

Dan Beachy-Quick

Place-Names: The Name

1.

Wonder closes

Desire defies

Eyes to open

other eyes

light enters with

a vision

The eye emits

*

When she spoke

over her shoulder

my name

I felt I was

in the park in

winter

Alive

And naked

in her mouth

2.

Eros in the ground dusk divides

Night from day

Earth from sky

Eros hidden in the games

Children play a love that learns

To act a hatred that costumes heaven

*

I knew I was old

when in the woods

the nymphs

walked under winter

Memory a bridal veil

defining

hem-loose threads

The bare branch a flowering

arbor

arching over the distant

Nuptial leaf-hidden lake's

ice

Ice

Author's note:

A former colleague of mine and I had planned on co-teaching a Proust class. When I left, we decided to work together on a book. He's writing essays, I'm writing poems. His first essay is matched by my first group of poems, divided into the three sections of *Swann's Way*: Combray, Swann in Love, and Place-Names: The Name. The first two sections are six poems of 12 lines each, radically varying in structure and tone: from the pure lyric to the almost meditative/narrative. The last two poems attempt a different approach, one devoted to compression and dislocation, more indicative of the larger mental/mind work the novel does as a whole.

After Kabir

—for Mai Wagner

Listen Saints, the sky is seeded
By a woman who throws her
Grain in the air and her children
Walk behind her pointing
At the sky. Starving, mother—
But you don't care. The men
Walk behind the golden
Bowls they carry, pray words
Their teachers taught them.
The invisible ox pulls the plow
Across the sky. The dumb
Man can't speak with the seedling
In his mouth; the blind man
Woke up with leaves
Instead of eyes. There is no
Song to sing about the world.
There is no world to see.
The old woman with the red
Streak of psoriasis laughs
As she scratches her head.
In the world there is one
Gift. Mother, give your own
Children their empty mouths.

Poem

Fruit, sun. Lamp-post
lamps shut
off

one-by-one.
One-by-one

the world is a
pair
of eyes, open-close
or close-

open. Will it?—you
who wear a
face always underneath
your face—will it

or will it not? Ripen,
rise. Will
it—in the dark? Sustain,

be seen.

Dan Beachy-Quick is the author of three books of poetry, most recently *Mulberry*. Milkweed Editions will be publishing *A Whaler's Dictionary* in fall 2008—an interlinked group of meditations on Melville's *Moby-Dick*. He is an assistant professor in the MFA Writing Program at Colorado State University.

"I spent my childhood summers in upstate New York, staying in the house my grandmother was born in. What I thought of as the back of the house she thought of as the front, and we often sat out there. It opened up onto the garden that climbed up the hill it was planted on. The bottom half of the garden were my grandfather's vegetables; the top half my grandmother's flowers. Japanese beetles decimated her roses. I would be sent to pull or pick what was needed for dinner: we'd all sit shucking corn or peas, dropping the latter in tin buckets. It was all too typically magical—or it seems so looking back on it. At the time it was just daily life in the summer."