



SCRATCHING
THE WIND
THE ANCRAM TRIADS

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Scratching the Wind

and

The Ancram Triads

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*Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! – Coleridge*

a yard full of swallows flaunting her daytime magic

Birds and downturned winter boats along the frozen river
what else were you studying all this time?
What could you forget but the obvious?
What is occult but something you forgot?

A Jocasta no longer taken for granted
a mother you have to woo orphaned by amnesia.
How right Freud was! A cowled Sun
I wrote sin
speaks: a woman we hid, subconscious in the fib of Phoebus.
This is what the branch says.

2.

Maori (God) made the first man and called him Mweuetsi (moon),
as the Southern Rhodesians say.

She made Moon not in her image but to understand her, not mirror;
mirare, to look at. Whatever you can see.

The mirror is 'gyptian sorcery (no mirror in the Tarot but look under the
table)
men with drums planting cauliflower by moonlight.

Is Heurtebise, *the monster of selfishness* standing next to you in the
elevator.

Is a Unicorn, is god looking at herself in man.

The crusty homunculus of "mind" and cultivated personality
to which the Unicorn comes as Judgement.

A man's voice and a woman's voice at once
she speaks and somehow I'm here, listening with my mouth.

You yokels might not do it but breathing in front of the white oak
is the most esteemed task.

Would rather see people I almost forgot
they imprisoned me, with nothing but trees to overhear,

The vegetal life they thought would silence me:

dreaming the fellowship of our carbon through her
(the world is the sun's skin).

3.

The iron sky plumbs
a self-floating sea
what do we know besides what stomach tells
birds quickest in the morning
at the thought of you, in the folds of the air (hear it?)
rolling over itself behind the mountain
the perpetual thunder. Hunger.

Might hold so much. Maybe if we knew what
music is, exactly how you can't hear it
until somehow.

Would you believe me if I said I could hear music?
How the trees talk with their clumsy hands all day
but the birds are what they mean?

4.

*That branchless ash, whose few poor yellow leaves
yet fanned by the water-fall!*

Chambered shadows;

a light as all the turchis
of the worlde had bene there.

The leaves lie.

Walls lurch under this skin. This stuff of Pentecost,
of mystery before meat. Mystery before meat.
Let us not be fooled I said,
waving my hand over the blood sausages.

Remember and eat of the moment,
which is a substance and the communion

of her persistent mien. The ceaseless changing
of This into That, *unde mors subiit, exinde vita evenit.*

5.

To the white beast who found the spoiled chicken on the lawn I gave a man's name, for she goes under cover of night. *Itzcuintli*, in Nahautl: the white dog of the calendar, who carries us across. You know what. They say the dog of the Seven Sleepers followed the footsteps of the good and became a man [Saadi]. Sir Launcelot, because she is one away from Sir Galahad, and the white beast is Judgment, and loss of virginity, and the sun unaware her strength in love but love's awareness of itself. All at once, vacillating: retaliates and adjoins, prowling here in diminution. Snorts at me and returns to her equivocal liveness.

Wolf feet and a panther's tail, a man trekking across the snow leaves two sets of footprints how does that story end? I wrote who. But no one ends. Only changes, I walk out of the sea as someone else's uncle, under cover of olive tree strip myself of kelp- but my footprints are wet forever. Was uncle who told me grace the snow with a chicken and *your necessary animal*.

6.

Of seer and seen
one is the discourse
and its eloquence
is happiness, or vice versa
just say it like it is
who's on those feet today.

Pine needles or particulars,
the myth of me is metaphor enough:
ducks bob through the grief-stricken corn
on the suffering side of Stissing Mountain,
order espresso they give you LavAzza
dogs and cats mate in the old
church how much can I say
until you stop listening
how much need see-

will I be absolved?

The feet of night is a formal decision
stalking at noon

how much breath-

I'm grass
listening to your feet
they never loved me
but in nearness.

*... I said to him: "Your excellency," (he had the rank of a general)
"please explain to me why Yezidis cannot get out of a circle."*

*"Ah, you mean those devil-worshippers?" he asked. "That is simply
hysteria."*

*... and then he rattled off a long rigmarole about hysteria, and all I
could gather from it was that hysteria is hysteria.*

Everything we do is hysteria. Reverberant complicity in the ring of waters. Devil of matter our fallen middle-man. *Spirits of the lower air* they used to call them, and called us worse, parading our *devil's nests* clothes through the megachurch humus.

