

3 Selected Poems from

CHARON'S HAMMER

by Keith Hackwood

The Breathing of Fine Lines

A stanza of plainchant reaching after corals
In the breathing eyeball's rhythmic foam,
These are the partings
Distant in geometry's garden, sea-living salad.

Anuria cripples our poems with the chewn-word,
Squeezes milk from our dry tongues.
We fissure anile brows, become the newly annealed
Not content with the curd of not-saying.

I burn your words in my own ashes, sabulous dirt.
I look to the serif for resistance.

Phased by repeated flutes the imagination dies,
Re-enters its lost silver, pushed through the loops of song,
Unfixed from several glues.
The phrase is repeated;
Repeated
Stating itself inaudibly –
Myriad syncopations.

You would call this reality
(if, through sewn-up eyes, you could see)
I know it and I lose it.

I am a product, your process, your totality.
Bereft, strapped by my own saccade
Your very own impacted orb
I pervade the Garden of Shapes, alive with birds
Blessed with squirrels,
And form you other words:

We hang at the bottom of our blood's avalanche

- Keith Hackwood

Neti

In the never-only-oneness of night's eye, freely given to breathing sorrow
Her chords arise from the yearning sphinx and the budding tear;
Poised in double unseen worlds, waters seep like melodies from splits in shale and schist,
Between her heels and painted toes. The singularity of love -
Only the moon expects her, and the madness-quaking marrow of magic, whose forms seduce the
petals of mind with the perfume of a butterfly's wings.

A shameful wind parts leaves along the street, bending the stars to another moment, another
rhythm of death. Watching this sweetness unman me, buoyed with hairfuls of snakeskin, I
swallowed the petal, the ordinary decision, tasting of moonlight and ashes.
At midnight the breathing soil sighs for her corrupted hope, I fell to my knees against chilled
glass, a wastrel, raggedly weeping.

This morning a sword announced the dawn.
This morning the magnificent light ceased clapping.
Two hearts unknown, a beam broken with absolute trust in the fire of an eye.
Despised by us, tantalised by particles, a screaming depth in every twig – who inhales this
vitalising exhaustion, this pleurisy of opened soul?

A bird lies dead in its feathers, blue and grey sweetness
Sing the majesty of angels with the poetry of forgiveness.

- *Keith Hackwood*

Red

Welcome to what remains of today -
A furnace in the underblood of oceans where no rose opens.
I am nothing but my breath, but those roses would
Be jazz-mantics, or seething hip-hop cobras in their paleo-vitamin
Death-nests, but their hair goes unstroked and now
Eros is left pricking accountants with dollarbuds.
The sun sets against the slow tide, the Market
Denies the place of rainbows, insists that I
Wear pensions in my hair in case of thirsty rain; but it's been years
Since I peeled an onion without laughing – what I know of options means
Nothing to your famous holiday smile.

I saw this woman by the bank selling ribbons, she had every colour
The sun allows but you would only buy red. Why is it you only wear red?
She dug into her arm with a razor, a flume of red ribbon flew out to
Adorn your head like a crown. You seemed happy then, in your element, but
I felt chilly. I never liked the wind off the river. I am nothing but my breath.

In the mirror, irrigation being born
In the prison one of the newly dead writes toothpaste sonnets
In the desert a boy cries sand from hopeless eyes.
The plough belongs now to the water-skiing priests
The camel has filled her hump with grit and
All the clocks in the west have struck out for glory alone.

Pay no attention; she often weaves with red feathers
When she thinks no one's watching her dance.

- *Keith Hackwood*