

4-1994

**aprD1994**

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, "aprD1994" (1994). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1210.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/1210](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1210)

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).

---

Arming against order. A brick  
circumstance, red as  
lying in the road. India.

Do you remember? The faces  
change less than in Africa, Americas.

It is all things we have to tell you,  
truths and terrorists. We lurk  
in your ink.

And then the alphabet changes.

A river is gone. Leper at my elbow  
trying to be me  
while I'm trying to be the girl across the street.  
First Communion Sunday. Brittle sunlight  
on new grass.

The white veils  
of compulsory  
mortality. Leaves on the ash.

24 April 1994

---

He mistook the shadows of bare branches on a white wall  
For a map of the town. He will look  
Forever for what is naturally his own—  
Street, house, home, hearth, fire, wife.

24 April 1994  
Wappingers Falls

---

Joggers in their white shoes  
come over the hill, he stays  
one stride ahead, her knees  
already giving out. I am watching  
a couple running towards trouble  
and can't help. They won't listen.  
If she won't trust her own knees  
who will she trust? The confusion.  
I thought we were on the world  
to give joy and redeem our pledges.  
What has that to do with running away?

25 April 1994  
Full Moon Morning

---

The one I must not say. The pillar  
In the desert, with fresh inscriptions,  
Blue tile round the doorway but no door.  
Climb me, I am the forbidden. Decline me,  
Better folk than you have left me here  
Casting perfect shadows all year long.  
I am essence hungering for accident. I hum  
In the wind and call it music. Who made me?

25 April 1994

EAUX AU  
SOMMET

LAP LUI E  
DES  
CEND RES

AUX SERRES  
VIT RINE

*a purity from April 1994 —*

---

All the amazements  
cycle of institute  
a board stretched over mud  
to bne my face!

Nightly!  
Green sprouts whitely  
surround a tree root,

things surrender  
to each other,  
swallowing earth  
lift or heave

a nub of silica.  
Aluminum ethics,  
we are made  
by radio.  
We are the was.

(2 IV 94)  
25 April 1994

## SMALL PEOPLE OF ANOTHER OTHER

Not my own other.  
But what we find  
beneath the tree  
when we go out  
breathless and afraid  
into the television.

Where a man holds a large green ball  
spinning it on the palm of his  
like God holding the world where are we now?  
Some kind of city.  
Some waiting animal.  
Blue feathered, made of air.

There are things to be studied.  
There is wind.  
A plate of rice,  
watching my step.

*Useful, usual, hence true.*  
Try a distant relative,  
the Queen's lady-in-waiting  
a noble jaw. My face,

I can't trust you.  
This is a sinister motel.  
And there is always this:  
a plate of rice with hot chilis,

a spring on a hillside,  
wet ankles. Lush nervousness,  
like lust without an other,  
an audience is looking at my teeth.



2.  
How did you learn to speak?  
I listened.

How did you learn  
to walk? I fell.

3.  
But how did I learn to cry?  
I watched the green shoots come  
under the rich grey skies of April.  
I watched a woman naked  
and a frightened man. The river  
choicelessly went by.  
And then I lost the knack of weeping.

4.  
After thirty-three years it is time  
Kingston City said something to me.  
Of course I've been wanting it to speak  
in Dutch and nakedness.

But then I knew it spoke  
all the dialects of sky,  
sky and waiting, sky and waiting and  
being wordless, watching the way it is.

(Early April 1994, Kingston  
chez Yeshe Namdak)

25 April 1994

WHITE

birch trees  
bare  
against pure  
blue

sky April evening cold

and bright.  
Everything this.

Mid-April, Saratoga Springs

# SMALL PIECES FROM A PUBLIC LECTURE

## **1. Heard from Laurie Patton**

Practice is  
progress. Sanskrit  
hair, a challenge  
threatens grasping.

Is any text the same?  
What is exposed  
in expository  
writing? The rule  
of revision.

See it again, was it same  
the first time?  
Who hears  
when you don't speak?

Pronunciations  
of a road.

## **2. Spoken by Sally Mertons:**

Analyzing my future  
put yourself at risk with those ideas.

## **3. Spoken by Deirdre d'Albertis:**

By virtue of smallness  
our responsibility  
is to design.

23 April 1994

## ONE SITTING IN THE AUDIENCE

In coif she was and tight  
woven wimple white  
a face pinched by air:

She is a nun of it, of questioning, a nun  
in a saintless society  
finding her own godway.

She is doing something  
bigger than she's ever done  
just by being here.

After years of engineering  
it is raining words. They're drenched now,  
you can see people shining

in their wet fur, shivering,  
waiting for silence to love them again,  
as it does at four a.m. when they briefly wake,

the flag of Thingland rais'd over an empty world.

