

# PSALMS

ROBERT HEALY

SI INIQUITATES OBSERVARERIS,  
DOMINE, DOMINE, QUIS SUSTINEBIT?

PSALMS WAS WRITTEN, EDITED, AND ASSEMBLED BY JOHN BERUBE  
UNDER THE NAME ROBERT HEALY.

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A CONCRETE RECLAMATION® PROJECT.

ALL FIRE IS THE SAME FIRE,  
SOMEONE ONCE SAID,  
THE JUDGE OR SOMEONE.

AND I'M SKIRTING SMOG  
OUT ON THE INTERSTATE.  
I HAD ONLY SEEN THE LAND OF  
GREED,  
NOTHING MORE.

REMINDED ME OF SOMEPLACE  
LONG AGO—  
A HORIZON I REMEMBER,  
PERHAPS THE ONE FROM  
YESTERDAY.

MAKES ME WONDER.

HOW MANY SLOW YEARS HAVE  
WE WAITED?  
HOW MANY SMALL STEPS HAVE  
WE TAKEN?  
ON THE PRECIPICE OF A GREAT  
BEGINNING.

IF NOT FOR ALL THE MOLEHILLS  
I MIGHT ACTUALLY GET  
SOMEWHERE.

ALL FUTURES SEEM TO VANISH  
WITH THE PAST,  
AND MY NAME IS MY NAME  
AND IT MEANS NOTHING MORE  
THAN YOURS.

AND I WAS SWEATING THROUGH  
MY SHIRT,  
THE HUMIDITY OF THE SUMMER  
RAIN,  
AND WE POKED AROUND THE  
EMPTY BAR,  
WAITING FOR SOMETHING,  
LICKING THE DUST FROM OUR  
FINGERTIPS.

AND IT WAS DARKNESS  
ALL AT ONCE,  
LIKE A MATCH, DEAD.

AND SOUND WAS SOMETHING TO  
LISTEN TO,  
AND ALL MY WORRIES WERE  
SILENCED,

AND I WITHDREW,  
AND NIGHT TOOK ME,

LIKE AN OLD SHIP  
I AM ONE WITH THE SEA.



Abbas Kiarostami  
Ad Reinhardt  
Adrian Piper  
Alberto Giacometti  
Aldo Rossi  
Alex Soto  
Ana Mendieta  
An-My Lê  
Andrei Tarkovsky  
Anne Carson  
Apichatpong Weerasethakul  
Barnett Newman  
Béla Tarr  
Benny Andrews  
Bill Bernbach  
Bill Brandt  
Bon Iver  
Bruce Nauman  
Carlos Morago  
Chantal Akerman  
Chris Marker  
Cindy Sherman  
Cormac McCarthy  
Craigie Horshfield  
Cy Twombly  
Donald Judd  
Elihu Vedder  
Ellsworth Kelly  
Francis Alÿs  
Fred Lyon  
Gabriela Iturbide  
Germaine Richier  
Giorgio de Chirico  
Gil Scott-Heron  
Gordon Parks  
Gregory Crewdson

**HAVE YOU BEEN THINKING OF  
GETTING OUT OF THE COUNTRY?**

**AS LENIN SAID, EVERYTHING IS  
CONNECTED TO EVERYTHING ELSE.**

**AS ALL THINGS MUST BE—  
YES—DIDN'T YOU KNOW?**

**AS ALL THINGS DO, WE  
DREAM—YES—AND WHEN  
THE CHILDREN WERE YOUNG  
WE TOOK THEM HUNTING.**

**AND WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE  
YOUNG—IN THE HOUSE WHERE  
WE RAISED THEM—THERE  
WERE BIG WINDOWS, IN THE  
MORNINGS WE USED TO WATCH  
DEER COME THROUGH THE  
YARD LIKE ROVING MIRACLES.**

**AND THE GUNS WE RAISED  
COLLAPSED INTO DUST, THEY HAD  
NOT BEEN USED FOR HUNDREDS  
OF YEARS THOSE EARLY THINGS.**



AND THERE IN THE NIGHT WE BEGIN TO SEE THINGS

*Robert Healy*

AND IT COMES FOR YOU, OR NOT  
FOR YOU BUT IT COMES.  
LIKE THE CITY SQUARE, WHICH  
HAS EXISTED ALWAYS,  
A VIOLENT CITY IT WAS, BUT WHAT  
WAS THERE TO DO,  
WE EXIST IN MIRACLES.



AND I FOLLOW BLACK MOONS  
EVERYWHERE,  
ON WAVES WE HAVE NOT HEARD  
OF,  
WILD AS LIGHTNING, READY TO DIE.  
AND I FOUND A BOWL OF CRICKET  
WINGS,  
AND DUST, SOMETHING TO BE  
PROUD OF.

