

10-2002

## octJ2002

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## THE DISTANCE

What would I be saying if you were to say  
it or here to hear it  
what would I say if I were a special case  
of you talking to yourself

I think I am,

the beauty of all connection  
is the infinitely small but palpable distance  
between us, measure me, physicists,  
no wider than the luminous gap  
between a word and its thing

as I would say if I were talking  
for my own or song's sake  
as the poet said and who  
would you think I actually am  
if you heard my words talking to yourself

I mean in you, burning bush,  
witch's well, ocean  
a wise child tries to fill with sand

talking with you is a part of my brain  
where the loving skepticism of the flesh  
almost takes hold and almost lets go.

26 October 2002

## SIZE

Uh oh poems are beginning to fit the page  
again, a bad sign, no?

I write with your pen  
to get a grasp on space,  
how much  
fits inside how long

carving the hours  
with great saying  
or am I a cheesy barrister  
defending my desires in a shadow court  
so pompously so true

or yet a squat  
Hokkaido peasant crouching in a rainy doorway  
whittling haiku?

Size is all.  
Because time is, and space the only way we handle it.

26 October 2002

## THE MESSENGER

Knowing enough to turn the knob  
open the door and go through  
but what then?

Listening to the empty room.

I've gotten that far.  
I repeat, quietly as I can,  
what I think I hear.

Whether it's a room or a street  
I can't tell, yet or ever,  
the darkness is in me.

26 October 2002

## TO CATCH UP WITH WHERE I AM

Glad gadabout did you say  
or is he gay, the difference  
bleeds through the music  
turn off the bar. Answer me.

Not gay. Not male. Not even here  
the rhapsodies of ordinary weather  
have confused me. I thought  
I saw a brother in the mirror.  
It was a sister on the stage  
a disgrace to the family, one more  
evidence of sexual malaise  
a lost lady in the middle of the heart.

Vermont yourself and be apart,  
curious green person. Your values  
levanted before your competence:  
makes you a criminal. Pine trees  
shiver when you walk by,  
last materialist in this spooky New Age.  
Materia is lumber. Spirit is gin.  
How do we get out of this place  
I don't know, how did you get in?

27 October 2002

## THE REFINEMENTS

Refining Rembrandt's coarse  
features, sport of timid souls  
aesthetics of ethical revision,  
botox those famous wrinkles,  
until you get a man who doesn't smell.

A picture of a picture, in other words,  
what we're taught to live by.

But suppose the only drawings we could make  
were fingertips lightly sketching on your palm,  
then you'd have your whole body  
to remember it, archive of that outline,  
and you'd know inside yourself the weight of what he drew.

27 October 2002

**SHE STARES AT THE TIMETABLE, I STARE AT HER**

Scam of the moon  
look longward  
over the sincere  
none-too-bright horizon

I have believed you again  
and again you're going away

How could it not be so  
I live in my shoes  
in the cap of my fountain pen  
I live in my ears I have

no actual place for you to stay.

27 October 2002

## MECHANISM OF THE SONG

In fact relax  
into the saying

a brilliant skeptic  
like a boy in chains

having to grow  
with all that weight on him  
of doubt, of stale  
a priori  
he mistakes for thinking

because you never know  
where an idea comes from  
until you look

and all your education tells you  
there is no way of looking  
behind the logic of assorted meanings  
to the glad null space where

there are no materials for thought.  
And that is thinking.  
I gave my love a cherry  
so she could  
think her way out of the wood.

28 October 2002

ΠΕΡΙ ΥΛΗΣ



## BEING ABSTEMIOUS

One of the perils of sobriety  
is not sitting around in bars  
listening anymore.

Now I have to make it up,  
those drunken conversations  
in which the American Theodicy  
reveals itself, the reverent  
superstitions we live by, to sort out  
anger and desire, reassert  
the continuity of a fragile self —  
that sort of stuff, disguised  
as talk about football and pussy and Iraq.  
We always know the enemy is someone else.  
We always know we did the best we could.  
We always know the other guy is cheating.  
The rich have analysts, the poor have bars.  
I wish the police would make it a crime  
to Drive Under the Influence of Psychiatry,  
working out entitlements behind the wheel,  
I hear the squeal of brakes all night long,  
I listen to my restless drunks inside.

