Letter to an Imaginary Friend

Thomas McGrath
and always halftime at The Funeral—but once, in Samsara. That is: NOW—start in the empty anytime: arrive.
Ahead of time: HERE: in the filledup nowhere, and go FORWARD

—“Cain’t hear you boy—ain’t no color but the night
Down here—get out in the stream and sing!
Who be ye?”

’Tis only myself. . .
the last man of the century. . .
Home

“Who you talk to then?
Dark here, cain’t see
You.”

I’m just a worn piece of leather that was once well put together.

The one who has come at last to wake the reluctant dreamer
Out of his surfeit of continental sleep.

Of the Revolution
to free the Bound Man

Credit card.
to make your jawbone book and heavenly

Sunrise in the rock.
the light of my house

Burning. . .
Do you read my blaze
down
there
in the dark?
Over.

“Ah—that old resurrection man!
Talk like you found it—
Place you get out.

    But my foot
    —stuck here in the stone...

In the time it takes to make one step is the life of my poem.
And unless the step is endless, hell is forever.

    But hell
    Shakes at one step; shatters.

It is not daybreak
Provokes cockcrow but cockcrow drags forth the reluctant sun not
Resurrection that allows us to rise and walk but the rising
Of the rebel dead founds resurrection and overthrows hell.

2.

What I am doing
    ain't nobody
    nowhere
    done before.

Have come a long way and arrive tired, the feet
Of language: raw: trailworn: needing to be reshod,
And myself with saddle sores from the long night ride.
I arrive near death, near the stall of silence.

    but that's no matter—

What began in the first blaze—despair—is to end in joy:
After showing you hell I'm to blaze you the trail to heaven.

Arrive cold—after the long fall into
The past that must be the future the future that is my past.
I see the bus go by advertising DOGMA and the blind
Veteran asking bread in the cold teeth of the night O
Ancient Witness
    —and all unchanged in the time of this poem.

All to be changed.

    I offer as guide this total myth,
The legend of my life and time.
    But the message arrives from far off:
From some future galaxy—arrives very fast, very faint, in a language
I can barely translate.

    and always the danger of shortfall, noise,
And the plandamn inability of readers to know good sense and song.
And so—nights of waiting for a single word and nights
When all arrives at once like a migration of birds.
Days when I turn it off in order to breathe, days
When only an enigmatic phrase comes through from another galaxy—Poem
—nights...
...when I am only food for the moon...

But hang-ups are no substitute for real agony.

Am born every morning...

And once in Samsara

—and the ceremony done...
—Warped and bandaged arc of a broken bow I am bent
On straitening...


3:

 Begun before Easter of a different year... Skyros... Dakota
 The world:

outside my window

changed and unchanged.

I have come

Back toward the light

(my brothers houses all burned this year)

toward

Morning.

Beyond my window the armless windmills are marching
Into the sea.

And the iron poet strides over
The dark village.

Cockcrow...

—and always springtime in Hell...

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I have come here—too young for this world and too old for the next—
From my violent acres crying for incarnation, to claim you,
To found our hungry legend in the field of bread, to find
Our bread in the bank of hunger, in the lame streets of the dawn,
To find our sign past sleep or the sleepy reveries of an insomniac Harp...

I have come to claim you, to build, on the angry winds of the renegade
Angels, the four blueblowers of the compass points, this stand
For the round song and the commune;
in the moon of bad weather to build
The pure rock of this passage
And desert night...
(first the stars and the sea, now
The rock and the wind)
—have brought you here: beyond the four
Elements: stripped: naked for travelling...
(Having lightened load, through the rock...) Now: all the trails are blazed:
The evidence is given, the Fisherman is rising, the Kachina is made—
The ceremony is done.
—Now only the incantation.
I confidently wait

Your rising.

Night, pure crystal,
coils in my ear
like
song...

Begun before-Easter...
Sign of the Fish...
wind whining

Out of the black north's cold quadrant, the moon
Glistening on the folds of the coulee snow and a far scar
Where the river sings and ceases, locked in its house of ice;
Cold front sliding in: a wisp of high cirrus
Rides over the Indian graves, the barometer drowses, the burning
Clock of midnight turns on its axis of darkness...

Had come there,
To that House, first sign in the blessed zodiac
Of all my loves and losses...
—to sing and summon you home.

Now: the wind shifts
a star
falls in the sea.

Skyros
the statue of Brooke on the citadel.

Time interposes
A discontinuous strata, the sediments of the summer:
What was and what is slide along old fault lines, history
Condenses its marble heroes
a metamorphic palimpsest
Hardens between the farmhouse and here: and I dive
Into the nightrock
terror
Now I call you:
I call
You:
from the four Winds and from Fire, come forth now
My thunderbird jawsmiths and soapbox phoenixes;
out of the ice-lined
Rolling coffins of the U.P. Line: rise;
I call you
From Water;
blind marble of those tolling bones
Walk home forever now from the cold dismembering sea;
I call you from holy Earth:
boneflower: starform
I call you now:
Goddess, sweet land I love, Old Lady, my darling ones—
Come:
We'll walk up out of the night together.
It's easy.
Only:
open your eyes.
slip your foot out of the stone.
I'll take you.
my darlings, my dear ones.
over the river.