A MAN HUDDLES, SEATED ON A  
BRICK,  
A WOMAN CRAWLS ON ALL FOURS.  
BLACK HATTED FIGURES ARE  
SENDING A MESSAGE.

SILENCE PEELS THE VERDICT.

AND I HAVE NO EYESIGHT TO GIVE  
YOU BUT MY TEETH,  
AND THE RUINS OF MY ENEMIES  
BECOME GREAT FLAMES  
IN THE WRECKAGE OF MY HEROES,  
AND WHAT WE DO IS ALL WE HAVE  
IS ALL WE ARE.

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## **SURVEILLANCE CANTOS**

*Robert Healy*

**IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THIS  
WAY—  
I MEAN THAT ALL TIMES HAVE  
BEEN UNCERTAIN.  
IT IS THE NATURE OF THINGS  
TO BELIEVE THE END IS NEAR.**

**AND IT WOULD BE GOOD TO  
REMEMBER WHAT IS SAID  
ABOUT THE DAWN—  
I MEAN THAT IT IS DARKEST  
JUST BEFORE.**

**SO WE WALK BACKWARDS  
ALONG OUR LIFE,  
KNOWING THINGS AND  
LEARNING THEM LATER,  
SETTING LIKE THE SUN  
ONLY TO RISE AGAIN.**

**AND GREAT MEN TOO SHALL  
RETURN TO DUST  
AND LEAVE TRACES IN THE  
STREETS:  
IT IS UNDIGNIFIED TO BE SO  
CRUEL TO YOURSELF.**

**THOUGHT IS A POOR COMPASS  
FOR DESIRE. REASON IS A POOR  
COMPASS FOR TRUTH.  
THE UNCONSCIOUS IS A  
MACHINE  
FOR OPERATING AN ANIMAL.**



**AND WE RISE FROM OUR SLEEP  
AND INTO THE DAY—  
ALL AT ONCE,  
LIKE RUSTLING FERNS,  
MOSS ON THE SHALE OF  
SALVATION.**

**AND THE LAND CAME BEFORE  
US  
AND STRETCHED OUT ITS  
WARES,  
ITS BROKEN FEATURES  
RESTING ON THE EARTH.**



A TIME WHEN TEARS COST MORE  
THAN ROSES,  
AND WE WERE ASHAMED OF THE  
POWER OF OUR DECISIONS—  
OF WHAT WE MAKE OF OURSELVES.

WE WHO ARE IN THIS RACE FOR  
RICHES, I MEAN.

AND OUT ON THE HORIZON I SAW  
TIME TICK WAY.  
FUNNY  
HOW TIME TICKS AWAY.

AND WE HAVE THE BONES FOR A  
LONGER PILGRIMAGE.

WE ALL HAVE DICE TO ROLL,  
I MEAN  
WE ALL HAVE COINS TO TOSS,  
I MEAN  
THE GOOD SHEPHERD MUST  
OCCASIONALLY GRIEVE.

AND STILL  
IN THE STREETS  
WE BURN AND BEAT  
JUDAS ISCARIOT.

STILL  
WE QUELL VIOLENCE  
WITH VIOLENCE.

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THERE'S A LOT OF  
PEOPLE LOOKING  
ILL OR LOOKING  
AWAY OR LIKING  
TO THINK THEY'RE  
DOING BETTER  
THAN YOU.

AND A DARK MAN DUG OUT WITH A RAKE THE SAND THAT HAD CREPT UPON HIS DOORWAY IN THE NIGHT. HE WORE A LINEN SHIRT DEEPLY STAINED, TAKING ON THE COLOR OF THE WORLD AROUND HIM, AND HE WORE PANTS OF THE SAME FABRIC, CUT AROUND THE SHINS WITH HOLES IN MANY AREAS, AND HE WORE NO SHOES OR SOCKS AND UPON HIS HEAD WITH HOLES AND DUSTY HANDPRINTS A WOVEN HAT SAT SLANTED, AND HE HAD DUST AROUND HIS EYES AND AROUND THE RIMS AND CREASES OF HIS NOSE AND IN AND AROUND HIS EARS AND DOWN INTO HIS SHIRT YOU COULD SEE IT COATED HIS CHEST AND WAS EVERYWHERE, AS IF THE DESERT CONTAINED HIM. AND IN THE CORNER OF HIS HUT HE HAD AN OLD WOVEN BASKET WITH HIS PRECIOUS ITEMS IN IT, TWO FORKS AND A SPOON, A PIECE OF RED WIRE, A LADLE, A SMALL STICK OF INCENSE, A MATCH, AND A DOLL WITH A DEFLATED HEAD.

THE SUBJECT THE  
POWER AND THE  
GLORY ARE YOURS.

JUST DON'T TIE  
YOURSELF TO  
THINGS SO QUICKLY.





