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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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GOING TO CHURCH

One thing true enough is telling. Ogival window seeing makes landscape woman. Or from all sides farmers and merchants hurry through these woman arches to be in church at last. To enter church, kyriakou, the lord’s place and what place could that be but the lady? The church is a young girl guarded by earnest eunuchs. We are her suitors, we line up, ready for the ordeal, we take our chances, which one of us will she take by the hand and lead us into the dark, never-changing ever-virgin simple mystery of herself?

1 November 2014
ALL SAINTS DAY

But all the dead are holy. Even the demons who made hell on earth for all life around them, they’re holy now in the great silence before they come to mind again and wake as someone else until at last they become our mother and our father.

1 November 2014
Knowing enough to know less
as if I were Europe and came home
every night to my fence and a fresh
wheel of cheese, a cup of water
from your well, the only taste I need.

1 November 2014
What’s in a nave
a ship on land
a kind of shoe
for a god to fit
too tight her
footstep in

and stands there
letting us behold.

But what’s in an elm
a shiver of amber
leaves they say but
we know better,
sap and sugar, stained
glass and Cambridge
by Longfellow’s house

who’s in the kitchen
with dining doctors,
deipnosophists of
Harvard Square around
the corner and down
towards where the folk
live, those bearers
of vernacular and tales!
Write them all down
in mandarin, translate
breath into stuff like
this, and o back then
for that god’s sake
imagine me, imagine me

hearing how stone talks
and meek cathedrals
cold incense and the soft
void above us to Whom
he cry at midnight, wet
pillows sometimes, or dry
catastrophes of sleep.

1 November 2014
CHOREOGRAPHY

is literally writing the place

writing the place
that makes you dance,
configuring a space
(or stone, of sound,
color, music, a place
of light) that compels
the body to dance.

Writing the place
is writing the dance
is writing the body
swayed by, beaten by,
place. Dance
is compulsion,
a regimented madness,

a force from the
ground won't let you stand still.

1 November 2014
The wind has come that bares the trees
—I don’t know more than that
yet, chairs overturned, covers spun off
in this by-humans-interfered-with world.

But out there the hibiscus tried to keep
its leaves, a show of strength, flower-
maker against the blow-away, a game,
for god’s sake it’s a game out there

and only me to take it serious, me
with my tenacious little notions
I call ideas, and think they somehow
make me different from what blows away.

2 November 2014
There I go again
describing what I see—
ordinary vistas
with poem obbligato.

One more mistake,
one more love affair.
I wonder what it sees
when it looks at me.

2 November 2014
LATIN LEXICON

Take Lewis & Short
and shake it out

so I’ll wake up again
as if I had never slept,

and all the words
I ever heard will

analyze themselves in me
and me along the way.

Words know us
better than we know ourselves.

2 November 2014
BORING PLACES

Church       Classroom       Train Ride

1.

Church

She says is boring
and delights to be so,
boring is pleasing them
who go so early
Sunday morning to
to bask in the irrelevant,
what all the week’s
other days and the rest
of this day too avoid:
tedious liturgy, pompous
desperate sermoning.
They take the pleasure
of being somehow benefited.
Like art. Like a fairy’s kiss.
2. 

*Classroom*

Twelve years of misery. Think of what a child (you, me) could really learn in those years. I hated school, it kept me from learning, kept me from books. From hearing, looking, just walking around. It made me repeat other people’s thought hoping I would mistake it for my own. I never did. I stared out the window and studied the better blackboard, blue one, full of white signs.

3. 

*Train Ride*

Travel is the opposite of going somewhere. When you’re going somewhere you just want to be there,
the train’s just a shuddering fidgeting waste of time.
OK if you’re traveling though, when the whole point is being anywhere else but where you are. Now the train ride is another glowing vista in Otherland, the place people pay to behold. Be held by. Next week our friends are going to Vietnam, not for war or commerce, just to look around, who knows why. Alas though no train goes there.

2 November 2014
Amtrak to NYC
BEING ALONE

Being by myself should be boring but is not. Slender shapely ideas pass sauntering through. Sometimes say their names, tell where they’ve been or where I am. Or even why they come to me to be thought, just now, with sparrows fluttering round them, green sea canyons stretching to horizons between their legs. An idea is a door. Being alone is opening it.

2 November 2014
Amtrak to NYC
NOVEMBER ELEGY

Tall men tend to tell the truth. The soapy residue even good experiences tend to leave behind—is that on the mind or some other plane midway between what they call us and I call me a level we dare not name where whatever happens leaves its shadow subtly, barely noticeably that colors (that drains color from) our feelings like a young or unripe cataract in an old man’s eye.

2.
Forgetting things is my business or part of the process (Pound says this of the wind), part of this obligation when sunlight catches on a long stray hair—we all are women to the wind, the Vulture’s bridegroom, the lighthouse far inland. I have to forget in order to remember, poignant answer to a mortal question.
3.
Who let the ghost in through the keyhole? Isn’t that what iron keys are for, to keep them out, keep them from speaking their word through, the word no one wants to hear? The slimmest word.

But here comes cloud, very loud, streaming from the northwest, a simple form for once, I could draw it, could pull it down and sleep on it tonight—some shapes are safe in bed.

It puzzles the animal of me, that rhinestone tiger with a wounded paw—

o leap your own fence, citizen, that’s your only limit now, given the calculus of terror, the agency of age.

4.

Think of that girl in Dante, fair of face but foul behind — the opposite of nowadays when handsome back and shoulders turn round to show faces of studied vapidity. Writing yields to ordinary knowing,
ambulances arriving at the scene.
O sentimental mind and tree-shaped heart my hero,
wine, tooth, tree, form, fire,
sex, sudden, weight, mine, then...

We get where we need to be,
get there by wanting alone,
magic spell of listening between anything ever spoken, there,
but where did the saying start?
Something to do with horses,
chariots, little books I forget.
For whom am I grieving?

3 November 2014
I taste fish wherever I go
must be the time of day
when the wolf comes out
and looks around, anxious
to know if I’m really me
and therefore his friend
or friend to be. Or is it a dog.

That can’t be right. Fish
live in the sky, that part of it
dense with hydrogen and salt
where the mineral of the air
comes close to taking form
but at least knows how to leave
a soapy film along your fingertips.

Afternoon is just morning again
heading in the wrong direction.
Or right if the sun’s too mean to you
and you hide like me in bosky
situations, cafés, houses, dells.
That taste again, as if an old book
swam up the Severn to meet me
when I was the other side of me,
back then, funny accent, different stars.

3 November 2014