

Notebook of Signs

Also by M T C Cronin

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the world beyond the fig

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M.T.C. CRONIN

Notebook of Signs

& 3 other small books

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Notes

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A number of poems from the book were published in *The Ridiculous Shape of Longing: New & Selected Poems* (Blesok, Macedonia, 2005), translated into Macedonian by Igor Isakovski.



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How are notebooks
born? Who throws blue lines into them.

Tomaž Šalamun
'Moss'

The arrow touches a thing in the night
that becomes its target
we are a sense
hungry for signs.

Michel Deguy
'Arrêts fréquents'

Notebook of Signs

Poetry is signs of signlessness.

Jack Anders
'Playing in the Sandbox'

Signs of a Time

We wore hats and gloves.

What might induce hankering, humour or horseplay.

Gloves without hands.

All a now thing.

Rice grew in our hair – nightly.

Squashing, crushing, squashing.

We were identifiable by our myelin sheaths of silver.

You are slung.

By the bug of the world that crawled over us.

Lie down with ice.

Frozen black feet.

The disaster is happening inside your head always.

With a head like what eyes don't see.

The world slurs to focus.

Unfocusable until the time is over.

Through your mouth.

The Three-Week Goat

For twenty-one days
the rocks made a mountain
Rue grew in clumps
under quivering noses
Three eagles – one who didn't belong
eyed the circular lives
of a horde of bees
A white flower
Yes, a white flower...
At the beginning of the fourth week
entered the stomach
of a thing with hooves
which immediately entered the sky
as if that other existence
had depended on some sureness of foot
on a certain view that had purely to do
with reality's angle
with its where-you-stand take
on survival
So a breeze continued
its sightless journey down the slope
A sheep in its second year, suddenly
saw the ilex forest

The Fragment Called Wisdom

There is a cracked stone
It is wise
There is a broken stick
It is wise
There is water, forever formless
always formed
It is wise
It is unwise
to shake the whole from its sack
of pieces
The head looks around
 at its new limbs
 and immediately starts telling them
 what to do

The earth falls
It is wise
The earth holds
It is wise
Where has the hand gone
 which once showed the eyes
 how to see the spine?

The Swimming Pool is Broken

The swimming pool is broken.
They can't make it work.
One efficient warrior screams at it from the side.
No result.
The housewife tries ravishing in it.
Nothing.
The gondolier comes up with his little commuter boat.
The mermaid puts on her glove.
Three smelly clouds offer some suggestions.
It's all hot, narcotic, lush and uncertain.
No matter.
The pool remains inoperable.
There's talk about expense and meetings about waste.
These don't stop the inevitable.
They have to throw it away.
Someone gets a bag and bundles it up.
A long period of little satisfaction follows.
Eventually comes the suggestion of a flattish-topped raceme.
For several months of the year now there are squeals of delight.
(They'd learned about instead though.
And used something else in the vase.)

Possible Cures for Beauty

Sleep faster.

Leave your memory in the war.

Love completely and perfectly.

With your poetry, override the moon.

Accompany the butterfly when it visits the flower.

Move remorse to the front of your stable.

Excise doubt from fiction.

Feast for a lifetime on the bite the ant took from the pear.

Keep trying close to your heart.

Remember that someone invented the violin.

Keep an eye out for stray heads with massive noses.

Gorge on the fluff of peace.

Feel happy and sad that nothing ever changes.

Treat fame like the ubiquitous spine of the soldier.

Rub someone in your eyes and split yourself open over a rock
for them.

Reach the gamut and repeat repeat.

Shelter in isolation.

Fill your hollow flesh with things unproven.

On a clear night, look for a single star.

Leap up high cheekbones and jump!

Describe it.

One Feather, One Stone

I'm sure Jesus
was born
in his beard

Born with
a feather
Born
a stone

Jesus could fly
Jesus could sink
He was an all-
round athlete

I'm sure Jesus
I'm sure
took the weight
of objects
a lot less seriously
than Isaac
Newton

Blue Lines

for Tomaž Šalamun

Don't race to blue
Wait for the piano
and its baby hippopotami
to leave the island
for the sea

Don't break the line
to find the dead sounds
the not-born sounds
The artist has sung
on the high roof

See the castle
switch off the horizon
That's your house
pulling magenta
on lines from the sea

Throw lines into shimmer
the fools and avoidance
The little animals
will reward you
with other colours

The Three-Dimensional Bush-Nest

the weight of a lilac sun
falls through the weather
into the three-dimensional bush-nest

small purples are born
violeta, efflatum, púrpora, ungu

they have no voices
but mouths which scream for justice
against the vestments in which
they were given birth

violeta, efflatum, púrpora, ungu

the bush squats by your hand
and burns only once in the lifetime
of every epoch