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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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**Skin of a tomato
very thin the sheath
it wears against
what predator past us
would it be sunshine
without you or
the chariots roaring
bronze on stone road
against the sun?**

**Exorbitant Bistro(t)
we name this planet
look at what an apple
cost or a cup of wine
a man crossed out—
the root sin is eating
anything. All we
really need is light
and air and conversation.
All the weird rules
religions have about
foods are distorted
memories of this fact.
This is the last supper.
Stop eating live forever.**

8 November 2014

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**Estimate the discharge
into Swan Lake. Pretend
to measure what you mean.
It is so easy to be dumb.
Smile at the empty water.
Any minute could be a bird
or other. The length
of its neck in proportion
to the whiteness of the music
you do not hear. The radio
is not on. All the copies
of the Bible, the Qur'an.
Think of the lake without a book.
Think of birds who have
to memorize the air. All
the going to be done. And here
we sit with a book. Yes, we
look up from its pages
and call the world around us
a church, God's own temple,
all that stuff, every pine tree
a believer, every crow
a muezzin. Yes, but still
words in our hands. Alas
even these. What shall we do**

with the motionless swan?

8 November 2014

POSSUM

**Exemplary energies of doing nothing
as the animal lifted one trotter towards
it had to be the moon that time of night
and nothing but forest all around**

**and I thought Here is creaturely intelligence
on a par with my own, paw uplifted, hand
waving at the mistress of mysterious light
how dare we beast and man presume?**

**So much for thinking. Into the underbrush
my animal skedaddled and I thought of all
the sweet men of my father's generation
who talked so nicely, if bewilderingly,**

**to me as a child, about Alaska and railroads
and battlefields and Chinamen they called them
though I thought of those people as ancient
sages disguised for odd, benevolent purposes**

as laundrymen and waiters. Uncle Joe went

**fishing for fluke. Uncle George had lost some
toes to frostbite in the Rockies. Or the Arctic.
I'm still confused by everything you tell me.
Uncle Barney was a Rosicrucian. Nothing safe,
nowhere to turn from the burden of knowing
things but not enough of them and all in what
must be the wrong order, make no sense.**

**I was happiest in church where no one
least of all a child has to answer back.
Just sit there and listen to the mysteries pass
till I might finally be ready for the weather.**

8 November 2014

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**Raptures unlimited by feeling
it happens while you look the other way
and suddenly it's over
everything is done**

**Things are gone
into their natural opacity, their calm,
the light they give off Novalis saw,**

**saw the light came out and never in,
saw the small golden ball rolling on the lawn**

**and there was one who smiled
and bent to pick it up.**

**picked it up,
handed it to me.
And that was the beginning of being here,
that place the philosophers call *there*.**

8 November 2014

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**Turn my face to the wall
the minute becomes half an hour
there is no point in being seed**

**a wall is an infinite recession
crammed into an instant, a cat can
stare into it for hours,**

who am I to look away?

8 November 2014

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**I wish there were a church
I could go to nearby,
walk to it in any weather,
sit in my pew among
people I more or less know,
who believe more or less
what I believe, vote
pretty much the way I do,
sing the same songs.
Then it would be Sunday
for real, the sun
would come through colored glass
shaping light itself
through some tortured saint
who still looks down on us
approvingly as we rest
in the somnolence of sermon,
the deep peace of words we
have heard a thousand times before.**

9 November 2014

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**Reluctant inquiry
men and women landing on the moon.**

**What seek ye, travelers?
A light inside my eye
brighter than any sun.
Have you come to me
to see how you are seen?
Am I the ancient judge
your darling metaphor,
a chilly flower in your sky?**

**They stood abashed beneath that voice —
only now did they recognize
the moon is a sound in the sky.**

9 November 2014

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**Are you dark enough
to read my runes?
I gave you leaves
you built a tree
to house them, I gave
you a single, shapely
cloud, you carved a sky
to stud it in,
won't you let me
give you something
that asks nothing of you,
a tune maybe
that needs no opera,
a cat without an armchair,
a sigh without a sentence?
It is good to think about you
dear friend, here,
a flame without a candle,
it will always go on burning.**

9 November 2014

FOURTH NOVEMBER ELEGY

**Earth is a conspiracy
of blue and green.
The rare blue flower
is the fathermother.
Wonder the small
amount of us to know
the cause is grilling you**

**the Kaatskill massif Melville thought
a Thule of isolation,
in this cabin I am born
again and again
I smell of wood
smoke of apple wood in flannel,
dead trees give winter life
choose a softer light
the “under-murmurings of the mind”
he says, the matter
that remembers us
doesn’t have to be remembered,**

**whatever we do
is the stuff of it
its magnitude measured
in owls and catamounts,**

a tree for God's sake
just a tree
between friends
pinewood table bowl of soup
from winter kale and virgin milk
nothing here of that Other Workman
the allergen.

