10-2003

octC2003

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/914

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.
VISITORS

The blue flowers
have come to me instead

at the edge of the woods
but on this lawn

lawn is lawn that is one’s own
they have massed

big as two sheep
browsing, the blue

small flowers gather
to look across at me

I am sustained
by this conversation

the oldest quest
pure listening alone.

Geese
roll overhead.

11 October 2003
To know the places of sacred touch is trust. To have knowledge of a person through the *accident* of flesh is to know a person on the same terms he knows himself — chest, hand, loins. To want to touch people is to want to know the world as they know it, to contact the *field of knowing* that the body is.

To walk around the church. To slip inside and hover like a thought in the shadow of a broad column. Way up ahead is the shimmering twilight of the high altar, the sanctuary, to study that from far off, but not penetrate. That is no business of mine. Those golden shadows of candle flame are for the deeply baptized, the wholly accepted. I am not one of those. I have to stand apart, down in the nave among the whispers. I am not the priest of such an altar, such god as may live there, but I am inside the temple of it, the embodiment of that god. I stroke the wood carvings, the stone carvings of holy bodies, the text of local stone my fingers read.

There is an eternity of incense of beeswax to smell, and I can smell flame itself that nibbles at the air on slim white tapers. I do not climb the altar. I do not penetrate the crypt. But I do kneel down. I kneel and kiss the curious porphyry stones inlaid to form a cross which is a knot, a knot which is a maze, there where the transept crosses the central aisle and the altar is not far.

By kiss to untie that knot and know the road that had been folded in the maze.

To know a person in the body her consciousness has put on for this appointment. To touch is courtesy, to stroke the hidden arguments of flesh is mere civility.

11 October 2003
If there were only one left
would it be a house or a horse?
(ABSENCES, 1)

I stroll through maples
a kind of magnate
among nomads

hoofing it
all by myself

I promenade between the solstices
in all this profundity

my wristwatch ticking

11 October 2003

(Absences are poems whose main words, apart from the eternal little ones where meaning rises, were not used by Shakespeare.)
WALKING

My whole life has been a walk one day from the back door to the corner grocery past the maple trees by the gas station with sea at the end of the alleyway. Just this has taken all these years to get the right angle of approach, the right desire, the right list of things to notice till all the things that happened around me were things I thought. Leaf shadows, portable pain. A small hunger never mended. Never admit what I was looking for. I let my legs show me the way. The moon never lies. I’ve only been walking ten minutes or so. I know the grocer has a thick wheel of cheddar, I think of him cutting a piece for me, Already I know what it will taste like, or think I know. Already I pretend it is the cheese I came for. Pretend it’s feeling.

11 October 2003
REMORSE

Looking at the words I wrote
an hour back — temples, torches,
touches, flames — I see nothing
but what I remember, the hand
writing its dark arabesques
across a greenish page, no more
like words than the fallen leaves
outside, my eyes are focused
somewhere else, not on this
convulsion of simple line across
eternally blank space. Because
writing is a point that moves,
a feeble pirouette against
triumphant light that cancels
shadow all day long the way it does
if we don’t burn (ink means
burning) words into the world,
endarken them against the easy light.

11 October 2003
To think of someone

cancels thinking
and begins speaking, dialogos
overtakes the quiet mind

or is all thinking conversation
— we call talking ‘thinking out loud’ —
running words over the rocks
of the river to clean them into use

but what are the rocks and to what sea
by means of what river does such water flow?

Analogies are the root of sorrow
and maybe at the root of thinking.

Think without words without rocks without river
think without someone waiting there at the end
of your breath, someone with mouth
gently open to inhale what you think —

is thinking something one is doing
or is it done with one?

12 October 2003
Asunder, as a letter is
when you take off a foot of it
and make e into f.

12 X 03
MEANING

When you rip open an envelope
and snatch the message inside
what gets left out, what falls out
of the envelope and blows away
while you hunt through the words
for what they are saying
instead of seizing what she said
who sent them, something
in the act of inserting the letter,
licking the flap, sealing it,
something in the solitude of not
reading, just waiting to sense
what the paper says, the curlicues
of love that spilled the message
you spoil by reading.

