

5-2006

mayE2006

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "mayE2006" (2006). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 740.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/740

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LA VECCHIA

they called it,
who, what am I remembering,
sunlight on the ceiling, shimmer
over the Grand Canal, over
the old bathtub
needs new grout,
and always the water does that to the light,

water always the same
no matter the vessel.

La vecchia means the old woman,
who told me that's what light was called
in Venice,
who do they call the light a woman
young or old?

Above the square (which is not square)
the clock strikes the hour
with a sound like a great bird calling,
despair of the whole sky,

and sure enough the pigeons all take off,
wheel higher, up
into the regions where the swallows ride
torpid on updrafts,
they sleep in air.
And who told me that?

21 May 2006

Boston

ON BELLEVUE HILL

And when I would be reading
there is instead, deceiving –
writing words I wish I could be reading
even if they're all deceiving
and only what I want to write
is true. The false
is true enough for me.

And then I fall to sneezing.
Enough. One day's campaign
is near enough to dream
for me to smell it coming,
feels like a sneeze and a sigh,
a big family packing up
and loading the wagon high
for the long vacation every
year on the land they own
somewhere far upon mountains.
Everyday Thermopylae.
I keep vigil for the tread of sleep.

21 May 2006, Boston

= = = = =

Can I be as beautiful
as some woman was
she asks the mirror
the admirer
 looks back
and frowns
 nothing
ever is again
usually it hardly was
the first time
I am wonderful.

22 May 2006,
Boston

= = = = =

In and out the sparrow said
I am liciter and all at once
while you are marginal
being man. Law on my side,
that terrible thing,
the natural.

I want to clear
this strange door
and open it to understand
the wall

and what's between

and what's beyond
where the forest runs of old
out of a book and into your mind
from which you can never pry it out,
the wildest place, the place inside.

22 May 2006,
Boston

= = = = =

Am I near it yet
border boundary
a scratch left
in the rock
a glacier crossed
once, the claw
of time? don't call
it anything
fancy, step
over it if you can.

22 May 2006,
Boston

DEFINITIONS

We're staying on the slope leading up to the highest point in the city of Boston, atop Bellevue mount or heights. I think about the word point, and what it is, a place in one dimension only. How could one such thing be higher than another, and still be a point? I ponder this, and spare myself the climb.

22 May 2006

NATURE

Sunbeam a dog finds it

Nature

wasn't always the way it is
now.

There was a person once
covered with skin, a person
with a face with eyes in it,
and a mouth,

a face and a voice
and I heard Whom speak
and saw throw off Whose robes—
that was Nature once

and now all it is
now is the clothes Who left behind.

22 May 2006,

Boston

= = = = =

In the sun on the street in a city the
immediate at last the hardest thing

Meet me at the piazza Giulietta
everything over and over again.

22 May 2006

Boston

= = = = =

And if there is one more word to say
the putty-nosed monkey in his leaves
will say it for me. *A word*
implicit in its thing, against
all the rules of language science,
a moot meet met. Let
listen to each things and repeat
what you hear it say. We
must be silent till it speaks.

22 May 2006,
Boston

BUZZARDS BAY

After they closed the hurricane gates against us
and the *Alert* had to idle around and go back to dock
and Rick drove us in his truck to Padanaram
where Dwayne took us in his fishing boat
very fast through great surf spilling a huge wake
boat leaping and smashing down on the wallowing
water of the bay today I was for just this once
a projectile of the sea, a part of its movement,
a cough, a suddenly clenched hand.

23 May 2006

Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Reduce it or take it to the place from which it came
ta'wil they say but those who say the words
do not guess the road down which it comes
even now fleeing from its origin. What comes?
Any word is a fugitive, catch it if you can
in the bloody swamps around Chickamauga
running for its life, every word is an escapee
from a lost battle, a dead seagull by the cannery,
a color lost in the night. The words turn grey,
blueblack, they turn gone and nobody knows
anything but the feel of them in the mouth
and then they swallow and nothing's left.
Nothing but you and me. Nothing but mouth.

23 May 2006

Cuttyhunk

BEND THIS MERE STREAM

that holds us in
until it is a flat and shining thing
comes towards us from every side
marked out in waves –

these are days. A red bird
sits on a rail. This is today.
The remarkable merchandise of pain
on display not too far away.

No to the market. The ancients,
who knew both less and more than we,
called this the day of the wisdom of thieves.
The emblem: a cunning old peddler
who has been everywhere and knows
the true weight of everything.

What else is there to be known?

Everything else
is the man in the moon,

24 May 2006, Cuttyhunk

Ocean, island,

Not every island has an ocean
some make do with rivers, estuaries, lakes.

Some islands are surrounded by earth on every side
and hoist a presence into the air

and some are surrounded just by air.
So there is some sense to wood,

some sense to whistling tunelessly
you can hardly hear yourself in the wind

as you walk along the shingle,
and look, nobody else hears you!

Free speech at last, America!
Howl into the anarchy of wind.

24 May 2006

Cuttyhunk

CLOUDS

1.

I asked for clouds and clouds came.
The sun didn't say goodbye though,
stays streeted through pale murk
a ghost in pewter in a lake of lihgt.
There, where the altrnatives are few.

2.

Berlin in rubble. This is what comes
from listening. From believing
the government. The fang
of the dead church still stands
in memory of that long
one-sided conversation.

3.

Things roll faster. Or a scar
heals that way to record
an intervention. All we are
is skin. To us the world
sometimes takes exception.
That is the wound. The scar.

4.

The pronouns scattered.

Blood everywhere. And already
you're getting your story straight.

This happened to my head.

No blame says the wise old judge
but your skin has ideas of its own.

5.

Snakeskin left after winter
a dry thing seldom found.

What must it mean
to slip out of yourself?

Don't ask. The dragon kingdom,
the integrity it strives for
age after age. We go to church
the way they slough their skin.

6.

Empty marauders, the men in calico
want the land they work, the food they grow.
Calico meant Indian, the first dispossessed.
The rebellion in our own towns
Pittsfield, Barrington, Poughkeepsie
nobody wants to talk about these days.
Government. Politics is nothing
but the squabbles of the rich
among themselves. Our only power
is refusal. But age after age we refuse
only each other, not the enemy.

7.

Is this so? Or only true?
Or only there, just there
the way the moon is
but not tonight. Obvious.
Nothing we can do about it.
Nothing we have to do.

8.

How much does an idea weigh
when it is born? Blue.

What is the father's name
to write down on the scroll?

Everything is known.

Why is it so far? And it is.

9.

Trying to unpack the sky
he dropped a piece of it
that shattered over the whole earth.

Wednesday's child. The ocean all.

10.

But there is something on that mild rock –
a mourning dove, that's licit, isn't it,
with a call or cry like a woman's wrist

lifted with desperate calm as she makes
she hopes a point in what she prays
is an actual conversation – that bird,

greyish, taupish, no iridescence, sad-
sounding but only sounding,
no sadder even than its mild rock

next to where hydrangeas might bloom.

24 May 2006

Cuttyhunk