

Rivercrossing

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CROSSINGPLACE

The sea is no-one's skin.
The sailor, bred in a tannery, addicted
to the repulsion of water and salt and air, sails.
The verb determines the effort : sail as close
to sea-skin as we get, hull (so goes the old riddle)
plough, net riddle, and enginegrease
an attempted transformation or rainbow
from which slick grey masks a venture
in which there is no landscape
to impugn.

Burnt pinepitch and oil soils pages,
blooms futures. The old poet's claim for mist
is mistranslated through too many miscegenations
to count : we no longer think in combinations
of mountain and air, remember in bonescript
cracks the goddess or excess, breathe and

the red feather falls.

The past crosses the Sam Chun River at the point where freshwater
and sea collide, saltmarsh makes new skin, lips parch, the city
imagined beyond reedbed the only horizon, the new mobility,
the new speech salted out from the lips
in this final effort.

Nothing is so deep swimming is fear.
There is now, each now new, each bird rising the first
and soon lost to a new first, each weed catching your ankles
and thread of skin stripped and lost to the swim the first and new.
You refuse the seed-metaphor, seek a different planting. Uncle,
you are the red bird, are the one

black smudge
among many (an old poet's claim that water drawn falling
must happen in a single brushstroke uninterrupted
but in various moments disturbed) I bear relation
to you only in untranslatable generation names.

We can re-
count what was into what is across breakwaters

stand on three peaks viewing the source
and unimagine the impossible : one great sun looking down
to scoop up each transient seed, replant, force growth, reap
in red and skin and flay with nets what attempts
to cross marshland (or 'area of environmental protection' where
scrutiny of the crossing, misty, prevails).

Recall : I ask you impossibly
why tradition burnt in generation books makes of the woman
waiting stone on a mountaintop.

Stones do not wait or want
nor woman either. What is forgotten also marks such a punctum.

What is we is a future and keens
backwards, does not know
what you are
except the margin
of a story

before
what decisive break
when mist like skin
fell over poetry

before
a single origin point

Again the marshland calls (the birds
call, rising from reedbeds and mangroves)

I wager on the breaks
to find the crossing point, desire
the point of no return, build life
for end times.

The vowels escape
or the crossroads.

into flesh, refuses

the wind-up, the body
a kernel and the ghost

grates mobile
and hearth.

Calluna

from pine, asks in pitch
except change.

Motes

airs, smudge out words.

a cold hearth, smoor
meant for leaving.

blackening plumage
the stone

which is perhaps the point

Plumage, cryptic, rots
featherfall.

We forget

invisible in the grain, remember
of a figure, smell mulch.

An I

between hearth

burns, resin spits gold
what it is has been missed

in migrant patterns scatter

Stasis breeds

of heart in a room

Birds nest in chimneys
by association

stains with night.

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STONEGATHERER

What dust there is is never only stone.
Imagine : the stone speaks. Prise open
the mind. Imagine (again) : the stone.
Reprise. A is more or less B
polytropos.

We cannot be sure
what stone is (were never sure
of bedrock).

An orange bird migrates, hops
from stone to stone seeking dust

*[there was an error
in the original – for dust
read knife [read worm
read false dusting
[there was an error in
the original – for hop
read in a vowel
a hop[e from stone
to s]tone, a c]row
false destiny, d]us[t
a]ston[ishment*

finds
beneath one stone, trembling, voice-
wizened figures

caps
the open mouths with more stone
before they can utter
– how

we did not divine such a bird

the 'dark' falls
the comedy is over. We
are bathed in orange light, colourblind, prating
or nightblind (something chokes nightsongs in tonerows)
but no longer static on the screen.

moss
whets
stone

C
R
I
S
I
S

sea
saltlipped rolls
knife

&

C
R
I
T
I
Q
U
E

The dark tripped and fell
from the universe once

which was before this action began.

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NYCTICORAX-NYCTICORAX

canticulum (anima beata)

C
R
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&

C
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E

Observe the romance of the sprinkling of dust which must be avoided.

The threat display is upright.
the man begins to count,
in-two, the bird, the saltmarshes,
falls apart, smothered
croaks in segments,
and yet is, does not
is essential.

Vision brought to a terminus
starting with the one-
and the world
in apostrophe. The 'man'
in 'modern' 'ruins' and what was not
annihilate, and thus night is and

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Serve man sprinkling dust.

Be void.

to have been capstone or cairn
of some planetary orbital force
flies cutting sky and mending it

The bird balances on what we interpret
but which now under weight
crumbles further. The bird
in its wake is our vision ironstained.

(obsolete theory of emendation)

It is the eye which slows

sound from happening.

It is the eye

which is party to what the dual is

the eyes

seek

(the red bird's beak)

are

clouded

is different now the sound barrier is broken.
To send is to stain but in this supercool movement it is only
memory that strains and you who forces from fear
or knowledge of the liquid crystalline.

Too many
will not take grey over ground, let gooselag pain sky
with sound and disappear (strange weaving through cloud
and cloud alike).

Further down, murmurations attempt
the aerial, fail, are read as patternings.

We tread thin ice
as clouds do not wait, do not count. Imagine : the
stone. Imagine : the cloud. Fail to draw clouds
and with brushcurves on the dull of paper
watch grey surround a drying habit.

There is a certain salinity in it all, a certain avoidance
of reprisals, the ink haloes of the wager (no-one
wears it convincingly anymore and weaving
becomes the darning of thin patches in matter).

I dare you. Because there is always a city
on a horizon
the plain
(if it still exists) is a figure, is
the sea, development, capital
there are forms
of petrol that flame green, orange
the sailor spreads animalskin over
the sea
effects a crossingplace,

twists his tongue

at the stench of the tannery
of the letter, forgets

the line

of light

is vertical : the horizon bends : the clouds

are too thick to cut or knot : the clouds

are not –

C
R
I
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&

C
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/

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Reprise, now, the story of the start of the red bird's migration,
what it carries with it, hooked on the cross of its bill with muted
swifftongued trill even as there is no one sure saying any more. The letter
cryptic as plumage bright in the pocket does not snag or chafe, break
skin or sing through seams.

It is well known that in the story there can be
no fault lines, only travel. Light rests in the ocean your eyes I keen toward.

Curtains immaterial to the moment are thrown open
to the solar term marked by the possibility of big snow.
Candles not lit on the night-time table set underneath the curtains
in certain finery; none of this is nocturnal, nor whiteout, all wilds
posed nothing. There is no domestic reflected in windowpanes,
the spheres have changed and neither star nor screech owl
hurl cries onto the dark.

We walk towards what we know
held by clock lag. Slowed, the book tells us we cannot wait for birdsong
(Loxia's red is irruptive as its figure). Snow does not fall,
the letter still, the world's sky gauze. The bird shines elsewhere,
breaks bitter almonds to quench an inarticulate thirst,
prevented from calling. There are no colours here, a cessation.

Past the city the ocean pays nightlight's debts in a gold that floats dissembling,
neither either nor or; the eye held captive by the band of it between city and sky
sends out flares.

These, then, are the lessons we might learn
should we see or ask for them, and as for the ocean, the bird, the negation
that comes before dawn, one day we will have cause to swim there.

Tonight in this winter on this hill I have walked too many times
unhampered by claw or beak shadows sough, fascicles twist, shortening,
a summerheady currency of gorse is studied lack and pine
no longer smoulders. Winter rain is not cold
nor precipitate.

