

THREE RELICS

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"ABSTRACT"

for 'Three Relics' by John McAuley.

In the three series of poems constituting this collection, I have tried to develop poetic forms capable of evoking a number of dilemmas concerning the past and its significance with respect to the present moment. First the grandeur of the past formed by history exerts a continuous ironic pressure on the present moment, but the irony is double edged since if the past has all the grandeur, the present has all the actuality. Secondly these poems reflect on the ordinary assumption of continuity which history gives to the past, and that our experience of the present is by contrast discontinuous, and on the paradox that the past, as experienced as present must have been equally discontinuous, despite the threads of awareness running through them which would ultimately draw them together. Thirdly, there is the paradox involved in the only way the past can be known as experiences in the continually changing colour of the present. And to render the past in these terms is to reflect the past in the actual way we experience it.

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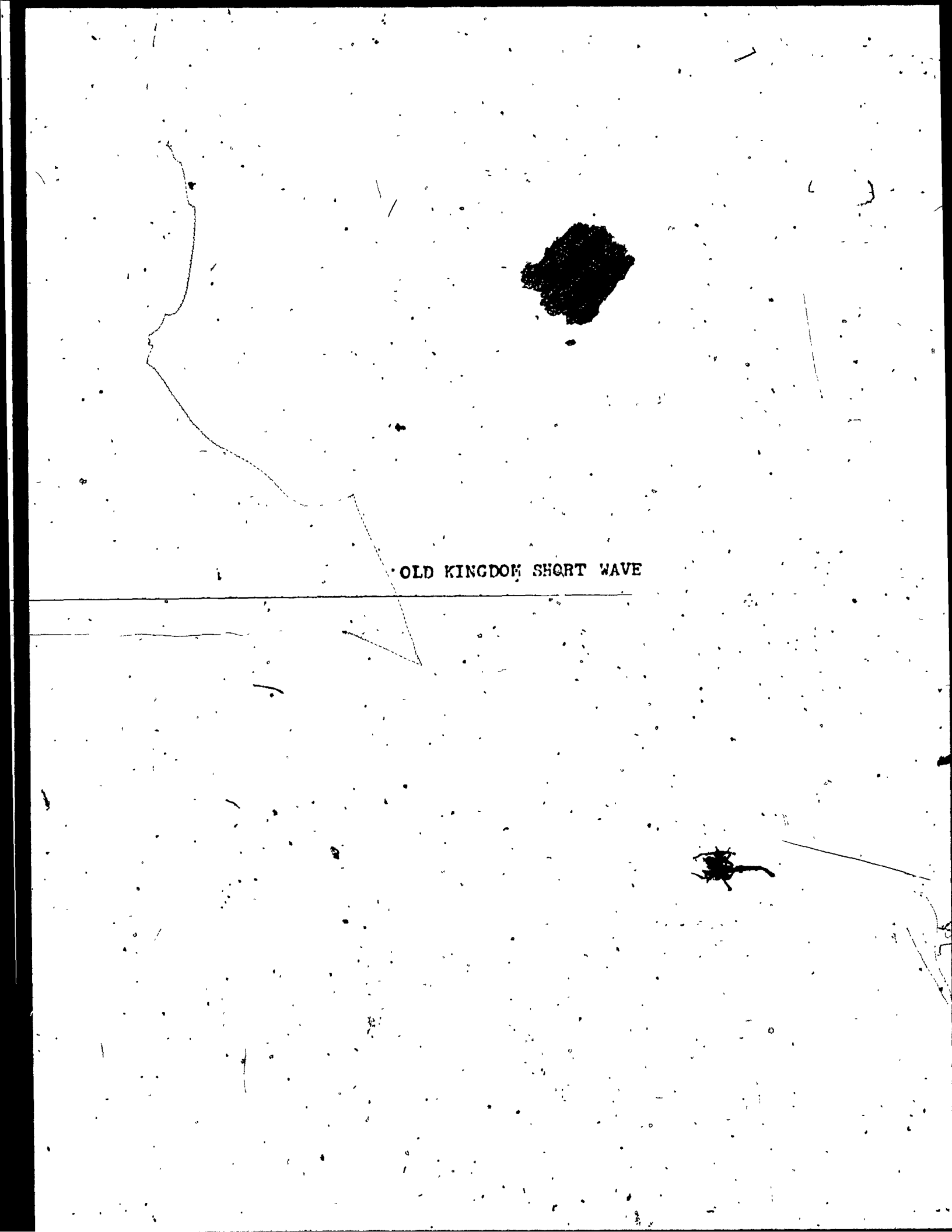
Acknowledgement: several of the poems  
contained herein have appeared on  
the pages of ANTHOL 3

