

D O N D O M A N S K I

S E L E C T E D P O E M S

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E D G E

I've come to the edge of a forest
that is capable of anything

wolves will not enter
but become ground beetles
and leave

this place is a turning point

the forest has lips and eyes
and rivers

they all stop and wait

beneath me
worms turn the earth
on its axis.

S U M M E R - P I E C E

whose heart or bowel was looted
for this cool arena of trees?
for this footage of bracken
ajar at my feet?

who paid for that sparrow's
nervous direction through the thicket?
for his song roofing
these goldenrods and lupines?

there is someone's vigour
wasting away under
all this blood and greenery

there is someone's familiar face
sagging over every bloom
permeating each athletic gesture
of the land

someone's torso that I knew so well
was ousted for this slew of flies
in the afternoon air

for this pond's peculiar look.

A BRIEF HIEROLOGY AMONG A FEW TREES

Vesuvius stigmata
Crab Nebula
such unmoored wounds
adrift in time

I pray to spiritous dogs
to candles growing wild
in the grass

instead of memory
stars fill the air

God is a stallion
(the colour of discarded boards)
racing towards an extended hand
in the darkness
ten thousand miles away.

THE FOX AFTER DEATH

there are silk climbs
and burlap climbs
places for me to go

as the spider goes
but with the sense of joy
a thousandfold

shine after shine
is the only way to describe death
bloodshine untranslatable
and flesh like clouds in the distance

having once been a fox
I flow like a river now
inside finches of light
this must be the way
to the present
to an animal place
a dry field
that slowly pushes
its sticks into God.

L Y N X

I have come to the Land of Forms
because there are others like me
we come to imagine ourselves

because snow is half the body
belief half the mind

our feet are soft dark ears
faithful hearing of faithful loss
we listen with the roots of trees
the rabbits ripen ripen and fall to earth
we approach making them red with predestined wounds
the quiet sequences the great turbulence
among the sounds that wish to be.

IN THE DREAM OF THE YELLOW BIRCHES

for Barry

Heaven is inscrutable,

Earth keeps its secrets

—Li Ho

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the sun's yellow throat at the horizon
the thunder keeping in touch
rain falling in choirs

I come inside to make tea and read
from *Poems of the Late T'ang*
to feel all those lost moments
resurrected in this afterlife
to feel the dead move slowly
like honey turning over in its comb.

pages slough off their words remain blank
for a few moments when the cover is finally closed
when it opens out to a great distance

the reader also sheds what has been written
what remains is the light twice removed
from paper essence of a weightless and thermal rise
of blood
layering in where the words lost their way.

constellations rising above clouds and houses
sidereal enzymes drifting through the streets
one barking dog giving us a distraction from the zodiac
so add one more mutt to paradise one more set of teeth
to bite down on perdition

also add this pseudoscorpion crawling across the wall
a minuscule piece of architecture from the *Book of Revelations*
now standing perfectly still a perfect word in its chest
for its next move across the abyss.

the night four hours old rain gone out to sea
God already sealing the lips of the sleepers with fire
angels already taking on the form of our ill effects
demi-present and yet bright in our dreams

hard to see the Mycenaean grave of each rose in the dark
each place where the colour of grace is buried
along with the first voice of the invisible

hard to see the inlay of ghosts in the spider's web
or sense the sleepers shining back from the other side
the sleep of others buoys up my hand and these hours
also this book-scorpion finally beginning its blush
and journey once again.

BIODIVERSITY IS THE MOTHER OF ALL BEAUTY

in memory of Judy Davis

when I think of blood drops and little hurts
entering a field filling the field
when I think of dandelions off their leashes
and the Noh play of dragonflies airborne
red and metallic blue light as silk

when I think that one sigh was the progenitor
of all life that the binding of oxygen
and hydrogen is the most erotic calligraphy
that every thought human and otherwise
is an astronomical unit
that each is star-laced to its very core

when I think that inside every genome there
is a line of sight that surrounds the earth
that perception holds the evanescence
of all things within itself
that atoms are in a perpetual state of bliss

when I think that deer move elegantly between
trees like the great tea master Rikyū
did among his bowls that a deep-sea coral
off the Hawaiian Islands is 4000 years old

when I think of parallel universes colonizing
the edges of birdsong when I think that
synaesthesia is the language of God
that flesh covers a wider and deeper pilgrimage

when I sit here knowing this is a dying world
nothing could be more effortless more sacred
than this sleepy forest at dawn.

BIRTHDAY

there was just enough evening left for me just enough grayscale left
to move into the blackness to wait there as many travellers had before
to wait for the tracings of birthplaces beyond the fittings of language
and intent places to be born and reborn names to be unborn
in the rhizomorphic soil identities to evaporate through transpiration
along the bending backs of ferns

on the night I was born my thoughts were origamic foldings of dark law
my beliefs had blood whispered into them one by one drop by drop
my eyes crackled like attended fires my tongue woke to the accumulated
wisdom of hillsides and ideological shifts in the river's current
on the night I was born my hands chose the penmanship of cicadas
my feet selected the speed of newts

on the night I was born there was a wide scattering of gravity and trees
there was the veering grace of bats and the vanities of diatoms
clouds billowed offshore phosphorescent plankton shone like heavenly
hosts and my skin had an odd warmth to it like the caressive fluidity
of evolutionary ancestors coming up through the flesh like the nearer
gods of time and space shining brightly through the otherhood
of stars and pinpricks of orbiting light.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Don Domanski (1950–2020) was born and raised in Sydney, on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada. He lived briefly in Toronto, Vancouver and Wolfville, before settling in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he lived for most of his life. Author of nine collections of poetry, his work is infused with a deep and abiding interest in mythology, religion and esoteric philosophy, and has been translated into Arabic, Chinese, Czech, French, Portuguese and Spanish. He mentored other poets through the Banff Centre for the Arts Wired Writing Studio and the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia Mentorship program.

Also a visual artist, his work often appeared on the covers of his books. He collected fossils for many years, before turning his attention to meteorites and Stone Age tools. He is credited with discovering the neural arch of a 350-million-year-old (Lower Carboniferous) amphibian previously thought to have gone extinct in the Devonian period.

His poetry collections *Wolf-Ladder* (1991) and *Stations of the Left Hand* (1994) were shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Poetry, and in 1999 he received the Canadian Literary Award for Poetry from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. *All Our Wonder Unavenged* (2007) was honoured with the Governor General's Award, the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Masterworks Award, and the Atlantic Poetry Prize, and *Bite Down Little Whisper* (2013) won the J.M. Abraham Poetry Award.

