

Translating Mark and John

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TRANSLATING MARK'S GOSPEL

'The translating proceeds from a pragmatic assumption: here is a story written to be heard by an audience. How then to represent Mark's voiceprint, that polyphonic texture of manifold repetitions?

The sound patterns of oral storytelling in English are helpful. To many ears this will come across simply as cast in a colloquial register. But like parables in Mark, maybe such ways of speaking can move us, or point us towards another, hidden dimension of experience.'

from the translation of Mark

now late in the evening – the sun had already gone down
they were bringing to him anyone and everyone
who was in a bad way or troubled by demons
and every man and woman was there
bunched together at the door
and he made many of those ailing from all sorts of illnesses better
and tossed out plenty of demons as well
and he wouldn't let the demons get a word in
seeing that they recognised him.

TRANSLATING JOHN'S GOSPEL

'Among the gospels John is something of a maverick – artless, bold, disarming, sublime, unsettling, at different times. Sometimes it seems there's more – and sometimes less – than meets the eye. Any new translation that doesn't try at least to match some of its tricks isn't worth the trouble. What makes it trickish is the insistence on believing – not blind faith but insight-full faith, where the insight of faith is the experience of a different way of knowing (an alternative medicine). John is a tale of knowing and unknowing, set in a world of some ambiguity. Now if that's starting to leave you wondering, the story's already working.'

from the translation of John - the beginning

Once and always

was

the Imagining

and the Imagining
was alive to the being of God
the very soul of God
was the Imagining
so it was
always
the Imagining with God
their being together

all coming-to-be
through him
came to be
and cut off from him
a thing could not be

in him was the undying life source
and the life source was the first shining light of the people
and that first shining light in the obscure night burns brightly
and the obscure dark cannot overwhelm it

there was a man
sent forth from God
with the name of John

this man came
to be a witness
to testify to the light

the one true light
shining down on all the people
coming into the world

in the world he was
the world that through him came to be
yet the world would not recognise him

into his homeland he came
yet his own would not have him

but all those who have welcomed him in
to them he has given the power of becoming God's children

and the Imagining came to be flesh and bone
and camped awhile among us
and we gazed on his splendour

splendour of the one, only son
emanating from the father
flush with grace and truth

from his exuberance we all of us received
unending grace
unending grace