we  
weren't even an us to be us with, we were three  
wanting to be four and four wanting to  
be one and one and one and one and  
sometimes two. And now we all were wondering.

4.

Things becoming tolerably swift beneath our glances

disappearing treewards leafless though they were  
so like so many birds. Blackbirds here all winter  
this one, hosanna, hosanna, all the Easters of the world  
coming to us by snowflake by melting ice eaves  
by dreams of fair treatment, a court of lapwings,  
a flotilla of newsmen hurrying towards a war.  
I will wait here till you need my broken vows.

9 March 1995

## IN THE MIDDLE OF LENT

There are margins or  
and there are margins for  
the sea thing and the money and

the radio gives only the numbers.  
Information, or the opera  
with no end. It sings all the time,

inserting its precisions  
which are pointless brutal  
insinuations

of systematic banality into  
this merely ordinary head.  
Of mine. That sees the sea

inwardly all the time and sometimes  
goes to where such seeing is.  
I also travel

to keep my eyes company  
while the world happens to them,  
not a fact for miles

if fact means something made  
or given as a proposition  
upon which a crucifixion

disguised as an equation  
depends. Banks close  
on Good Friday

at three p.m. as usual  
but in any case the man

in question is already dead.

10 March 1995

## MIDNIGHT

What will my house look like,  
this airy box I'll fashion out of night,  
bricks, sticks, myths,  
mild meats, oriels, *an eye*  
*in the top of a wall, & a mouth*  
*open in the ground?* How many rooms  
do I have? Will you come  
visit me in each?

And what will the dark look like  
when I have nailed it all together,  
tight-seamed, no light shows through,  
no lip breathes a purely human word  
to sneak through this mortal business.  
A house is all wood and waiting.

10 March 1995

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Out of the human world eloquent mechanics  
Stand before whiteboards with prismatic markers  
Explaining the last life you dreamed you had.

The engineers of afterspace consent to know you.  
These characters you made up — Eva in leaves,  
Adam on Ararat — clutter the blue space you plan,

Cocktail party personages you thought were gods. Then  
The pain people crash your party, you knew they would,  
You turned the elevator off to make it hard for them

But up they came, all seven hundred storeys to your brain.  
If you live a million years (and you will), you'll never know  
Whether your body's in the world or the world's in your body,

Which the scabbard and which the sword. And for all  
Your postcards and pilgrimages, are you just some kind of door?

11 March 1995

THE POET CONTEMPLATES CÆSURAS, LINE-  
ENDINGS AND OTHER SACRED PAUSES

Exorbitant interludes. People always waiting.  
A gap in the middle of the line a man  
could walk the plank there and fall  
into the turbulent language — what  
are they waiting for? Or is it who?  
This separation is the life of the thing,  
*Scheidekunst*, the life of music,  
of ardent silences interwoven. Here come  
from somewhere, a tune of tones  
bent over our gasps for breath,  
Pan did it, call it song, a maiden  
or a dozen fleeing, wet-ankled in sedges,  
spring again, the snow relaxing  
into the browns that He'll make green,  
my master, fur-foot that tyrant,  
There is nothing but what happens.

Saturday, 11 March 1995





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As if? No. The sequestered  
beginnings, locked in shy grammar  
like a pigeon trapped in a classroom  
and all the students have gone home.

Breathe chalk. Beat against the glass.  
There is a kind of pallid oak  
that poisons anything you say  
and makes it obvious, authoritative,

a boss's word. I went to school  
to learn the worst they could do,  
and dared them, and they did,  
and I survived. Or did I? What am I

that I can speak of being? All  
I ever was is saying. Not talking,  
there is no to whom in my oration,  
just the shimmer of clarities

optioning against the light of touch  
until the random utterance  
almost by accident makes sense.  
And that is me. For the moment.

Martyr to my recentest remark,  
I belong to what I say. Once  
I called this speaking, and said I live  
(or let me live) in the house of it,

no other walls make sense. No other  
doors know how to open.  
Hear me, I said to the brick. Listen,  
I said to the cinderblock. Rock.

Wood. Lath. Plasterboard. Tree.  
Brook. Wave. Bowsprit. Flag.  
You understand me, you are various  
and specified, I am what you dream of,

I am the shapely fleeing  
that makes you look as if you endure,  
the beautiful fugitive  
whose shadow turns into steel.

Sunday, 12 March 1995

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Give good counsel. Accept  
the gold from my necklaces, my knees  
twitch with anticipation  
of your weight,  
                                  how weigh you,  
the gold of you how know,  
you tin roof by the lake in driest summer  
how gleam you, maiden?

14 March 1995

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Not to think about his plans, his Manitou  
in local heaven, deer scat on his lawn.  
Morning is exclusively for earth. No other  
element needs this renewal but we do.  
So much of us is place.