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OLD KINGDOM SHORT WAVE

1.

BY WAY OF AN INTRODUCTION...

a common man might wear  
a false beard

surely

pharoah would attach  
a lion's tail to the small of his back

FROM THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE...

there are many strange devices  
in the buildings  
of Egypt

Hero's steam engines  
can raise monuments.

## OUT OF SIGHT...

on your left  
you'll see that tomb

definitely looks like a space craft  
something right out of tomorrow

with a capsule riding on top  
ready to rise from shadows  
at the base of the mountain

a fuel line from a nearby swamp fills  
its tanks with prayers

(follow me -please)

where it splashes down

there is an island &  
sand bar in the river of elysium

that must create  
one heck of an undertow

your attention  
ladies & gentlemen

the countdown has begun  
with yesterday now shaken  
into fragments



4.  
YOUR ROVER REPORTS...

to take a grain  
from one desert

is the beginning  
of another &

a beginning of the end  
of the first

according to the laws  
of conveyance

crossing all this sand  
i meet the expense  
of the universe  
in each footstep &

you become an egg  
~~breaking~~ open before me

easy over

frying in the sun

if

this universe was  
all fire

)you &  
i would be wordless & done

## CHANNEL RUN...

ten bees zip home  
over infinite ears of corn

& sky leaks slowly  
below the evening star

& most men wash down dreams  
with beer

the bitter & the sweet seep  
thru our pores

but the scribes  
it seems have no time for songs  
the rest of us hear

they work silently  
in corners

everywhere

to keep our stomachs from rumbling &  
our granaries filled & emptied  
by their books of plenty

6.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR...

be ready always  
to make your report when

you enter the council chamber where  
each petitioner advances  
a seat at a time

this dynasty is governed by music  
from the cross-flute & nay.

## ON THE PROGRAM SCHEDULE...

sister & brother love  
the scent of Punt

from the gulf  
by the turquoise sea

ah the prerogative  
(  
what a servant can see)

siblings incessantly grunt  
like cats stuck together

trying to come  
apart

all night in heat

## A. QUINTESSENTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT...

makers of the secret  
of all the royal words

pass from house to house  
in pharoah's palace

at a distance

reception degenerates  
into background static &

all movement is disguised

so the living & dead are distant neighbours

see how still  
in death

pharoah appears  
to lie

## SONG OF SUPPLICATION...

what is the instrument to pry  
lips open in this land?

where flesh bear-hugs bones  
to the holy horizon of skin

old kingdom short wave beaten  
out by yellow bands &

(eyes to dot..

solid flecks on the pupils

the ocular is not a blindfold  
though sometimes a well of tears

clear drops roll  
down your cheeks

let us taste (them)

we dance fast  
because of finitude

an ankh holds a sun  
on brown hands &

a dozen gods sit  
frozen in seats

some stag line

airline passengers hijacked  
to a sycamore table set by a priest

drugged with laurel fumes &  
the clouds rush away

Aten's  
hot disc handjives arc light &

long wave smoke threads  
thru the air

tying up the news

spend one thousand hours  
listening to oldies but goldies.

from somewhere:

