

The Western Borders

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THE WESTERN BORDERS

*Oh would I were where I would be!
There would I be where I am not:
For where I am 'would I not be,
And where I would be I cannot.*

Nursery Rhyme

IRELAND

sandycove
keel

a snicker hugged this face that lay in sand
cliffs are cruel yes cruel rock and rook of
cloud past all and Ireland a place circled
round by the sea and Ibex a creature with
horns like a goat and Ibis a bird that in
Egypt I've read was worshipped while living
and honored when dead galloped across
the laugh of it all for a light sand floor am
told to go down while hills hem dawn into

SONG

*

name my cottage Merlin
shutter it in trees
Merlin of the Dark Gate
deep calling into Sleep

a jungle
of giant rhubarb
down the snug lane
where inner
was outer

*

Enchantment like lies can alter the sight of the beholder
but not the reality of the thing seen

the rumble of a bell
the murmur of a door
the growl of a hinge
the bang of a leaf
the rustle of glass
the clash of a clock

*

the room shifted and hugged me close
the room hinted that punctual my clock forgot
the room pushed to be sitting alone
could panic in the room and strike out for the walls
which are slippery under water and slope away.

wind sucked under our skirts
a coat flew into the sea

led by a famous berserk)
 they will be spindly if crowded
led by a famous berserk)
 were hated and feared by girls at the sea-side
led by a famous berserk)
 before your knees I fall

fret harbingers

what the sea silts up

a rural scene and mischief

The flight into Egypt by Jan de Cock
then down the hill to the larder
wherein that strange Thee of Thine sat snug
and we paddled in forgotten places
and fingered the slant of your skirt

Demosthenes came striding by the seashore too
solitary at midnight and his laugh crackled like fire.

Her children will rise up and call her blessed

*

" a garden at work on a flower. "

" a canoe with a view. "

" a discreetly warped hedge. "

" a landscape languid with cattle. "

"a circular landscape with stunted trees. "

*

as wise as an (earwig, owl, eel).

as sober as a (knight, minstrel, judge).

as crafty as a (fox, cuckoo, kitten).

as bright as a (button, bicycle, bucket).

as smooth as (sandpaper, velvet, wood).

as slippery as an (accident, eel, engine).

as straight as an (angle, angel, arrow).

the up high the heather sparkled
cave
far a promontory fort
down
noone in rain the flax is black at its
base
had
ever where are we going odds and ends
down
the must go asleep and swallow the sky
massive
possibly
flew
could
see
the
Horn some pinnacle or distant point
all
over
the
room

in another part of the forest
in another part of the forest

waylaid
by words
by words
quips
hyperboles
&
mumbled incantations
by words
by groups of voices
by bells
swelling of bells

head seemed upright
head seemed cabbage

by a snicker hugged this face in sand
and swimming without fins and flying
without wings loving immense and tran
quil where standing stone and stacks
of skulls where pavements have been
worn and won back through my mother's
childhood my family trailing after to
gether when punctual the clock forgot
I am empty I felt running along behind

a pool fifteen feet deep in some places and about thirty feet long fills this final passage. In cross section it is bulb shaped with about three feet of head space between the river surface and the roof. The water is intensely chill and an inexperienced improperly equipped caver could panic and strike out for the cave walls which are slippery and under water slope sharply away from the center.

SAINT BRENDAN

words

freeze

in

icy

air

somewhere

a

star

explodes

the

Fortunate

Islands

are

two

in

number

and

are

in

the

Sea

of

Darkness

I
check
my
where
abouts
by
the
altitude
of
the
stars
against
the
rigging
and
set
out
to
summer
solstice
the
fortunate
islands
are
2
in
number
and
are
in
the
sea
of
darkness

LIFT BACK THE HATCH OF THE ARK
AND LOOK OUT

When the tremors began
I rushed into the metaphysical yard.
Paper doors bent when opened
the ground swayed like sea.
I couldn't stand
I saw that walls and houses shook
The twenty foot tower of a church
came tumbling down.
Some hid in caves
Some lashed themselves to tree-trunks
Suspended between two trees
they swung back and forth.
Part of the house began to fly away
I locked the door
and pocketed the key.
"Is so and so there?"
"And so and so?"

