

4-2012

aprA2012

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "aprA2012" (2012). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 2.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/2](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/2)

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).

= = = = =

Once I could write  
the whole world in one day  
then it took seven

by now I can barely  
color in the daffodils  
slackly lovely by  
the leachfield, and blue,  
blue, o love, so  
much sky to fill.

1 April 2012

## THE CRUCIFIED

Who took upon himself  
the persona of a redeemer  
spoke outrage in the temple  
and what seemed just foolish to the Greeks,  
the Swiss, the spring  
flowers of the Engadin, one scarlet  
cyclamen I found growing  
from a cleft in the rock ledge  
after I had climbed the Roc d'Enfer.

1 April 2012

= = = = =

Worrisome thought:  
will the hydrangeas  
come in blue this year  
and will the cholera  
stop killing in Haiti  
and the tanks in Syria,  
and my knee get better?

1 April 2012

=====

Things fly about.

They stand naked on the corner

these flowers mean trouble

I have forgotten everything I knew.

1 April 2012

= = = = =

So slow the car  
imagines the road

the road divides  
before it reaches

anything called me  
and I answer still.

23 July 2015

=====

Problematize the obvious you get a science  
ask why X loves Y you get a picture of their eyes.  
We want to be seen. All the rest is music.

23 July 2015

## MANDORLA

the marvelous  
almond-shaped orifice,  
the shape that speaks us into this strange place,  
ogive windows of the lost cathedral

we are the stoned priests, we hum.  
Because this is the shape of the body  
coming in and going out,

the sacred window that is a door  
that is a half-closed eye

and in the silent for a moment mind  
a tear forms, shaped like it,  
shed for all beings

the suffering of things.

Through the door the stranger comes  
shadowy blue with sympathy for you  
you can't understand, the stranger  
sits down on your doorstep

and does not leave,  
smiles as you enter and leave,



for love is a beggar even at the meagerest door.

Grace of that contour, ooze  
of meaning sticks to everything,

nothing void in this empty world

you sing inside us till we can't resist  
opening our mouths to you, raped  
from inside out we sing  
such a simple song, the future  
will understand  
even better than the present can.

Difficult poems are the easiest to write.

The hard work is getting you  
to sit down beside me  
even at the ordinary table, where better,  
faded flowers and fresh coffee,  
to talk and talk and what comes after  
when the hibiscus on the berm outside  
finally gets around to it and blossoms us.

23 July 2015

= = = = =

Keep nothing. Send it all  
back to the foundry  
they'll melt it down and cast  
the massive Five  
Minutes Ago on a Lost Part of Earth  
to be hoisted up in the public square  
between the Dutch church and the CVS.  
People will say it resembles a cannon  
or maybe a man eating an apple  
or a woman showing her child how  
to cross the street safely the lights  
keep changing, who said we  
ever have to stop? Go write  
another town and live in it,  
kiss the window and see your breath  
at last, see what you really mean,  
a smudge-on-clarity is who you are,  
drunk identity in a sober world.  
Sometimes they fire the cannon,  
more commonly the child runs away.  
Winter apples are withered but very sweet.

23 July 2015

**[for Orestes]**

KL:

It is woman's work to rise against the state.

When I killed the king I was killing  
the power of the state  
over the individual, I was killing  
the rule of husband over wife,  
priest over worshipper, gods over mortals.  
This is woman's work.

It is woman's work to destroy the state.

Then when the king was dead  
and another feckless fellow  
little more than a boy  
came to animate my chilly bed  
out of inadvertence I became the state  
but I meant no power, wielded  
as little as I could,  
let things go along as they chose,  
things can be trusted to go their own way,  
I let whatever wanted to  
grow in my garden  
and never cared what people think,  
I let the sun shine and the rain fall

and let the roses shove out their thorns in peace,  
that is nature's way,  
that is woman's work.

I let you live as you chose  
in rags and smelly clothes  
and sulking all day long  
and sleeping every night alone  
to play your silly part,  
a simple daddy's girl  
struck down by the loss of his  
power, the only power that you knew,  
you had no power of your own  
yet...

And then your leper brother came  
panting for revenge or god knows what  
and from such feeble maleness  
you sucked enough strength  
to rise up against me—  
I was the state and you cut me down.  
That was woman's work.