Safe to eat this.
Safe to remember.
Let's discuss your attitude
or what a statue wears
at midnight in Apollo's temple —
of course they come to life, *T.S., R.de G.*
what else can gods do but prowl the night
the sacred dark inside your sleeping?

(9 November 2014)

COLOPHON

**Can there have been another
such that the pages slipped
loose from the binding and spoke
themselves all over the wall
telling the truth at last? Or
is this the only one, the only
complex lie made simple truth?**

9 November 2014

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**There should at the end be
the same number of poems as
the number of sketches in all
some artist's notebooks plus
all the finished paintings,
drawings, sculptures, doodles
on napkins in the Café Sperl.
It is the business of the angels
to see that my quota is reached.
Now name the artist. Not even
Death is so perspicacious as to know.**

9 November 2014

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**In the assertion a chemical
imbalance triggers behavior
analysis suspends its inquiring
only halfway to the angel.**

**Walk there with me instead
hands on each other
by the river, through the botanic
garden that college maintains**

**somewhere has to be celebrated
again. Nervous mandolins
our grandparents played at night,
too civil for accurate banjos —**

**yes, the same terrain, same
failure to push investigation
to its limits, same cold hands.
But there was one among us**

**nameless, unremembered, differed
from the way the rest of us behaved,
one who must have read a book
that yields all the answers,**

**knows what our sleep dreams,
and why we wake married & forlorn,
on vacation in Bermuda, understands
the poverty of our explanations,**

the book that is the doorway to the angel.

10 November 2014

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**The strength of images
is that they cannot
be only seen.**

**The people cried
Give us a book
that gives us a God!**

And Moses wept.

10 November 2014

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**You have a lot to say
about Moses for an Irishman.**

**— Can't help it,
he was one of us,
born in water and never sure,
guest at royal heritage
but couldn't prove.
What could he do but guide
people baffled as himself
out of complexity
into the desert to see at last
what comes to mind
in that simplicity,
sat down and took it to heart
alongside one last river.**

10 November 2014

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**He looked and saw
the things the world commanded
dew-soaked patios empty of gossip
and a church boarded up —
how much more could sunlight tell us?**

**Of course listening is hard, the pebbles
gleaming below the shallow brook,
the waterfowl's excuses, pine tree sap
children love the things that happen
aren't you? We leave the theater
sure only of our own emotions
— we brought them with us like an old soiled coat.**

10 November 2014

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**The vee of sky
between the pines —
victory is mine!
The em of tree
around it, mmm
for maybe. Winning
is the cruelest trick.**

10 November 2014

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**Something on the other side
of now where lilacs grow
and bells ring from an empty sky
and girls know a trick or two
to wish away tough-minded sunshine
so we can be shade again,
a game of fitful breezes,
amateur astrology, long sighs
that somewhere mean contentment,
after something wonderful is done.**

11 November 2014

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**Not too much syntax,
Harry, syntax spoils the meat.
Image is a bone
overgrown with flesh and fat.
Nothing is more nourishing than that.**

11 November 2014

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**How well we know
the things we don't know at all.
Ignorance is our scripture
and we believe it literally.
The word against God.**

11 November 2014

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Why is the ink pale today?

= Who is my father?

Why are the trees bare?

= Why did my mother die and leave me?

Why do they fence in the little park?

= Why can't I reach out to another?

11 November 2014

FINAL EXAMINATION

- 1. An orphan can have no children. Explain.**
- 2. Name seven women who left the planet and have not yet come back.**
- 3. Where does the wind sleep?**

11 November 2014

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**How can she be so old already
before she isn't even young?
There are mysteries in this illusion called Time —
children born with glaucoma,
old men dancing in the street.
We need to be ridiculous.**

11 November 2014