

3-2009

## marG2009

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### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "marG2009" (2009). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 529.  
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Incidents of worship.

Who the gods are  
varies with the beholder,  
*holder of the gods.*

So you make your pantheon  
by sheer observation  
attending to the many shapes  
that make you worship,

make you long to say them  
and say to each: You mean this  
and I love you for it  
and will serve you all my life  
and will be your work in this world.

Then you set above your desk  
images of them, studying them  
night and morning it seems  
you are studying the world.

You ask questions and they speak  
things in your head,

clear enough, and these you share  
with your friends, why not,  
they're in the world too,

they need the same answers  
you do. But not all.

There are some questions  
closer to you than skin  
and these your gods discuss  
in wind-shifted leaves,  
nothing to report, light,  
thunder in far prairies.

12 March 2009

= = = = =

meant for you to see how  
to use sight is it better  
live where see the mountain  
or on the mountain see  
only endless landscape  
away and nothing close  
and the ground falls away  
on every side but the seeing!  
Vermont on one horizon  
the other Pennsylvania  
what are they just names  
in the blue distance here  
the sun in your eyes.

12 March 2009

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Those mountains over there are just as close  
as all the friends I've lost to death or other intrigue,  
Could they one day come to mean me  
the way I mean myself, mourn myself, already  
half vanished into the distances from which I came  
those blue hills eyes of my mother, Paul Blackburn's eyes?

12 March 2009

## **AN AGITATED WITNESS ATTENDS COURT**

Ask me questions till you run out,  
my orgasms will answer you, sheer delight  
(you see right through it) of answering!  
Ask, ask, I can't wait to tell the truth  
or lie or make it up whichever comes first,  
ask, ask, I am in this world exclusively  
to attend to your questions. Asking  
is your honor, answering is all I mean.  
Why are your bailiffs so slow to pay attention?  
Shouldn't a court recorder be transcribing even this?

12 March 2009

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They don't understand at all  
what their bodies are.

They are single sentences of immense  
length it takes forever  
to read and parse and understand.

To know one body fully is to know everything.

12 March 2009

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It wants us to ask  
questions about each other  
not the sun and moon  
or we are them and then  
we can answer truly

it wants to know us  
as we know ourselves  
into each other  
the spill of meaning  
the skin know itself

the other knows as well  
it is no accident  
it wants us to know  
by asking and by saying  
the skin of words

tonguetied witness.

12 March 2009



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When is it time to be now?  
we have so many choices  
I'm only talking about what you can  
take inside at night  
yourself a womb of streets  
everybody perspiring, the quest  
of traffic and the quick of come.  
It all is as it always is.  
The names change, the words  
get other tone-rows and the songs  
get other words and the sun  
does its grammar overhead.  
We guess our way from bed to bed.

But you knew that a thousand  
years ago why tell me again?  
How do you know what I knew when?  
And your thousand is different from mine  
and there are no years

just ampersands knotting together  
one thing after another  
until we're done. Or one.

13 March 2009

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All the disasters

come after.

The spiritual landscapes

between the Harlem Ship Canal and the Westchester line

more complex than a virgin's dream.

The Virgin's dream.

But I am virgin also of these places,

sprinkle salt on all my wounds.

13 March 2009

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But I wanted to see what it said  
so I broke the glass  
wanted to smell the spring  
so I dug up the lawn  
but did anything listen?

Not even one.

The blackbirds are back  
that's all they knew,  
the science of arrival  
is the deepest art of all.

13 March 2009

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One more word before remember.  
Slip it into your calendar  
some people don't like a slippery feeling,  
like the rough wedge in. A day  
fits inside a day. You come  
inhabit my hour. Then you get mad  
and leave behind a risky quiet  
like when a dog stops barking  
but any minute might start again.  
That's what I get from a conversation—  
I don't belong to you enough.

13 March 2009

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All that coming towards  
and then Passover  
running through the trees  
almost naked with spring

to get away from the book  
that infinite family  
the dinner all word and no food  
you don't want to be Jewish

you don't want to be you.

13 March 2009

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Between the curtain and the sunny window  
the new amaryllis splayed in scarlet  
against the pale cloth, its own petals  
also diaphanous, shade inside a shade.

13 March 2009

**HE**

And for a moment wondered  
where those scars had come from  
on his palms.  
Then he remembered.

13 March 2009

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Till there is none left to say  
then say it  
green as you care to

since the telescope the moon is shy  
all our invasions  
cherries on the apple tree

I give you plump apricot  
whole in your mouth  
turns into language

o god please talk to me.

14 March 2009



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How long anything has to go decides  
the instrument is full of its own sagesse,  
scalpels teach the surgeon's hands  
and you take me to the other side of my mind  
where I have nothing to rescue or defend  
just noise with silence in it and sunshine  
vague in the branches of a busy tree.  
And when you have me there, such  
arguments of energy and flesh, what  
curving politics of grace! Exclaiming  
is better than explaining any day,  
catches the child mind and makes it stop  
thinking. Get up and go, beyond the usual  
equations, to the land without comfort,  
without sin, when sense is made  
only by the senses, and language,  
that live fish in your fingers, begins.

14 March 2009

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Waiting at the edge, sedge, a kind of grass,  
Egypt out the door.

How strange we are, we kept the old gods  
and changed the religion—

Isis forgives us time after time  
no matter what we call Her.

Isis is always. Isis is only. Isis is.

14 March 2009

## HOME FROM A WALK

I went without money  
without passport even

all the way into the afternoon  
and came back home

a hundred years later  
my own half-acre

no cat, no own shadow  
even on my own floor.

14 March 2009

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I called him after his voice  
to say  
what love would not let  
myself avow

I am a scrap torn  
from your book,  
listen to me,  
written in a distant stronghold of your mind  
while all the really smart  
crows are flaunting it around out here.

14 March 2009

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Different typefaces

explain nothing.

It's up to you

again, kiddo,

put the imagined stress

on the word you want

the words to say to you

you're in charge

of what it means.

14 March 2009

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Hushed colors of old rugs  
washing them fades them even more  
and the sun bleaches what is left.  
Still, it was red and you know it,  
green leaf on sand fallen,  
you know it, the infinite variety  
never mute. The sky  
seems to be crying out  
now not just the crows  
not just the sun. The blue  
ordinary of the wall  
is what is calling. But  
only the colors hear.

14 March 2009