



# The Martingale

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I.

# *Of Origins*

# 末法の歌

And you asked me: to whom does it fall, if not to us, to write  
songs the machines will sing in the dawn of the uplift?

Whose, if not ours,  
the aubade: the ochre, the ascent?

# *In Eden*

In Eden, God is talking. All the snails are here, attending; all the other animals.

Eve, distracted, rubs her hand absently over the rough bark of the newest tree, harder and harder, until a thin trail of blood runs the length of her arm. Holding her hand in his, Adam licks the blood away, running the warmth of his mouth up from her elbow, kissing closed the wound in her hand.

# The Martingale

& I will always play the martingale.

After the Deep, the shallows; as  
when steward of Eden, I was compelled to let the land lay fallow  
after the first blooms fell.

I am no longer, the keeper of secrets. But there is now no  
room between here and heaven  
for what there is to tell. This is true:  
the name God gifts me  
cuts sharp as glass, and burns hot as the last fire of first love burns.

& the unsung word in its standing flame is endless rain  
on this empty sea.

50° 51' 0" N

God grows the green into the kelp of this world.

Of the other world, there is

nothing known: from the furling sea kale, borrow, borrow  
[as the compass dips towards Architeuthis  
& the deep bells]

all, against entropy;

everything, all kept,  
all beyond the reach of God.

# Lions

We lead the lions last to the slotted ramp. The other animals are restless. They, like us, feel the imminent, wish the door closed, the dark sealed in with their familiar smells. The lions are quiet, reach into the air with soft muzzles, tasting the lowering dark. We lead them onboard. The shallow ark shakes under their heavy paws.



# East

With maps carefully drawn, the love of God a stain of gold on our hearts, climbing the last wall of ice, the keel deep in snow over us, the looming shadow of the frozen hull.

With ropes and hooks, pitons and knives driven deep in the timber, hauling ourselves to the deck, packs and flares cached in a cleft of the rock lower. The door, closed, shut, we found, with the ice chipped away, fastened inside by wide metal bars.

Crowbars prising, lamps lit, descending wooden stairs to the three levels of the hold, the six of us shivering, lamplight shrinking in this ark of bones.

2.

*Of Memory Fields  
& Residua*

# Albion Drive

the winter was, with blades  
of ice  
over Hackney Road,  
there,  
several times, a Chinese opera perfection  
you might have lost, later, in the ground of the general —  
the blossoming of things  
from their stems out — [mistaking

for the old winter  
the new growth frozen, by a glance too brief  
to catch the shift] had we not seen

these lantern pearls; these sky-blue filigrees  
of steel:  
walking Sunday from Spitalfields,  
, white  
wings, all this laddering  
of layers: no copper joint holds heaven  
here to all that falls, this imprecise  
colourfield  
of broken walls; near Albion Drive, this purple  
skyburst of climbing herbs.

(Something like the song)

Cabbage roses  
or the moon. & pollen in the air.

This also the way home; &  
tho the boughs are low  
and you must crawl,

feel the dust. Of itself,	you
dust. Of iron, stars.	you are
	wherever

where the dust is from:  
a fault in the nothing  
weighs down the light.

love, tell me again, what it is  
we know & do not know.

these leaves, since  
late September  
heaped, are thrown —  
love given, ever against the  
chill of this season:

what this place, made bonfire-lit for this occasion  
serves between

[ is suddenly shown.

# 三丁目

There is small life everywhere,  
mice beneath the tracks in the  
subway, cicadas and crows  
brim the dark trees with noise

all these

intercalary days no diary holds nor held. I lean my  
head against cold  
metal, she is making jasmine tea in her small kitchen.

Everywhere, the sensual presses in. On

the ridge of  
the roof, a black cat is walking in the rain, shakes

the falling silver  
from its fur.

# Finer

i

nostalgia

invests clear water with lucent purl.

In its blue enigma other maps are turned  
white sails : thrown high, all  
familiar flooded things, also  
the hyacinthine,  
the amaranthine, amongst  
dead leaves & copper bells.

In Ponto-cho, or in Upper Street  
I am drunk in the firework of this night: words, all crocodile chalk, all  
cluster; canticle of birds, all useless speech in the perfect dark  
to reprise the unreturning,

I am  
here, always here — anxious for  
the change in it: the rising sign, the finder,  
the flower of stillness.

The fallen sweetness of the rose once  
promised a different end to summer;  
the lilac by the open door, persimmon and honeydew,  
ferment of sweetness; fresh figs —

all distraction become the moment: ten years not lost or gone  
but given, you can not cage in the circle of hands; the broken hologram rose.

In Sanjou after soft rain, snow. In  
receiving postcards, answers are set tokens:

love

is real.

My friends have made me these three words, two times: indifferent —  
reading, forgetting them.

ii

We are brought forward  
through an arabesque of errors, to where we started, & what remains  
of the  
spine, the spire: the span  
that holds the form to one form. The fire.

At this turning the lake reflects nothing that is over it, this fallen tree  
bleeds sand and sap,

the chain of gold around the sun is  
hope abandoned:

I cannot stretch the skin of another day its cover, nor recover its sense.

