

6-2002

junG2002

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "junG2002" (2002). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 950.
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MISTAKES GET MADE

Morning maybe
is one of them, hot day
on the way, beleaguered
by recency a thought
falls back to sleep.

I don't have to keep thinking.
I can be a tunnel
under the mountain,
I can find one thought
and keep it. Stone
all round me and
dark inside.
Only the light of passing cars.

27 June 2002

If only the sun wouldn't remember.

The secret of your maps is
who lives there
still,

carved into the contours
your pretty ink blots try to match

here's your mother's home here is Portugal
here Jesus died here you fell in love

nowhere nowhere the river of forgetting.

27 June 2002

PICTURA

pinxit pictorem.

You get the picture—
What comes from your hands
creates you.

I made this Latin up
this morning
to make me,

to get me past
this awful trouble
of being someone.

Back out into the stone
barrens under Muckish
a place before people
and the sea not far

27 June 2002

THE ONES

Who pass are looking for salt.
You know them, you have sat
in their traveling cafés
listening to gibberish.
It pleases them to have you
attend their negotiations.
I don't have to tell you
all the nouns their mouths
know how to find and speak.
God knows what they're thinking
while they're speaking,
God knows what you know
while you pretend not to listen.
Everybody understands
everything — that is the curse
of the world. You eat
from the same table. The same
moon sprinkles your sheets
with a tired illumination
in which you sleep
not long enough ever.
Waking is forever.

27 June 2002

To be on the way to being somewhere else and still be here

To be on the way to being somewhere else and still be here
as the opossum stops my traffic midnight back road
a crossing must be a crucifixion, yes? Like Merrill dead
or Plutarch not quite mourning the death of oracles.
Dearth. They dry up and blow away, shiver, brown
scaly oak leaves of Dodona, no one reads such things.
We are Romans, not Greeks, and should be otherwise.
No blame. Leibnitz looked between the colors
and saw the other light, the one that leaks out from the mind
and makes the sunlight dark. Black sun, Key West, dead sea.
Limitless contradictions of a given word.
Give me a word. The. Give me the word and I'll go.
I know you want me to come back I'm never sure
you tell me so many things you know I am a structure
built mostly of beliefs. Beliefs and appetites.
And fears. Give me a word. What's
in a name. Ariel. Sharon. The skinny
arms of Auschwitz stretched out against the horizon.
Wings. A skull with a gaping mouth, come in
to me. Come in. Sunlight on the lawn, you call that mercy?
Everything is. Do you really want me to come back,
strange as a penguin, oily, from an unreal place
come home? Which is no realer. I'm still afraid
we are controlled by otherness, the world outside the world.
Not aliens, there are none, except the abductive act itself
which once experienced denies safe conduct anywhere.
You are not born a changeling. They touched me
and they changed me and here I am, far from here.
And they used your fingers for the operation.

28 June 2002

LA CANAILLE SUR LA TABLE

the trash that live around me
stuff that just accumulates
let 'em eat dust!

The smell of lilies
color of mauve, of soft
Parisian inks

dripped from Venetian pens
dagger sharp, nibs of glass,
the smell of lilies and the smell of ink,

the cool word glass
glass mountain I must one day climb
the wind falls.

28 June 2002

Perversions

From age four

I loved cheese

Men tone with eau

de Köln their chin

*

High squawking. He brides

For she grooms? Seagulls

In sea rooms. Tide rush

The stone stacks. Hush.

*

Dortmund depot

Expediting

A word to here ear

From there mouth.

*

Cad astral slithers

Down the medullas

Of sleeping girls

Creeps forward

Into the optic nerve
Basks in seeing
Himself inwardly
Welcomed, in dream
As seems surveyed.

28 June 2002

WRITING INSIDE

Writing inside the permission to say nothing
where 'say something' means to comment
on one's own life or someone else's
one is suddenly free to be nobody again
as you were in the womb and I listened

*

as you were when you were just beginning
to be young and there was nothing
between you and what you touched or saw

*

saying nothing, everything is free to speak
words like fish sleek their way through a finally
sustaining medium, appear, menace,
baffle, nourish and delight. Language
is a trick of schoolmasters. Words sing.

*

This goes against all my rules
thank God. Where 'God' is the light
inside the rule released by breaking it.

*

Not grammar, not syntax, not style.
not meaning. Not etymology. The guess
That happens when a word is heard —
that's what I mean. When it's heard
in the head, from your tongue or another's,
when a word is read. Leiris knew best
but we get lost in meaning. Live in the guess
where the word is still wet. And we
together get to lick this terrible moisture.

