

6-2003

jun12003

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "jun12003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 1016.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1016

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LA MORT ET MOI

I have a strange relationship with death.
Such that it has come to me so often
in so many ways, it's worn out my door,
worn out my driveway, my little town,
my river, my America. Death has been talking
to me so long, has told me so many
ways he knows me, she knows me,
and all the ways I almost took
to walk with her, with him, with it,
whatever person that must really be
who comes to unperson me.
So many stories.

[19-20 June 2003]

WANTON, WHO

is how it sounds, what language
was I speaking

(the sea is loud this morning, sun
clawing through cloud, fog)

in my head
sometimes I wonder
who is this wanton, a lily surely,
that strange aggressive scent of
so white a flower, or yellow some, or purple
of commerce, the way the room's
suffused, who
brought them?

two words left on the shore
and a smell remembered?

But what language was I speaking
that spoke like a toccata
of lilies, who could that be,
the feel of touching someone,

as if any given thing, a lily, say,
was also an ocean
and had a shore nearby and a great

abyss far our below
the immense surface of itself
stretching towards a further shore,
and of that shore, what

or who could be known?

(what wanton language
in the commerce of the cloud
breaks through, clawing
for attention, some
idea left in the mind

left behind on the beach,
who?)

what lily language was a smell remembered?

20 June 2003

LITTLE FUGUE

as a young man can't leave
his lover's body alone
its parts delineate
everything he knows about the world,

étude, caravel, but the daylight
(tiger lily) is another flower,
flowers,

one ocean or so many?
snug black clothes a cup of coffee
also brewed but how
in an office for two
women by a man who
doesn't drink,

Geneva, kirk or covenant,

remember the unusual names
of someone's children
(Avis, a bird, Geneva, a place
or lake or way of worship

something to drink)
the normal name escapes

the bolting sieve
of memory

sifts all present
time too,

nothing to remember
ever,
cake in a diner, uneaten,
try the chili

talk till something hears
then taste
the sound of it

to be remarkable at all
leave here and take home,

but a third fishing boat has joined two others,
men fish standing up

stripèd bass, among fish
bass rhymes with lass
not with face,

striped is two
syllables New York
bass fishing
in surf or boat
defined this coast
a hundred years ago,

stripers, one says,
for the fish,

not the strange men
whose pleasure
seizes them,

it is not something
meant to understand

does anyone know
why doing does,

do you?
there has been no you here
till now, is there ever
really you,
three boats or four, no, one's a rock,
can it ever trust the thing it means?

it is not intention, though,
that guides time
past the promontory
of your attention

if you, you,
are really here,

sneak the truth by you
in the fog of weather

illicit touch, as if it meant
a great deal, then world's
whole weal in that contact,

contract, would you,
wealswoman of more than
all this land
listen to our hands?

modest exordium

aren't they afraid to stand
in such small boats
o'erbalanced by the rod in play
fall not into the sound?

the wind steps up

as if it is time
that closes windows

(it is as the *sun breaks through*
that the *wind rises*)

then something colored
bosomed even as a man
hard tremble
yellow beak blackbird

flowers nailed to the sky?
no cock to crow
the island wake

an aftermath
of where every
one at all
has ever been

or tender evidence
-- does y love x? --

there is nothing to feel no one to feel it
native sincerity
naïve, means to have feelings

of what language they were speaking now.

20 June 2003

ON THE CLIFFS

In all this blue
see that little cloud?

It brings
the weather back,
dog barks, rain falls.

Exaggerate the obvious
then you will be me,

my mouth in your hair
trying to impersonate the sunlight
strong in the sea wind
the bronze of sunlight in
also your hair.

20 June 2003

CHRISTENINGS

Today the air is made of wood

ash wood cherry maple

a table for your chair

the light spreads

on the green hills,

and it makes me think but why

of all the white baby shoes

bronzed by old custom

green now, hard green shoes.

Verdi. Gris.

The things

a child stands under,

salt on his tongue

direct from Galilee.

