

6-2003

junF2003

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "junF2003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1014.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1014

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

What are the sequences
and what are they for
the woman called from Spain
to ask, I asked around the bar
and no one knew, they are stars
I thought out loud, that didn't help,
who are you, I'm in Malaga
she said, but who are you,
I just need to know the sequences
someone told me you would know
You don't even know who I am
but you're there, aren't you,
and you're thinking about it,
think about it it might come to you
then you can call me any time
any time at all I'll be here for you
call and tell me when you know.

12 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

BESET

Enough to beset a stranger
the rain wind howls
but birds don't fuss

have I also missed the gravest importunities
content with following my own *will*
my sacred sense of secret *right*?

cold in the muscle of my arm
a warm heart hurts—
change, change,

you own this earth,
there is no law or you are it.

13 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

TU ME MANQUES, DIT LE MONDE AU DORMEUR

Be that as merci
you phoned my call
in your midnight
forest of waves

it heard me so long
to wake the boat
suppose me carried
into the alternative

you are waiting there
like a letter in the mail
already I feel old
and no one knows the wine.

13 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

TON THE T'ATTEND

says who
the beach
is smoking
in the rain
my glasses
fuzzy, too
much looking

who says
anything is mine
or waits for me
in some fine cup
a pleasure
or mere morning
obligation

who tells savor
to inhere
in substance
who tells experience
to linger as memoir
recomposed
for the occasion

the sea a long wet dream?

13 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

SO DECK TRANQUIL

Present orbs of planetary influence
set at nonsense, the mohair degrees
where wisps of intelligence still
cling annoyingly to experience
like friends you meet in bars
and slip away from while pretending
you're just going to the phone booth
to check the local weather,
cell phones changed all that,
now even the men's room isn't sacred
unless it's one that still has a lock on the door
and a window you can wriggle through
just like the movies and why all this
compulsion to escape, what did they say
that bored you so intensely, or you
what did you do you can't face up to now
preferring the consolations of a sinister alley
with its cat and dumpster, after all
your appalling acts of imagination
do you think the G-men are really after you?
We learn about conspiracies by being part of one
or more, we can't help it, they burgeon
and clamber up the beaches of the mind
as you fancifully once put it
like animals from Lovecraft
wiser and wittier than you
if unaccountable in their architecture

and bad at geometry, the way you are at trig.
Predictably, the Tarot card in question
contents itself with representing all this
as a crayfish crawling out of a puddle
and a couple of coyotes yelping at the moon.

13 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

LA FILIACION

They all have families. Even the wind
has sisters, and night
comes of a long line of concealments

pressed against your breast.

I talk about things I know
not necessarily understand,

understanding is for someone else,
the way water is
when you see it gleaming from the hilltop

not there for me, though it is patient,
allows me to enter, to drink.

Pajaros, Lorca would have said,

summing it all up in a lovely
predication no one can confute,
over your shoulders, in the trees,

birds. Things come for our seed.

13 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

ASMODEI

he cried out, summoning
what he took to be a devil,
a fairly exalted one
in the hierarchy of hell,

but there are no devils,
no hell, no waiting tempters,
tormentors, friends.
But someone came

at his call, the arrival
was sudden, overwhelming,
a girl at the door,
smell of jasmine,

he opened and let her
come in. And now he'll never
know. We do not understand
the simplest things,

the difference between
primordial and primal,
the shape of just this
particular shoulder

at the sight of which

there is instant recognition
but of what, he'll never
know, nothing

to be said. Her eyes.

13 June 2003

LEARN THE WORD SLOWLY

I'm only a man
it takes a long time
to learn who is speaking

paperclip or telephone
or seaplane roaring over
but mostly you're alone with wood

did you ever hear a paper cup?

*

to reassure myself I am the case
(rabbit haring over the road slow
walk for him a lift of chunk)
or certify I am another
substance of what you meant,
every man a bashful bride

*

solemn remission

I can deny you nothing
because nothing's in my power

*

one by one we lose the facts we were
and turn into other documents
love letters from x to y
we never heard of them, never
been in that town, never tasted
that famous vintage we so praise
and yet and yet there is
a clock in the clock tower, a book
in the library, what do they prove,
I never read it, the last
thing I learned was telling time

15 June 2003

WOLLUST

Shelter

from the rain

then from the bright sun

but don't think

I'm telling you the weather,

this is neither history nor love

those two soap operas

we have bit parts in

this is Desire that runs below the world

and has nothing to do with the desirer

and everything to do with that thing there

the alternative, the mother's sister,

the available, the legal, the red

mark on the wall,

the female blackbird hunting food,

the drooping leaves of one more unnamed houseplant

bleak in that dust from the sky that we call light.

