

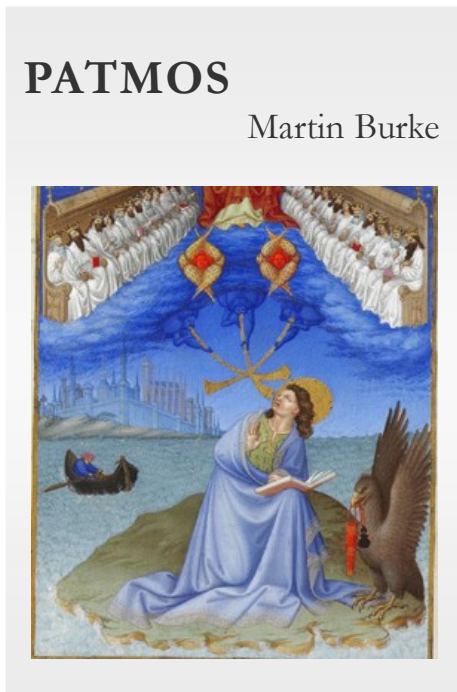
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Cover—'St. John on Patmos'
 Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry
 French Gothic manuscript

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

A carbon-dated history preceding a luminous one
 As if we were Greek enough to satisfy the world
 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 salts 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.

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

A Stone from Glendelough

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 mind enduring
 The double weight and double love
 Of this place and that other.

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
 By seeing what the world had to show
 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

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