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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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**Rapture meant a take
of wing from here
thithering aloft it
may be or else
else. Certainly there,**

**not here, as music
minds. The experiment
of being gone. Shadow
of a sound.**

14 January 2014

for EIKON, a book of images

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,
eaching 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.

14 January 2014

THE OPTIMUM

**is a kind of animal
lives on the far side of town
out beyond the fences
across the tracks.**

**Some nights you hear it
snorting like a grampus.
But what is a grampus?
You don't know that either.**

**You'll never catch it.
It flees before the thinking mind.**

15 January 2014

CLOCKWISE

**turn it
that way
the flowers
will thank you
and water will
rush down the sink.**

**The natural swerve,
my hand on your flank
in darkness, one
or both of us asleep.**

15 January 2014

A BETTER MIRROR

**Light too
knows
how to hide.**

**A better mirror
it said.
I'm waiting
for it to say**

**what it meant
so I can say it too.
A thing, old red,
leathery, pebble
grained, dull.
There—study that.**

15 January 2014

DELIUS

**His Nietzsche symphony
The Mass of Life
hidden romance
of all that despair
a voice above the staff
remembering earth**

**or the mountain
remembering nothing.
That is what walking is,
a walking man
is a mountain in the desert,
his passing thoughts
eternal Scripture.**

**So there is a silk
rose color of mauve
on my desk in a clear
substance looks like
water is solid.
Goethe sits across from me
enduring for once
the glib disorder of my work.**

**Everything is a mirror
he says, everything
except a mirror.**

**I have been with the Germans all my life
have to protect myself from their sheer**

**power of sound, word and voice and organ.
Disorder is my only armor,
to be unsystematic frees
me from their grammar
into the natural incandescence of my own,
my water is solid, my rose
lasts forever.**

**All that may be true
he says, but when did truth
ever help you speak the next
word, the one trembling
in your chest, your lips,
those lying lovers, ready
to spill it, spoil it,
into the glorious actual?**

15 January 2014

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**The age of love
is over must
begin again or
something better
a story we all
tell us together,
tweet by tweet
the immense text
scriptures itself,
dawn of mass
mind o Johnny
I hardly knew you.**

15 January 2014

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**Naked light
it snowed
crystals
a sheen of
glass thin
thin squeaks
underfoot—**

**there is sap in the world tree still!
just a matter of being
spring and let it speak,**

**and out pops the sun
that lawyer in the sky.**

16 January 2014

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**My pen has had a stroke
struggles back to fluency
I coax it back to saying so
anticipating reciprocity.**

16.I.14

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**Adequate ratio?
A thought
long as a page.
Then turn it
for god's sake,
soon ends the Holocene.**

16 January 2014

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**We take it as a reward
but it is someone
else's business working.
Just like the weather.**

16.I.14

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**Quiet. Unsayings.
'n'And I said it in '58
only an image can speak.**

**An image is an animal with no pronoun.
An image is verb.**

16 January 2014

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**shall we begin
with the beginning or
somewhen else,
the sword Saxon
with salt in his beard
stumbling ashore,
fainting to be there**

**or even further back
this morning
the sun showing
brief over snowfall**

**or the deer? Hungry,
down from the hill.
It all starts with
hunger. The beginning.**

16 January 2014

