

4-2009

**aprF2009**

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "aprF2009" (2009). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 540.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/540](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/540)

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

= = = = =

Caught in the mirror aha  
an animal an escaped  
slave of feeling fleeing  
animal almost  
full of gasps and beginnings.  
I have never seen this face before.

13 April 2009

## IN THE MIRROR

Glass. I saw your face  
sleeping. You were smiling  
also, talking to me.

There was a typewriter,

old, with glass keys,  
what a small alphabet  
but a big apartment, your smile  
you were sleeping, awake  
also, talking to me,

to console me also  
because the doctor couldn't treat me  
because he had a headache  
so I treated him  
my hands to his temples

he resisted, finally laxed,  
let me. Aren't you  
the face of the doctor,  
wasn't it your temples  
I held between my hands  
daring to heal?

How could I cure a doctor  
yet I can cure everyone,  
we must know this  
about me. About any me.

13 April 2009

= = = = =

When I have finished everything it says  
then I can talk. Then the night bombers  
can take off from the northern moors  
and hammer targets made of sleeping people  
who if they had time to speak before they died  
would speak a foreign language – proof  
of their need to be dead. There, that's  
what it says, war is always evil, no excuse  
for it ever. Ever. Now I can say whatever  
I please, nobody will pay attention to that either.

13 April 2009

## ANGER

Not to be angry as that  
not to be angry it is a lark  
a bird found only in poetry  
no not angry a box delivered  
at the door a little box  
the man rang the bell and left it  
not to be angry at any small box  
it could have a lark in it  
I feel something moving  
I can hear it singing.

13 April 2009

## LESSONS IN LOGIC

1.

Logic, I think it is a wolf  
that takes a word and eats it up.  
I think it is a tree  
wants to spend a wooden eternity  
counting its own leaves.  
Logic is always counting on its fingers.  
Now we fools want to teach logic to sing.

2.

And who is we?  
And who decides  
what music makes?  
Who makes music  
and what good does it do?  
We sit with our composer friends  
and listen with something close to reverence  
to the wolves howling on the hill.

3.

And what good does it do?

It cheers you up

while you're counting leaves,

it helps you keep your place

as you measure the words of what you read.

But what do wolves count?

What does logic do for a wolf?

Does music even know what wolves really want?

4.

Caught without comfort on a hill

the lazy shepherd reads himself a book.

Too many sheep, too few wolves,

nothing for him to be professional about,

too many to count, too few to fear.

Words on pages are the logic of idleness.

why bother turning the page, this page

has plenty of words on it, no need more,

read what's in front of your eyes

again and again, you youth, you mystic,

you shepherd of woolen experiences,

watch the lazy words move around like sheep.



5.

In the old days they did this with a flute  
and a sheep and a boy on a hill.

Boys dream about girls, girls dream about wolves,  
wolves in the iron fastness of their brains  
count sheep, sheep and things like that,  
anything to eat to keep their deep chests powerful  
to hurl out that cry at night that in their hearts  
they know is the one thing that keeps the world afloat.  
An animal knows this, and we  
after two thousand years of logic lessons almost  
know this much about what an animal knows.

6.

As if it were given to us also to howl.

It's all a man can do to be a girl  
or a tree to be a wolf.

Secret dreams of oak leaves:  
to shiver in the summer wind and not be counted.

14 April 2009

## **BLUE**

Blue, it was always blue  
the flower she bent down to look  
even more closely at

as if she could see the whole sky  
right there between her fingers then  
folded them around it softly

and only then plucked it up  
from the spring grasses  
where it was small,

always blue, and she  
was always naked as she bent  
calmly to study it and seize

the blue, always we have seen  
the long line of her body  
from hip to ankle one smooth

descent as she, always bent  
from the waist, never crouching,  
brought down her hand to take it

and bring it up along her thigh  
her flank her side the swell  
of her left breast and finally

the flower touched her lips  
on its way to being known  
and she took in the color of it

and became what it had been  
blue and of the earth—  
and at that hour the old

man came and caught her,  
told her: I was once as you are now  
in love with springtime

and soft things, now  
I have gone down to where all  
the colors start, a gap

sliced in darkness  
defining everything: Come  
I take you with me there.