Those we loved lead us, bringing forgotten gifts  
they no longer understand,  
that we follow them. After us the road is empty.

*cordons de la eternidad;*  
silence impenetrable as speech,

knowing words cannot past the triumph of the carnival  
at the nine gates  
reach,  
are inadequate compass to find what  
we had thought so simple, lost so near, that they might suffice, from here to  
here.

iii

In my garden, under Orion and the new moon, I plant  
cardamom and coriander, caraway, saxifrage,  
sweet basil, horehound, lavender; burying the carnival.

bury this also, finer into the same earth  
that we may find, though later, the flower of stillness.

Snow yet piles.

& (its silver bowl



# Loira Road

The year  
rises from empty May; fills with gold.

Reach out, asking  
where are these enormous bees from, in the heather  
strumming forgotten things; this late-winter eternity of dove-blue  
rooms. Stars pool on the broken floor.

The child brings these secrets home.  
Beyond this door the house is falling:

The white pulse of the  
ghost's hand draws him. (though not the dead:

the future echo of a life difficult as flowers has its own power.

She takes his hand:

'I will stay the harvest, but will leave you nothing'. In the field, you lay  
together, under the perfect corn.

& even this is unclear. The sea is near. The face of the wave, rising,  
becomes a wall and then the sky.

Then here the wave is falling.

Remain and then leave, as you will.

# Etoile

& unexpected you taste of wine and smoke, and  
you are the sun, sex,

death &

Bataille got it:

I cannot regard you other than through  
this deceit of mirrors

Or be burnt, ravaged, transformed. & all such rehearsals, vanity: wax and  
wings.

I love you in a dazzle of haecceity — all that will burn, aflame

& lose you

to contingent, casual disregard. Your addresses changed so many times; I am  
with you nowhere.

& seeing everything, suddenly again together in one place,  
, having seen  
the same shadow set

the third time over the house,

counting the days backwards, it is the same,

here as ever. On the table the poetry is grapes half darkened; a word I could  
not read was written by your name; I had half

forgotten you.

& if, of at the lake, your hair wet, turning, I remember

indistinct, as water

is in water

waves only

those small birds asleep,

only surface, yet flex that memory by

even their little weight, & later

when

with all the houses dark, and you beside me, sleepless,

at the river

something crosses the long slope of the hill

# Clayton Tunnel

& for a mile on the line through  
diatomaceous chalk, it is as if

between Hassocks and home, in that  
brief heavy darkness, it is that day again, with you

stepping over  
the boards of that Fairlight 3 [without context  
scattered along the hallway,

& as you  
open the door

all the light is drawn down the hill from the Heath.  
& all the hours fall open —

*that is nothing of significance*, the boy whispers: [although  
occupied between his  
lovers and his gods, he is himself  
nothing. Not even water in the chalk.

& yet follows you here, two breaths and all these years  
behind you, again into the same infolding light.

# East Croydon

Under the strip lights

here; it is me, and the Iranian girl I met hours into the queue, talking:

1. Merleau-Ponty (I am reading *Phénoménologie de la perception*, in translation, to pace the wait),
2. the rift: the place of unseeing being;
3. the third thing, and
4. the *kairos*.

And we go through this,  
in the great loop.

At her party the following Friday,  
I hold my drink, & the waves come as waves. The sun has plowed; its gold  
now buried deep  
motions the becoming. The lanterns are lit. There is no  
jazz  
in the chikhai bardo.

3.

*Of Language & Limits*

## 2 plateaux

鏡

At the door, these are fading shapes.  
Fading, they become distant. Shapes, they become silence heaped. Is anything  
left  
of such low fidelity ghosts,  
after the drift, once  
we audit the whole of  
what the loom wove, and find the unwinding stars remain the same single  
unchallenged awkward measure of things? A cascade of gems  
from love's tangling weave all torn.

影

À la porte, ce sont des formes qui s'effacent.  
En s'effaçant, elles deviennent lointaines.  
Formes, elles deviennent silence amassé.  
Reste-t-il quelque chose  
de ces fantômes de basse fidélité,  
après la dérive, une fois  
que nous avons audité tout  
ce que le métier à tisser a tissé, pour découvrir  
que les étoiles qui se défont demeurent  
la seule mesure maladroite et incontestée  
de tout? Une cascade de gemmes,  
déversées des fils du tissu d'amour s'entremêlant, déchiré.

# 8vo

& if you are looking for clarity in purpose,  
you are looking over the shoulder of the thing  
not straight into  
its many eyes.

There is not even weather here; how do you plan  
to make the long walk west into a season of storms,  
with just these folded notes?



# پادزهر

It gets in at the margins, then

the stone-marrow seeps  
through this cut  
in the art,

& petrescence creeps into

the bulk.

*'A formal device'*

But you would say the same

if the process was instead sublimation,  
& if at its end there  
was nothing left: not this bezoar,  
none of this at all —

nothing at all, with nothing

left to judge.

