

5-2001

mayE2001

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "mayE2001" (2001). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 1032.
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Given the parts of a vascular plant
why should I call you flower
when you are stigma stamen style
ovary ovule seed of me

when everything I am arises in you
so just as well call me flower
I am your flower or strictly flower of you
a brief colorful excrescence of your will to be.

26 May 2001

MERIT

Merit, and what it's not
a safety
sung by degrees

believe a shipman
when he sells the wave

or starlight
when it comes to stay.

26 May 2001

Sometimes we don't know the color of a thing
a rag we wipe our faces with

never notice the sad fading mauve
left when red white and blue have bled together, faded,
fallen into another kind of holiness

the way old men do, quiet and scary and
then they'll say anything at all
that comes to mind
or maybe even not that far
from the rough moisture of just breathing

their voices like leaves rustling in the woods.

26 May 2001

Why can't I take on your pain?
Because I want to,
 Because it's yours I want,
Not his and hers and theirs,

Just yours. And the chemistry of absolutes
Doesn't work that way. Love all or nobody.
It all works, but only all of it works.

26 May 2001

NUCLEOTIDE

Notional socialism is an angry giving that astonishes
Uninstructed — or merely unobservant — tourists
Clustering around the lead statues in the turbid fountain
Located a few seconds of arc off the center of the plaza
Emitting from seventeen gilded spouts vaguely arranged
On the plan of a springing lion a very soothing water.
This, consumed in moderation — gill or pint, no more —
Instills a specious well-being that lasts through early
Dinner and the two hours of operetta at the playhouse
Ending only when armed police hustle them back to the hotel.

26 May 2001
on the dais at commencement

DREAM HORSE

Dreamt of horses
or one horse only
for all of us to ride

why only one
among so many

but many was three
why could there be two of us
just the two of us the you of us
why couldn't there be you

that we had one horse
with an old clean woolen blanket on it
and he carried nothing
not even us at the moment

though one of us could ride
later if it had to be

a horse is maybe the future

we will ride the old bone when we need to
the clean blanket between our legs

one horse
one noun among so many pronouns

what do I know about horses
a horse is an animal that knows the way home

this horse carries nothing but the way

2.

Q. Who was the horse?

(who is any animal,
the squirrel staring at the seed
measuring his leap onto the feeder
praying,
who is his prayer?)

A. The air waits.

Q. Why doesn't he?

A. The time is right but not ripe,
a flower too is mostly waiting.

Q. Where is the dream
now you're watching the morning
rain on voodoo flowers color of meat
and all the rest?
Where is the dream in the blood waking?

A. It never was
but it did seem.
And now the seeing
decides against leaping
off the branch.
Or crawls up higher
to risk another way.
Now enter from above.
From behind.

Q. But who were the innocents
(you were) who trudged beside the horse?

A. Those who abstained from being carried,
those who wanted to do their own work
not the world's busywork,

let the horse go on without me!
But it was the only horse,

the only street.

Q. Why do dreams always leave us sad?

A. Because they fail to keep us sleeping
safe from the intolerable
question of the morning.

Q. What is that?

A. A dream is a failure.
Any word is a slip of the tongue.

3.

But if I am the horse
(my doctor said I am the horse)
then you are the rider
(and the doctor also rides the dream)

you are my only rider

and I am the one between some
thighs to come
the simplest way of all
a horse is
a presence in the middle of you
that makes you move.

But if I am the horse
then I must be walking alone
at once too slow and
too far ahead

I must be out of the question
not enough of me for so much of you

27 May 2001

It is something to wonder about
the woman in black fashion
slipping through the gold coast door

a client of a strange hotel
who visits herself in local mirrors
while the lake is waiting

can you hear what I'm saying to you
my words fluttering around your face soft as hair

I wonder

It is the wonder indigenous to the conscientious voyeur
staring down the staircase you will mount
soon enough into the seventh heaven

a world is what is willing to be seen.

As if you cared what I wanted when all your want
encloses all of mine and all of me
as the beehive encloses the bee.

And I am waiting too
lying here with all my special water.

27 May 2001

Admirable distances reverie abolishes
the way dream abolishes proximity,

these are the differences, the opposites,
dream the absence charged with infinite identity.

Waking the same. Bringing there here.

28 May 2001

A weak king wants to be in someone else.

To touch is not to know,
To know is not to remember.

I woke early, knowing nothing.

28 May 2001

Being certain.

A character
You've never seen before
And never even thought of

Climbs out of your clothes
And walks away
Body outlined against a sunset
Baked wholly out of your own poor light.

28 May 2001

AT THE EMBASSY

I didn't avoid the reception but I thought about it
There were moons there and foreign preachers
Coins rolling underfoot a lot of them
Bronze mostly but silver here and there
The way things spill I took a glass from a tray
But didn't drink it just watched the ballroom
Founder under dull music and killjoy to the last
Can never leave a room at all confident
I have done everything I could have done in it
So stood halfway up the curving staircase
Admiring the more agile dancers some of them
Just a swoon or two away from being in love
To use a phrase from my childhood you hear
On classic movie channels to this day or night
Grave as Walter Pidgeon biscuits for la canaille
That's me I guess and go upstairs. Mrs Organ
Was resting on the chaise beside the telescope
I would like to wake her but don't know the spell
Because hanging out with people is a riddle isn't it
And leaving a party is a fatal wound received in dream.

28 May 2001

But waiting for you here
I realize hereness.

You'll never come.
It doesn't matter.

I am where I am supposed to be.

28 May 2001

Moods are our parasites

I thought when I wondered
Why all animals have parasites that bother them
But we have learned to carry few

The only lice we carry are resentments

29 May 2001

A letter disappears in the sky
from the sky

gradually, like an a losing its leg becoming o
or o's hat dwindling till it be u

fading in turn till only I
am left, pointless

a scrap of breath.

29 May 2001

THE TREE OF QUARKS

So bound unbound
 split into wholeness
a new thing

parsed over the last words of some old phony
 who tried to be not only the whole of France
 but France a hundred years ago when it was lilacs

does it have the vowel of quarts or the vowel of Marx?

Marl Quarks is what I'd say, a brain with an id for an ego

All the distinctions,
all the tender branches of that tree
a child follows street by street into the ramifications of a word
heard,
 where does the sound take him,

what color is a name?

30 May 2001

But it says nothing in me
a silence like the flowers of the locust trees
snowing down on sunny lawns at evening
I could believe the back yard held such court

with no one on the throne, maybe a shadow
of someone passing or maybe it was just a thought

a thought is a darkness too.

30 May 2001

Exaggerate the incidence of light
The venetian blind is made of angles
Sliced sun sliced cloud
You want to show me something
So far away it takes my breath to see it.

30 May 2001

who could it have been
I missed my chance
to get inside
me a broken chain
free at what terrible price

31 May 2001

Sometimes I forget how beautiful beauty is
especially when it bends its back towards me across the arch of time
and brings its mouth close to my face and whispers a tune
a little story I thought I was the only one in the world who knew.

31 May 2001

(listening to *Die Frau ohne Schatten*)

MARKETPLACE

In between the arches and the odd
A melon seller sits among her wares
Smoother than they, less ripe, and both herself
And her merchandise are veiled by seeing,

The core of softness or sourness concealed
By the glib glad sunshine of how we see.

That we see at all. That persons
Cloak themselves in meat and musk and fruit
And stagger almost blindly through a world
Busy with wanting and forgetting,
Frantic as birds at morning
Tortured by the liturgy they celebrate.

Far cry from pretty girl selling her melons.

31 May 2001