14 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

full moon of Sagadawa

=====

A quiet little place inside my hand
that remembers all the letters

your name too is there
and I can feel you sometimes

far away as you are
as if somebody nearby

were breathing on my palm
or a blackbird flew by and dropped a shadow

and all the while I know you
who you are and what you want

but I leave it for my hand to say,
listen to my hand's abrupt expositions.

14 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

DREAMS OF A PERFECT ORDER

Even as I speak the fog comes back,
swallows another island and a piece of this one,
morning is like that in the world,
the Leader's touring car
looms through the mist
carrying his virgin girl friend
home to her affable hotel,
Berlin is such a spacious city,
don't mind the politics, it's just
another kind of weather,
the fog comes closer now,
we Irish say the foggy
foggy dew's what kills you,
weather kills you, politics,
history, Goebbels' crooked smile,
Helmut Kohl's big overcoat,
everybody you can think of
is fatal, names are lethal,
don't worry, the girl will get there,
she'll love you till she dies,
what else can she do?
Love is one more weather.
Asleep in her hotel
after a long night trying to say yes
to some question he wouldn't ask,
she dreams she's back in Florida,
a waiter's serving her fried grouper,
a tall glass of suspect wine
is by the part of the plate

that would be Iceland if the dish
were Europe, she knows that much,
she sees the palmettos in the parking lot
jiggle in the hot wind off the Gulf,
what a dream, what does it mean,
no snakes, no pelicans, no friends,
only herself and this dead fish,
this strange amber wine,
this waiter whose fingertips
dare to run lightly down her arm
bare at this season of excessive heat,
What does he want? Why is there so much fog
around the simplest island?
Forgive me, love, the Leader says,
I have affairs of state to deal with,
nationalities, minorities, and below it all
this little war you help me understand.

14 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

Lady can I help you read your letter
your eyes are dim with crying
and I feel nothing

the light of morning
is still in my eyes
after all these years
and even my fogs are lucid, let me

take it from your fingers
hold it to my skin
the edge of me that sees

and tell you what your love
was saying when your true love wrote
this meager letter
one page, a page, what is that
with all the semesters of your longing
all the skeptical miseries of childhood
and all you get is one page of words,

words that all are in the wordbook to begin with,
and what does your true love say,

let me read it to you
let me weep with you
at all that honest love
so well expressed
in other people's words

we stand together in the fog
knowing no better
than each other
nor ever will

it will never
be any better
than it is
together,

that's who we are,
that's all it says,
shall we weep together
because we have each other?

the fog is lifting, lady,
you have your paper,
here it is, and I have
the long alleys of interpretation,

everybody loves everybody,
what happens then?

14 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

THE CERTAINTY

The certainty of space
is a bird, the certainty

of horn is a hollow
and the sound is in

you now helloing
and remembering

and all the empty halls
are full of you,

the great white
black shouldered very

wide wings of a heron
lift from the lagoon

the light at Potter's
Flats at twilight

soundless after all
broken certainties.

15 June 2003
Cuttyhunk

=====

so the English sparrow got its start
in Brooklyn
on its way to being everywhere

a man named Nicholas Pike
started bringing them in
from England and letting them go

they say it's not so much a sparrow as
something else,
a weaver finch

I suppose he had something fine in mind
like the rest of us, our mothers
and our fathers bringing us here

snug in their bodies
all the way from some
dark unnamable island over there.

15 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

THE COMPENSATIONS

The sea is loud this morning
but invisible in fog.

Something needs me
to remember it, I am alive
for its sake. What.

The war is for the sake
of the battle, the battle
for the sake of the soldier,

the one who dies.

Marche funebre, green
pastis on white marble tables
none too clean, death
is a seaside cafe, we always
knew that,

why did the poets
have to keep insisting,
is it built
into their language
to explain the obvious,
the city we are leaving?

the simple vowels of my soul
have your weird accents on them
now, language, your cruel
diacriticals that make things speak
from the other side of otherwise,

and all my life I have to wait
for you to pronounce me
one girl after another

seafoam around her ankles now
wondering where the bird,
that one, has been
and why he comes here now,

heron, to alleviate the empty sky,

15 June 2003

PILLAR OF SALT

one more lie
by which we live

a story she did
turning her back

to the glamor of the future
and watched the actual

we watch her back
while she studies the real

any Greek statue
tells us this kind of truth

beholding the beholder
we are held

I translate my anxiety
into stone

this is your shape
this is the air around you

touching you everywhere

I have lost the key

to that boundless room

the air impersonates

still sea wise

to lick the salt.

15 June 2003