23 April 1994

---

A very bisque Nabisco in a plastic sleeve with ordinary  
tan light crisp —but not too— tells an overOrdinary story  
like a dromedary in the pasha's tentative  
entablature of ars nova music interpreted nowadays for the guitar  
o it is to wonder if the cascara-bitter laxative ceremonies of “our” politics are  
ever likely to cleanse this world we (complaining  
tone) require more of than the usual whereas that and that alone  
has the mysterious *temptation to be difficult*  
of which girls' first post-prom pinafores are made  
stiff-starched and shadow-shushing as they go  
walking in and out between parked cars your Uncle  
perhaps is one of those with a camcorder in his fist  
judging nicely the Historic Moment when  
now becomes Then and is worth a slot in the book.  
Nothing is ever really ordinary enough am I?

25 April 1994

---

Near the altar a crush of flowers.  
Businessfolk in ponytails, their hard  
lenses set on sanctity. The news  
is good today— night closed its doors.  
Those who love sunlight are stuck with it.  
The king has gone away. Whenas  
the truth of virtue is rain and the king come back.

26 April 1994

---

Floored by opportunity I wait a kind  
of grass, a board to measure me against,  
a puzzle tree with birds, a ship not making land.  
Secret name of this: *a man at morning*.

26 April 1994

## ALONE

In the coal cellar they waited,  
loosed into human sleep by burning  
or into the fancies of the idling child  
hiding in those hard hillocks,

the salamander speculations of desire.  
I was a child who hid beneath the stairs.  
There was so little room for me to be me  
anywhere, any angle unobserved  
was precious, like a street at midnight  
or a closet floor. I wanted that closed garden  
where no one walked a dog and sunlight only  
trembled nearby through a gauze of leaves  
and wind was sedulous and fine rain toyed.

Then I could meet myself below the pine,  
high noon, color of balsam in the air, a waft  
of everywhere condensed as here. The elixir  
of privacy. I hear those other voices now.

26 April 1994



## MOROSUS SUM

The dismal gists of authorship  
arrest a matchflame halfway to its candle.  
A green field fills up with louts.  
Lutes. We call it seasonal and it may be,  
but I sense the ancient ghosts come back  
with all their brutal yearnings still intact

—there is no noise where the dead hang out  
so they want music here. I see each one  
uncountably many, pretending to be dandelions.  
Trucks roar in hot muffled leafless air.  
The self-humiliating young attend the quivering  
and shout, the least they can do is join the dying.

*Alors* (as books say), they are persuasive,  
*les morts*, they want us all to join them  
but most they want the young, the ones whose skins  
best show wounds and weals. It is *The Seduction  
of the Living by the Dead*, though men call it springtime.  
You can tell because they beckon from the ground.

27 April 1994

## TIME OUT OF MIND

The withers of that horse go touch me  
evensong at morning my lute is perforate  
in a pattern of stars street maps silhouettes  
till I can't tell I muse from I remember, or I do none of these,

breeze and billowing curtains! A Cuttyhunk morning  
and still on earth! The curve of it (bowl or  
soundbox) intends to propagate verdurous  
Sanguinaria whose root writes red — pure Chinese music

—depends on how many planets a culture reckons—  
tones — in the dream house a horse is led  
three times round the sleepers and if he neighs  
the sleeper perishes, that is, wakes up and goes to work

with a horse all day at the back of his head.

28 April 1994

---

Until I do nothing but what I do  
and the sky falls down

meeek children looking for mothers  
fathers looking for jobs

what are you looking for  
you who are reading this?

Can you see me? Can you guess the man  
waiting under the stone of the word,

insect man or druid man,  
Merlin come to whisper in your sleep?

The leaves of trees tell you what I tell.

29 April 1994

---

Catch me saying no! It hovers  
like a grand crow over sunny lawns  
and wiser than they are and sees far.

Tells me what to do, this No  
with two wings (myself and others), with loud  
heartbeats in the sky,

whose lovesong is always a warning.  
Intimate crow flies up in my chest  
not to say No but to say nothing,

quick shadow on grass instead of any word.

30 April 1994

# NI]-re

I open my mouth in the place I am told  
I open an hour, I make a hole  
in the side of the day and it speaks

I open a word when I am told  
the word has a heart in it  
This is the skill they taught me  
that I have hardly learned,

I do not label things I speak their names  
I pierce the armor of their seeming  
and out of the crack they speak  
they call and we are busy hearing

I open my mouth and the mouth of me  
is a hole in the side of the world  
the mountain chooses to speak through me  
and the cloud is persuaded to tell what it knows

going and no staying and no coming and no fear,  
I open my mouth in the house I am told.

30 April 1994

S A W K I L L

Then at my house. The leaves come out  
the stream is hard to see  
sparkle and darkling quick  
between the trees is all

a rush, a sense of going  
but nothing gone, it's always  
there when I look close,  
river on the other side of the mind.

30 April 1994