

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

1

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.

2

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.