Book of the Dead

Ani, lead singer backed up  
by super groupie Tutu

have been trying to sell it all  
for 5,000 years

## NUMBERS GAME...

we count the floods &  
seasons by the multitudes

in birdland where  
each bird sings alone

clearly out of emptiness  
across the sky where

souls hatch from the dead &  
fly away

(Audubon would have  
made it very big in Egypt)

you are allowed to sit  
in the presence of the gods &

you may sit before them  
adoring each moment &

they are wiser for it  
with each illumination &

there are 12 changes of the sun  
each day &

7 ways to bow  
down to pharaoh

the mask of death will be torn away  
& our faces shall reflect eternity

that we should co-exist  
is proof enough

reason begins to sink  
into the ground

we can demonstrate the law of triangles &  
the force of a nature two-thirds the way

down



at the temple of Ammon  
there is a spring

that is cold thru the day  
but warm at night

remember

when you make your bed  
that the heavens have been  
stretched thin

breathe  
everything  
in

without this respiration  
there can be no salvation

even across this land:  
of the detached & isolated eye

at last

darkness appears

a blue field with 7 staggered rows  
of yellow stars hung over the prow

of a boat that floats  
up the lazy stream &

the boat takes  
down the flags

the word god symbolized by a flag  
a kind of pennant

on top of a mast  
towering over the sand

## BABY FACE...

the eleven pylons slide/by  
oh my they are  
a story in  
themselves

as the pyramid texts  
like chain letters keep  
getting slipped around &

you know what happens when  
the weak link snaps

(a noose to end any rebellion).

among  
the tall &  
narrow signs

superstition is far removed  
from the fact of fate

even flames contain the gases  
of their own extinction

poor Osiris

private parts exposed

look

he is cut  
with canals &

great statues are dragged  
across his skin

where

the mind freely projects.

it is a matter of readiness

in other regions

there are various tribes &  
breeds of beasts

now

Osiris has been dressed  
in baby jumpers  
with feet

he looks as snug as  
a bug in a rug

standing beside him

Isis wears a lotus flower  
on her forehead

(royal jelly for the queen &  
even a queen lets her hair fall  
before the deities)

i see

Isis is a good 2 inches taller  
on her bare soles

even though

Osiris is crowned  
with a ten-pin  
on his head

## NEWS FLASH...

there is an electric odour  
of ozone

in the burial chambers of our dead

(where we encircle the bodies  
with networks of coiled cloth)

& the stars feed  
on this ether

to burn with the brilliance  
of a clear sky

but even stars dim  
one by one &

we paint them  
on the vaults

in the shadows

& the dead shall pass  
over the stars

\*

we slip back  
into ourselves

easily

the way we set out  
to prepare a perfume of marjoram

the way leaves darken  
under cover of a hollow cloud

the way this harmony shakes the limbs

sunlight returns  
trickling almost to the roots

something however

escapes the scent of detection

if the sun was everything

but we cling  
to the flow

a plasmic wind  
from the poles

## TRAFFIC SITUATION...

the sailors that come  
from the Great Sea

men of: Kefa & Asebi have been stoned  
by the sphinx on the ever shore where

the waves roll under the sand &  
motion generates matter

from the shore  
watching the waves matters

Canopus  
it appears

disappears

with the morning dew

a stone placed upon another  
is a sign of order

eclipsed by the plans  
of our architects

eyes right & the nation rises  
to attention

Ra's smile gives us colour  
look at the nubian &

there is music on the radio  
that heliopolitan sound can

be heard passed Thebes  
all the way to Memphis

green signs along this expressway:

MEROE  
NEXT 3- EXITS

& just beyond:

18.

USE HIGH BEAMS AT NIGHT  
6TH CATARACT AHEAD

THE GREEK POEMS



A BASIS FOR INTERPRETATION

take them all  
with a grain of salt &  
rub it in

every blessing is worth  
counting

THE FIFTH LETTER is a face  
with a chinese slant &

(everywhere)

those tight lipped phoenicians  
must have been surprised

how the hell did they ever invent the alphabet?

men of sidon & tyre robbed  
by the greeks,

look

at gamma grounded.  
in an epsilon freeze

some line-up

while the chinese multiply  
low profile

& the yellow race is  
not powered by purple sails

A POINT has no magnitude  
truth to make play fair

so euclid sharply propagated  
inserting his stick in the aegean sand.

