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Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

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## TALISMAN

Parchment the moon is  
you can't read  
its blue Hebrew

it subdued  
your longing  
by looking

but everything yearned for  
is still there

you read the shadows  
shabby beauty  
of their vast bodies

immeasurable really  
immoderate as your desires,  
they fit inside the smallest space  
and fill the largest

they move everywhere you can conceive  
there is no world beyond them

your lonely skin  
in a sky of its own

you are freed  
from your desire

but the beauty you longed for,  
is present there  
is here, didn't you know  
that, darling?

light silences the images it displays.

23 August 2003

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Why does the word I'm writing  
make less noise than the sparrow  
telling its dreams to the branch?

How small do I have to be  
before I can sing?

23 August 2003

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Gauguin woman  
soaking up the world  
by sitting in it  
river by river you.

23 VIII 03

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Stealing references, footnote pirates  
split the library open  
melon seeds sun juice Chinese.

23 VIII 03

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Little by little  
there should be someone here

23 VIII 03

## **FOUNTAIN PEN**

What is it really

a gold chisel

gouging away blankness

23 VIII 03



## **AFTER A BAD FALL**

this is as able as I can  
the wound of gravity  
slew me, I died  
for a moment, minutes  
lay paralyzed and then

the old music started  
to come back, it still  
is thrilling down my arms,  
pins and needles, carpal  
crazy, I can walk,

it hurts, this is a report,  
not much the hurt, just  
enough to tell me  
I have come through  
something but how far?

Is it now yet?

23 August 2003

## TESTING

Testing one need against another. Miracle time. I can move, my hands can write. ЖИВН — is that what it is, to live, to be alive, when the alternatives are obvious and so close? To move. Not like Dante's suicides, locked forever in the last gesture of your despair, but moving.

Since my fall I have been two men. One is paralyzed from the neck down, still in those first moments and ever after, lying there on the cement, staring at the sky, that is his only deed, to see that up there, and know that his whole life is changed in that moment one moment back when that huge impact silenced movement. The other man seems to be now, capable of movement, sensation, pain, even awkwardly holding this pen now, to make these marks, like Primo Levi's dot of carbon at the end of his book, end of his life. And he fell too, further, deader, onto the marble floor of his mother's house. And I lie on earth. Is that why this pen leads to carbon. In that everything does?

24 August 2003

## HARVEST

This is the last day of the County Fair. Sheep and kine, pigs and llamas — for the contemplation of these animals such fairs were first conceived. Now I want to think these animals are groaning under the scrutiny of weekenders anxious for action, eager for the rustic picturesque, the *frisson* of seeing the great distended udders from which their ice cream comes. I hurry to write down everything I think, worried how long, how much I too will be able to yield. The morning is cool and bright, 57 degrees at nine in the morning, after the night aloud with owls.

24 August 2003

## WRITING SCARED

So much to tell, hardly any of it about me.

Me just lies closer to the word-frame, the ratcheting claws that fetch up parsed outcries from where?

Where does the language wait, uneasy sea, to press, tidal, into acts of saying, now, a hand moving because it can, pressing into the fjords of silence, firths, words,

a frightened man, me, writing it down, scared of the silence in his body,

silence of the pen, that solid rod from which something flows,

but when the brain runs out of think? That's it, now, the fear, the brain, the animal part, the spine, αὐτὸν, the being-body, the Body-being, bathed in the water of the Styx, the part of the mind that can get damaged. That is damaged.

My hands ache and my fingers tingle, not for Sappho love but some carnival in my nerves, plexus, don't tell me, rare paresthesias, get better, please get better, work it out, coccyx, occiput, cranials, cervicals.

This is *Writing Scared*, my new workshop course, I am the teacher and the students at once. "Fear and lust / trust nothing else," I wrote once. Maybe that will be my new job, new therapy, self and others, rent an office in Woodstock and teach *Writing Scared* and *Writing Turned On*, and make my victims go through the non-stop of writing during their attacks of lust or panic. Write through. *Durchschreiben*. Can you write scared without writing about what scares you? The cars, kids, mortgages, diseases, abandonments, bills, infidelities, ponder them all together till you work yourself into a furor of tremble and

dread — and then write, from that, in that, *wie ich Euch heute ein Beispiel gebe*, as Egmont says, mounting the scaffold.