14 March 1995

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Wolfsbane is a pleasant habit  
bleat of moonlight warning off  
those sting-eyed strays from forestry,  
sly scientists of bite. I wonder  
in all my pilgrimage how to shun  
these lopers with their welcome throats.  
Dogbane I pray thee, Wizard, comfort  
me with their absences. May every road  
be bright and empty as this March moon.

14 March 1995

## SEMÉ

Things that scatter. Semé they say in heraldry,  
'sown' with stars. Or tears, bells, knots, what-  
ever it may be. The sower and his seed,  
a parable of how things fall out. How  
we do not listen, or even listening do not hear.  
Eating lobster with Marge Keller and dreaming  
— each of us — of some new life. Which always  
means a marriage, early for her, late for me.  
Death is a potter, creates the ultimate shape  
with one last twirl of the wheel, one hand  
to shape and one to cut the vessel free. The  
one that had been me. I become what I am  
just in time to leave. For there is a field  
where all the acts I scatter (acts, arts, ways,  
means) suddenly and terribly matter.  
This is after all after all. Semé by my hurry  
consequences spatter, the stars can't lie,  
things follow suit. The little morning myths we  
lived by fall away like broken masonry. Noon.  
It turns out the house protected us from nothing but the sky.

14 March 1995

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Wraiths rawly. The ideo  
are ideas come back, old  
desires vamping our now.

Brief neck, you hold apart  
a planet of desire from a galaxy of fact.  
Strictly between, yours

is the power to speak, the breath  
of the one in the measures of the other,  
specified into the mutinous air.

Language is nothing but control.  
All sound is mantra — mean well  
and bide unwanting. It all serves.

15 March 1995



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You would want to have more time for it,  
the coffee, the castaway. Alone on Money Island  
each one is. Hard words, my masters.  
And moon so lately new is full —  
something's incontrovertible, and tough.

16 March 1995

## AFTER HORACE

Once the Bandush fountain sprawled  
rose-attar'd spatter on the cooled  
limbs of desirable bedmates who  
in all the luxury of light looked dark,

pelts leathered by sun's glow such  
once candidates worshipped. Musclesh,  
worn out by pleasing, green and amber  
battle in their eyes, these Parthians.

Moon wit in sunburn. Merry ardor  
as if they were born far, while we  
keep secret skins and hide our loves  
as the accurate unforgiving City teaches.

16 March 1995

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But skim the hour of its meant?  
A bold balled skein, fistful barely,  
stuffed into a leaking yawp — smite  
critics with muffins — terrazzo  
floors awash with suds, ammonia,  
Greek restaurant at dawn, forgive  
the Constitution, that sieve of lewd  
permissions — we need a nastier  
republic, Genoese. For any man  
that bears to rule confounds  
his enemies with the facts of life—  
death is the scabbard of renewal—  
how can Hell hold so many? A crumb  
left for pigeons, a church tower  
abandoned to the sky. Think  
what it would be like if work meant  
for the benefit of everybody else.  
Then the shooting started and we died  
by pieces, gunned down by this natural  
catastrophe called men. We fell  
without an image to hold onto  
and called that absence liberty, and died.

17 March 1995

## BIG STARS IN BIG CLOUDS

Those things stand to face you, they are sweat  
from someone's brow. Whose (stars) are they?  
They fall. Everything with them, past ice rink,  
o city people are so talky why is that, is talk  
so cheap they spread it thin, and why laconic  
countrymen down east, what does that mean  
when even the trees give lectures all night long.  
I mean you can hear them. The way you hear me  
now, or that time outside Cairo in the Mena House  
you heard what you pretended were the ghosts  
of all the prostitutes who gave pleasure to the poor  
well-paid workingmen who lifted their share of stone  
up into that Alternative Universe, the Pyramids.  
You stood on the terrace pretending to hear them,  
their five thousand year old professional endearments,  
their practiced spontaneities, and deep  
beneath their voluptuous jargon you claimed you heard  
their own individual lusts. For they had desires too,  
you told me, and far from satisfying them,  
their rigorous obligations left them keenly wanting,  
focused, feeling, yearning, but for an embrace  
that was not on this side of the Nile, not any Nile.  
You never figured out what they wanted  
but heard them wanting it all night long. I heard  
the summerwind in sand, car tires, conspirators  
at their everlasting whispering, men at prayer.  
I thought the desert was silent and the city spoke.  
You tell me again it is the other way round  
and I don't know what to believe.  
Men are impossible to please.

17 March 1995

## BUILDING

Jefferson's brickword  
Fleming bond  
dot dit dot dit  
until the course ends

a corner in a turbulent wall.  
A house is a man's  
self-image

bind my walls  
on this slate or shale  
befell to build

„,17 March 1995