How to erase the ring, and take me with it! How get to the other side of the simplest matter. You run your hand along the curvaceous paten of middle-earth, *as soon as you can see a squirrel's ass*, as the French say, high-tailing it from the dawn of your measure. Heaven is the end of my table.

7.

You know what happened to the nights
I was crying in my room
I was far away remembering
the northern tree, I was closer to you
than you are, waiting for my owl
telling fortunes to pass the time
the things we dare to care about!
All the while weighing what's there, a red sash
in your pocket, weighing necessity, have you
feeling enough for these objects
the hedges and fences one vanquishes
you sprint across the Veronese lawns
overcome the olive trees
Lady at the end of matter, too late
I try to tell you as much that fate is secondary
to the necessary motions one's angel
undergoes your true love will die of poison
in the estrangement beyond this room.

And can only hope
this travel resolves itself in her
and the imaginal continuity
of space, the rock wall to windmill
of what you feared were digressions
is a Pythagorean coitus, so much iron
plumbing itself, for which
what measure but perspective
the river pours directly from the sky
striding a sexy feldspar up the driveway.
I will go on talking forever, as we do
conjuring the silverware for love of each other.

8.

Your true love will die of poison (are we any wiser?)
if you ever stop talking, ever dare to think you made it
across all those lawns and shrubberies those Keepers of Space. Who?

Is the god you wrestle, the pen
withers my leg I give you a fiefdom.
I am Jacob, whose wives and servants
crossed the ford of Jabbok and I returned

why did I ever go back! to wrestle with the luggage
the face of god, there is always this matter between us
My name is Israel
the wrestler

of this inexhaustible stuff, I spend the ink of night
understanding: things are the keepers, godling, angel
I moon until mercy,
is that dawn's name
if it bless me, and I let the angel go?

Finally just another man with wives and sons
no more to say than a flock of black sheep?

But I cannot be cured of this.

*If the biblical libido
cannot become aware of itself
how will it ever cease to deploy
its biological wanderers
among the nipple-trees?*

did they make me play alone too much?
I never knew how to play.

A motor-memory pleased by vegetal engines
I learned to have the last laugh, all the time.
Dawn and dawn again, reentering an imageless dream
to *finish it, be done with it*. Never wiser.

9.

Get up, or it has all come to naught
said the voice this morning. At the
command of dream, she has her way with me
impetus of day the rotten tomato I threw

into the night I now lasso from the roof
of the shed with an extension cord
her radiant, telluric, day is all dream
has to say the words are her

that interprets my night. A blotch of
red in the white where is the crow like
unto my lady's hair whose blood this is
her blush but crow has gone from this.

The imperative is everything.
The confusion of first light and skin
brings speech, taking advantage of electricity
that angel, extension cord, coming through the window:

get up, or it has all come to naught.
Who speaks that way, but the primacy
of writing, electricity, who taught me
taught tree, taking advantage of eloquence:

beheld, followed, she sequels
in the *en passant* mountains:
recklessly I makes my way.

You'll have to stumble over many birds to give her an answer.

10.

I was Jacob smashing my foot in the dark
a heavy chest of saffron ordained my voice.

I bless the underthings into day.
I anoint my pillow with olive-oil.
I grow a beard-
bridge from head to heart and understand her
in this service: olivaceous and footsore

I arrive on the wind, sitting on your porch. An old man bruising his eyes
on the distant blue mountains: touch him and he'll sing your name, only
it sounds like the rustling of leaves of footsteps trailed off in a widow's
parlor. You forgive him the impertinence and he shambles away. Like an
old widow forlornly caresses the tea things he looks back. You decide
right then- and call out to ask him what he thinks as he disappears into
the drapes of your heart.

You see a cat (you, who are so perceptive!) sitting atop the crusted-enough
snow on the summer-table next to the old man's vacated seat. A woman
walks briskly around the corner of your house emitting palatal clicks and
cries Lenny! oh Lenny! She smells strongly of Frankincense and satin. She
smiles, just slightly, showing you long cuspids.

And after you have shown these great and marvelous things (though you
haven't seen people in months) what is to be learned, or from any of those
heart wrenching somewhat suburban scenes that do happen. You put your
hand on the knob to enter the inner-patio cool to the touch and curious
with cracked lacquer. You've always wanted to survey this knob, yet knew
its beauty was so complicated you would get lost forever if you dared. But
now the reflective zinc alloy stud blinds you, as if an encased sun
streamed from the pole of this fussy ceramic globe. You close your eyes
and let your candid fingers stumble over the hieroglyphs of mottling as
their size begins increasing to the touch. How big can they get?

Does this acute touch-light cast the shadows of trees,
let roam the raven shaped DNA of light itself across my heart?