28 October 2002

## **RUSH**

The problem is this: any drug you ever took,  
every rush you ever felt  
set up a small parish in your soul  
and is there right now, you can revert to that blissed condition  
just by walking down that set of streets,  
the deep scary member of remembering.

28 October 2002

## **UNDER**

Something lingers  
among the laterite, a shale  
shading downhill to clay

where water pools out after  
shadow of rain.

28 October 2002

## INCARNATION

We have grown into the island  
what was rock before  
only us now

And moors  
full of woodcock full of larks  
are us

we have to be  
everything that we displaced  
into the unknown liberty  
beyond what we were thinking.

29 October 2002

## POSTCARD FROM SILENCE

Things renew each other  
hard for me  
to write a letter  
the words want to stay  
so close together.

29 October 2002

## **DRAGOMAN**

I am a tour guide  
with no Pyramid  
but all the explanations  
of an immense absence  
tremble on my lips.

29 October 2002

## TARJETA

So this is just another postcard  
when you're waiting for a real letter

I do love you but I don't know who I am  
when I say that, all I know  
is what I see out the window, so that is why  
I send you this picture of the Late Roman aqueduct.  
Or is it the sea front at Marblehead?

29 October 2002

## HANDLING SIN

There is a town in the town.

Handles on doors  
are called knobs.  
Night is called to.  
In church they said  
things call out to other  
things and it is scary  
when they do there  
dragons and lions

the scars the Bible leaves  
never heal,  
white lesions in the soul  
old, go  
show yourself to the High  
Priest and tell no one

Anyone can tell  
who you are  
and what happened to you.  
Your sins are in your face  
your belly the sway  
of your hips as you walk  
always towards some altar  
to be healed.



The laying on of hands  
as if your skin  
were the only skin we have.  
The only sky.  
The talking.  
As if the mouth  
were too holy for words  
and had to say  
some altogether different thing.

29 October 2002

## **FOR PAUL, A CONTINUITY**

But I think it's the continuity  
that's lacking. For example  
I prayed to the ash tree  
for a sign. When it fell down in a storm  
another tree grew where it had stood,  
a linden this time, a tree full of hearts.  
Years and years. It takes  
so long to read a sign.  
By the time I read the word you send  
the one I mean to tell is up and gone.

29 October 2002

## IN THE SOUTH

1.

It is not clear  
how high we can go  
or what we can expect  
of each other

of the place  
when we come to the door

it is close enough  
I feel your cheek  
along my neck  
as if you nestled in me  
we were traveling  
we stopped right here  
in shadow on a bright day  
to look up this hill

where a building like a castle  
stands against the sky  
ours for the seeing

this whole presence  
is us, for us  
and the place itself  
the day and its décor  
ours to be with

the feel of us

ready for something, maybe  
ready for everything

this moment, this chateau.

2.

The car was just part of the landscape  
like a hot heavy shadow  
of where we had been. Of who we are.  
We are here, amazing as hair,  
as stars, as hills.

No explanation.

How can people even for a second  
even in a dream overcome  
the immense loneliness of being  
and sit on the ground together, easy,  
a picnic with no food, just the view  
all round them, motionless, good  
as if the world had just been created.

Every morning I call to tell you  
what you know already  
because I found a letter from you on the lawn.  
Because we are always beginning again  
we will never get there.  
But then there is nowhere to go.  
Only this place we keep recreating.  
Go to school in a raindrop. Get married in a leaf.

29 October 2002

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I am trying to come  
to where I am.

Children play in the streets

I do not love them  
though I love where they are  
and how they move.

I try to come  
to where something is waiting  
always, but it wants  
too much of me,  
too many lovers.

29 October 2002