

FALL 2019

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ISBN 978-1-77131-512-8

6 X 8.75 INCHES / 104 PAGES

TRADE PAPERBACK / POETRY / \$20

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Into the Humber River

Someone tore the hands off a big round clock, familiar
as a classroom compass & abandoned it
to the weeds. It took the time right out of us, poured
it through the small black circle in the clock's
centre & underground into the river.

It was a blessing to watch the hours & minutes
drain away. We didn't miss it the way we'd miss
our own hands. That sudden calm when time
disappears, the atmosphere soupy with fish & bug
& bird busy-ness, the glare of springtime green.
If you spoke into that empty hole, it would hold
your words & breathe them back to you
in the sensible prose of granite & bridge,
in bird vowels, cloud song, river.

Inside my Quietness

after Frank O'Hara & Margaret Christakos

Inside my quietness is a breath
 caught in fear. Inside my breath is a warmth
 licking the hard forsythia buds yellow. Within
 the four-spiked blossoms are a long sleep
 and an abundant hunger and inside any hunger
 is a woman or rather any woman contains
 many hungers. Inside all our fears is a reality
 both twisted and true. Art lives beside fear –
 fear of falling short or overstating, fear
 of offending. But courage beckons others
 to attend. I haven't mentioned
 the sorrow inside quietness, which tries to shrink
 but stays huge. Even larger is the sleeping.
 The sleeping body that breathes the world alive.

Our Own Myths

We make our own myths and spells
 these days—clear-cut myths of peeled bark
 and planed logs, rooted myths for abandoned lands,
 their owners evicted and bereft. Tell backhoe fables
 to conjure dwellings whole and complete
 back onto these fields and flatlands. Undo spells
 cast by profiteers, sing new songs
 of undoing and renewing,
 miracles of restorations accomplished
 by the heroic and the flawed.

Today we joined the rebel women
 who still walk rebel lands, women who
 never said no to the crow, their ears attuned
 to salmon spawning in Duffins Creek,
 apples ripening in orchards, sap reddening
 the willow branches every spring. Old and young
 women, each with one hand on a steering wheel,
 the other on a keyboard. Or one hand pulling
 a cabbage from the kitchen garden, the other
 playing a harmonica for the disappeared
 children, grown and gone, tossed
 from their parents' lands.

Luminosity

By the time we look up we might have lost enough star power to end a small war on Earth. Frittering my gaze. All those Mediterranean gods & goddesses, says my Norwegian friend, they were so *active*. Banished for their sins into the galaxy's outer coldness, generating just enough lumens to teach us a few lessons—how to endure, how to be present & sparkle, to hide when we need to, to extend our love through space, across time.

Ah, those nymphs & monsters, their abductions & infidelities. Their beam energy. Remembering that tented night in Zimbabwe when all I could think was *diamonds*, *black velvet*, shuddering at my own persistent clichés. Then that moment—a hyena visiting the campground's rim took a quick dog-look at us & loped off starwards for other prey. His sparing us reminded me of our impermanence—how sudden chance can kill, but not cast us into the stars. O couldn't we measure our lives in lumens? I'd be happy to have, in a scale from one to five, anything brighter than the second magnitude.

Are you ladies lost? 2

oh no we are not lost we are just hesitating under the leafless trees wishing we were in New York or Malaga or Melbourne we are finding it hard to move as we are wishing Franco had come to a more deserving end not to mention Henry Kissinger or the Bushes Senior & Junior & that other newer one we are assembling our spray cans to spray graffiti on railway sidings to repel DOT-111 rail cars oh no we are not lost but we do have a kind of science-fiction look on our faces not lost but perhaps losing well, maybe a little lost but pausing to count the moths & ladybugs one of whom I found in my hydroponic lettuce this week you are a *local* ladybug I said to the colourful pill-like corpse you were born & died here which makes you friendly & heroic & well-fed we are scanning the sky for drones as everyone must these days the animal extinction count is troubling us oh no we are not very lost but we are grateful for your concern