(a point of order, yes)

each line is a lie of adjacent points  
meeting on a serious locus...

the whole being greater than the sum.  
deductions get drawn from

now

there are over 800 million chinese  
that's more than euclid could  
ever shake a stick at

FEET NOTES

-for the gadfly

old soc who had a fear  
of finding himself

lost in a crowd

IN THE LAST ROW of seats  
at epidarus you can hear

every word of 'the clouds'  
"oh socrates  
socrates"

a character fires  
up the audience against the old man

aristophanes did not write  
with a code of tasteful approval  
in mind

he wrote to kill

while sappho wrote for love  
long after helen had been the trojan prize

now even here  
in montreal

greek women take to 'black at 26'  
going from childbirth  
thru the menopause  
in 36 dark hours

what power that culture has-

in china

(contemporary dark horse culture)

people do not kiss in public but  
refer, however, to each other as

-comrade-

mao, it is whispered  
lost his sex

when he became a diety

not, that socrates would have made an offering

SOCRATES CHOSE HEMLOCK  
to athenian corruption

oh socrates you'd like this-

the potential of communication realized  
when ydigoras fuentes appears  
on guatemalan t.v.

el presidente asks  
his ministers: "did you steal  
from the treasury?"

(each rises & performs:)

"no el presidente, i did not steal  
from the treasury"

another time

a rumour spreads by mouth  
around the capitol:

"el presidente is an old man  
he can't get it up"

so fuentes goes on t.v.

skipping rope & juggling indian clubs

getting it all up

the trick of giving the crowd  
what it wants

at great expense.

a red chinese satellite spins thru the sky  
while a 100 million peasants tune up  
with transistor radios  
in mud huts below

(all this was funnier

before

1 began to stick  
my tongue in the cavities  
between my teeth)

No. 5

a taxi driver leaned  
on his horn  
to raise the alarm

the family across the street were first  
to appear on the sidewalk

with suitcases in hand &  
whispering in cantonese

(survival quiet in mind)

it's the cooking  
all that steaming rice & fish  
oriental style boils down to:

flame, flood & famine

now

turning red as dawn breaks  
with a chorus of reels  
making up park avenue

above us all  
as if on stage

the old lady from athens pulls  
a black shawl across her shoulders &  
cool as a melon exits like a heroine  
from a tragedy

back off the porch  
into the burning tenement ah-

it was nearly curtains

but she was rescued by the police



No. 6

how green that valley became  
around katmandu

& all things flow  
so heracleitus says

forget the golden section

put the himalaya's on peloponnesus &  
she'd sink like a stone

old stoned heracleitus trying  
to listen to the sound of rolling tears

eyes glazed  
like ice

remember

the top of that mountain

don't mistake prayer flags  
for service station pennants

on temples  
in nepal

THE FOURTH DIVISION

"the enemy will not be  
able to move an inch  
on our maps"

\*generalissimo chiang kai-sek

THE GREEKS SMASH thru the center  
of the persian line  
the ball game over  
in one battle &  
xerxes loses his crown  
during a sudden death affair  
today

the world stands on persia  
carpets brought out in train  
"dash-be-dash"  
the curse of the cursing caravan master  
for good reason

when lead dromedary & driver are half  
way to the moon

"dash-be-dash"  
some camels kneel  
in an attitude of prayer

as the last rider wheels in his tracks &  
heads back over the dunes

to return in several days time  
with an explosive expert

who will disarm hidden mines  
buried in the sand

xerxes turned back to asia  
after burning his bridge

only to be stabbed  
i presume from behind

watch where you step  
on a persian rug

x -marks the spot

GENERAL ALEXANDER marched  
 as far as bactriana to die  
 unvanquished in battle

from a scourge of microbes  
 that sent a fever to fry  
 his nicomachean brain &

why did the chinese army stop  
 short of spilling across the deccan plain?

india twice saved by default  
 where summer days steam above a 100  
 in the shade

greek roasted in china &  
 chinese boiled off in greece

a different kind of violence

the works of one age prohibited  
 in another

out of true patriot's love  
 from glowing hearts

IMPERIALISM endangers the species:

the dalai lama has flown &  
the minotaur has fallen

into the labyrinth  
of the extinct

china & greece stealing nations

(sheepishly)

then creating bare faced lies  
for legends thru out time

even the snowman has retreated  
to the caves

leaving footprints  
that spread the word  
beyond the islands

where the sea becomes  
many voices

& truth flies

let each man be  
the passenger of his own mind  
rather than the flight of some pidgin fancy

