

6-2012

junG2012

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "junG2012" (2012). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 239.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/239

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☺ = = = = =

Woke at four o'clock and saw
and didn't want to sleep
wanted to stand and hear the sea
say the same things it said last night.

And the slim moon
rising over the Elizabeths
decreascent moon
holding darkness all around her
blue, while down below
the band of reddish pale
on horizon—color of flesh
and the light was leaching up the sky

the secret's out? Light
comes out of the earth
and lifts up heaven
and the birds begin to sing,
tentative at first,
and Bell 6 sounds
as the sea too begins to rise.

Watching this vast chromography
happen out in the laboratory
silent, silent, titrations of the light.

15 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Remove them from the Vale of Desire
their faces lost
smashed toolkit of an earlier time.

dreamt 15 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

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I was thinking of these finds in Spain
even my old Altamira knew
evidence of who we were
when we began to write—not draw—
on the walls around us.

Writing came first. Then
the bisons and the leaping deer
the horn-head priest.

We learned to speak by reading what we wrote—
drawing was a kind of shorthand
to say a whole proposition in one curve of
haunch one stroke of spear.
A scratch on the wall was our first I.

15 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

PROTHALAMION

A word or two and after
hummingbirds
expensive dawn on wedding island
oh you kids I marvel
profligate wisdom of the *happening*
that ancient shore
emergence from the womb of
the ordinary
the prayer called everyday
gasp that and new
the seagulls will be glad
every marriage happened already
the wedding is an afterthought
a wager, a Broadway musical
all these messages
must have a sponsor
a chase of cardinals past the window
and now it's time to eat the bride
and lick the silverware
once the groom was just a goom
guma, "man," he
is the bride's man
the bride comes first
matriarchy rules

this one archaic day
and now she comes
wearing what she wears
the Sound resounds
with guests gasping
in for once comfortable admiration
oh to be rocked in those hips
oh to be favored with those eyes
Armani never looked so good
far out at sea a cruise ship blasts
a hymenial steam whistle salute
for this is the appointed time
when two become one
for a whole afternoon
there are no differences
now it's time to kiss the groom
oh to be wrapped in those arms
oh to be known by his keen mind
as she will know and be known
all night in uptown shivaree
imported by wheel and rail
is this not love
that agitates the calendar
and makes the guests float in
from their own obscure desires
to share this panoply of lust's
own entitlement and march

and who is this gaunt gent
who blubbers verses from
half a dozen Bibles
is he not the mullah
of lawbreaks, the pope of propriety,
he seems to be crying
God says it's okay to be friends
even to kiss
and another god says so too
and lots of goddesses
and why not
and the little princely boy
kneels before the pair
and proffers gold
two rings two doves fly over
the glass is smashed
fireworks hit the clouds
on a clear day you can see Long Island

the consul of Antillia is here
he wears a sash across his penguin chest
floppy blue hortensia in his buttonhole
a spectacle of tasteless grace
and he reads poetry in a hammy voice
blessing everybody right and left
and squeezing the bridesmaids a tad too tight
the wind was up before the sun

the guests hung over from the night before
scratch their itches in the freshening breeze
bluejays everywhere and stunted pines
pinecones on the bonfire last night
each guest got a cone to toss on the blaze
the kids collected them for weeks before
hymen o hymenae! Someone knew Latin
and squealed it as the pinecones
crackled and exploded
as the flecks in their eyes are doing now,
headache and morning sun
I need a drink
an alphabet of appetites
ready to be spelled out all day long
be serious for once
this happens like this only one time in every life
a solemn high convention of convention
nobody's a virgin anymore
but still we smash the glass, we break the door
the groomsmen help him from the car
he's wearing what his father wore
forty years before, his own grandfather's
morning coat all dove-grey well waistcoted,
spats too and a topper in his mitt
my God would she have said yes
if she'd seen him like this then
what about her, rolling up the aisle

like an ice cream sundae
outside the afternoon takes over
grackles peck at champagne corks on the lawn
human conversation never ends
though Benedict says it should keep for heaven
do Christian mothers still bronze their babies' shoes
is the mayor coming this town has no mayor
some woman runs it from a Board
will she be here she's here already
the one in lilac with a Kyoto fan
what a color for a wedding
it's more like Lent
look at all they're giving up
OTHER PEOPLE, SEX WITH
but more than that an austerity is built in
some men think marriage pretty meager soup
but this is a wedding don't talk like that
we took the ferry and she was seasick
it's the anxiety all that water and no meaning
everything I fear is here
the girls the guys the long commitment
for I am the pool in which Narcissus plunged
look in my eyes and see his yearning still
staring at you of course
all lap and lip
and there she goes now
do women still powder their noses

how many men here do you think are wearing garters

how many false teeth

they do that implant now

it was so hard to get here

it's not near anywhere

I want to get married on the moon

means you don't ever want to get married

how can I ever be sure

the certainty dear chum is in your genes

nobody knows what he means he talks like that

the groom wrote his Master's essay on Derrida

I thought people went on for the doctorate these days

terns are screaming overhead

we must be too close to the nest

we used to be close in fact one time I thought

what is that bird who drags her wing

why do they always build these things on a hill

all that climbing up and going down

lapwing do they have them here?

