

6-2005

junA2005

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "junA2005" (2005). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 796.
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as eagerly as a swamp bird
neglects the dawn cry
to seize the fry of some mud
adoring fish
needlessly bright colored
with blue fins

I wake to you
swollen with remembering
a gold ring I never gave you
a bucket of rice
I dragged home from the market
as if it could feed us

or still the inexhaustible yes.

1 June 2005

= = = = =

Examine the obvious again.

Always. The obvious is a dog.

I was a parricide

I was put in a sack

with a snake and a dog

and a cock, from a rock

they threw me in the sea,

Ostia, the gates.

Why else do I hate

the evidence of me?

I was a question

that bothered the rabbi

so he couldn't sleep,

the rabbi's pretty wife

put me to death

with a satin pillow

and a carving knife,

with her thighs and a mirror

with a smell of orris root powder

with the sun.

I was the sun. We began

by killing whatever made us.

A child on the lawn wields a stick,

a child and a stick are common,
they belong to each other,
a boy and his stick, he moves it
means no harm, he hurts,
he hits the sky, the grass
dies, he hurts himself, no way
to tell him from the light,
he hurts the light.

Light. It has to come from somewhere.

To assert the primacy of light
is to assert God King Father Power.

Light has to come from somewhere,

I have a dark stick I lower

I doubt the light I kill the light

as the man and the wife

say to each other as they go to sleep,

kill the light, I do and I did,

I lift my little stick against the sun.

1 June 2005

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Patterns of metaphor

conjure me.

Control me.

Kites in the wind

and who holds the string?

*

The Europe that once braved itself to withstand Stalin's armies
now cowers before the Polish plumber. Rhetoric, rhetoric kills.

Laughter lies.

1 VI 05/Cuttyhunk

THE SHINING DAUGHTER

who is the mother
why is the cell phone ringing
it is the sea

the sea is the mother of itself
all flesh knows this
flesh

in Lent we fry water in the oil from the new-mown sun
at Pentecost we play a sport
called climbing trees that are not yet planted

and old people pray to a tree that has never been planted
and very old people understand the sun with their bones
and for their sake we let the light come up again

meager over the house roofs and full of hope
and the fish walk back to their ponds
and everything pretends to be what we think everything is.

1 June 2005

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Strangerly nice
my father was
a secret agent
till the day he died

would let us know him
by just being there
unembarrassed
by enduring

I still don't know
really the light
his pale eyes took
brightness from

looking always
looking hardly a word
spoken, once
he drew a horse

and looked at me.

2 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Rest at the embankment or
a sword overhead or a becoming.
That's what he said, then waved
goodbye to little Charlie, climbed
into his old green truck. Goodbye
again. It all tries to become
all the time. Never enough being
to be. We live in the shadow
of an immense flower somewhere
else we think. Flower of elsewhere—
I pluck it and rest it tenderly
between your breasts, here,
speaking my old-fashioned Basque,
the beautiful words that
nobody knows how to mean.

2 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

The sea and recovery.

Cancel the arrival.

Listen. It is also

a disease – healing,

ailing, the same.

To have lived so long

and not know them apart.

2 June 2005

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the sea wears a mask

face of a bird

what kind are they

there are women who know

and what they know

is the mask on another's

face, mine.

2 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

LATE SPRING ON THE ISLAND

Got here
before the roses
those luscious
Levantines
were tardy
and we arrived

a mile of coast
sea poppies few
and beach peas
none and then
four, five, six
roses, rugosas,

two days later
no change.
The dragons
of the atmosphere
console us,
the alchemists

are busy in the sea
and so on, this
pebble has mica
in it, that one
pyrites, o Christian
world, you named things.

2 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

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Wednesday's paulownia flower
picked up from the cemetery gravel
where it had fallen, brought
home and taped in this notebook
springs its fragrance on me now
Friday morning opening the book

in a world that has no other smell.
It fades as I keep sniffing at it.
Habituation. Dissipation. We lose
what we have into the air,
the general. Everything becomes
everything else. But tomorrow

morning it may recall its
property again and be itself.
whatever self a flower has,
how strange there was no smell
right under the tree, that peculiar
Japanese leafless hollow-nutshell
early springtime tree. Lilac-blue
flowers. The strangeness
we get used to, get used to not
getting used to, odor of it,
so quick the known world

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SUCCESS

Where anything else goes –
a reminder, a radio –
follow, not lead: to follow.

To follow is *folgen*, to have Erfolg,
'success,' while to lead
makes you a *Führer*, and no one
knows where to lead.

Every leader
leads the led into the wilderness
of Sin and shame and shattering.
The vessels break. The Jews are dead.
Can't help but kill. Can't help but kill
when you follow someone who leads.
Never follow the leader. Follow,
just follow.

Watch carefully
the haunches of the ones ahead, the ones
who are following too, learn to read
the subtle hesitation of their moves,
foolish certainties, wise reluctances –
then at the *kairos*, the appointed time,
you suddenly stop. You know the hour.

No leading. No
following now. *Erfolg*.
You are where you are.
Fog comes over the sea to wrap you
in the glory of the eternal unexpected.
You have chosen
to stop and you stop.
The stone is glad.

3 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

for Charlotte, on our Anniversary

A dozen years ago
we spoke each other.
The Methodist parson
your father's friend
wore his Sandinista stole
a friend of liberty,
our offices betray us
and we alone keep true.

Stole: a mark of priest.
To officiate or do
priest's work he must
put it on. What do we
do to be ourselves?

We speak.
Without the word
we are not spoken,
not 'espoused.'
Without the word
there is no marriage

just as in the silent
heaven of the Christians
no one marries,

their wedding
is all the wager
of beholding,
staring deep
deep into the yellow
heart of the rose.

But roses here
we give to one another,
you dearest
answer to all my questions,

we are wedded
to a time
with roses in it,
we are worded
on an island
where the seaside roses
are just beginning
as we also are
just beginning to speak.

3 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

In the margin

Meet, melt

Monksript in winter

Ligament taut

A word meant

Someone he saw

Someone fore-edge

Painted landscape

Of her coming

Riffled apart

Her pictured never not.

3 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

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if a skull were a word
and not a wound
the backbone a pen
writes it into the earth
red ocher shabby grass
the sky knows how to read.

3 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

POETS

Poets create small perfect worlds in glass
using no glass.

Transparent, unbreakable, unthinkable, ignorable—
a poem is a clear glass bead at rest in clear water.

3 June 2005

THREE THINGS ABOUT EVERYTHING

Everything is a mirror.

Everything is a window.

Everything is a door.

3 VI 05, Cuttyhunk