29 June 2002

THE BALANCES

Not a breath, but cool.

We have squirrels they have marmosets.

Below the wave and on the shore

Capt. Ahab trims his fingernails

using his dead wife's clippers,

ivory-handled, made in France.

Inside the temple all the living monkeys

dance around the unseen Hanuman

and we bowed down. As many gods

as worshippers. He will go forth

from the accidental island

and never make it all the way home

to the land with squirrels in every tree.

Now a breeze begins but the sun

comes over the linden tree

telling me once again I've lied.

2.

And if in the book of your mind

you save Ahab and damn Ishmael

isn't he truly saved since there

is the only where he ever was or is?

3.

Every book I ever read

my mind keeps writing it

some more I want

to be simple. Reading

is writing. Remembering

is making up.

4

Love is an intricate
calculus of oblivions,
all the things I need
to forget to be with you.

29 June 2002

IN DREAM

In dream last night

I got sick and died.

It was so simple and terrifying.

This is it, I recognized.

And that is about all you have to know.

29 June 2002

EENDRAGHT MAAKT MAGT

It says, I was born there.

At five p.m. I learn it's the motto of Brooklyn.

At eight Russell brings a book in which I read
it is the motto set above the giant clock
in the Centraal Station in Antwerp.

Unity makes strength. Unity is everything.

With what do I unite. The force

Of all the centuries behind me,

the force of you behind me.

The eternal obvious, the bland,

the coarse, the fine, the very fine

I will unite with the bare trees of November

I barely remember, I will unite with the weather,
with ice cream, dog shit, gingko trees,

I will unite with Gerritsen Avenue, Parkside

Avenue once Malbone St. once Marylebone

once a disaster, I will unite with the disaster,

with the bronze panthers in Prospect Park

with Kings Highway with the Narrows

and a sketchy Norwegian freighter sneaking
inland through fog, with parrots, with stones

of Cuzco with busboys from Oaxaca with

video arcades with carpet sweepers

I will unite with the sea.

29 June 2002

WINDOW

From this window you can still see the twin towers.
It's not just that windows open into different times
Or every window is its own. It is that coming close
To windows is a clergy thing, it makes a priest of you
To sidle up and raise the shade or shift the curtain.
Grey from this window that I mean, a slow soft
Summer morning grey before the heat wakes up
And you see the towers look so ordinary and not far.
Because this window stands not where my house does
But in another time of Brooklyn, the lost cliffs
Of Greenpoint is what I think. Religion is a dicey game,
Symbol and uncertainty, and all a window is, is risk.

30 June 2002

(dream of 8:04 am)

30 JUNE

How can Lena Horne and Mike
Tyson have the same birthday?
Somebody is either asleep at the switch
or trying to tell us something.
But then somebody always is.
Coincidence grinds like the dentist's drill.
La belle est la bête, I suppose
is how you really spell it, beauty
Is the beast, coincidence of opposites,
the world gnashing its teeth in its sleep.

30 June 2002

TAXI

Taxi medallions used to be lead
or looked like, Saturn coin,
restriction, limit, old.

Memories are taxicabs
cruising through a city you
only think you know.

Some are legitimate, some
gypsy licensed, some rogue.
It is dangerous to ride

in any memory, to climb in
to the past, your own
or another's (reading,

hearing, dreaming ----
because the one who dreams
your dreams is never you)

you never know where
the driver will take you.
Saturn. Restriction.

Memory chokes me.
The leather feel of you
around my recent neck.

Even if it takes you
where you think you want to go,
even if there is an actual road

god knows what you'll see along the way,
that girl on 8th Avenue, the poor
diplomat from Colombia clubbed down

by police outside San Remo, or in
a passing car's rainsmeared window
your mother's anxious face

looking for you still.
Stay home. Revisit nothing.
Walk in the thoughtless now

all thing and no thinking,
nothing ever to remember.

30 June 2002

MANIFESTO

It's got to be interesting all the way through
otherwise it will never make sense.

It will just be you wanting something again,
you with big ideas and your pants on fire.

Every step of the way is a real step, goat foot sure,
along precipices, through brothels, under the hill
bankers and steelmills and cormorants and milk

breath by breath. The least thing must music.

30 June 2002

TO COUNT ON

No color left
to tell you

harmony is a hammer
melody the nail

but the house you're building
is in the sky

Why not? Where else
will last

space
unimaginably permanent.

30 June 2002