

# The Mind's Eye Sees Red

I was paid a visit today by a bird-woman:  
a *Coccinella magnifica* flew into my head  
and, instead of bouncing off and flying on,  
she alighted, stayed; folded in her real wings.

I smiled and was delighted  
when, on reflection, I felt her waiting;  
her paired elytra glistening,  
perfectly centred on my brow  
as a red, black-dotted bindi.

With glee, the mind's eye said:  
*Imagine me a world – as Lennon did.*  
*Choose carefully your Lennon;*  
*there's more than one beetle to be*  
*spotted in heaven, and earth, or sea.*

I guess – if my hearing was poor  
or my spelling unsure  
I could easily have ended up bitter:  
biting on a citrus fruit; or kneeling  
beside him and his Marx – red-faced  
all set to go – waiting for the starter's gun  
on my marks; but . . . no matter.

*Paint the country flat,* said the mind's eye:  
the common foetal eye of a nation –  
natural before it is born;

and so, I paint it side-on as a dream-line  
bleeding on the lowest edge extreme  
of my canvas; above it only sky

where gold bars weigh light . . .  
as a feather on finches' wings,  
gently buffeted, burnished;  
all a flutter in a wind of seed, as they dust  
sub-atomic glitter onto teasel, dandelion,  
thistle-crown; and I am down  
downwind of it all – weighting, weighing;

contemplating the alchemy of these gifts  
as they parachute sideways into the dull cold  
bars barring the open window to my dark cell;  
into the hardened pig-iron steel  
to soften it . . . to soften it

to soften the un-taped silence . . .

that's what I can't hear any more  
as I hear my own voice return – boomerang,  
come at me; words spilling out  
of my head, my mouth – leaving my lips  
then back into my own (captive) ears.

I too am captivated (for a short while)  
until I hear myself getting in the way  
of it all as my slowed-down thoughts  
get muddled in the repeating double-take

of what I have just said, relayed through the  
headphones; thoughts slowing with every echo  
of what I said, then heard then said  
again and again in the double, double-take:  
the getting in the way refrain: the reflection  
of daydreams creating refraction, distraction,  
dislocation from the comforting fake of the 'here  
and now' of me; as past, present and pluperfect

concur once more, once more . . . once more  
once more within this constant bore  
within this monotone looping of *musak*  
or the monstrous drone of complicit computers

or the – only black,  
or the – only white of the button-pressers,

the pen-pushers,  
the bean-counters,  
the form-tickers –  
the form-makers:

the fuckers that roll out miles and miles of red tape  
with the sickly smiles that the lickens of gummed  
stamps have; their coated tongues raw – bleeding  
like flayed tapeworms ingested into the furred-up cycle  
of forever-overlapping roles; rolling out more  
and more red-taped carpet for the Gala-Nights  
of tuxedoed farmers as they queue up frozen  
as welly-booted penguins: good men, flightless birds  
out of water, standing still for their hand-outs –  
awaiting pats on their backs as lambs to the slaughter:  
men forced to diversify, intensify,  
to go against the grain – forced to spill their guts  
on their own precious family land, to make more rivers  
of liver-fluked blood for *them* to wade through; springing  
more and more floods of bloody tape to enable *them*  
to infect all our sluggish livers, or to clog-up already  
gasping lungs in the yellow bile and red bureaucratic  
phlegm, of the takers and the fakers who rust and blunt  
the very scalpels (and the knives)

of able and keen surgeons and healthcare givers;  
who – because of *them*,

can't cut through it all to even save lives.

**John D Kelly** is a poet and architect living, writing and working in Fermanagh, winner of the Hungry Hill – 'Poets Meet Painters' Competition 2014