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EIKON

Robert Kelly
Bard College

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EIKON

A SET OF IMAGES

**SACRAE IMAGINATIONIS VERITATI
MARTYRO PRAECLARISSIMO
SCIENTI SAPIENTIQUE
IORDANO BRVNO
NOLAE
LIBELLVM HOC
DEDICAVIT AVCTOR
CAELIVS RVFVS
VALLIS ANNAE
MMXIV**

**Image:
a small lily
white, pinkish within
its structure down there
obscured by a woman
dressed for business
holding a newborn
fawn in her arms.**

**Image:
A large map
of South America
laid out on broadloom.
Two white children
are asleep on it.
Their cat is keeping watch.**

Image:
On an open palm
a coin: a denarius
in the middle of it—
a man's voice says
“denarius” in puzzled
tone, French accent.

(See, sometimes an image speaks. Only a fool thinks images are silent, or are only images of seen things.)

Image:
A chair creaking
no one sitting on it.
The moon
almost full
in the windowpane.

(It isn't that one wants one image or another. An image wants us.)

(It's not like some famous writer who chooses an expensive woolen jacket to be photographed wearing as he sits like a squire on a rustic bench. No, the jacket chooses us.)

Image:

**A sky pale behind winter trees.
A boy looking out the window at them and it:
his love is divided, not for the last time.**

**Image:
A blind man
is writing with a pen.
It has run out of ink
and he begins to suspect it.**

**Image:
An old-fashioned
alarm clock with two bells on top.
A woman stuffs it down among
her husband's socks
in the chest of drawers
to muffle the sound of time.**

**Image:
Earliest morning
the moment when the grass turns green.**

**Image:
A huge figure on the horizon
straddling the earth,
doing something to the Sun
he holds between his hands.**

(Earth and sky grow bright together. There is deep meaning in this. We are one person and only one.)

Image:

**A woman touching her ear
as if to say Speak to me
louder, I can't hear you, louder.
I am language already
I just need to hear you.**

(Don't wait for morning to wake up. The deer, with their poor vision but keen sense of smell, are up betimes. They are waiting for you to do something. They have been waiting for a thousand years.)

Image:

**A television screen is showing
a snowstorm to an empty room.
In the next room, visible through an open door,
a woman is sobbing.**

(Everyone has a mother. Or has had one a while. But who is she now? Or when she is not only your mother?)

(An image is not only a what, it is a when. That is the mystery of everything seen. Or any thought at all. Whn is it, and to whom?)

Image:

An elderly white man shaking pepper onto two poached eggs. Behind his back a young woman is staring out the window, where nothing is to be seen.

Image:

An empty sports car, open, is parked under a palm tree. What can they be thinking?

Image:

A turtle is crossing a lonely highway. A boy is watching it, wondering if it's safe to pick it up and hurry it safely to its destination. You can see the worry in the boy's face. Danger. Contamination. Disease. Bite. Alien contact. Failure. Could drop it, hurt it. And maybe the turtle wants to do it this way. Nobody knows. Nobody knows. There are tears in the boy's eyes.

Image:

**A clock tower
casts a shadow
across an empty
plaza right to left.
The hands are at 8:12.**

Image:

A couple in Victorian clothes

walking by the sea, keep
to the damp sand near the
arriving waves. She holds
a parasol, he holds her free arm.
Elbow. They are far away,
just silhouettes, really.

Image:

A pair of glasses, negative diopter lenses, strong, rest on an
open book printed in Pali script. Across the room a parakeet,
blue, is active in its cage, interviewing the little round mirror
that keeps it company.

Image:

a large white seabird
lands on sand,
stumbles, rights itself,
comes to rest.
A fishing boat has just
come into view
after rounding the cape.

(You think you were born here? Nothing could be further than
the truth. Every morning a new adventure, an education, a
catastrophe, a song. Everything we see we see for the first
time.)

Image:

Two girls, perhaps mermaids, hard to tell, are swimming side by side in the sea, coming straight towards the viewer. Will they pause on either side of you? Will they pass you by?

Image:

A zoo, all the cages empty.

A light snow is falling.

**A sheet of paper blows along the ground,
you try to pick it up to read
but it's only an image, only
part of an image and an image has no parts.**

Image:

A highway seen from above. Heavy traffic in both directions. Below us, three crows pass from right to left in flight — their shadows, distinct on the ground, interrupted by passing cars, so the shadows go up (car roof) and down (roadbed) like piano keys, white and black, like music. Like music.

Image:

a Crow pecking at a dry ear of corn. Each kernel he plucks free he tosses into the air where it becomes a star and flies away.

Image:

In an apartment building, on the eleventh floor, a kitchen window is open onto an air shaft. A potted geranium is on the

window ledge. A butterfly of some sort has just landed on it. Or moth. Who can tell?

(The precision of images is not the kind of precision that words know and can recite.)