A word once spoken

then child becomes the word

verbiformis hominifaciens

the light inside the mouth.

20 June 2003

NEWS

The new is always order or a sort
or a sortition, the new is always page
blown open by the wind and some words read

by you or by another and you tell me
reading in your quiet voice
the machine can't always reckon

the moments of another's life, the fierce
red Pentecosts of understanding
that do come down, that do come to me

also, listening, hearing your voice
even when you are fast asleep or far away
making clear the place I stand.

21 June 2003

SUMMER SOLSTICE

Glad linings adult baptism scour
patronage of absolution island flint
cottage chimney saltimbanque of gulls
honey havering witnesses soon doze

athwart a rock an inclination puce
thy neighbor's catafalque vim's supper
wind in treacle shuddering day lilies
cause a girl Pentecost with suns of wine

heathening thirstward to possess one song
wireless be true the chance a man heard
become a woman stubble in old barley
white horse would hate it but a house goes.

21 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

PAULOWNIA

close by a Nippon tree some Russian found
and called for his Paulina queen or almost
does trumpet purple flower hollow pecan shells
only then will lobby soft green leave arise

such difference in their come and go
the child guesses graveyard magic come to call
the names of all the town are buried here
he's afraid to touch the fairy trunk picks up

a tattered flower fallen from the crown of it.

21 June 2003

SEEN

from a boulder in this beach
profusion of wild red roses,
fewer whites, the smell of them
pervades the island a wild moment,
wind from the northeast sculpting clouds.
purple beach pea-flowers too,
and bright yellow sea poppies
the whole sea lined with flowers
along the eastern shore
through binoculars the neighbor island
coast of Nashawena
where the red bulls
make their way down to the sea.
sometimes but not now.

21 June 2003

NOR'EASTER

as they say
the wooden striped bass
on the church steeple
swimming northeast
in sudden wind gusts
spattering rain on the window.
It could be anytime at all
these three hundred years
or more. Weathervane,
im Winde klirren die Fahne
said Hoelderlin, the clatter
of what shows the way.
Shows the wind where to come from
to get all the way here,
rain spattering against the shingles
click like rosary beads
someone praying fast. What words
to what god. Something
out of the storm cloud
out of the north out of the east,
the smooth sea hasn't heard
the message yet. Rise up,
citizens of weather, the wind
is rising, the storm is with you,
is a word in your own mouths
it will make you speak. Freedom
is terrible like this.

21 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

=====

Beach pebbles
we brought home
in sandy pockets
rest on a white saucer,
slipper shell, agates,
granites, wentletrap,
common stone.

Description later.
Now they sit austere
in morning light,
wanting nothing,
no technology
can improve them,
no need to read them

but an ordinary eye like mine
doesn't know how to leave them alone.

21 June 2003

=====

Dead man humming
last little prelude (BWV 938)
so long Glenn
ago agone

to hear the man's breath
beyond the music
or is it the music
the only music we have

and all those elegant
fingers, all that Bach,
just a flight of cranes
above a man dying.

21 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

MAKING THE CHANCE

last as long as the man lingers
or a broken cliff face for a fall
-- no leap there -- of lovers

spiritual problems ganged
around a muscle the sea will cure,
fall, fall that after all

lifts you no less than me
some words bring
their tunes along with them

I am tired of moral rough house
I want the clean Law back
the thing the prophet told

all wrapped in white
with a wind coming out of the cave
and a dog afraid

but not of being beaten,
no chastisement in this design
Awe is punishment enough

on this stone bridge of ours
we live built whenever it was
over the unfathomable abyss.

22 June 2003

BRIDGES

So how do you like living
on bridges now dear friend
when every yes is a no to someone else
and there's no way to go but straight ahead?

22 June 2003

Breathless under weather
a year turns her inside out
a quarter of her conscious life
she's been with him,
full half of her adult life
with him, and now without.
There is a change like death
-- life is fiercer than that old thing.