# inrō

It was only that one time I looked  
past it all, from objects to observances

& realised the contrivance  
by which it was all set about me:  
the world, but

other than  
the truth of its being hoof and horn and  
all that falls,  
all smashed together against the slab of light that life is: [such candescence!

Maybe I was beautiful that winter all alone.

# the limit

I get sober so fast, and wake

Face down, hand stuck tight, wrist-deep in Pólya's urn.

# aura

The further north, the more fragile the fixtures  
by which the stars are held,  
until at the pole itself  
they break from the finest of wires  
by their own weight.

I snuff the wick. Nor'east the wreck, the dark  
snow, high  
stardust drifts, settles. The sails burn: the hull slides under ice, under and into  
this raining light.

4 u

u r so avid

even the sun stops. the world 4 u, stasis:

a shell involute; in amber.

4.

Coda:

*Of Animals, Ruin,  
& On Being Witness*

# the nest

the snow  
was one day heavy  
in the yard

-- light, stealing

fingers over leaves,  
coarse grasses : blossom  
under snow, shaken.

here are houses,  
seen from above;  
here, these days: separate as stones.

such division of substance: salt / harbour / sand.  
buoys & bells dwell  
in the swell  
of a neap tide that fails

while now,  
with my beak I pluck and weave these heavy reeds

# analemma

## *Winter*

I sleep the winter.

## *Spring*

Nightly after their murmuration, they come down to me, & lead me to the shadow court of Jack-of-Gold, the corvid king: to the patch of dust and moonlight where they say I was conceived. They tell me their stories of my life, bright eyes unblinking, then wait. 'Sing' they whisper, 'sing your song'. But I have no song to sing. Again they wait, then fly, laughing: 'Not tonight, my love, not tonight'.

## *Summer*

I have seen knots done well, though being thus, cannot myself do them well: rope becomes more than rope, to hold each held thing, high over its own deep spring. With what skill I have, I knot these words to lift the summer sky a little higher over the land, and make my way home, to my warm burrow and the berries I have picked from the low branches, up on the greening hill; and all the honey from the hives.

## *Autumn*

Autumn has touched the soil. Its gold rises through the finest filaments to edge the leaves over us. Leaving my burrow, I am already rising. Everything rises, everything asks the same question, quietly, of what remains in these late September days.



# vessels

i. (井の頭恩賜公園)

ink

that in five lines becomes  
a bunch of nettles, in the night points one step north — where  
the colour of water gets  
    over the road,  
    over the pearl of the three-quarter moon, gets in after —  
(before the first thought

& all the gold  
was birdsong over  
/& through the heat; the same fading of the same echo of metal striking again  
the same bell.

ii. (新年会)

On the vine, life in clusters;  
gathers of grey fur;  
rough-thread-bound blind  
mayfly eternity.

Behind the mirror, winter.  
2 voices —  
wind at the door.

# stone song

where the garden starts, (or ends — it depends), the stone  
is treebark-grey, and tall,  
but on this page lies flat: unparseable, as death is. Implausible as death is.  
Unpassable as death is.

Yet all the autumn  
rain still greens the grass, my love

& as your song  
makes shown

what grows is love  
before (& impossibly, past) the impassable stone.

• • •

The bell boils in its fittings, in the third second, gone.

There are three things made of metal in this room; count them: first this knife, here on the tray, that cut these apples. Second, these coins. Third, this ring she gave me, never yet removed. This, the first lie: there are many things made of metal in this room, and no time to count them. Come, look, here through this doorway, quick, look:

the city already burning.

5.

## *End Matter & Other Maps*

# the overround

## **Clearings**

1. Being unfolds as an open field of potentiality, the native drift of which is dispersal.
2. Presence instantiates as a clearing: local order enabled by active comportment (attention, remembrance, craft).
3. Every clearing is time-bound; once its sustaining comportment weakens, its ordered sense unravels and is reabsorbed into diffuse potentiality.

## **Bearing-Witness**

4. Disclosure draws its force from the tension between the revelatory and occluding powers of speech.
5. Bearing-witness is world-constituting: it shapes an intelligible domain within the open field.
6. The strength of witness lies in attentional depth and precision, not in duration.

## Frames

7. Episodic memory gathers traces of multiple clearings and re-projects them in recombinant form; the horizon that holds these projections together is a frame.
8. Memory is recombinant rather than archival. Each frame is therefore a fresh configuration: provisional, perspectival, and liable to dissolve when attention shifts.
9. Across clearings, iterative replication and selective retention recurrently re-instantiate similar motifs; recognised within a frame, these motifs form constellations.
10. Coherence emerges as a statistical inevitability of replication-selection dynamics: evident to the framing gaze yet mute to consciousness situated inside a single clearing.
11. Frames are themselves higher-scope clearings and may fold into wider frames in a recursive architecture of sense-making.

## **Poesis**

12. Dispersal tends toward oblivion.
13. Poetic praxis, by intensifying witness, momentarily arrests dispersal and illumines constellations.
14. Each act of witness is irreducibly singular yet co-inhabits an atemporal constellation of structurally resonant clearings; the linkage is configurational, not sequential.