

6-2007

junF2007

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "junF2007" (2007). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 693.
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= = = = =

Bird sailing in at me
virgins me
to be on a hilltop
and it happen me

bird at my eyes
swoops by a swerve
embraces me
if I were a lap

I would be full of
what he sustains
himself on the flight
the lighthearted road

he works so hard
to deliver, a bird
at me I don't know
his name only

the noplance from which he comes down.

19 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

LEXICALI ROSE

1.

I want a Latin dictionary in my bride
so when I say I'm homo-nexual she
will not dare to understand me.
A nest is all I need, a knot, a stem
hitherer than root, a tongue to taste with,
spring of actual stream below Minetta Street.

2.

The course of water, *amnis*, 'a stream.'
"I am this." I want her saying.
A long day begins with a single this.
The marvelous ordinary
stumbles over the horizon.

3.

Here it's an island,
heron. What's it like
to be you are?

I've seen you only
from the outside only
a body, yours,

walking up the hill.

4.

Trouble this morning—
I woke before language.
The light was here
but the sun was not.
I had all the meanings

and no spoon, no cup

one wave after another
and not one of them
pronounceable. So many
foreigners I have become
just by opening my eyes.

19 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

I could have had what was hard
but was too serious for that, like a man
in a florist's demanding a bouquet
of nameless flow'rs for only such dare hope
to speak th'untried virtues of my love,
the shopgirl flustered by the wave of trochees
flounders in the cool-room, always fall
back on freesias she thinks, the smell
would answer to a sweeter name, no?
And so it went. I could have been your rose
she thinks, your most particular mistinguette
or even the gloomy lilacs on your summerhouse
but no, I am a maiden, you a customer.
My whole life was like that, trying
to peer up the skirts of the morning
to see what humankind has never guessed
with my unspeakable binoculars. Narrowed
to slits my 'glassy, wet development of skin'
spots fancy cattle on a neighbor island
hough-high in the chilly surf. Can cows drink sea?
No harm in asking but no one's hear to ask.

20 June 2007
Cutyhunk

= = = = =

Mist. We river. I let
myself go. Work
to be done. Hard
not to do it.
When will I let it
do itself so I can do
the nothing only I
can handle?
No one but me
can plumb this vacancy.

20 June 2007

= = = = =

Some new secret
to bring right home.
Evidence? Hardly.
Nothing in the world
but bird cries
in the fog and far
downhill the surf
grumbling in sleep.

20 June 2007, Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

The thing my father taught me how to see.
My favorite animal on the merry-go-round
my stones would sink while his would skip,
a crystal set we listened to the sun, crackle
of clear light on the earphone, catswhisker
wiggled just so o prissy finger, education
is misunderstanding. Nothing remembers.
Learn three birds and buy a book, hopeless.
Kneel down and make your confession
nose pressed to the dusky grill, even better
when there's no priest in his little closet,
how can I have carried so little out of childhood
and still have no much here, infantile,
my day thick as pudding with belongings.
Bread pudding, my favorite. And colors
I thought I never knew are all around me.
It was the hero climbing out of his coffin again,
what to do without Euripides, the theater
is dead, only little me left now to carry
the paper to your porches at the gloaming,
lemonade hour in those disgusting cartoons
encouraging young Wasps to enter Trade.
Buy but never sell, especially real estate.
Why would you ever get rid of something real?
Buy and never sell, the code of happy men,
targets of the matter world, intersector of cash,
mild as Methodists on the lawns of heaven.
Walk into any water turns it into Jordan—
that's the ¡milagro! built into our skin.
You talking to me? Trying to build a house
from the sky down, using loaves of bread.
Egyptian scalawags vamoose across the sands
and soon give themselves airs in alternative
theologies – Josephus tries to refute this idea
no one would ever have thought of
without his refutation. But I believe it,
anything worth denying is probably true.
And fear of woman is the source of all culture,
which makes the real woman turn abstract.
No sunshine on Mothers Day for them,
the bearded brutes that built the Bible.