14 April 2009

## QUALITY

Try now to understand  
the quality of quality  
as if Aristotle had come  
whistling through the mail slot  
and we had to let him in.  
Can't keep Greek out.

*Any category  
is always about me.*

Whisper me in Swedish  
your blonde breath  
help rescue me from  
this angry south  
all names and knives.

Qualities of actual things  
disturb the mind  
as things do not.  
Why is that?  
is a northern question,  
really isn't it  
about the way real people smell?

14 April 2009



= = = = =

Little by little  
the tree climbs the sky.

When there is nothing  
above its head

it has reached the sky.  
They are alone in the world.

14.IV.09

## THE PRIESTLY GESTURE

Day of the tiger

lifted

one hand held

the horizon, the

other stroked a cloud

passing over this burnt rock

they use to pray.

Women press

their bodies to the rock, men

press their bodies to the air

this is the priestly gesture they share.

the priest though is the only one who doesn't pray.

stands, holding the horizon firm

far from the action of the earth,

far from his own old body

standing on the dogskin carpet, his

eyes full of tears,

the priest

teaches them to do what he neglects,

he will not marry his body to the rock,

you cannot touch him,

a holy person

far away from your blessing blood.

15 April 2009

## HERO

This is not the day for small,  
a large crater with a howl in it  
the maiden barefoot brings it  
you drink the noise, you swallow fire  
like the heroes before you  
waiting for the scales of chance  
to shiver. Shimmer. Things  
break in you and you break them.

Breathe them. Big, big.  
Are you sure you have enough blood in you?  
Drink more. Are your stones  
rich with ore, shot through with the blue  
tourmaline that tells the gods  
have found this place and powered it  
for you? Can you piss so high  
you can make the sun sizzle in the sky,  
almost put it out, make the moon laugh,  
does that feel like what's going on in you  
right now, Miracle?

The book said:

If the book has leprosy  
its pages mottle and smell bad  
take it to the priest and let him read it,



see if it hurts him as he reads silently  
then goes to sleep and dreams,  
what does he dream, let him explain the dream,  
then read the book aloud  
and every word he reads out loud  
will little by little heal what's left,

but you're too great for that, you shout,  
Miracle, you should all the words at once,  
then all the books get healed at once  
you think, you shout,  
but who will ever read them, words, books, noises  
in the sky, the moon shines bright,  
she likes the pain she feels, huge shout,  
the words are young again,  
the new-sloughed serpent gleams in daylight  
and all the books are true,

the priests fall into comas and the statues wake,  
every object is a miracle like you,  
Miracle, open your vast mouth,  
bleed your clamor all over the planet,  
blood means bless, did you know that,  
but you forgot, I'm tell you now,  
shout it in your broken ear, you  
are the world wonder, the bridge  
that goes everywhere, the shoreless river,

the knife cuts anything, the drink  
one sip of it means everyone is fresh again,  
wise again, never dull again,  
all that in your simple-minded shout,  
not even a roar or growl or gnooring  
beast note, just a plain loud word,  
shout at the top of your voice  
top of the sky, any word at all.

15 April 2009

= = = = =

But even laughter can't beat money,  
used to be the sharpest tool  
don't call it knife call it a fool  
laughing at those who deem  
themselves his masters. Awake  
yet audience? Have they told you  
who you like best? What food  
tastes best in your mouth?  
Obey the instincts they install in you.

15.IV.09

= = = = =

Or be dislodged – as  
a statue from its niche,  
Saint Peter shown  
with a cock at his feet

or as a tune – Valse  
triste, say, from the head  
by a funny noise  
in your aunt's attic

you have to investigate  
long ago long ago  
or as you yourself  
now from the order of time.

15 April 2009

= = = = =

Cold sweat and sick in the night  
I am sure of nothing I haven't said

when it sinks from the cauldron of unease  
to the avenues of pain, when trees  
by themselves line every boulevard  
– linden, ginkgo, London plane –  
and Johnny comes home again  
and all the songs learn how to stop.

15.IV.09