I let you do it. And you did well,  
you are my flesh and you know  
deep inside you what I knew:  
love men but do not let them rule,  
a queen is the antidote for a king—

destroy the state and grow the person,  
all power to the individual,  
I let you kill the state in me  
and by doing so you set me free—  
and that is woman's work,

break all the rules  
and begin each day just you,  
just you and what you see and feel—  
all longing and no belonging.  
You and I are just women now,  
being with each other,  
and that too is woman's work.

*(Elektra moves forward very slowly, slowly reaches out to embrace her mother,  
clutches her, kisses her breast.)*

23 July 2015

= = = = =

And the blue sky comes  
it is an answer

to no question  
Be like that

all the time  
arrive

and be big and be there  
that is the simple situation

what the ancients called  
the bosom of god.

23 July 2015

**[for Orestes]**

OR:

I met a poet once in Thrace  
a gloomy man with tender hands  
who told me that human men  
were created not by the gods  
or chance or destiny  
but anciently by human women  
soon after the beginning of the world.  
Women were the first-born  
and the only humans then,  
they gave to one another  
in some strange way that love  
and tenderness and sciences  
were all part of. Then their poets  
thought up the image of a servant  
body, rough and strong enough  
and shaped just enough like women  
to fit together pleasantly. The servant  
carried, threw, battled, lifted, dug—  
but as often happens with creators  
they fell in love with what they'd made  
and in a terrible moment let them take charge.  
Do you think there's some truth in this?

PYL:

How would I know?

I don't feel much like a servant,  
do you?

OR:

I don't know what I feel.

PYL:

Me, I'm glad we live now  
when we're in charge.

OR:

Are we really?

PYL:

That's up to us, isn't it?  
My business is to be in charge.  
Yours too, that's what brought you here—  
why are you doubting now?  
Your mother sinned against male power  
and you came to take revenge.

OR:

I've seen her murdered in my arms  
and yet she's alive.  
I've seen the blood-soaked robe she wore  
but now her breast is pale, unblemished,



I've seen her eyes follow me  
as I move about the room,  
she knows I can hear her  
but she hasn't spoken yet.  
I've seen her smile at me—  
how terrible a dead woman's smile...

PYL:

Clearly she's not dead.  
There must have been some trick—  
women are like that.  
Elektra pretended to kill,  
your mother pretended to die.  
They're just working on you—  
it's all just make-believe,  
all that phony blood.  
Women are like that.  
And it's your own fault—  
you should have done what the law requires,  
you should have killed her yourself.

OR:

At least I held her as she was slain.

PYL:

Not slain.

She walks in the city.

She's here now.

OR:

But only I can see her!

PYL:

Don't be silly, we all can see her,  
her servants bring her breakfast,  
they make her bed and air her mattress  
while she goes down for her morning swim,  
I see her sitting on the terrace now,  
my conquest sitting soft beside her.

OR:

My sister. I don't like your word 'conquest.'

PYL:

Call it whatever you like.  
Women like me, people  
in general like me—you  
fell in love with me back then  
didn't you? Why shouldn't she?

OR:

Do you think of me as a conquest?

PYL:

We've had fun together—

that's what I think.

The clouds above just pass across the sky,

they don't change it.

We're just who we are,

have fun while we can

and stay loyal. I have always

been loyal to you, haven't I,

kept company with your leprosy,

brought you back to Mycene—

we're good to each other,

so now I fuck your sister—

that makes sense to me.

OR:

That's so limited, so mercantile.

PYL:

What more do you want?

Big things drive out little.

There's only one sun in the sky—

does that make it limited?

OR:

Go have her, I don't care.

Just be careful—a woman

who has killed once can kill again.

PYL:

She'd never lift her hand against a man.

And even if she did, I'd be like your mother

and rise up from the dead

all ready for breakfast.

Don't worry so much—

all that guilt and vengeance stuff is over now.

OR:

*(has drawn closer to Pylades, lays his hand on P's arm)*

I do love you, dear friend.

I'm sorry if I spoke wrong,

my words are wrong,

I want you in my mouth.

PYL:

*(playfully, tenderly)*

We rule each other with an iron prick.

...

23 July 2015

= = = = =

Many a moshteen in Drumcondra  
I ween, I saw them on a Sabbath morning  
when devil the church they'd ever  
spoil with their breeches, loud louts all about  
talking the football and hurley,  
I feared for our lives as I steered the rental  
up the wrong side of the road to the north  
where someone told me an airplane was  
would whisk us none too soon  
to walk at peace among the dreamy Swiss.

23 July 2015

(*máistín*, 'thug')