

Poetry Series

**Thomas Rickarby**  
**- poems -**

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Thomas Rickarby(27/03/1986)

# American Wilds

Her neck had the smell of an opium flower,  
and she danced with the grace of a Mexican child.

Her lovers would gamble their hearts on the hour  
she would brave the frontier for American wilds.

Oh, they would wait in the wings to fly south,  
always coming up broke because love is a place  
where you'll fall asleep safe and wake up lost.

Oh, yes you will.

So I awoke in relief in a Texas commune,  
where Christians prayed for my soul to return,

they danced in circles all round the room  
rejoicing for Jesus is coming back soon,  
to take all of the sadness out of their lives.

Thomas Rickarby

# Broke

When you have taken the last dying leaf  
of your lover's script and ripped it to shreds  
like the documents transcribed  
by your dodgy accountants,  
remember this:  
the transactions of love fit badly to numbers.

Thomas Rickarby

# Clearing

At first I tried to sweep aside  
the forest of my thoughts.

An axe in hand I cleared the land,  
slowly back to where I was.

Then I slept, a great long sleep,  
where nothing moved at all.

Awaking to the bright still air,  
I got up and simply walked.

Thomas Rickarby

# For A Moment.

Love can be mistaken.

Like the man who jumped the canyon,  
who judged the distance safe,  
and whose fingers graced the cliff edge  
for a moment.

Thomas Rickarby

# God Exacts Revenge

After Adam had choked on the apple eve had gifted him  
and was torn into the nightmares God had blessed him with,  
God struck the sky like a drum.

The sound rumbled through the garden as thunder.

Then he plucked the moon from its resting place  
with his left hand and rolled the light out of it  
between his forefinger and thumb  
so that it was reduced to a black grain of sand.

Then he nailed it to the knot  
of Adams heart with a bolt of time,  
where it nestled and began to tick  
to the rhythm of Adams body.

Hungry with gravity  
it soaked up blood with every pulse.  
Adam awoke, startled,  
his cells suffocating, screaming  
for the air he was drowning in.  
He began to retch blood  
as if to save some.

Assuming guilt, and not knowing  
what else to do, eve kissed him  
and took the blood into her own,  
where it mingled, turned dark  
and sank into her womb.

Then God rested,  
happy in the knowledge  
that he had created love.

Thomas Rickarby

# Hughes

The swarm of crows that pecked at his eyes, his heart  
his throat  
were attracted there, like to like.  
They gathered.  
The crowd, the black storm. He caught and held each  
one by one, breaking their necks with a wonderful snap.  
Though each he killed spawned a thousand more -  
each ruffled feather an inky embryo  
that shook free and germinated  
in its mothers blood  
Myths weaved and reweaved  
the population flourished  
and Hughes, the great ecologist  
had not enough time  
to record them all.

Thomas Rickarby

# Meanwhile

Whilst god slumbered in heaven  
dreaming of his creation  
and the snake plotted his revenge  
with the abyss  
Adam and Eve were sleeping  
in the peaceful garden,  
enjoying the respite  
beneath a tree  
where a slowly ripening apple  
hung over their heads  
like the sword of Damocles.

Thomas Rickarby

# Poetry

Poetry is a fireplace to bask in.  
It's warmth awakens wounds we thought  
we had cauterized; A hot knife  
skimming calluses and peeling back  
dead skin, as a farmer tilling earth,  
  
till it hits a vein of rock, a nerve.

Thomas Rickarby

## Scene From A War Film

A girl is softly laughing at the end of the hall.  
As I stumble, half asleep, to the whisky in the bar.  
My wife is sending letters to her kids in Tel Aviv  
as the maid brings in a trolley overstacked with hotel sheets  
There's a whistle in the background,  
could be a kettle out of sight.

and we all go out like lights.

Thomas Rickarby

# Self

First you'll hear the pattern of my feet  
as I shirk off endless streets,  
corridors and caverns  
to burst into mountain mists.

Then you'll know what lingers of my voice  
as I sharpen your child's ear,  
spin your heart the length of a phone line  
or span pacific tides with a shout.

Then you'll watch the shadows of my fists  
as I protest the sun and waver  
from left to right, like a boxer,  
aligning myself to face the light.

Then at last you'll feel my coursing blood  
attuned to your own beat, like a record  
spun and mixed tight to the havoc  
in your chest or head.

Thomas Rickarby

# Stranger

Who can say which way is back  
when all signs face the way you came?  
The man in the white suit walks  
an eternal winding road.  
He goes to nil past the two porch lights,  
those lamps of God, my house, my home.

Thomas Rickarby

# The Aliens

The clouds unfold across the day,  
blocking out the sunlight.

A fleet of wyrd animals,  
going nowhere in particular.

Sullen beasts that cannot speak,  
giants of the sky.

They do not eat, they do not sleep,  
they have no way to love.

When a poet pens a strangled lyric  
clouds crowd out the page.

And when a person fails to talk  
they've clouds caught in their throat.

Thomas Rickarby

# The Vanishing Koran

Dedicated to the eight burnt dead of Gojra.

Who knew that ink and paper  
could matter more than human flesh?  
Perhaps those Christian boys-  
who should have been accused, instead,  
of helping time to pass.  
As though they'd sent the cracking leaves  
through every autumn, all at once.

It all leaves after time.  
No less homes and people  
which are too vulnerable to fire,  
to holy fire that stinks of petrol,  
that's bottled up in glass.

Thomas Rickarby

## Tide (Old Flame)

The tide is drawn out to sea,  
deep with salt, rich with weeds.  
Its soon pulled back upon the beach,  
beckoned by the unseen moon.

Thomas Rickarby

# Timing

There's an old man sat in a waiting room  
with a pain that he's not had before.  
The sky outside is darkening  
at a pace that goes unnoticed.

A girl stares up at the breadth of the sky.  
Bored, she turns away her head.  
Here to meet a boy from some time past,  
who has not turned up, and won't.

Goodbye, she says, and then makes her way home.  
Whilst an old man dies in a hospital.  
And a doctor is struck dumb.  
And a wife is asleep near a silent phone.

Thomas Rickarby