Humph. Rosary beads self-knotted in my fingers.
This recitation cures more than rheumatiz.
The beads are Irish horn, the chain is fairy gold
picked up in Donegal on an August morning
when one stab of sunlight pinked the fuchsia
and I found this. Hysterical machinery of prayer!
As long as the beads fit the fingers the beads
fit the prayer, any religion that has sounds in it
or even I suppose that weird gospel of the mute
where men pray by winking at things seen
a certain number of times in a special rhythm.
Their eyes fill with tears, but some god's tongue
tip licks the salt away. Did you read that
or did that extravagant housewife your heart
fall for one more amour and make it up?
As if this bitter planet could at this late date
sustain even a mild flirtation with the truth.

20 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

The problem as usual is not knowing
who I am today or am supposed to be.
When I'm a witch I pick a Tarot card
to tell me by sly impersonation who
or when a pious Jew I take a verse
from Genesis to show the way. But I'm
just me, and me's a far cry from I am.
Right now I am this lucid harbor
not pious, not Jewish but you never know,
the sun's so sheen I can't look at myself
in the mirror, sea shattered at my feet.
Me all over, and I am nowhere to be found.

21 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

SO OFTEN THE SHAPE DISPOSES

The mystery. Women hide it in their clothes.
Men's drunken laughter by the golf cart
refers to it. Children know it's there
and never get it. There is a tree
down by the apple grove that leans
an ancient elbow bough on a boulder
and grows up again from there. Deep
in shade behind it the oldest trees
cluster around the mystery. Ferns
bow down. Rabbits, to speak only of
rabbits, seem to worship there. So *there*
must have much to do with *it*.

The shape of it makes us guess it
but we never see the shape. The guess
is all we've got of God – see Exodus
XXXIII – the sense that someone just passed by.
And proved something by doing so,
by making us feel, but we'll never know what.
Demonstration used to mean proof.
Something happened in you, and
that is what you are, the shape said.

21 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

MORGAN LE FAYE

Yield some to save the rest.
Magic. Sometimes we love
sometimes the forgetting
itself, the pale green stucco
ceilings at Saint-Gallen.
Will you help me in my Project
A chorei, read the bible backwards
and let the bird at last
fly out of that dry shell?
For backwards-reading is really
reading inside-out. You'll begin
by finding out who Adam's
mother was, and how, like
Jesus (Adam II) he had no
father. Immaculate. New
testament rescued from old,
both from church and synagogue
—honorable job for a Bat Mitzvah,
to find out what the real commandments
are right now. Even if they too
still number ten, each one
a honeyed tongue slipped in your lips.

21 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

S H A N E W I S

Woke up
with her in mind
the most
melusina name I know
rose Friday morning
from Thursday's dream,
a name

only, what is it,
a she surely,
an Indian heroine
in some American
opera I never heard
is my best guess

But the dream said:
She is the one who swims inside the blood.

1.
Not a cloud in the sky but the grass is growing.
The glass is falling, which is not glass, it is a number,
a behavior of mercury. I am one of those
who have no ancestors, yet am no orphan.
There was nothing old around me when I grew
so I had to take the ivy on the wall as my mother
and the brick wall was my father's smile.
I had a house to hold me in its arms.

2.
The point is I read this nice children's book
about time and the sea, about a boy
and his grandfather and I had none.
No grandfather no grandmother no boy—
so I couldn't be a boy could only be a son.

3.

What does all this mean
to the ocean out there
or to you over my shoulder
with your mind I hope
on other things? Driftwood
to burn on cold nights
in the old franklin stove.
Solitary oystercatcher
on the sandspit, there.

4.

The name of her slipping through the mind's
locks into the pool of waking, a gasp
to be in air again, our air –

to be remembered

is to breathe,

the Greeks knew that,

plant no hyacinths for me
in rainy seasons,

just say my name,

repeat it when the wind blows
and let the seed-syllables of who I was
disperse,

thistledown drift of my identity
scatter into dirt and rill.

For of sound

a man is made,
his parts called
out of vacancy

to assume one more
the function

bedded in the sound of it,
sound of him,

shyness of a man
speaking his own name.

No man, I said, I am No-man.
And this is my island.

5.

