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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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=====  
No man alive has seen Mohammed's face  
only the green fire  
that stands between  
a man and the sky

stands for his face.

When you see the green flame  
you'll know it's he  
and our traditions make you sure

no devil can take his form  
even in dream.

But no man has seen the actual face,  
and what do we think when we look in fire,

study all the thousand faces there  
rising and falling, all of them  
telling us something, no face  
ever silent, and every fire speaks?

10 April 2004

## THE MEETING

“Thereafter  
one had delight in  
waking”

                    Miriam said,  
after that meeting  
sad as it was  
 (“Don’t touch me

for I am sick with life  
again, I would hurt  
to have,

darling,  
we are always,  
there is no *again*,”  
he had said)

but sadness is a part of it too,  
delight, her delight  
a devious mathematics  
each woman knows,  
works out for herself,  
how much story  
is worth how much pain

“but pain is so general”

she said

“it is urgent we distinguish

thorns that are natural

from pinpricks inflicted,

distinguish malaise from disease,

so many discomforts

so many anguishes

and only one mind to hold them,

no wonder it's so easy to be swamped

and think I am the pain or pain is all I am,

but it's all just a cup

a cup full or empty

evaporating in the sun or leaking by moonlight—

so he died

my cup was bitter full

but he came back

and it was suddenly

empty, then he told me

not to touch him

and it was overflowing

but then he said

he would be with me

forever, empty again,  
but with everyone everywhere  
always also  
and the pain seeped back  
to be not special,

o the tides of it  
and why do I bother  
and who do I believe>

it all is a calculus  
given to reckon

how much can I bear  
in the endless delight  
it stabs me through?

We meet now in the evening and share our cup,  
he gave me so much I will never forgive him.”

11 April 2004

Easter

=====

I have to know so much to be me  
and no time to get it.

All my mendacities  
mean not to disappoint.

I am Houdini. I do it  
with mirrors of course.

Or sledge hammers. Or holding  
my breath for a year while  
daffodils grow out of my chest.

The trick is the words  
always have some business in each town.

They are my accomplices,  
they know what you're thinking,  
all I have to do is write them down.

11 April 2004

Easter

=====

Something I need  
you to remind  
a woman's voice  
another language

11 April 2004

## VINCA

sun over fence over periwinkles  
it begins to be time

but time is a giant  
waiting only

from across the lawn  
I hear someone say

‘a flower’  
as if in answer.

11 April 2004

=====

So many words  
left in this bottle  
so many adventures  
after noon

11 IV 04

## THE ANXIETIES OF SPRING

In that mood a man  
hears every wind a love song

something late  
rustles in the underbrush

and something talks—  
any citizen owns spring

any single voice  
owns all the words.

2.

City was I born  
who now in silence

an old place  
gone from syntax

is just things tastes  
flowers distances

rabbi, why  
are there ships

why does anyone go?

the change between

one remembering

and the next,

horizon,

what am I not

3.

what am I not

seeing when I see

this smooth pebble

agate I know

my fingers turn it

over agate

can it be

the other side

of the world

I touch it

rabbi, can here  
be there?

can a tree grown down  
can it meet me here

in the schoolroom  
of the tongue

tombstones  
of dead saints

all the alphabets  
all the birds

that broke against  
the sky and fell?

11 April 2004

=====  
**Cast me as bread before**

or follow behind

the boundless, school of sleek

delphines in their shoals

current across what

amplitudes of living room

hold such conversations

pigeon princess arbiter of

the working truth

no one really gets to linger

it's all built out of doubt

makes such diamonds that my master

47<sup>th</sup> street arcane exchanges

here is my Swiss gold here is your weather

for they gave us the whole world in exchange

fit it to your next smallest finger

and be Mandalay, cock pagodas

gilded with your currency,

a hip hop lap, white trash truancy

and this traviata became God's mother

just like you, for any girl

can compass it, and any boy

protect it from the wolves the wheat the bronzes

intemperate with real estate  
how to get that youngling through  
into the mitzvah he was meant to be  
moon of Sinai simoom of Dakota  
somewhere between her hands she held  
destinations of the entire soul

