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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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All the while the olive tree

was waiting. Rocket fire over Gaza.

Old days of war, war is always new.

The Jews think the Palestinians now

are the Philistines of yore,

every Jew a Samson.

They pull down their nation to destroy another,

the Holy Land a temple toppled

down on their heads. And the pious

Orthodox knew all along

that the State, any State, is a false temple,

a precocious and blasphemous presumption.

But what do I know. Nada.

I know nothing about war except war itself.

10 January 2009

CROWS

I don't think they're exactly birds.

Something else present.

A winged sagacity,
articulate, prevenient,

alert. Wind talk. And black
never ashamed never hiding
in camouflage. A crow
on snow. Some crows.

10 January 2009

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I asked but found nothing

I wanted to see

I read but nothing answered back—
the words marched away over the hill
obedient to some author's agenda
and never looked back at me
or down at themselves.

I want words that know how to listen.

10 January 2009

PRESENCE

Something there.

Not a fox even

not even a man.

A shadow of something

not in the room

left in the room.

10 January 2009

ABSENCE

Old movies full of ukuleles.

Platinum permanent waves.

At least we have escaped

from that. In another

part of the forest

where no one is waiting.

If you listen

you'll hear Time breathing

evenly. Or is it me.

Maybe I have escaped too far.

10 January 2009

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Things get lost along the way.
Or the hand hurts
lets them fall.
And things have their own way
to get back to the silence
we interrupt by moving around.
Let there be just once this
dance where just once everybody
stops – would that mean listening?

11January 2009

[Syllabic decryptions of the preceding]

Disyllabic text:

A long
silence
moving
around.

Trisyllabic text:

Interrupt
everybody
listening.

11 January 2009

LISTENING TO MENDELSSOHN,

this trio composed
when he was eleven.
You can hear him

trying to remember,
then stop trying then

being there anew
with the singularity

he was before now
and the music alone.

11 January 2009

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So many things to read
the same words in all of them
we sit and watch pioneers
move trees around on the hill
and hills around on the plain.

11 January 2009

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Or simple reading:

a book with no words

like the birch bark

my father showed me in Vermont

when I was five.

Indians wrote on it

he said. I'm still trying

to make out what they wrote

on the white bark, just

look long enough

eventually understand.

First taste of maple sugar.

11 January 2009

THEODICY

Things get to live on their side of the road
seldom do we get to cross—
danger. Other. Far.
What more? Hurry,
to establish rulership at home
the men of old. Seeking.
Why can't we live as a thing lives?
A thing knows how to rust
a thing talks about relationships
in terms of pure geometry,
that is, angular distances alone.
A thing never wants to be you
whereas you want to be someone else
all the time but seldom the same.
That is why in French *envie* means
both desire and envy – they are the same,
a little like rust but not as pretty.
A little like verdigris on copper rooftops
loveliest color in this world below the sky—
the green roof of the bishop's house
is all we really know about god.
These are forbidden practices, yearning
to cross certain roads at midnight
or pirouettes performed by certain flowers
autumn when they let their milk floss float.

Everything moves away from us
have you ever noticed? Europeans
those atheists will go on talking about
the expanding universe, stars on the skin
of an as it were bladder or balloon
ever and ever getting fatter. Americans
are famous for bringing god into the picture,
ironic, since god is a European import—
they got tobacco and we got religion.
But Bach came with it, earnest and noisy
in the shadow of those clumsy concepts
just as when as kids we sat in the church
listening to the endless excuses on high
a little mouse would creep out by the altar rail
and suddenly we knew we were still alive.

12 January 2009

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And a starfish
looks right
in at us
from an eight-colored future:

beneath every bridge in Königsberg
the same fish shelters—
old carp, old pal of mine
waiting for silver—
every fish wants to be a coin
every bird wants to be a twenty dollar bill—

see, the world is on its way without me
which is why you should trust what I have to say—
God wrote the book but a man wrote it *down*.

Down here, among the irrational numbers—
o blessed neoteny, else we might ripen
to starfish in the womb, our extremities equipollent,
sucker-likely, mute—

the bridges are over dry land
and lead to other bridges that end in mid-air—
emptiness! terror! and a friend is waiting—
are the lips a little parted to

Speak a word of welcome home a kiss?

What does the rude but necessary

air know about kisses?

It's still singing lovesongs, doesn't

know when to shut up—

touch

I said but there was nothing there

not even the shadow of one

rising to meet me as I fell.

12 January 2009

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There was some problem with the light
the wave-function fractured on a thought
bleak not because of winter beach
you can hear the sea thinking

if you come from around here I mean
where the sea comes every night and you eat clams.
My people, my tartan Mondriaan!
I live halfway down this string

then one day Ile leape vp to my God
and you'll hear the whole octave sing.

13 January 2009

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You can tell a lot about human culture from how we chose to live in a locale where the sun rises at a different time and a different place every day. Nothing coarse, just subtle shifting north and south, just enough to let you know that anything could happen. There are times and seasons. The infant Jesus looks up at his mother and asks Mother why is there such a thing as night? Hush, she says, you have come to the right place.

13 January 2009

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Crow carrying piece of cake
lands in a crook of linden tree
dislodges snow that sifts down fast.
Gravity is truth. Feed me, feed me please.

13 January 2009

THE CONTAMINATION

Students who masturbate in class
will be punished by being forever
turned on by plate tectonics or
the provisions of the Treaty of Westphalia.

13 January 2009

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Suppose there were another,
an absolute, as Eriugena taught,
in whose essential light we think

and by thinking find all the rest?

Would *that* not be the essence of *this*?

And this taste of salt in my mouth

the truest evidence of deity?

13 January 2009

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All philosophy gravitates to idealism eventually
because thinking is itself an escape from
objects perceived and the perceiving of them.

13 January 2009