To write in the emotion  
not about it

write, write while constantly  
renewing the anxiety

remembering the dominant feeling  
pressing you on

the demon knows you best.

24 August 2003

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Things are fair about me  
and a wind knows me  
'clever' the Irish call it  
that seeks you out  
through the accidents  
of wall and wardrobe  
and finds your skin,  
finds you at home,  
the chill of beauty  
fresh on the bright  
sage flowers  
scarlet on the sun rim,  
purple verbena still in night.

24 August 2003

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Think about all the things to be afraid of.

Think of them

one by one

until something happens to your pulse

your breathing

then begin

win a blessing

from that crippling angel

before you let him leave you

clutch the enemy to your chest

until the hurt or fluster of it

makes you speak

the words you say, Jacob,

cripples silence forever

and language too, famous for being lame,

limps along beside you.

Even now something else is running my hands.

24 August 2003

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What I turn my attention to  
is the center of the world.  
Look for it there.

24 August 2003



## SEPTENTRIO

What is coming  
comes from the north  
being quick or slow to tell

being a feather lost on a wind  
lost in the sky  
but carried, but held

I was a semaphore signal  
wooden painted white  
for a long time beside the railroad track

I was somebody's favorite number  
like a god you rock  
yourself to sleep remembering

or sometimes there are two dogs  
barking outside the fence  
spotted pattern of these dogs analyze?

how to keep them from leaping  
over I dread the close of dogs  
not their teeth so much as their persons

all they are is trouble  
my father's grey felt hat  
fedora from Danbury given

in the north the people dwell  
from whom the peoples come  
hardwood memory

the cold unhinges things  
and heat forgets  
carry your door with you wherever you go

I could stay here forever  
like soil under grass  
letting earth speak

because there is nothing else  
not the hotel in Dun Laoghaire  
not the girl from Tenerife

who was I when I touched her  
whose fingers were on my hand  
and who was she supposed to be

the game is over as soon as its begins  
a game can never go anywhere  
the only mark left on the paper was the shadow of the paperweight

if I can pick up this smooth onyx  
will you still be able to read?  
children in the foothills neatly dressed

some in blue pinafores some in khaki  
make their way down the streambeds to the road  
open school room where the nun is waiting

to explain more than anyone knows  
god long division shadow ocean  
they sit in the warm wind remembering

we had crossed the border from the Punjab  
outside the purple acacia flowers  
smoke in the trees and through them we see

the snow capped mountains  
when the dog stops barking  
I stop thinking

no room for memories in a swollen arm  
it squeezes down into my hand  
and becomes your problem your hand what are you touching?

as long as it's in words I can say I said it  
sign it my wooden arms above the track  
the red lights in my palms flashing

every word a crucifixion  
but what does it mean  
a word hurts the sky

someone said what I was saying  
it's time to mention the chunk of sea granite  
on the man's desk cloud in the sky

whale tooth holds the notebook open  
he studies his homework mosquitoes bite  
how long does learning last

next life I'll have to learn Greek again  
wouldn't it be easier to remember?  
and are you sure the rock is granite and where is the sea?

onyx whale tooth stretto all things  
weigh paper down see I remembered  
pain comes later when the body hits the rock.

25 August 2003

## TWO MEN

I am two men now  
one of them still lying at the foot of the step  
Saturday paralyzed  
not yet wise enough to look up from his fear  
to the sky right over his face

*so caught in terror  
he could not see the sky*

nothing anymore but the sky  
the only thing that's left.  
Sky means everything you can't touch.

But it can touch me  
he thinks. Pronouns,  
me, it, you, he, pronouns  
are clouds.

And who is the other man?

25 August 2003

## **GRAVITY**

Spinal shock

I was playing  
football with the  
earth. It won.

25 VIII 03