

Glaciation

ALSO BY WILL STONE

POETRY

Drawing in Ash – Shearsman Books (2011; Shearsman Books, 2015)

The Sleepwalkers – Shearsman Books (2016)

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Les Chimères – Gérard de Nerval – Menard Press (1999)

To The Silenced – Selected Poems of Georg Trakl – Arc Publications (2005)

Journeys – Stefan Zweig – Hesperus Press (2010)

Rilke in Paris – Rainer Maria Rilke & Maurice Betz

(Hesperus Press (2013))

Nietzsche – Stefan Zweig – Hesperus Press (2013)

On the End of the World – Joseph Roth – Hesperus Press (2014)

Poems – Emile Verhaeren – Arc Publications (2014)

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*This book is dedicated to the poet
Michael Hamburger
(1924-2007)
in fond memory.*

Contents

The Oaks	11
Restoration	12
Winter Light	13
The Heart	14
Van Gogh's Room	16
Pigs	17
Swifts	18
Storm off Speke's Mill Mouth	19
Morwenstowe	20
Trakl – The Oval Photo	21
The Commander	22
Russian Fair Play	23
Glaciation	24
Verhaeren in Rouen	25
The Ceremony	26
Exhibit 'B'	28
To Max	30
The Wrecker's Coast	32
The Sniper's Victim	34
Angelic Intervention	35
Translators of Baudelaire	36
Exploring Culture's Wreck	38
The Ghosts of Tully Castle	40
Schopenhauer's Reprieve	41
Heym's Madness	42
Grave Detail	43
Reading of the Bourgeois Women	44
Regeneration	45
The Ipatiev House	46
The Hawk	49
The Buzzard	50
Natural Phenomenon	51
Garden and Leisure	52

The Sinister Blue Lake	53
Greyfriars	54
The Jetty	55
Hour of the Old Buildings	56
Sudden Flight	57
Where the Waves End	58
The Monk's Bell	59
SS Fort Breendonk	61
Frithelstock	63
In Boulge Churchyard	64
Explanation to an Academic	65
Sorley	66
At Hartland Point	67
Stragglers	69
Ducks and Geese	70
Reeds in November	71
The Deserter	72
In St Sulpice	73
Take Off	74
Exodus	75
Walser's Last Walk	77
October	78

‘The glaciers creep like snakes that watch their prey, from their slow rolling on; there, many a precipice, frost and the sun in scorn of mortal power have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle, a city of death, distinct with many a tower and wall impregnable of beaming ice. Yet not a city but a flood of ruin is there that from the boundaries of the sky rolls its perpetual stream...’

– Percy Bysshe Shelley

‘Mont Blanc – Lines written in The Vale of Chamouni’
(1817)

The Oaks

In May the oaks on the ridge thicken
strangely towards evening.
They begin to command, take over,
they rope in the hedgerows, they deepen.
When the flaring of the human subsides
the owl's amber eyes stare out
from the cage of contorted branches,
to follow the field mouse carrying corn,
while we slumber, the hunt goes on,
and in the morning
the dewy blooms deceive us.

You sit beneath their dusty branches
and calmly seeds parachute into your hair.
For once you might see with those eyes,
connect, rake over, receive answers.
But they are unable to signal.
Our worn out bellowings for meaning.
drift uselessly up into their canopy
and are snuffed out, saved from themselves
like the staggering flames of spent candles,
from the dream of some deliverance
that limps stoically in our wake.

Restoration

On palm-fringed paradise islands
over creamy sand and through
polluted surf the real ocean abandoned
this extinct generation still plays on,
unaware that plans are in the final stages
for its obliteration. Brazen,
they dump their sacks of organs
by perfectly azure pools and poised
leap up from white springboards.
Beneath palms, confident in their wealth
they lounge, as they have always done,
lost in the lack, lured to the shallows,
all the effluent that darkens the earth
from the outflow of their shadow.
But above them unseen the moon's ice scythe
is sharpened, to the stars are handed weapons.
All the planets and terrifying expanses
of nothingness gradually synchronize.

When the powerboats stutter and their
engines stop,
when the flight is grounded and can
no longer take off,
when the barbecue coals refuse to glow,
when the maid fails to sweep the patio,
when receptions are abandoned,
and the guests' mail remains unopened,
when shoes left out are set adrift un-shined
on the dark canals of hotel corridors,
when the breeze lifts parasols and waves
begin to curl like great silver razors,

when the horizon's guillotine sweeps down
held in the vice of sea and sky
and untended children like heralds cry,
you'll know its not the end of time
only restoration.

Winter Light

All grey, the diamond glass
and distant estuary, mercury
that once crept into the cold snare
of land and stayed there.

No relief in the graveyard for souls.
An icy wind keeps the spirits
pressed to the clay, and hoar frost
ravishes the inscriptions.

But from the marsh the cathedral emerges,
and the first flame of gentle hymns rises,
an amateur choir, a feeble congregation
beneath the angels' powdered faces.

The beautiful gift of their decay.
Nailed there, saturated with prayer,
they bless the terrified birds outside
losing strength in the black hedges.

The Heart

At school they held it up in a jar
I saw the purple ventricles and aorta.
I saw the human heart passed along
in buckets stretching weedy arms
to end in a hiss of steam and sweat,
the sly contempt of flames.
I saw the valves, one with a kink
and felt the shape of that lumpen thing,
and heard the nervous statements of students
as the stainless steel sunk in.
I saw the heart fail or thunder on,
a flayed horse bursting through a copse
and hearts that wait in bone-armoured chests
I've seen them wave hopefully
like the silken tendrils of sea creatures swirling,
forever reaching into a dark green void.
And I saw people target the heart
and once in a cemetery I even saw one rise
somehow gasping to the surface.
But no one heard the cries or cared
when mercifully I smothered it.