Image:

**A child
learning Latin from a book
his fingers toying with cracker crumbs
while he repeats
words under his breath.
A candle flickers on the table.
Graham crackers.**

Image:

**Someone in shadow behind a door.
A Turkish carpet, runner, crimson,
from the open door into the dark
deep in the next room. Waiting.**

Image:

**People in evening clothes fleeing from the opera house.
Cabs arriving from all over.**

Image:

**A live mouse standing proud on a magician's hand. The animal
wears a collar with a tiny ruby gleaming in it.**

Image:

People at tables in a sidewalk café, sheltering from a sudden downpour. The taste of pastry in the rain.

Image:

Man lying flat on his back on the grass. He is playing a tin pennywhistle pointed at the sky. His fingers move nimbly but his eyes are closed. Can you hear him?

Image:

In a provincial Roman arena, a group of Christians huddle together while lions approach them. There is something in the sky, hard to make out. Is it an angel, come to save them? A vulture come to feast on the remains? Or just a smudge on the old woodcut?

Image:

A mechanic is working on the carburetor of an older car. From his immaculate white shopcoat and the neat necktie visible above it, we reckon the car a precious antique model. A little whiff of fine smoke comes up from the device, as if alcohol had been burnt there. Outside the garage a mountain is visible. It makes you think of Mexico.

Image.

The angel has just played the Last Trump on his golden instrument. All over the landscape graves known and unknown are opening, their stones or turf flung aside by some power, and dead people are standing up, baffled, climbing out nimbly, each

at the peak of whatever beauty they possessed in life. They begin to smile as they see each other, and hear the continuous overtones of the great trumpet.

(The beauty of an image is how it sustains the lives of those who chance to behold it. Once seen, never forgotten. Or to put it more somberly, you can never unsee what you have seen. Or unhear the sound. The overtones never actually end.)

Image:

Lenin haranguing a crowd of sailors. A sudden thought occurs to him and he loses his place in his discourse. The sailors look confused, turn to look at each other, wanting to know what comes next. Do you, looking at this, do you know?

Image:

In poorly equipped high school chemistry lab an old teacher is drowsing in a decrepit green chenille armchair. From time to time students come to the door, look in, see him, and withdraw, lest they disturb his dreams. They know that this too is science. And science is everything we can know.

Image:

**Your own hand
stretched out in front of you
towards you,
reaching for you.
A small bird, maybe chickadee,
lands on the extended wrist.
Who are you now?**

Image.

A woman muffled in heavy woolen coat and scarves and shawls, motionless on an empty residential street. She seems wealthy. The longer we study her the less we understand.

(Children can recognize their mother's cry. Are we sure of anything else?)

Image:

A wolf lying asleep by a dying fire. In an hour he will be cold, unless someone brings wood or coal. Is there anyone in the house brave enough, caring enough, to do this? Is there anyone here at all?

(The uncertainty of outcomes continues to plague medical science. If only we could be sure. Diagnosis is hard enough, prognosis dubious. Still, a smiling face works wonders, and we live till we die. The problem is living. Living well.)

Image:

A daguerreotype of a middle-aged bearded man. A black satin waistcoat shows inside his high-collared coat. The face is strangely familiar. Disquieting. And you could swear that ornament on his watch-chain was your own, a four-leaf clover sealed in glass, gold-rimmed.

(Nothing is our own. Ownership is one more illusion. Tell that to the bank. Tell it to the neighbor across the fence. Tell it to the field you stand on, soft and damp this mild winter dusk.)

Image:

A bed with someone sleeping in it, gender, age, race not apparent. Sleeping we assume because it is so peaceful and ordinary. A small painting of a waterfall is over the head of the bed. A pair of slippers toe to toe on the bedside mat.

(We know the dead do not wear shoes. We cherish every sign of life. Index of life. Only the living can see images. The dead become them.)

Image:

Children having a snowball fight in the schoolyard. Laughter and tears, as expected. One snowball misses its girl and splashes on the brick wall behind her. It makes a star-like pattern, she turns to see what almost hit her. I was born here, she thinks, I am a Capricorn.

Image:

An old man crossing a plowed field has stumbled and fallen. His cane, he'd been holding it on the wrong side to depend on when he lost his footing, is still standing beside him, jammed into a furrow. The man, not really hurt, just lies there a while, sees his cane, begins to laugh.

(The old man is Oedipus. The cane is his daughter Antigone. The field is the underworld. The laughter is the only real thing in the picture but it's hard to see.)

Image:

Children walking in procession. The boys carry flowers, the girls carry books. There are thousands of them, they come down the hillside and cross the plain, they wend up the mountainside and pass over the crest, always more coming, passing, going.

Image:

A man opens the doors of an antique mirror and looks in. The face that looks out is not his own face. In fact, we can't even speak of it as a face looking out. It is a face but its eyes are closed.

13—14 January 2014