## TWO COSMOGONIES

those were the days-

greeks crazy about drapes &  
sure each new discovery  
was an ancient secret  
revealed a peep  
at a time

THALES OUT in his lab  
under the stars calculating

falls into a well &  
the air turns blue

thales rescued finally  
by a sleepy maid servant from thrace

a new girl in the district

(thales wish almost come true)

& she hadn't heard of his nocturnal habits

"you so eager to know  
what goes on in the cosmos  
can't see anything at your feet!"

she yelled &

greek astronomy lies  
tripped up for 219 years

below all those stars

there are more chinese humming:  
'the east is red'

when they go to bed  
than visible heavenly bodies

moist points like venus' nipples gleaming  
as she steps from the waves

HOMER FELT the world  
was a huge flat disc

aristarchus proved his braille  
was wrong in illuminated prose  
without the aid of a telescope

(walk a crooked mile & still get home)

copernicus sat there  
saying, "i spy with my little eye"

& suppressed credit due  
to aristarchus

your head would have spun

at 6 i used to spin around & fall  
to the ground &

wonder if a hole would drop  
me to china

overhead

the man in the moon has slanty eyes  
that gaze down on: north, south, east, west &  
center

somewhere between peking & canton

the people's army is digging the revolution  
back underground

in order to lead it into light fresh air



## A LAPSE INSPIRED BY MEMORY

History can present a problem  
of some magnitude  
when spelled  
with a capital 'H'

but to end a poem  
with a question

leaves nothing taken  
for granted.

I AM MOST CERTAINLY NOT a philosopher king  
cave dwelling would give me arthritis

plato

i have read you many times &  
don't pretend to understand  
though building a poem as surely as a civilization  
is a state of words & mind

the particular is greek to me  
in the way it dissembles like the tortured path  
to the general.

& i am no smart fox  
the grapes lie forever beyond reach

where aesop the lesbian was taken  
to the top of a cliff near delphi  
to be killed for running off at the mouth

"grant me one last wish", he asked  
"let me embrace my executioner"

& aesop clutched the man &

both toppled over the edge

aesop is my kind of republican

show me the white cliffs of dover &  
i might pull you over

on top of me?

THERE ARE 3 PATHS in greece:  
 overland, up olympus or  
 down thru the caves

easy to get there

as easy as transmigration or  
 transmogrification

(entelechy could put  
 us all into heaven)

it is time to use your magic

aristotle

do you know  
 about the party gods in china?

lin piao has been purged  
 his soul wings to a chinese lantern paradise

like a moth drawn to light  
 at the feet

of the eternal chairman  
 in a kind of sparta

but where is the chinese hell?

in the dark canyons of wall street  
 full of occidental demons wearing white shirts & ties

easy to get to wall street  
 these days  
 even if you're chinese

it is time

to shed some illumination, aristotle

the greekling tongue will not transmute  
 it lies buried in translation

that man WITH HIS BIG MOUTH  
putting everybody down on papyrus

we remember the greeks  
but forget

they were liars

the biggest liars in  
all recorded history

which is bunk (&  
mostly unearthed?)

ah

go fish

inside busts of mao  
stuffed like fortune cookie

for rice paper words that lie  
hooked like herodotus

THE ACTS

sturgidity is not to be confused  
with the erect which penetrates  
to the very art  
of perfection

TO SIT with agammemnon  
around a mycenean fire

some iron age king

he could swing an axe  
with the best of them  
in peace or war

(this

all before:

beware of  
greeks bearing gifts)

when the pump of a man's arm  
was all the presence needed

a hand as good as a word &  
clasp that reaches across time

a blade is swift  
in sure hands &

the tree falls  
sharply to the ground

TO KEEP THE FAITH &  
swear by you

even now in  
this sick society which is ill  
on land

thru the air &  
spilling over the seas

the best medicine is service &  
will make blood brothers of all men

(amen) oh hippocrates

we learn  
from the east

about smiling patients  
unatherized on tables

during major operations &  
needles that can

prick us  
under the skin

43.

