10-2002

octJ2002

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/991

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.
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 prioris
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
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
I am trying to come

to where I am.

Children play in the streets

I do not love them

thought 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