Who *is* that next to you, asked Rachel.

This is *your* wooden trunk, Jacob answered.

I thought *I* saw *it* was a woman, and her eyes *were* of unbroken fire.

Civilization is things, said Jacob. *Both man and God*, rejoined the
[angel .

11.

You drove and I
ogled the trees, and we did other
things- we looked at apples together
I love you with your presence

birds born from the shadow of the Simurgh:
I sing the shadow of your shoes your
feather I hear they keep in China sing from
its shadow on my heart you put up with me.

A beat of silence. Did you hear it?
Language goes on knowing without me
talking to you, since forever, silence means
I've gone away, that idiot standing in your light.

Let the shadows speak for themselves.
My hand is a Greek permission
a flock of birds you mistook for your contour
then mistook for you, and watched it fly away.

12.

(Light-Transcription:

*What's a loose thread
in the chance of everything?
I'm not from here, but you follow
me anyway a pagan through Christendom*

*something happens and I give your father
a flower, a featherbed, he's Kamehameha or
king of Maori who cares let the logic induce you
stone hewn from a white scream*

*I too am a virgin, I mean
I don't remember knowing anything but this
place I've never been being the trees I never
touched the squirrel in the wall...*

(A Unicorn:

**Lo, Dexter! the stylus-
Her garden
transcribed with night
glyph of her motions.
And from the window**

**a homunculus running towards me across a field of snow in full-
[moon light. A bi-
pedal, compact leopard, a square ball of muscle.**

**Because in a moment of weakness
I had sought Heraclitus to justify my findings,
sinned against reading, made her monster,
a leopard vengeance broken out of the sun.**

**Tricked from virginity
fallen into matter
I know something different, other
Light streams under the door**

of all I've dared
to see, to say she's something else.

as *Something else* then, she comes.

I smash the instruments,
stain leopard skin with ink-record, open the sea-locks. Rags in the dirty
world, I lisp you her secrets on an unnumbered street, until they let me
back in.

13.

It is all for lack of wheels, when the Solar Wheel is Taranis, Jupiter or Roma, swarthy, suspicious beneath their cloaks clutching scandalous rondure. Daring to touch. Their wheels catch the Adamic hay, *standing and fallen* Williams calls it, anything but description, standing in the skin of the soul, sun-huddled, unpaired from what one is. *Standing and fallen*, language in its trenchant drift to thee, it is the wheel-people who savvy, patteran the very leaves, who dare to tell us what everybody knows. Black as clouds, blown where be what may be, I've heard the movements in their banter, as if the speaker had jumped from the tower and the angels on the pavement ran from a directionless menace (*excuse me for existing*, they politely say). I've heard the voluptuous map of motives deploy its lambent delegates in the simpleton's simplest sentence, and I've seen him forgiven, so long as he kept talking.

The freedom of motion twins its stationary contender. I finally get a car. Wheel grace for god-thought, I cup my left breast, I sit still and go everywhere, catch earth up into new wholeness I dare, despite myself, vociferate wheel faster than contradiction. Manta ray, sky's jaw I wheel forward, am not her but the four horsemen of. In her attention cruise recklessly through the deer-trails, wind-paths, local fates of rust and mold and beloved mosses. Now must I love you from afar, no longer imprisoned and no longer among you. I caress you with the tenuous hands of this radiant metal reflector, mingle light on the just waking trees, they call out my name. Jacob!

Vainglorious man, who mistook grace for triumph, and thought to be the sun itself, until your hands were full of nonsense. The words move to their place in a sentence not this one leaving landscape to call your name, a wheel in your hand to remember that other as it sinks into the earth, is interred among the vegetables, dragon waiting for some hapless farmer, waiting in your ice-box to unearth her.

A sentence not this one but of motives and motions alone. Half submerged, *standing and fallen*, the apeiron is things, misplacing us. Jutting into the world, a branch ushers you through the door it is, that simple enough letter.

Does that make sense enough? But things are resolute, as we fawn and fail and confuse, staggering angels, never knowing what is but in. Until it meets the cool knowing water of you, the *standing* water.

The Fisher King

Note:

The unromantic solitude which had inspired the vegetal commiserations and the communications of some previous pages ceased to be heard. Whatever imperative those perceptions had answered required new form in my alterity. The day after finishing *The Fisher King* I walked (slid, fell), with my friend Emma, half across the Hudson, from the Barrytown tracks out to the island just short of mid-way, on the near side of the ice-breakers.