12 October 2003
UNPREDICATED, SILENCE FILLS WITH EVENTFULNESS

copper cup wrist warm

rain color no rain

tea color leaves ground

small hill small sky

who close not here

sounds inside name hurrying

call people street one

door sounds finally finally

12 X 03
LA FIN

The terrible story I have been telling about you all these years dissipates. You take your body and go home. I am free of predication, a man free as newspapers, like a lawn without hammock or a coast unbothered by a sea. A certain quiet grief there is in being void of narrative. For one thing one is at the mercy of analogies, those seeds the gods leave in the feeder for us.

12 October 2003
BE HOME IN TIME

Be home in time for Halloween
said the Aurochs to the Year

because a length of time
is always sinewy like an arm
an flabby like a ham and
hard as a knucklebone and
could go anywhere

time is what it takes
to unpack space

every animal
is still waiting for
time to come home

we’re all alive right now
brothers climbing down the stairs

the bones sing.

13 October 2003
THE SOFT WHITE STRING THAT BAKERS USE

Committing some self
to the improbable, a baker
begins to wonder why
his dough begins to rise.

His daughter Veronica
helps him think, she
sits busy on the floor
by the kneading trough
not kneading, she feels
the air change “along
my skin” she thinks
“the same as in,
everything eats air.”
The bread is trying
to become her. She is
trying to be her father,
such a man, the
strength of his arm,
the pressure of his hand!
In the over the heat
is waiting like the sun
under the horizon
in a town with no churches
he looks at the woman

at the floor at the window
swelling with light
and still doesn’t know,
he still doesn’t know.

13 October 2003
HAVING COME BACK FROM THE EXPEDITION

Folklore carries me
past any reasonable answer
out where the question itself
rages, herds of it drifting
westward with the sky itself.

13 October 2003
TEXTS are wandering
between the magnetic poles
suspended in movement

which is why they quiver
as he reads them and he blames his eyes
eyes so tired at midnight
when he puts the scrolls away in the ark

but the words are still nomad
quivering inside him
and he reads with closed eyes
the peregrinations of the Mercy
among the thoughts and images
that people his mind

he reads them also
in the wilderness of dream.

14 October 2003
APOLOGIAE

Every profession must excuse itself before the suffering in the world. And those who practice two professions must make two apologies.

In the face of that suffering, the executive and the handyman, the priest and the accountant, the millionaire and the pauper are all guilty, guilty the doctor and the whore, the actor and the poet, guilty.

Each apology must blend the quality of that profession with the dignity of the person who makes the apology. All persons must learn to inherit their own dignities and perfect the skills of their professions: to make the perfect apology.

When this apology is proffered secretly but in an open place as someone might make a resolution silently under the sky over the city square it is called taking the first mask off, and it creates a slight healing effect throughout the world, like a cool breeze in hell.

14 October 2003
can that be
the man himself
divided into his instances: his passions by their mysterious algorithms
haunting the interior lexicon

desire plucking out
the way it does
    this image then that    —    in/mage, the named thing

built out of words in the blind part or cecity of mind.

14 October 2003
LANGUAGE LETS THE MIND

see what it thinks.
Co-nascent, the image and the word?
No. In the beginning (we are taught by the First Linguist)
was the word
and the word moved towards (προς) the god

(as if god were the first image the word intended,
the first thing the word spoke?)
That sacred pros! ‘To’ or ‘towards,’ that the word was not
something done but something doing
something with motive power,
a word is on the way,
a cause instead of an effect.

And word hides, and hides forever, its mystery —
does word imply a speaker, or only a listener?

You make me speak.

Empirically all our speech is pretty vain. But perhaps our listening is not.
Maybe we will hear it to the end,
this word, that word, will
suddenly speak.

What ne’er was thought but now seems first express’d.

14 October 2003