

4-2003

aprG2003

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "aprG2003" (2003). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 896.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/896

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BLACK DOG

Couldn't there be change?
The black poodle behind the stove
has other things on its ci-devant mind
besides rescuing me from girllessness,

it is a dog of the beginning
if dog at all, even as the martini
in my veined claw began
life as sacrificial juniper

that Sherpas burn to the Goddess
on their way up the highest mountain
according to the National Geographic,
speaking of girls. No change.

For things arrogate unto themselves
four things: impermanence, color,
deceptiveness and truth.
Their fugacity breaks your fucking heart.

And I suppose that being gone is
also a sort of change so maybe one day
the pole star will look down on happy men.
I mean happy me, I always make that mistake.

Who could the dog really be? And who
lives on the top of Everest, so crowded
with Japanese and cameramen? Is he cold?

Has he traveled through unscheduled nights

to warm himself behind my oven, sheer
smelly animal of him, reminding me
that I too know how to sweat, swink, swive
and other archaic enterprises. This devil

is certainly details. Look at his bloodshot eyes,
why should a dog look like that, he doesn't
drink, he doesn't sit up all night reading
ancient chronicles in monastic scrawl,

look, the sun is rising all over town,
no place to hide, kids talk sensibly outside
on their way to the gibberish of school,
Good Friday is the secret name of every day.

OK, dog, arise and sing. You come here
for reasons pregnant with beginnings.
Who? All I ask is an answerless question,
the kind I started with. What

was my face before I was born? Did it
wear glasses, mustache, did it cringe
when church bells rang? Did it think
every twilight shadow was a dog or a girl?

29 April 2003

AFTER FRANCESCO COLONNA

Wouldn't you like to be
like the guiding woman
in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*
and lead every lover

up the civilized mountain
lifting your long hair
to show that special
nakedness leads them on?

Where could we go
but to the Natural?
And what could we do when we get there
except what is natural to us?

Do you know yet
that you and I are
and are of one nature?
Different sex, different age, interest,

attitudes, rhythm, all different.
But there is a dark star
that inhabits us, its raying arms
reach into you and me

as if we were the same animal.
Lead me to myself, you
will find yourself there too.
In the quiet morning

we prepare the day,
the lunch to carry, the map
you are. I slap you lovingly,
you slap me back, we embrace

again for good measure,
the star makes us crazy inside,
we risk everything,
we go, we die to live.

[24 April 2003]

{from *The Night Book*}

INORNIS birdless
a viscous morning
suddenly inorn
soon even this will
begin to speak.
Maybe at the end
of life you tell
a story again.

29 April 2003

TOO MANY MARRY

Alkahest needing

to dissolve the excessive vessel,

to be trim. Size

of oneself not

a dram larger.

Filming through the empty glass

fills the image with new meaning,

a different kind of light,

smudged, meaning? Meaning is witness

30 April 2003

FIND ANOTHER NAME for me

find it in the forest
where there are no telephones
and I bring my own fences

but you have to find it for me,
name me, I said, because
we are all children of Lilith,
Eve came later, name us all

because they bore false witness
about us and our mother,
said we were children of
whereas we were not, no families,

we were born orphans
in an empty world.
We are the ones who had
no mothers, I need you,

do you understand,
I am telling you something
you never heard before
though you've heard all the words,

the tea in my cup has grown
cold but no less bitter,
it is the morning after all, turn
the bible inside out and begin.

30 April 2003