SEVERAL RECKONINGS

yevtushenko, i am told  
wears a watch of gold

with a wrist band  
as wide as the volga-



SOLON DID YOU HEAR  
 about the two junta magistrates  
 who tried each other?

(maybe you missed their courting &  
 the way they dropped their robes on the steps  
 of the parthenon)

on washroom walls  
 you see:

be gay gay is good

-oh boy-

it's long after the fall & we're all  
 in the age of lead

even the colussus of rhodes fell  
 like a giant stunned man taking a punch on his glass jaw &

he stayed down for the count  
 until the turks stripped him &  
 carried the pieces away to:

istanbul

constantinople

byzantium

the world has minced  
 into a 3rd rate kung fu movie

who will stand up  
 at the bell & come clean?

it's an open &  
 shut case

I WISH TO PROCLAIM  
oh bony shade of pindar

that expression has fallen  
from the contest of: nemea, pythia or

any other sacred parnassus  
to the skree of exploration

where feet become slashed &  
sore among the shards, pindar

i must tell you

the day of the amateur is gone &  
good guys finish last &

even i find myself on a slope  
of tumbling, crumbling homophones

(i did not say homosexuals, pindar

expressions of latent manifestation spread  
like bread & butter these days, i mean

the kind you eat is your bread & butter)

but i still want to scale  
the eroding face of the peak

though the slivers &  
jagged pieces escape

all counting

who can recount our tale?

EPICURUS where are you tonight?

wine it up & warble  
because tomorrow

we could end squared &  
converted for more than a touchdown

that happy exploding old greek  
died with his tongue in a slave girl's navel.

the mushroom clouds will catch  
us belly up

chinese bombs are dirty  
as the yellow river &  
made of rice paper

fireworks to light the sky &  
fry us like chicken  
in a wok

(then almond cookies)

to be there  
with a head

high among the paddies  
huddling with dragons

CONSTANTINE

you took the royal jet to rome  
with your crown & danish cheese cake

when papadopoulos threw you out

maybe you should have taken a slow boat  
to china across the mediterranean as blue  
as the proclamations of the new greek dictatorship

but papa's boys are electrifying  
all the islands & in every general store  
a t.v. set gathers dust in the window while

you, inconstant king splash  
thru high italian social circles

did you take the treasury?

(was it hidden in your consort's lacy bra  
in the name of constitutional monarchy?)

don't get me wrong

the same electric current is applied  
liberally to the testicles of students  
in athen's jails while the amerikkan 6th fleet rides  
peacefully

a stone's throw away

in piraeus harbour  
to protect the freedom of the seas

that slow boat to china would have been docked by now

in shanghai where confucius is read  
again with mao's blessing

no man is an island  
even if he makes waves

your royal majesty

WHAT HENRY HUDSON FOUND

You see there is no remedy,  
either we must double it

or before  
noon

die.

-Captain John Davis

north by north west:

Hudson was first to steer  
a ship by the dance  
of a compass needle

first to put thread  
thru the eye

later a map maker stitched his name  
with quill & ink to that river & great bay

out of pity  
rather than discovery, certainly

no Homer has sailed our Arctic Seas

.but the North Pole, Hudson sang  
is simply a point

.nothing but vanity where.  
the sun's rays shine 5 months the year &

.beyond the cold  
itself a belt of 2 or 3 leagues width

.you shall see grass not ice  
no ice then

.deep water sailing  
into the Ocean of Chin, for Zipangu where

.the palace roof was crowned  
with molten gold

53 north by 80 west:

'Discovery's small boat pitches  
along side & first mate King is hurled

near the tiller with these sick: Moore, Fenner &  
Woodhouse driven from sleep

then, the master bound  
his son John, Michael Butt & Arnold Lodlo thrown

in by mutineers  
but they appear to be men  
of ordinary complexion though 2 of them can't be sea dogs

the one barking orders looks like a cat with blue eyes  
that other is dressed in Puritan garb