the one of which all identities are  
glints and recollections and explosions  
kidnapped by a guess of other  
from the safe of some, of course they'll kill him  
every mother is aware of that  
it's the first thing she knows when she  
feels him inside her, this subway lurch  
south of her heart where the tracks split  
and her life careens and she knows too well  
this one that hides in her will hide from them

but they will find him and there he'll be  
half-man half-god half-tree  
the foolish mathematics of divinity  
bleeding our salvation  
look at me and remember.

12 April 2004

=====  
And I think I dreamt of snow  
surprised me even so so that I thought  
why am I dreaming into snow  
among such amazing animals?

To dream that you're knowing  
is prison, to know that you're dreaming  
is liberty, a latin word, to be  
a rich young man again means freedom.

Be alternate with energy!  
Be an electric light in a toilet bowl,  
let the universe of mystery  
squander itself sudden into understanding!

So little wit and all that mania  
yet I too grasp that fire critter  
that eel of light that writhes out of the tomb  
and permanently scars the sky with stars—

we make those lights!  
we manufacture universes!  
Nature is our half-remembered dream!

12 April 2004

=====  
Encumbered with seas  
the journey invents  
a map made out of breath—  
do not breathe for instance  
until the white tree  
comes into view.

Then breathe like a rock.  
Breathe like the sky.  
Overcome inertia by  
holding my hand tight.

Our clothes are wet  
even before the rain already begins.

12 April 2004

## A SPIDER QUESTIONS GRAVITY

Fastening on *things to know*  
what is it that we do they do  
those others  
organized on different numbers,  
4, 6, 8, or none or many?

Number rules me  
and what is true in 2-land  
is so only there.  
There must be other *ways to go*,  
the *others'* way to go  
a snake's idea of rapid transport  
slowly turn into our machines  
of course we will have wheels

inline skaters Larmarck  
catastrophe the measure  
changes, out of its own body  
or its little earth  
the spider builds  
universal gravity

if I could go to her school  
I could walk in these clouds.

13 April 2004

=====

What if we turn into  
each other on the way?  
Will the roses still smell red  
and thorns still make me cry?

How will I ever understand  
the higher doctrine of your skin  
and feel the symphonies of air  
I think you walk in?

I am an acolyte of earth  
and scarce know how to guess  
the immense philosophies you  
just by being you possess

because you are other you know  
the meaning of each thing  
I walk in your shapely shadow  
and listen to you sing.

13 April 2004

## **THEOGONY**

Catch the miller  
asleep behind the mill  
and interview his daughter  
until we both turn white

and she has left no  
grain undisclosed.

Then I will be her mill  
and grind all night  
so by morning  
we'll all be gone

just a millstone left  
gleaming in the sun.

13 April 2004

=====

*after George Hamel*

Everything I hide ends up in words  
which are always the best place to keep them  
since no one knows. Reads. Remembers.  
Understands. The J train coursing overhead  
up Crescent St to the Jamaica curve  
drowns out the sound. The flickering  
ruby taillights in the rain are so exciting  
they wipe out the sense. I can't see  
in the dark, can you? What's left  
when sight and sound and sense are gone?  
A man hiding what he thinks he thinks.  
And I would too, considering what it's like  
to be known, to be far from home  
and then come home. To be hard at work  
always. No wonder he puts the words away,  
to hide in the sky like the stuff we breathe—  
o darling, have you ever seen the air?

13 April 2004

<late> =====

**The emir of the obvious**

leads the procession again.

Dark words, long sentences.

Prolapse of democratic institutions,

checks unbalanced.

Strawberry flavored bismuth syrup

coax a nation of absent-minded strategists

playing solitaire. Closet kings

and old men in Waikiki

playing swing in pink hotels.

That is why I come to you now

like a blue handkerchief speckled

with Uncle Barney's 'Golden Cardinal' snuff.

13 April 2004