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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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Standing in for history

the story tells itself only itself
again
in us—
nothing sure
before this word

history means believing what you hear

it is the scientific analysis of forged evidence

what men dream about
as they walk around
then wake up to tell

history is an artless art
a devious chain-letter of apocalypses—

we know something happened
because the corpses
are there to count.

Ruby shot Oswald
that much we know

because we saw
something like in on TV
or someone said.

But the why of it or who
either of those weird people really was
is fantasy alone.

Irresistible pressure of soul's molecules
—migrating unconsciousness—
makes them to what they do

makes us believe what they have done.
It's all inside, it comes along with us.

We
are the conspiracy.

10 April 2012

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Does it hurt the earth
to be so trodden on?
Does it hurt the face
to have its picture taken?
Never trust a photo
that shows a human face.

We are not
what we seem
we only appear
to be there.
Our presence
makes a lie of things.

10 April 2012

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Love means to belong
to the imagination
of the other. I become
whoever you need.

10.IV.12

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Not really near any kind of mineral mine
the heat hurts me and the cold
undivided jogger consciousness
of nothing at all but the engine runs

we are fuel for something else.
The parson paused mid-homily and wept
thinking of all the broken statues,
battleships painted the color of fog—

so much is give, taken away,
left in place, consumed, gets dusty
flies alight on it, shadows fall.
Have you noticed how trucks just go?

Birds fossick in the bushes, though,
fingers pat down damp morning hair.
train tracks always remind you of something—
go, dear friends, the Mass is ended.

11 April 2012

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Sometimes it shivers when it gets close
Ah, fuyez douce image or *La chair est triste*
hélas, neuter becomes feminine, systems
bend reality to their own purposes,

we think we make things up but things
make us think them then set them in place
halfway out of the woods, to dog our steps
and baffle kind imagination, count the ways,

how many genders in your body, and how
many ways do you want to love whom?
Paradox is cheap, like aspirin, but it works.
I breathe a willowed breeze by river side.

Hear the sound until it's worded, then
whisper what you heard so your lover
hears it too, your mother, your dentist, your priest,
when they come to the door they let everybody in

you spent all night trying to keep out.
There. A door is such a simple system.
I lick your lips to learn how to count,
you lick mine to learn how to forget.

11 April 2012

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Of course her body was his pleasure ground
his midnight afternoon, his Luna Park.
But did he linger? He did not.
We run from that which most completes us.

There, I've said the truth for once, so sue me,
I want you to become more different than all,
I want to inhale your thinking as you move—
yes, he said things like this all the time

to drown out the sound of his footsteps retreating,
the car door slamming, the old engine turning over.
Vita, vitesse, life is speed, he thinks
as he hurries from what makes him happy,

to keep running you have to keep running away.

11 April 2012

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Let the hereinunder remember
the words that came before you said them
and the morning whistled

the way men used to do at work
or even on their way to work
the dark habit into which our lives are plunged

because a villain named the State
protects us from ourselves
but never from it. Him, it usually is a him,

a bunch of hims who make you go to work
and fight in wars and pay for the privilege.
But (like all the rest of us) I digress.

11 April 2012

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Exhausted by the shallow fall of light
Across the cinder-surfaced former rugby field
I stumbled up a hundred steps like
Dracula at Whitby, though he climbed lots more
To get to the ruined abbey. I have one of those
Too in my heart, lodged safely on the clifftop
From which I can watch you all day long
As you pretend to be the ocean, just
Being there, just being beautiful. This though
Is my story. I got to the top and climbed
Out of my body, back into my mind and rested,
Thinking about this and that. Mostly that.

11 April 2012, Hopson

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The clouds,

the clouds
 are enough to behave to
 this day, Thor's Day,
 a good day to quote Olson
 even if on the other side,
 the in,
 the love,
 the world be lover,
 love against authority,
 young Siegfried to old Wotan,
the gods are the same as the state

projected upwards,
 god of the caste
 gods of war
 lords of belonging
 to the alpha male
 but that was yesterday,

and today the clouds,
 the clouds are enough to believe in
 fleecy cumulus not too high
 not too many, sleeping in the sky

at peace with my beholding,
holding,
 clouds up there, old
old Siegfried down here.
never died, still the old dented
baseball bat in hand, ready,
ready for nothing,
 for the clouds, the
beautiful clouds,
 sweet white,
white as my hair.

12 April 2012

[SQ—‘flame’]

It is real, that is,
the grace of thingliness
inhabits it,
it makes sense
from any vantage.

It is the pure sign
can't be interpreted;

the final mystery
is clarity.