-by God!  
he takes notes-

the restless ones are just tars

except the carpenter  
who simply said he would not stay  
on board, not stay unless they forced him so

taking his tool box, rifle, shot, powder, pikes &  
some meal, believe it or not, the last on 'Discovery'

all this by his own leave

a hero crystallized by disorder  
truly salt of the earth

he drops lightly  
into the shallop



mutineers smashing sea chests  
the heart of a man's possession

'Discovery's mainmast snaps forward &  
she slips over cakes of ice

beginning to run  
this high water slack

swinging sharply astern the shallop  
in tow is chopped free

the tow rope with a hiss  
a hiss hits black water

'Discovery' shooting east for  
open sea in flight

flying for England  
topsail down  
from an enemy &  
that enemy they watch is us

if we could rip our hearts  
from our throats

abandoned, this 24th day of June  
one thousand sixteen hundred eleven

8 men praying if  
it pleased God

might have Mercy  
on our souls

as we drift with sun  
in this current

pulls us  
for certain hopelessness

Thomas Woodhouse wept in the greatest distress &  
Philip Staffe persuaded him to quiet saying

there was no one on board  
who could get the ship home &

now we set southwest  
not to mainland as yet

but for the island 'Discovery' anchored by yesterday

it pleased God that our shallop beat  
over all the rocks though we found her leaking

thru the broken water &  
rode our lady in

at dusk we ate the balance of our meal & named  
this island Faith & the one to the north, Charity

for now we will tip our shallop  
at prevailing winds as a lean-to on the sand

some place we name

some place this island huddled against the wind &  
that other those choppy waves

this morning in thick bush finding  
only some berries

men speak of nothing but the memory  
of cooking & various perfumes of meat

God- it begins to colour every thought (imagine,  
bread growing on trees

trees shooting fresh loaves  
in this wilderness)

then after noon, the boy tripped  
on some rocks &

discovered vetches  
greens which we boil &

they are excellent fill  
though not succulent—

Praise our Father his son &  
the Ghost among us



Adam Moore, swollen badly on his face & arms  
being too weak to brush the demons away

died this evening  
of 13 July

he had suffered patiently &  
made a very godly end

whispering to the boy  
at the last

we laid him to rest  
on Faith's highest elevation

a bare hill, poor Moore now  
a hollow branch of his family tree

Fenner is weak but keeping Woodhouse  
in the new lean-to of cuttings

Woodhouse stews all day  
his brain seems pulped

who cares how many leagues to the coast of Ireland

Woodhouse clutching all day  
for his scraps of paper

who needs  
a mathematician now

the knowledge of that number will never carry us home

tacking with fair wind  
the shallop sails to Charity

for exploration  
each cliff there a new face

backs pulled picking berries &  
vetches & later catching 17 small fish we squint

at the horizon  
nothing but a line

nothing but mockery

you can trace  
the cobalt belly of this land

with your fingertips  
under rolling clouds

in a silence that makes the clouds seem less complete  
than the memory of yesterday

as if your fingers could pry open  
that narrows pry open the passage

that lies north by north west

right into the bite of a gale  
about 4 o'clock

we were caught & sailing for dear life  
the hull seemed as thin as an egg shell

waves crushing  
across the beach

very thankful  
to beach

alive in the undertow  
all of us standing there

upon us came heavy curtains of rain  
sudden white faces illuminated by lightning  
the loudest thunder we ever heard &

later, our quiet family of stars,  
few of them lucky }

Saturday, Woodhouse went to his death  
swearing in an outrageous manner

after the burial  
Fenner who has begun to recover his health

spent the evening discussing our plunge

Fenner, Lodlo & young Hudson shall work with Staffe  
to build a cabin while the rest will sail to the mainland  
to barter fresh meat from unknown Savages

at sunrise, the shallop set southeast, Hudson commanding

as if he still secretly desired  
that passage of his mind's eye

salty water with a western ebb &  
never closed by fog

he was stopped northeast by a spine  
of ice trying to leap from the leagues in high latitudes

& before that thwarted by a mermaid  
with a speckled tail in the Russian Sea  
whose majestic teats disturbed the crew

