

Poetry Series

Thomas Rickarby

- poems -

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Thomas Rickarby(27/03/1986)

American Wilds

Her neck had the smell of an opium flower,
and she danced with the grace of a Mexican child.

Her lovers would gamble their hearts on the hour
she would brave the frontier for American wilds.

Oh, they would wait in the wings to fly south,
always coming up broke because love is a place
where you'll fall asleep safe and wake up lost.

Oh, yes you will.

So I awoke in relief in a Texas commune,
where Christians prayed for my soul to return,

they danced in circles all round the room
rejoicing for Jesus is coming back soon,
to take all of the sadness out of their lives.

Thomas Rickaby

Broke

When you have taken the last dying leaf
of your lover's script and ripped it to shreds
like the documents transcribed
by your dodgy accountants,
remember this:
the transactions of love fit badly to numbers.

Thomas Rickarby

Clearing

At first I tried to sweep aside
the forest of my thoughts.

An axe in hand I cleared the land,
slowly back to where I was.

Then I slept, a great long sleep,
where nothing moved at all.

Awaking to the bright still air,
I got up and simply walked.

Thomas Rickarby

For A Moment.

Love can be mistaken.

Like the man who jumped the canyon,
who judged the distance safe,
and whose fingers graced the cliff edge
for a moment.

Thomas Rickarby

God Exacts Revenge

After Adam had choked on the apple eve had gifted him
and was torn into the nightmares God had blessed him with,
God struck the sky like a drum.

The sound rumbled through the garden as thunder.

Then he plucked the moon from its resting place
with his left hand and rolled the light out of it
between his forefinger and thumb
so that it was reduced to a black grain of sand.

Then he nailed it to the knot
of Adams heart with a bolt of time,
where it nestled and began to tick
to the rhythm of Adams body.

Hungry with gravity
it soaked up blood with every pulse.
Adam awoke, startled,
his cells suffocating, screaming
for the air he was drowning in.
He began to retch blood
as if to save some.

Assuming guilt, and not knowing
what else to do, eve kissed him
and took the blood into her own,
where it mingled, turned dark
and sank into her womb.

Then God rested,
happy in the knowledge
that he had created love.

Thomas Rickarby

Hughes

The swarm of crows that pecked at his eyes, his heart
his throat
were attracted there, like to like.
They gathered.
The crowd, the black storm. He caught and held each
one by one, breaking their necks with a wonderful snap.
Though each he killed spawned a thousand more -
each rumped feather an inky embryo
that shook free and germinated
in its mothers blood
Myths weaved and reweaved
the population flourished
and Hughes, the great ecologist
had not enough time
to record them all.

Thomas Rickarby

Meanwhile

Whilst god slumbered in heaven
dreaming of his creation
and the snake plotted his revenge
with the abyss
Adam and Eve were sleeping
in the peaceful garden,
enjoying the respite
beneath a tree
where a slowly ripening apple
hung over their heads
like the sword of Damocles.

Thomas Rickarby

Poetry

Poetry is a fireplace to bask in.
It's warmth awakens wounds we thought
we had cauterized; A hot knife
skimming calluses and peeling back
dead skin, as a farmer tilling earth,

till it hits a vein of rock, a nerve.

Thomas Rickarby

Scene From A War Film

A girl is softly laughing at the end of the hall.
As I stumble, half asleep, to the whisky in the bar.
My wife is sending letters to her kids in Tel Aviv
as the maid brings in a trolley overstacked with hotel sheets
There's a whistle in the background,
could be a kettle out of sight.

and we all go out like lights.

Thomas Rickarby

Self

First you'll hear the pattern of my feet
as I shirk off endless streets,
corridors and caverns
to burst into mountain mists.

Then you'll know what lingers of my voice
as I sharpen your child's ear,
spin your heart the length of a phone line
or span pacific tides with a shout.

Then you'll watch the shadows of my fists
as I protest the sun and waver
from left to right, like a boxer,
aligning myself to face the light.

Then at last you'll feel my coursing blood
attuned to your own beat, like a record
spun and mixed tight to the havoc
in your chest or head.

Thomas Rickarby

Stranger

Who can say which way is back
when all signs face the way you came?
The man in the white suit walks
an eternal winding road.
He goes to nil past the two porch lights,
those lamps of God, my house, my home.

Thomas Rickarby

The Aliens

The clouds unfold across the day,
blocking out the sunlight.

A fleet of wyrd animals,
going nowhere in particular.

Sullen beasts that cannot speak,
giants of the sky.

They do not eat, they do not sleep,
they have no way to love.

When a poet pens a strangled lyric
clouds crowd out the page.

And when a person fails to talk
they've clouds caught in their throat.

Thomas Rickarby

The Vanishing Koran

Dedicated to the eight burnt dead of Gojra.

Who knew that ink and paper
could matter more than human flesh?
Perhaps those Christian boys-
who should have been accused, instead,
of helping time to pass.
As though they'd sent the cracking leaves
through every autumn, all at once.

It all leaves after time.
No less homes and people
which are too vulnerable to fire,
to holy fire that stinks of petrol,
that's bottled up in glass.

Thomas Rickarby

Tide (Old Flame)

The tide is drawn out to sea,
deep with salt, rich with weeds.
Its soon pulled back upon the beach,
beckoned by the unseen moon.

Thomas Rickarby

Timing

There's an old man sat in a waiting room
with a pain that he's not had before.
The sky outside is darkening
at a pace that goes unnoticed.

A girl stares up at the breadth of the sky.
Bored, she turns away her head.
Here to meet a boy from some time past,
who has not turned up, and won't.

Goodbye, she says, and then makes her way home.
Whilst an old man dies in a hospital.
And a doctor is struck dumb.
And a wife is asleep near a silent phone.

Thomas Rickarby