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## The Age of Endarkenment

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## The Age of Endarkenment

1

Then all go

to form and to lift

some words falling together / silences budding

from out what's left

have to have fallen from out what's left

no matter how meagre

no matter how lift

in the age of endarkenment / not much left

and we were a scourge and we were beloved

and we sang as we killed our way across

killing time and with our hands in the heavens

remember the winter? remember the beach?

I stood up to go with the mountains / their birds

who knew the mountains would leave here too?

the opening notes of a new symphony wending

then the seas joined in / liquid troubadours too

pulses and sea birds

all birds were once sea birds

but we don't know if dinosaurs sang songs too

2

Then hoping our signal *will have been* found in the rocks  
razor-thin stratum up the side of eroding canyon wall  
our wild chemistry transfixed  
then escape through anti-capitalist sorcery  
and emancipation from multiple time signatures  
history not free of butterfly effects either  
subsoil through stratosphere  
thin as all that / and thinking itself whole  
then quickening and compressing time scales folding  
it's the pace not the volume / whether Volvos or volcanos  
then how to separate natural from human history  
said the vine crawling tendril by tendril over bookshelves sagging  
the wall being removed so the weather gets in to read  
the event that we are / trickling this far out of Africa

3

Only such dim light as never  
will have come to have been singing  
from entropic shores  
saying if tipping points / borders  
what kind of a border?  
wind in a vacuum  
seemingly unguarded  
unless no passports / no tomorrows  
watching all in flight and still flowing  
I think swifts don't need to land on tiny feet  
how liquid we are limbs over ground gripping  
just moving so living / all moving to be living  
goalposts and targets  
then precipitous  
then absence  
no one asked for tipping points / borders  
then some did  
then money-hate  
then our hubris a golden spike in radiocarbon record

4

Think of the last trans-Saharan epicontinental transgressions of the Early Paleocene  
and the decrease in the volume of the carapace over time  
as the transgression advanced carrying the evolving association  
this incursion of the sea seems to have been of short duration  
floating algal islands and island hopping  
insects migrating / from a few meters to many hundreds of kilometers  
employing entomological radars  
then changes causing phenological shifts to host plants  
destruction of habitat and landscape fragmentation  
marine incursions and faunal reshuffling  
then the fact that we cannot exclude embarkation by vehicle  
butterflies crossing large bodies of water on ships  
moss balls called *glacier mice* migrate in herds one inch per day  
each soft squishy ball comprised of several mosses combined  
and carrying worms and water bears within  
when habitat is removed / by fire or changing climate  
then increases in emigration mortality  
then follow the route of the plants towards higher altitudes / latitudes  
plant and insect assemblages / communities / people out of deserts  
what makes people / people?  
it is time to re-examine molluscan migrations

and bathymetric difference

when the Bering Strait opened astartids and other bivalves

invaded the Pacific

then a variety of cues are used for orientation: celestial / geomagnetic /

olfactory / auditory / thermal / wave and current pattern signals

unlikely map-compass system of navigation

my friends used the stars / the desert their sea crossing towards detention

in the Cenozoic asylum

**STEPHEN COLLIS** is the author of a dozen books of poetry and prose, including *The Commons* (Talonbooks 2008); the BC Book Prize winning *On the Material* (Talonbooks 2010); *Once in Blockadia* (Talonbooks 2016), and *Almost Islands: Phyllis Webb and the Pursuit of the Unwritten* (Talonbooks 2018). In 2019, he was awarded the Latner Writers' Trust of Canada Poetry Prize in recognition of his body of work. He lives near Vancouver, on unceded Coast Salish Territory, and teaches poetry and poetics at Simon Fraser University.