

10-2006

## octE2006

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, "octE2006" (2006). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 753.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/753](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/753)

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).

= = = = =

Caring, yes, but what of the staying  
while you care, who dares to drink  
that glass all the way down and leave  
the door, stumbling alone out there  
into the sky? The sky is all  
there is outside a house, we live in it  
and it sometimes in us. From it  
we sometimes dare to live. But who  
would dare to stay, to stay with care  
and even stay with love, the way  
the sky stays where it is, a bright  
stone we live inside and move,  
its veins run through us and we  
try to stay by breathing. Caring.  
Daring to stay. Will you stay,  
stay with me (whoever I turn out  
to be, later, when we both go out  
and look up to see the sky, the same  
sky that is all round us, ignorant  
as we are), stay with me until  
or putting it another way will  
you stay until the chemistry  
has done its work and we are one?

26 October 2006



= = = = =

Castaways on joy's ocean  
spill sheer sound. Scelsi  
rebound from cracked concrete  
music-shell of the Social Republic  
crumbles in sea-foam. Who

broke the light?

The last house of all  
is the senses, please don't  
take my touch away. The panoply  
of simple be.

The accurate mistake  
we call it,  
world without end.

When the license plates were made of cardboard.  
When a city was no bigger than my hand touching yours.

27 October 2006

= = = = =

The girl in the expensive pants  
looks good in all the maple leaves  
she shuffles through on her way to art,

the camera chalice in her hands  
tells all, she's out to get the world  
in dollar-sharp focus, not a hint  
of murk or maybe, all of it her own,

the photograph, the whole  
season one meek commodity.

27 October 2006

## BIRTHDAY OF EVERY CAT IN THIS

You sat then slumped  
beside me on the daybed  
yawned into my arms.  
We explored the afterglow  
of who you were.  
touched where you were  
coming from. Everything  
is an explanation.

28 October 2006

= = = = =

But that could be it too.  
A spud. Something scorched.  
Gold feathers. Or golden.  
Tureen. Bread  
floats, bread won't help.

Hope is a crescent, a silvery  
lying moon. Dream  
of a friend approaching:  
facing you. Full of being here.

28 October 2006

= = = = =

Because I think everything is the god

or: everything I can think  
is the god  
thinking it in me,

would that go even beyond Africa

that moral place?

Grace compels us to choose the good—  
and some men call that freedom.

But in the closet the girl curls up  
thinking of her distant friend  
among the forests of all the clothes,

the space between them is  
all she can hope to mean by the world.

28 October 2006

## THINKING OF THINKING OF YOU

At times I think of you. And at those times, or sometimes in those times, my whole mind becomes a dark and quiet pool. Through it, your body swims, naked, easy. And when I think of you, this thinking takes the form of seeing and feeling you move through me. Really feeling, as if I were really the water and you really are the human swimmer knowing, being known. Knowing all the water. All of you being known by all of it, the way water is, or does. That's is how the mind does. Sometimes I feel your flank as it brushes past my face, pressing soft but firm against my mouth like a word I am meant to say.

28 October 2006



## LOVE POEM TO A STRANGER

I want to look forward to remembering you.  
And if I ever get around to touching you  
I want to remember the taste of all the times I didn't.  
When there was nothing at all between us  
not even the weather, it could have been spring already,  
and the distance itself was part of your skin.

29 October 2006

## WHEN IN ROME

Magniloquent otherwise. Or on top.  
Tusculan Disputations. *If it pleases  
the gods*, one might become wise.

Or another, passing in the street,  
would say: I like that coat of yours  
and you, flourishing in the bewilderment

of truth would explain, or complain,  
but I'm not wearing one, I'm naked,  
what you see is the shadow of what I felt,

words thick as fur jostling in the arena  
of my skin. You mean it, but the other  
touching his temple would hurry on.

\*

I lay on the sidewalk of that city  
and listened to the paving stone,  
it told me all about the Argonauts  
of such dark streets, the arguments  
lovers used to refute their desires  
and philosophers to render valueless  
their actual experience, sobbing  
as they quarreled in the stoas  
of mean protestant chapels, purple  
with penance, the smell of shadows.