What could be more embarrassing
than to swim that way
bare-syllabled, gleaming naked sound-shape
spilled into morning.
I think you must have been Shanewis.
I think this dream was yours. Or you.
You slithered through my spaces
to bask in the rock pool,
babbling your own name.

6.

But it's in the blood
she swims
or lymph

and knows before we do
what shape our desire claims
ready for her to take on

as a woman on Church's Beach
steps carefully on shingle
up from the waves and accepts

even gladly the towel
I hold out that warms
and conceals her and she smiles.

7.

How easy it is when it's alive.
Query: What swims in the blood
when an ancestor isn't? No.
Ancestor lives always in the blood.
Query: Why do they call genetics
blood? Doesn't matter, just find her.
Him. Who is this Shanewis
swimming through the sleep gates
clear into wake-up, a woman

reconstituted through her name
alone, seeded in my mind.

She slips between us, lacing the words
between speaker and hearer,
the whole air's a pool to her Undine.

8.

All I'm supposed to do is tell you,
that's all. There is a liquid grace
that's feminine and efficacious
runs between such as speak and such as hear
spattering water drops as she goes—
we read her traces, a gleam on the wood-grain
morning floor oak. Sun. She was here.

9.

Or simply in a mirror, any mirror. Shows
like the iceberg tip only six
sevenths of the whole person
who can be known only by the words you say.
Principles of Phonology. Jakobson.
Troubetskoi. The distinctive
minimal utterance. That makes you you.

22 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

CHALKMARKS, AFTERNOON

Let such things not be draff – to use a Bible word
I think we understand, don't toss away the little
bit of smarts you scraped together from
an infinity of one-life stands. Sophiboly, they call it,
throwing wisdom away. Which is the basic urge
of civilization -- tear down what we have, build
something else instead our grandchildren can demolish
gleeful as Assyrians in purple and gold. Penn Station
is my case in point. Or Les Halles by Saint-Eustache
now a hole in the ground with a bookshop in it
time will fill in, using gravity alone, and bad reviews.
Sardonic he sounded this afternoon, tea was late,
grumpiness predictable, see above. An isle
like a fingernail in water, all opalescent, almost true.
Come there with me, I interposed, to change
the erotic quotient of the setting sun, there's always
someone else waiting for you there. Really, where?
Wherever you look. I am tired of looking,
I want to be seen. They'll do that too, they're all
eyes, as the saying is. I thought it was all ears.
By now the clouds had swallowed their pride and left
a gap, a band of positively amber sunshine
fell along the cliffs outside Menemsha.
Can there be a rainbow made up just of blue?
That's what it seems to be doing right now,
shadows of children scribbling on the street,
their voices wander up to meet us, after.

23 June 2007
Cuttyhunk

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

Sparrows asking one another for a date.
Wait by the gate, follow the picket fence
down steep Broadway to the sea. A dock,
a system of jetties newly electrified.

Deep in every harbor Stonehenge sinks.
Sea canyons peopled with instances of art.
That must have been a time, but who knows,
really, aren't we just afterlings of destiny,

polyester consequences strutting our stuff
in damaged beerhalls? No cultura on weekends,
friend. Sun is what they pay for, that crisp
actinic moment, your skin against the sky.

Read Paracelsus on the sand, then you'll spot
the sporting Naiades atop the surf. Come
again? Bring something or buy something
from the ruined sailor. What happened to him

shouldn't happen to a log, parts of his body
got left in a book and he speaks no language.
Dolphins carry poets through the risky strait
each one danging plectrum on his cithara

not to mention sistrum rattling by the ladies
yalda-ing their uptalk Sapphics as they ride,
pure juvenile fiction is the best of wine.
The frit that bakes down to a glaze: the sea.

2.

On islands wake early so you can hear
the first precise manifesto of the sea.
Listen through the sweet of last night's
Sumatra inadequately reheated
in the microwave. You think: the thorn
that Christ wore, the stained glass window.
The five year old Kidder kid skips
down to their garage, the golfcart's
safe. The sea's whole enameled history
of which we are (says the metaphor) the frit

and all that happens us ever is the heat.
The sea explains. No end to its annals.
Summershine and weekend ending,
that sad old song your mother sang it when.

23 June 2007
Cuttyhunk