

BLACK ICE AND RAIN

Michael Donaghy

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Psalms 6.6

Can I come in? I saw you slip away.
Hors d'oeuvres depress you, don't they? They do me.
And cocktails, jokes . . . such dutiful abandon.
Where the faithful observe immovable feasts
– boat races, birthdays, marriages, martyrdoms –
we're summoned to our lonely ceremonies any time:
B minor, the mouldiness of an old encyclopedia,
the tinny sun snapping off the playground swings,
these are, though we can't know this, scheduled
to arrive that minute of the hour, hour of the day,
day of every year. Again, regular as brickwork,
comes the time the nurse jots on your chart
before she pulls the sheet across your face. Just so,
the past falls open anywhere – even sitting here with you.

Fifty copies of this book were designed, printed and bound in the summer of 2002 by Barbara Tetenbaum with assistance from Maki Yamashita and Clare Carpenter. Handset Meridien was letterpress-printed onto Hahnemuhle Ingres paper. The paper collages were created using an abaca paper handmade by Katie MacGregor of Whiting, Maine. Support for this project came from the Regional Arts & Culture Council of the Portland, Oregon metropolitan region, and from an Oregon College of Art & Craft senior artist residency.

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Their black walls smirked with Jesus on black velvet
– Jesus, Elvis, Mexican skeletons, big-eyed Virgins.
Rodin's hands clasped in chocolate prayer –
an attitude of decor, not like this room of yours.
A bottle opened – tequila with a cringe of worm –
and she watched me.

Lighting a meltdown of Paschal candles,
she watched me. He poured the drinks rasping
We're seriously into cultural detritus. At which, at last,
she smiled. Ice cubes cracked. The worm sank in my glass.
And all that long year we were joined at the hip.