29 October 2006

= = = = =

Shocked by blue heaven  
a house went down

you thought it was the wind  
it was an idea yielding to its opposite

huge vacuum when thought's withdrawn.

A door. As I have tried to tell you  
the law is. But you wouldn't listen –

you thought pleasure was something else.  
It never is. It is only this, only ever

this. Pleasure is this.

29 October 2006

= = = = =

Things coming back  
take a while to come back to themselves

like a red straw floating in a milk pail  
the way is long

the lepers in the rows of corn  
hide from the sun

they are singing about the long way  
the long life of things

the strange sad life of time and language and need

sometimes I have heard foxes  
shouting at nightfall in the cornfield

or just beyond it  
where the trees shrink away from me year after year.

30 October 2006

= = = = =

But how could a line ever be long enough to get there,  
tell me that, you Holy Trinity geometer,  
you mother of analysis, you hegemon of hope?

There is nowhere that properly speaking could be called 'else'  
except where this very line is not.  
And this line is as you see is everywhere

along with you seeing it and me whispering into the narthex of your ear  
(my excuse to breathe in the linden and oak moss of your hair)  
all the destinations of the minute hand one by one

without ever committing a single act of that adultery called "giving you a  
moment's peace."

30 October 2006

= = = = =

*[for a 2<sup>st</sup> birthday]*

Now the twenty-first letter of the Name has been spoken. The letter is *c*, *shin*, which some understand as meaning 'tooth.' But this kind of tooth is like the Dent du Midi, the great mountain peak called the Tooth of the South, which is also the *tooth of noon*. In Chinese, the same character (squared off, made rigorously asymmetrical) is *shan*, a mountain. The tooth of earth that bites into the sky.

This is the year's work that lies before you: to be earth and hard, to be wide open to the sky. "The Kingdom of heaven is taken by violence," it says in Rabbi Jesus's workbook. This is the year to work the book, to beat the sky. To bite heaven.

30 October 2006

= = = = =

But was I the sign of another,  
my whole being just a sign  
and never a signified?

Shut up, I helped him,  
there are no signs.  
Except that the Long Body writes,  
that is the body of your being in the world a long time,  
a cipher.

But can my cipher be read?  
Enough to be grass. Or an amazement  
plucking at the hem  
of passing saints and motorists.  
Somebody knows you, somebody  
even cares – but you,  
you don't have to find them or name them, see?

He saw not  
neither did he spin  
nor understood  
the purple river that runs in him  
and gives such ardor to his excited face  
was grace. Time is just the skin of him.

31 October 2006

= = = = =

When is thinking about a thing the same  
as doing something else? When does the low  
light dance club lose its roof to a high wind  
and let the snubnosed sky probe in  
the way it does on other planets why not here?  
Forgive me, I have been awake since sleep.  
Some other thing, I mean, not the one  
you keep thinking about all the time, in blue  
satin and across the room, a plastic glass,  
a flute with nobody playing it and still  
the wee hours fill up with music, how?  
Dunking for apples. Closing your eyes.  
Not here. Another order of life altogether  
on another substrate system just like you  
but far away. A little tipsy but present  
if not presentable. Why not? A gloom  
settles over the permanent café. Night  
has enough work to do without using it  
to make yourself glum. Find an old map  
and follow it. The maple tree will help you.  
The sun is always behind the wall. Climb.  
Over the parapet you'll see the one you mean.

31 October 2006

= = = = =

Any map  
shows the way

that's what's so  
hard to remember

following the  
delicate lovely blue veins

Not one of them  
ever gets there

but every  
map shows the way.

31 October 2006

= = = = =

There are too many stars in the sky  
when I was young there were only a few

and the great hazy Milky Way ran right across  
clear as a word on paper

but now the Way is weaker, its stars have left the stream  
and stand around, dangerous loners looking down on us

everything is vaguer up there except for them  
those dozens and dozens of individuals who

have broken free from their old constellations  
no more bears no more altars no more scales

just fierce white eyes staring me down.

31 October 2006