Killdeer maybe I'll look it up

it was winter and you were cold

she let me roll oranges down her back

as we kneeled before the fire

awkward time between vows and dinner

dance with me

they're starting a fire again

paganism is very boring all that nature

why is religion always creeping in
and then it was dusk anew
a wedding is the saddest storm
two people bidding farewell to the rest of us
the bride is drunk now and the groom is missing
we have to get the dinner started
he's down on the rocks feeding cookies to birds
larus the seagull corax the crow
we have fishing crows here only
I love their loud instructions
leave the meanings to me
music has none that's why we love it so
if we all sit down they'll serve the soup
who are all these waitresses
girls from the high school his aunt's the principal
look a helicopter do you think it's
yes it was and landed on the lawn
making all the skirts fly up and the table settings rattle
and from it steps the mystery guest
missed the wedding but just in time for supper.

16 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Pencil

walks stiff

down the middle

of the street

at midnight

it struts

hard to see

gunslingersleepwalkernightingale.

16 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Blackbird first then the cardinal
then the sea. The news
is different every day
but says the same thing.

Look on your works,
ye mighty, and read
the message of the morning
men groan

and women mourn
and all you do is
make things worse,
your heroics
our despair.

17 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

VACATION

An island where it feels
you just got here
and you've been here forever.

17 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Suppose I took
every word as an instruction.
And any word you write
tells me what to do to you.
To you or for you
or on you or in you
or in your name profess
a new and timeless prophecy.
Talking to each other
is the oldest religion.

17 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

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The mail came and read me
women everywhere
the smoke of the Decider going up
from the altar where we park our woes
one lust at a time.
Men everywhere. Insects
is obvious when you walk in
safe from the bright street.
Coming in is like falling downstairs
into yourself—darkness
screams as you tumble.
Hawk overhead—how
can they have a bird in a house.
It's not a house it is a temple
a place apart.
Everything in you. You pray:
let her answer as she is asked.
Let the cup just once be full.
Let it rain on the moon.
One day all things will know who they are.

17 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

PYX

I looked at her until she seemed to be
a lacquered jewelbox on my mother's vanity
a countess of somewhere small and hard to find
on the other side of an ocean I had yet to reach.
So I stretched out and touched her arm here
width of a playing card above her elbow
seven of hearts say and we both were thrilled
at the softness and firmness of what betweened us.
Cloisonne she said not lacquer. You I said
seeing the only one I ever laid hands on
and no one will ever open this small box.

18 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

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A family friend came with the kids and the dog.
He got up early eager for the new venue.
They slept in because it seemed vacation.
Something dull hurts in my chest as I take note of this
A leaden feeling like a pancake at breakfast
or too much sun the night before. But wait,
I got it wrong, I think he's just going fishing.
Poor fish. Poor people. Limp world with such pleasures in it.
Let me be the judge of that, it's my chest that hurts.

18 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

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The problem is you were supposed
to fall in love with me
said the oyster to the clam
but you were old and grizzled, sire,
and that pearl you call your art
is just plain sickness—
it revolts me with its shiny smooth
as you do with your rough exterior.
Yes I am rugose and you are sleek
said the oyster to the clam, the world
adores me for my art and you should too.
The world, sir, eats us both, the world
is full of people all hair and horn.
They mean nothing but our ruin—I alone
am queen of symmetry and silence and wet.

18 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

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And so we walked down the street
into the old language.
Frogs say it, you hear it
in your lungs those great soft
ears inside. Now you walk
through language and out the other side.
Where the sea washes up among the pebbles
and the sun breaks down in the wind.
This is beauty, suffer it.
All the curators on the planet
those insolent spenders of other people's money
could find a way of selling this, this cool
despair this end of the road
where beauty is something you stub your toes on
something inside which you powerfully drown.
I know what it's like, I fell into her once
and I've been frightened ever since—leave me
I stink with holiness.

18 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

BLURB

The angels of Aquinas would love this book—
it errs by intellect, not will, and it is ordered
with that almost divine circumspection by which
the planets are ordered in Ptolemy's system,
where Earth is rightly placed between love and war.
Now find a book to match this description.

18 June 2012, Cuttyhunk