Something right here
the unnamable
full of reminders
of other names, lost
loves, burnt down forests,
ancient water on the moon
in the light of eclipse,

it wants me to leap up
to meet it by looking,
confuses my grammar
like an unexpected hand
on the skin of your back

who knows who touches me,
we are far from the Iliad
where even the nights are bright
and the watchfires
still are blazing on the beach—

if I just turn my head
the sea is made of wood.

Or the sea too is on fire—
but that's how it seems to
me so this is about me,
not it, you know,
it sneers at me
with the beautiful sneer
say of self-indulgent
Isabella d'Este
that pretty girl with
the snake around her neck
all colors of the earth
and this is what
the snake was thinking,

She scratched the light
to let the darkness in

when you climb the rock

you can't see the color of the rock
you almost are,
the color of time
from far away,
sunset in the mind.

12 April 2012

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Mild as the winter has been
it seems so long since anything
grew in the earth we could
harvest and be sustained by—
even now pretty yellow flowers mock us
sighing we are nice to look at
but you can't eat us, months still
to wait before we are cabbage and turnip and corn.

13 April 2012

DOGS

Poets are the dogs of society. They come in all different breeds and shapes and textures, but all of them are noisy, demanding ceaseless attention, need to be fed, walked, played with. When they fight it is usually with one another. They do no work and are useless most of the time, often bite the hand that feeds them. They are lazy and restless at once, and are both subjects and objects of specious love and iffy devotion, easy sentiments. They are loved most by the immature, the old, the lonely.

13 April 2012

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In public I
never stop speaking
a foreign language.

13.IV.12

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The wrong one
the heart keeps beating but
it is in the wrong chest,
the wrong ribs' ivory
holds it in

it twangs too like a brass harp
hammered on the city wall
when the king in her kirtle
danced before the Lord

and no one was anyone yet.

14 April 2012

= = = = =

Make it later better.

The order of the words
only counts on this side.

Across the street there's just a heap

skandha, the accumulation.

Now you're mad at me
because I praised your clothes
and used a Sanskrit word,

so inappropriate, you rise
and leave the confessional
determined to find a better priest
and that will be easy.

We're everywhere. We're waiting for you.

14 April 2012

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Calm me into craziness
the human will's a waffling thing
and needs a spine.

The upright animal
is not easy, all
to have free hands for work.

And what is out work?
What did we think we were doing
or were supposed to do?

Who told us there was anything
up there worth reaching for?
All the subtle scientists pretend

to measure me—they are right
but I am more. When I look
in the mirror I laugh at them

then I laugh harder at myself,
pretender, scam artist with my face,
laugh the way God laughs at theology.

14 April 2012

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for Masha

She woke and there was a fly.
It didn't fly away it remained
quiet on something near
so she could see. She watched
what she could see. Things
moved through her mind, as many
and as moving as the fly
was still. She began to speak
to it, using the language of flies
(everybody knows a little of it)
quietly indeed until he answered
in the same language. When the talk
was finished it flew out the window.
Language does that. Makes you
fly away from where you are
hellbound for anywhere else.
Makes you run away from what you
mean into what you can say.
How different they are, different
as a woman and a fly
talking to one another some
quiet morning in a country town
and the fly is elsewhere now.
Nobody lives very long. At times
she hates language because it lasts,

lasts longer than the fly or she.

Language bustling about
in the morning of the town
and no one to speak it, no one
to hear. The fly is gone.

The woman is lost in thought—
what could the fly mean?

What does a word even mean?
Is it just something to say
while we mean something else,
something else we don't even know
and the fly flies away?

2.

I was the fly. I watched her with so many eyes
I got tired of seeing her so I flew away.
I'm trying to remember what we said
because I remember we were talking.
She wanted to know who I would tell
about our tryst she called it though we never
touched. She thought I might be a spy
sent by a certain man on the other
side of time but I wasn't. Thought I might
be an agent of a foreign power
and maybe I am. It's not the sort of thing
I care about. I move about, things
adhere to me until they fall off

or I brush them off one leg with another.
Is that power? Is being in the world at all
a kind of agency? I couldn't make myself clear
because I have never thought about the question.
I belong to wherever I am, and everywhere I go
belongs to me. I tried to tell her Be simple,
dearest, accept your ignorance the way we all
accept the weather. Don't think about it.
Think about something else. And really, really
there is only one other thing to think about.

14 April 2012

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The trouble with cats they can't
talk you can't discuss
Nietzsche with them
which is a pity
because I think they'd have a lot to say,
every cat a little Zarathustra.

15 April 2012