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.
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BY WAY OF AN INTRODUCTION...

a common man might wear
a false beard

surely

pharaoh 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 spacecraft
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
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
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
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 new.

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...
	here 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...

can.
of Men of Sefki & 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:

MEGEBE
NEXT 3- EXITS

& just beyond:
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 epidaurus 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

I 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-shek
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 KEEVY

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 erection which penetrates to the very art of perfection
TO SIT with agammemon
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 &
clap 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
unetherized on tables
during major operations &
needles that can
prick us
under the skin
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 Colossus 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 &
fray 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 athens 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
51.

53 north by E0 west:

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

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 shallot 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 shallot
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
the dog days begin

like sheep the heat herds us

very cold water there

forced all out quickly so

we have no freedom from these bloody mosquitos,

butcherflies & horseflies stinging hell

these hordes torment us

almost beyond words

though now at least it can be said

we feed on frogs

but must confess

they are hard to catch as fleas

nights, dreams escape

from this starry chamber

where we are held at the pleasure of fate

what we would throw away

for a side of beef

maybe an arm or

a leg or 2
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 shallaw 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 shallow 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 for he was stopped northeast by a spine of ice trying to leap-frog the leagueres 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 coryon (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 slant 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 shrunkn 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 mosquitoes 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 Easter 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, (and 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

Indio 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