

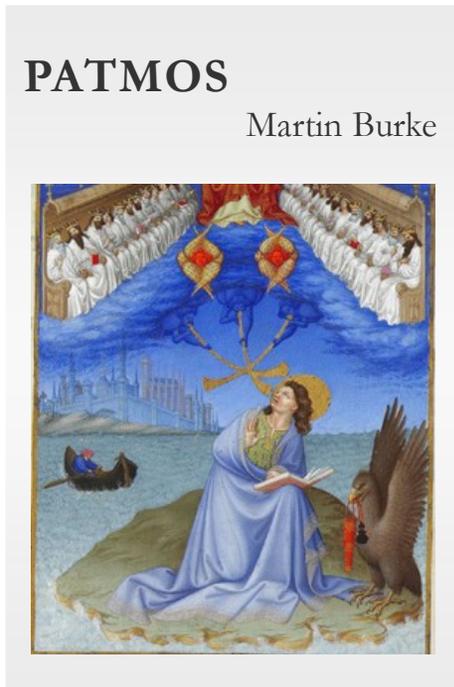
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ORIGAMIPOEMS.COM
origamipoems@gmail.com

Cover—'St. John on Patmos'
Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry
French Gothic manuscript

Origami Poem Project™

Patmos
Martin Burke © 2013



The Dream House

The light exonerates
What the dark claims -
Enter and be still

The corbelled roof
Holds you to a centre
That is off-centre

A point you cannot pass beyond
A point between experience
And expectation

You are here
And not elsewhere
Where passage begins

Where times restores
The wounds and scars
Of time

- To lie in stone for half a million years
is one desire

To be its carver is another –
But what's known beyond the clang
of the hammer

But what we attribute to a sound and its echo
Echoing our speculations into the corbelled space
To repeat in us its music
Half a million years are nothing

But a fraction of time's fiction
Where there is no time
There is now in the endless perpetuation
of itself
There is the here of silence and light
And the dream within the dream-house
dreaming

There is no 'we' in the dark
The light goes out and we are alone
Not a breath of certainty issues in the dark

When the light returns
Your breath frictions
Your thoughts to sparks

And there is neither
Here nor there
Nor then nor now

But dream's uncoiling
In the corbelled dream-house
Of the mind

Patmos

Struck on lichen mottled stones
Certain words revealed themselves
Where the new orthodoxy reinstated
the old accusations
That we were dealers in truth and light
That this was the world Keats walked out of;
We creatures outliving the weaning dark
Compositions of balance and imperfections
Eager for a vivid metaphor with which
to address the world
With a path through thickened undergrowth
to surprise and surpass us
Where among affinities and heresies
I was more refugee than citizen
Chanting against that city's walls
that they fall like Jericho.

Inheritance and obligation
Learning to surprise myself
In abiding ink no breath could refuse –
Something dying and something being reborn
The knots of history from Heraclitus to Christ
Choirs with viable words

As if we were Greek enough to satisfy the world
A carbon-dated history preceding a luminous one
With our breath and signature.

And when this turns to ink the future happens.

I do not come with empty hands
Have winnowed and been winnowed
Have carved initials on a tree
Sap oozing through engraved words
Like weapons added to an arsenal
And trees strung with sails to catch
the juice of spring;
And so the future begins
With words dipped in flame and blood
to drip on a page
Hands holding the sun then cast in cooling water -
A vaporous template of rising smoke
The burning nib's howl, the word-hungry page.

A Stone from Glendelough

It's as if streaks of water
From the lake it was plucked from
Are still flowing in it

And its weight no weight
Nor a heaviness to be carried
From one place to another

Or that somehow it will cease
Or become what it is not
Or deny the friendship it offers

And was offered with
So that the two lakes of that place
Are now the pools I draw from.

- Soft light upon the sloping tree line
Acorns and holly
Shadows on the surface of the lake

A path meandering towards a grotto
Moss covered stones
The sense of immanence and possibility

And time not broken but continued
From where we started from
To where we had arrived –

A location, yes, but also a resolution
Aware than a new responsibility
Had been placed upon us –

Less than the weight
but more than the weight
Of a stone plucked from the lower lake
And that those waters washed the mind
To clarity and duty.

- And I cannot take my eyes from it
Nor say that I've written is untrue
Or that simplicity is complex when it isn't –
Water streaked stone and
The double weight and double love
Of this place and that other.