At first the pine-cone I desired from a tree there, that I had made up my mind to retrieve days before, would not remove; and I struggled with it, until, uttering some supplication, the sky drew up, the frozen expanse around, and the shore-trees and rocks, and the tree to which I addressed myself (the first time I had touched a tree in months!) - these things replied. Not by moving or listening, but offering themselves, as testament, as they were, they were offered up in the space they embodied, yet in answering unheeded of it. So it came off easily in my hand, and Emma was surprised. Retrospectively, this is all I ever really wanted to say.

THE ANCRAM TRIADS

1.

Doors bang in the Victorian house
of unpeopled Ancram, a thousand rooms
unable to place her

but the necessary motions.
A Scotland of the mind
fact fleshing

the footsteps that never left
return. Strain towards this
love and a clammy palm, a tree

out of nowhere answers.
A saving grace, as they say
without this tree no sky is:

the leopard prowls
at the feet of his mistress.
What more direction.

What more could I give
but ghosts, those delegates
of the middle. Wine glasses

of water forgotten
on the mantel
you drunkenly miracled.

I do not want to say
the world is structured
by a domesticating love

though some fork
of the rhythm in me
likes to lie, manqué

against the breath, moon
a house-cat deployed
from an empty house.

2.

Hysterical to amend
the relation:
combed from thee!

*

Wives' disease
dis-ease
catch myself

*

water from the tap.
I am that empty chair!
I am that glass of water!

*

Poured from the civic dust
I want to be you
gracing what is.

*

Blue dusk in
from clouded glass
I keep a religious distance.

*

Now intrudes
the fretted trees
inhale you and sigh.

*

Think no further.
Make not doggerel
of the delicate wood of distance.

*

The white saucer
in the drying rack
as the sun drives over it.

*

Discourse of what one isn't
the loving condemnation of this
spoon against my sin.

*

Sun
wets through the dust
but never breaks it.

*

An eye for an eye
the predicate strums a
phony distance.

*

A bead of sweat drawn
by the sun through the
windshield.

*

Practicing real time
I honor your numbers
and betray them.

*

Parables or lies
nothing's harder
than rhyme.

*

The jar
on the hill
remains unanswered.

*

A face trapped in
another world's heaven.
How can you trust music?

*

Angel of Through.
Day's lives.

*

What my rhyme says.
The clue. You lovely guess
of the plangent sea.

*

Tanager hops onto the rim
of my vocabulary, a desire.
A crimson door.

§

Dymaxion misunderstanding
a man wit cement shoes
sunk away into the aria of my love.

*

Ditched body in the voice,
Boss. Pluck open your doors:
Bluebeard is architecture, sunk in.

*

First things, that
old story, *arche*, placate
idol for luck. Give the walls something.

*

Tobacco or corn
the red mother
parthenogenesis of joy, beans.

*

Minimus:
the tiny hands of everywhere;
giant buried in the water-table.

*

Under high sun the flotilla
peaks the vocable crest.
Beans I'll be.

*

Prick across the real
wood with joy
at the passing trees.

*

Brother fire
in the burning field.
Brother Can't-Help-It.

*

What is surrounds
itself topologizes cymbals clash
around Directionless Tower.

*

Crests rib the cage of sight
of lions and torches answering
significance. Whose?

*

Whose land am I in
that thrushes and roars.
What war parted this rain?

*

Clothes for an invisible
king. Voice of
a thousand mouths.

*

Thirty birds
are what
they seek.

*

Your castle is a dissimulation
of birds, I said
o Fisher King,

*

the city crawls narrowly,
your doors are workmen
of ever-flowering desire.

§

You never asked
what things are,
someone chastises.

*

The dawn mocks you
and is the intimation of
a wound closed by the music

*

of what the hell is that:
unhesitant
to its questioning.

*

Mystery of matter
you have to use your words
but that story never ends.

*

Words parade
to harrow with apples
the old eating sin.

*

Say the thing
to where it hurts
o infrequent of the city

*

you must live in the city.
The Kundry of her image:
kiss away the cognizance

*

of cognizance, the hell of us
back to the other
the beautiful in the garden.

*

Nothing happens but being
healed by silence
saying our sameness.

*

Drawn in, pleasure answering
careful of the significant loss,
of words washed up

*

those ever-bleeding relics
shored on the known
we call story.

*

Answer, answer
not reflective pool
but pools reflecting each other.

*

Whose blood this
broken rain, martyrdom and happiness
riddled.

*

These ganglia of space
wounding us a double-wound
beyond blood's untrust.

*

It takes all my heaven
to get around here
the doors have changed.