

JAMES TOUPIN

What Light Admits

—*Daguerre*, “View of the Boulevard du Temple” (1838)

The view from on high
looks down at the way’s turning,
the instant an eon.

Only what lasts out the gaze
is destined to appear.

Always before
the human has been lost.
It almost is again.

The street, then crowded
with the traffic

of drays and carriages,
is vacant. No one
strolls the boulevard.

What did not stay put
could not be caught.

Only by happenstance
could a man emerge.
He stands near the corner,

shadow fixed to page
because he was fixed

to the spot in life.
His shoes, it is thought,
were being polished.

The smudge at his feet
might be the bootblack,

seen as the eternal,
if it does,
might discern us.