

6-2010

junE2010

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "junE2010" (2010). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 500.
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POSTCARDS FROM CUTTYHUNK

When you think of the island, you think of a fine high wind on the sea cliffs, the surf you listen to every night at the rim of sleep. But there are quiet inland places too, haunted thickets, shallow meadows where the air hardly moves, warm even on the windiest days. And this magical overgrown path through the aspen grove, more like a story than a place.



In secret places like this we walk quietly, quickly, as if not to disturb.



The ferns. Beyond them is the oldest apple tree in the world. gnarled limbs reaching out everywhere. The serpent still lives there, and Eve's loincloth hangs from one branch.

Like Prospero's island, many more men than women. Only one Miranda. And memories of Sycorax who, unseen, still rules the island's manners.

(11 June 2010)

= = = = =

...see them walking in an air of glory

To see them walking now
fifty years later
the glow of glory gone hidden now
but the glory lasts.

To see them walking now
quick into morning when
the sun elbows its way
through cloudbank
like a bigshot through a crowd

but they in speed are humble
decent meek,
they are people in the zone of God,
newshowered, in clean clothes,
their minds fixed on some beauty
they have read or heard
or even held in their arms,

stepping now the clean street
somewhere that must
(because they are)
be beautiful too,
these ordinary saints
on their way to,
these people of the town.

11 June 2010

= = = = =

See, I was quoting myself,
I was leaning back to another
time to know who I meant—

who those saints are.
No, what they meant in me.
What it meant, when I spoke.

We are the intermediaries
between the people of the town
and the limitless unknown.

11 June 2010
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Can you hear money?
A dog in the dark.

Break a shadow find
something better than light.

Touch is the sunlight of the skin
music is the nightlight in the bedroom of the brain.

11 June 2010

VOCABULARY

One thousand small words
chase me around the block.
Ringaleavio we played, a cruel
embodiment of absence,

hide and seek and find and beat,
over blocks and blocks we ran.
Or hid. I hid wherever I could.
This is personal. This running

away from the words is the deep
hypostasis of the city.
So many me's fleeing from our enemies.
Who love to run the way we love to hide.

11 June 2010

= = = = =

Here is a different kind of sleep
bright afternoon on the daybed
sea breeze piercing, almost chill
a lucid sleep unstained by the least dream.

11 June 2010

= = = = =

Writing tickets:

a summons
to appear before the night
and identify which
of all those stars was
the one that made you.

**

What made you do
what you did, what you do.
Epictetus said Blame
nothing and no one
not even you.

But the stars are what they are.

11 June 2010
Cuttyhunk

WALL

As well stand here
as walk elsewhere.
All there is
is what I see.

11 June 2010
Church's Beach

= = = = =

In dream, we belong only to our breath

the fairy tale:

the fairy tale I have come on earth to write

(as if *Faust* and *Egmont* and *Werther* and all the poetry were only qualifying exams for being able to write *Das Märchen*)

Now tell this tale.

Once there was a woman who turned her breath inside out. The silken tatters of her dream she put on as her clothes and went out to work in the world. Aha, she said, at the first glimpse of the sidewalk all fresh in sunlight, people strolling by, aha, she said, the world I see is built of memory. I will understand it by taking it apart memory by memory. I will learn the absolute by forgetting the relative. I will go back upstairs and sit at my window. I will become a window. The light will come into me for a change. Out in the street, people will stop hurting each other. That is all I can do. It is a mystery, but one must be quiet about such things. I am such things. I will say no more about myself. Only this hint: I am soft glass. And there is a bone.

12 June 2010

= = = = =

If I were a word
what would I say?

I am a man
and say nothing

but words.
Who would you

believe
and why?

Is anything I say
true of you too?

12 June 2010

= = = = =

When things strike so fiercely
and nothing remembers you

then the ferocity we learned in each other
an alloyed passion
of two inerts composed

sent them mad—
a grove of beech trees.

We have forgotten too much.

Call out to the sun
to the stone in your shoe

I also am a heathen
heathens pray to everything not just some god.

12 June 2010

= = = = =

Waiting for forever
takes a long time

at the wharf
an invisible schooner
floats ready to sail

why am I the only one
who has to witness these things?

where do the gulls go
who does nature belong to?

gathering her skirts around her
the boat came in last night
gliding through the sunsheen our way
and came silent through the morning
to the little wharf we stood on

must I go on board to test the distances?

An invisible man is safe
from everything but his own desires

what strange seas
can an invisible ship invade?

Bottomless abyss of the visible.

12 June 2010

ISLANDERS BEFORE US

They were just like us but had no hearts
they ran on breath alone

sly tubes like organ pipes ran through them
so they sang sort of as they moved

we dissolve our oxygen they took it raw

for the passions of the breath
are a deeper mystery
than the passions of blood

here they hover
still with us the way
the sea-side wild roses
flurry in sea breeze

but longer and louder and before us and after.

12 June 2010

= = = = =

I call it what I call it
because I don't know its name
for itself,
 every single thing
has one I presume

or is naming a human
neurosis only
 and the far-away and well-within
free of such need—

because they do not call
out to one another?

Or only to us?
 For they do,
and every
 word a man says
is some thing calling out
to another through him.

We fit in between things.
In that sense we are water
but not so good at listening.

13 June 2010

THE METHOD

Dawn. Seagulls
walk around the lawn
like nuns—
 not an original
likeness but a true one.

What is lost into language
of the original freshness of observation

can only be reclaimed
through language itself.

13 June 2010