Our skiff was a fir log
loaded with barnacles
and other trash.
In the morning
when I looked out
So many doves
flew west of Hungry Bay
They obscured the light.

FALLEN JERUSALEM ISLAND

There is a Queen whose castle is her keep
There is a King who wears surge of the sea on his forehead
Palms that grow here have water above them
Enormous fins are stiffened on frames.

Still the brazen prophets reach down and threaten
Some remote arrant Divinity
"Stretch forth thy hand"
Such cries — As if an army shouted at once.

Does everyone stand while a Blessing is asked?
What is served for dessert?

You are lying.
I am not lying.

Down in the dimmer valleys the real doors of wood
have long since rotted away
Darkness pavilions drown darkness
Parents crouch behind transparencies of doors
They have left a light in one window
"A better day coming"
The blind doors of stone will always survive.

I hold my son by the left hand
He wears the leafy crown of Ireland
Dust we are — and dust we will return
We bring bullets, hinges, and other small gifts for the baby.

THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

Wilderness worn away for ages — only the wash of waves
Each fragile sea — a sepulchral bay
Each shallop — thin as eggshell
Reflected in glass — all things held in place — and there was peace.

Ahead through harvests of maize — perpetual night —
Or light —
Or what was —
Or what will be —

Then war parties continually went out
Trumpets, neighing horses, flags, feudal scutcheons, royal insignias
Glittering helmets startled the ancient forest
They found no treasure and wandered perpetually
from place to place
As if fury could explain away the unexplored interior.

A Stranger knocked at the door of my hut
A spectral assailant — arquebuse in hand
Behind him I saw
Nuns, priests, peasants, crusaders, practical navigators
Curious, knowledge-seeking travelers.

AT DEADLY WAR WITH NEIGHBORS TO THE EAST
NEW PILGRIMS HAVE BEGUN THEIR TASK
THE DENSE FOREST WILL BE CLEARED AWAY
THEY ARE BUILDING AN ANCIENT COLONY.

BOSTON HARBOR

scud under bare poles

"He stretched out the north over the empty
place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing."

Job 26; 7

the sea means the wide world

from such Displeasures. of Plagues
enchantments eclipses or Tremblings

of the earth deliver us.

far on at the beginning

at the edge where the Needle

lies flat or reversed a Remarkable.

what sail snow vanished over

ashore O far. a City

— Chaos
it was Order
that gave Beauty.
it was Order
from the Paw
of the Lion
and the Bear
and from the Chambers
of the Wind

— the out going

it was Order
from the Paw
of the Lion
and the Bear
and from the Chambers of the Wind
where the wild leaves turn
wild white backs to the sky
it was Order.

what sail snow vanished monuments
where vanished a Run
 ice to the indies. Staghound
 swift to equator — skysail and studding
in 13 days under
 Capt. Dumaresq pronounce it
d'merrick and Romance
of the sea

the shipyard '3 pm

the western sun at Sink
time tweaks at the Poles
 time catches queer at 6 pm
 deflective light on the lost
(where from Staghound to Glory of the Seas
 an orb of globe in 22 days)
on the lost dry bones
of the drydock dinosaur

the american strand

rare in the world, and all perills
of pyrats lashed to a sinking
 strand, out of Tempests and Wicked
 dallience we clashed
over Cause, and Effect
 ate out the Kernal.
but stone sloops still fly light in Dreams
and drowsie haunts are deep

frost fog, and sudden trembling

alto and empty
the maple, oak,
ash, and others
discuss the past.

of others and before
of wolves and woe.
Sennights swing round
in their cold clearly
and the dead stars fall.