**ROLLING FIRES ACROSS THE  
PALE DAWN.  
WAKING UP AND RESPONDING  
TO PIECES OF MY SOUL  
THAT WERE NOT THERE BEFORE.**

**I DREAM OF NOTHING:  
ONLY GOD  
AND HOPE  
AND WHAT COULD BE.**

**GOETH THE MAN WITH  
WANDERING EYES,  
GOETH THE MAN WITH NAKED  
MIND.**

**AND A PRINCESS DAWN AWOKE  
ME,  
WITH PUFFY WHITE CLOUDS  
BANKING ALONG THE SKY,  
AND A LONG TONGUE OF SILVER  
RUNNING THROUGH THEM.**

**AND I WONDERED  
HOW LONG MY LUCK WOULD  
LAST.**

**BUT THE DAY WITHTOOK ME,  
AND I FELT PLEASANT  
AND UNEMPLOYED  
IN THE SPRING OF MORNING.**

**STAY WITH ME NOW,  
FOR I MAY SPEAK TOO RAPIDLY—  
BUT I IMPORE YOU TO HOLD ON.**

**THE IDEA THAT GROWTH  
AND THE TECHNOLOGY IT  
PRODUCES  
WILL ENGINEER A WAY OUT OF  
DISASTER  
IS FALSE.**

**WE WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE  
TO INHABIT THE EARTH  
AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE.**

**WE WILL HAVE TO MOVE.**

**BUT THE LINE FOR HEAVEN'S  
QUITE LONG, LORD.  
A PATIENT MAN I AM NOT, LORD.**

**I AM WHO I AM,  
OF COURSE,  
THAT MUCH IS TRUE.**

**PERHAPS I AM NOTHING SPECIAL,  
PERHAPS I DID NOTHING SPECIAL  
AS A CHILD.**

**SO IT'S...  
IT'S SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY  
SPIRIT?  
MY SPIRIT IS SICK?**

**SIR, I PRAY EVERY DAY—  
I'M THE LAST OF A DYING BREED.**

**POSTDILUVIAN AS I AM, I MEAN.**

Ingmar Bergman  
Jenny Holzer  
Joan Miró  
John Berger  
John Cage  
John Cassavetes  
Jorge Luis Borges  
Judith Butler  
Kay Sage  
Larry Bell  
Lawrence Weiner  
Luis Barragán  
Michael Sugrue  
Michel Foucault  
Octavio Paz  
Orson Welles  
Pauline Oliveros  
Philip Glass  
Philip Guston  
Rafael Moneo  
Raoul De Keyser  
Rem Koolhaas  
Richard Misrach  
Richard Serra  
Robert Sapolsky  
Roberto Bolaño  
Sam Shepard  
Sarah Crowner  
Sophie Calle  
Stanley Whitney  
Susan Sontag  
Tadao Ando  
Toshio Shabata  
Tongo Eisen-Martin  
Vilhelm Hammershøi

**I LOOK AND YOU'RE TALKING TO SOMEONE,  
I COME OVER,  
I SAY WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO,  
YOU SAY A GHOST,  
I SAY OF WHO,  
YOU SAY THE GHOST OF CESAR CHAVEZ, MAY HE  
REST IN PEACE.**

**YOU'VE GOT TO GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY, YOU  
KNOW?  
I MEAN, HERE WE ARE IN THE DIRT, IN THE MUD,  
MAKING CLAY WITH OUR FINGERS.**

**AND HE SEEMED TO LEAN BITTERLY AWAY FROM ME.**

**THE BETTER YOU BECOME AT SOMETHING  
THE FREER IT SHALL MAKE YOU.**

**BUT I WILL NEVER HAVE TIME,  
NOT IF I DON'T HAVE IT RIGHT NOW—  
BUT I'LL MAKE TIME FOR YOU—  
I'LL DO THE DISHES—  
I'LL MAKE EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT,  
I WANT TO BE WITH YOU.**

**AND THE PRESENT MOMENT IS A PRISON AND A  
SALVATION,  
FOR WE NEVER LEAVE IT.**

**BUT I SEE PEOPLE COME AND GO.  
SMALL FIGURES LIKE THAT OF THE PALADIN.**

**GOING TO SEE A MAN ABOUT A HORSE.**

**AND DON'T FORGET THAT THERE ARE NO GODS,  
AT LEAST NOT AMONG MEN,  
NO ONE IS PURE, WE ARE ALL FALLEN.**

ROBERT HEALY IS A WRITING PROJECT FROM JOHN  
BERUBE. IT IS CONCERNED WITH THE VIOLENCE AND  
BEAUTY OF ORDINARY LIFE, THE ETHICS OF OBSERVATION,  
AND THE EXAMINED LIFE AS A FORM OF BECOMING.

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