

# mark

by Duncan McFarlane

*A journeyman sets out a frame: he marks it and sets it in measure and fixture by rule and by compass and plane;  
he marks in it the images which remark the forms and the beauties of one and all;  
he marks it and hangs it in the house upon its frame;  
he hangs it and marks it and steps from the house  
(cf. Is. 44.13)*

## I. Peregrinus

*'In exitu Isräel de Aegypto'  
cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce  
con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto.  
[...]  
E Virgilio rispuose: «Voi credete  
forse che siamo esperti d'esto loco;  
ma noi siam peregrin come voi siete.»  
(Purgatorio II, 46-48, 61-63; cf. Rilke's Enzian in Gravity's Rainbow, 'Beyond the Zero')*

*'When Israel came out of Egypt,'  
those spirits all enchanted as one voice  
each written word that follows in that psalm. [114]  
[...]  
And Virgil answered: 'You may well believe  
that we are quite at home along these shores,  
but we are all just strangers passing through.'*

Were we not all  
from somewhere else,  
in a house of exile,  
in a place of strange crowds:  
sanctuary in a name,  
deliverance in a hand—

when every sea arose  
and set the winds adance;  
the mountains skipt like rams  
and the little hills like lambs.

What moved you, ocean dark as wine?  
You hurricane, against the shores?  
You mountains, that you skipt like rams?  
And you little hills— like lambs?

and when I see  
the mountains fold  
the hills leap up  
I see  
how I might dream  
there is a hand  
to turn the sky  
until the light  
brings towers low  
to raise the grass  
and find a way...  
'til those who search  
and those who can't  
will sleep at peace  
by ev'ry road  
with a dance on  
ev'ry mountain  
side, and a song  
in ev'ry stone

## II. *Porte-fenêtre à Collioure*

*Atte laste I saugh a man,  
Which that I nevene naught ne can;  
But he semed for to be  
A man of greet auctoritee...*

(Chaucer, *The House of Fame* 2155-)

'We here remain  
the fortunate  
*ostologoi*:  
the gatherers  
of rag and bone  
of those we knew  
and those we don't;  
we few, we know  
that Golgotha  
is everywhere  
and everywhere  
a *Golgotha*  
a *Calvary*  
a *Third of May*<sup>1</sup>  
a *Guernica*  
a *Pilgrimage*  
to *Isidore*<sup>2</sup>  
a *Porte-fenêtre*  
à *Collioure*:<sup>3</sup>  
a turn, a shout  
a shot away:  
the sky, the sea  
all history  
no tomb enough,  
no hiding place.

'No: you will find  
no veil, no blind  
no way to hide  
no hideaway  
down here—'

a voice of strange  
authority  
who at the last  
I saw—

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<sup>1</sup> Goya 1808

<sup>2</sup> Goya c.1819-1823; cf.1788

<sup>3</sup> Matisse Sept-Oct 1914; cf. 1905

### III. Polysyndeton

and darkness drew  
once more along  
the surfaces  
and nothing moved  
and no-one spoke  
to name this loss  
of light the night  
nor hope once more  
to call the dawn  
the bright divide

as though the glow  
of all the stars  
all the mornings  
and the evenings  
had fallen back  
into the past

and such a fall  
without onset  
without decay  
nor up nor down  
becomes a flight  
repeats a fall

now cry aloud  
three times or four  
how could you go  
where have you gone

should he not smile  
in his review?  
did he who made  
the night make you?—

...and the evening and the morning...

...und Abend und Morgen...

...et vespere et mane...

...και ἑσπέρα και πρωί...

...וְהַיּוֹם וְהַלַּיְלָה וְהַיּוֹם וְהַלַּיְלָה וְהַיּוֹם וְהַלַּיְלָה...

...και ἑσπέρα και πρωί...

...et vespere et mane...

...und Abend und Morgen...

...and the evening and the morning...

#### IV. '... and a Table of greene fields'

(Nell Quickly, *Henry V*, F1 2.3.16; cf. Ps. 23.2)

and when at last  
I found him there  
I tried to hold  
him in my arms

he seemed to fold  
between my hands

and I forgot—  
for a moment  
I forgot—  
and I reach'd down  
and tried—I tried  
to put more clothes  
upon his feet  
and they were cold  
as any stone.  
I took his hand  
I felt his heart  
and held his face  
and took the weight:  
and all was cold  
and all was still  
as any stone.

## V. Kenosis

...καὶ ἔξελθοῦσαι ταχὺ ἔφυγον ἀπὸ  
τοῦ μνημείου· εἶχε δὲ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις·  
καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπον, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.

κατὰ  
Μάρκον

(Mark 16:8, Codex Sinaiticus; Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209; etc.)

... and they came out quickly, leaving  
the monument, shaken and ecstatic;  
and they said nothing, for they were afraid.

[here ends the account] according  
to Mark

Before the room  
behind the rock  
beside the mere  
below the vault,  
a passageway,  
a welcoming:

not in the dance  
of mountaintops  
the hurricane  
the shroud of seas  
nor sun, nor moon  
not in the stones  
distill'd from flame  
above, below  
but here, conceal'd,  
a still small voice:

'You seek the life  
no longer here;  
but only this,  
the paradox  
the commons call  
a cenotaph:  
the hollow crown  
of memory.

'But go your way  
and tell them all  
you thought it here  
and it was gone.'

And I went out  
into the air  
among the lost  
discovering  
that I could see  
the hue and cry  
the colourways  
of ev'rything.

I was afraid:  
said not a word:  
not any word  
to anyone;  
I was alone  
and he was gone.