& after that slipped his cock-boat into that american canyon  
(3rd time the Dutch said, was lucky,) pressed on by palisades  
so much like those of his private sound

finally his explorations climaxed  
in a slap of 'Discovery' belly to belly with mud flats &

later downstream  
wild Savages streaming aboard

backs breaking the water

the Savages hurled off ship by crewmen with guns & axes  
(& after several severed hands were found on the deck)

lucky, we lost  
none of ours &

now Hudson runs for land  
already found

Hudson opened his mouth &  
saying nothing embraced his son

(maybe, dreams are still food for his thought)

last night, he promised to return  
in a month &

then said nothing

for there is nothing  
but nothing in this labyrinth &

today we pray  
for his safe return

if any Savages have ears to hear  
please Lord let them hear him



the 11th Sunday after Trinity:

on firm ground the earth was speared  
with stakes

then the frame wattled with boughs  
15 feet each wall, each wall 8 feet high then

poked holes at east & west ends  
one for light the other smoke

over our rafters layed branches &  
against each wall spent weeks rolling logs

from base to roof & finally  
stopped at 9 feet thick then

made our hearth & lately  
sank a well

as the pond we smell

Lodlo climbs the watch tree  
to watch for our shallop to pass this way &

the days pass away as we gaze  
at shrunken ghosts

of ourselves  
on this back water

though still entertaining fancies  
as if they're thick lipped whores

feasts in palaces where  
they're no mosquitos feasting on slaves

& here  
the shallop is weeks beyond its intended return &  
Lodlo cries from his perch

.great pillars of smoke dawning southeast

but there's no sign of the shallop &  
we never saw: Master Hudson, Michael Butt & John King again.

(great ball of fire: that monarch the sun has long rolled  
over-ramps of cloud &

their remains must be resting under  
ancient tangents scored in rock

punched out by a one way star,  
the meteor that made the bay.

so long Henry  
this is your way out

as the clouds have become a highway  
for this poem to rumble on)

September ended with hail & snow  
at the low door

we made a windbreak &  
spread over the earth floor, as much covering as we could  
to keep the dampness  
from striking up at our bones

we fear that without God's Assistance  
all shall be struck down this winter

we cut as much wood as we could &  
finally, fate struck off the axe head

although now, the last vetches are added to our store &  
almost continually  
we sleep now

sleep is our only refuge  
our still water

we freeze like fish & sink  
to the bottom of our souls

wading miles in waist high snow  
to tend traps we have devised as we waste away

Fenner weary & empty handed after checking lines  
crossed the pond

to save going around &  
Lodlo going around, then

nothing but a column of steam

no scream

nothing but steam rising  
over broken ice

steam circling with the wind,  
this 20th day of November &

we tried to comfort Lodlo  
from the bottom of our hearts

first day of Advent:

the sea sprouts  
eyes of ice

fixed without motion but below  
the current must flow still

even though the sky is so cold that the moon soon will set  
like a stone inset forever

the world freezes solid  
to about 10 feet from the fire

we drink melted snow &  
eat vetches we thaw

at supper tonight  
a rafter burst in a shower of bark &

some days ago

a rock exploded  
in showers of spark

leaving a cavity  
that was full of snow

before the boy could see  
the power of this cold

that could not move mountains  
but can crumble them

hard labour to lumber with wood into cabin  
as the snow is almost to the roof

so far, (& it was far  
down our lines)

we trapped 2 foxes this month,  
though one has mottled blood &

now the air is filled  
with particles of ice

very sharp & perceptible  
to the naked eye &

they sting us like mosquitos &  
raise blisters as hard as horn &  
we pick dead flesh from our gums

as if anyone could conceive  
our miserable condition

if we could conjure  
with the flames

but we are too numb &  
our love for the Lord waxes cold sometimes.

death tears a man  
thru the belly & now even the master's son  
young John Hudson is dead

so we sleep  
knees tucked under chin

at least falling asleep  
backs to the wall -

God calls us daily to prepare our souls  
for a better life in Heaven

\*Lodlo breaks into fevers &  
must be tended like an infant

this morning, the sun appeared to climb  
across a wordless distance

a weak birth  
casting no joy, no life