

Various Portents BY ALICE OSWALD

Various stars. Various kings.
Various sunsets, signs, cursory insights.
Many minute attentions, many knowledgeable watchers,
Much cold, much overbearing darkness.

Various long midwinter Glooms.
Various Solitary and Terrible Stars.
Many Frosty Nights, many previously Unseen Sky-flowers.
Many people setting out (some of them kings) all clutching at stars.

More than one North Star, more than one South Star.
Several billion elliptical galaxies, bubble nebulae, binary systems,
Various dust lanes, various routes through varying thicknesses of Dark,
Many tunnels into deep space, minds going back and forth.

Many visions, many digitally enhanced heavens,
All kinds of glistenings being gathered into telescopes:
Fireworks, gasworks, white-streaked works of Dusk,
Works of wonder and/or water, snowflakes, stars of frost . . .

Various dazed astronomers dilating their eyes,
Various astronauts setting out into laughterless earthlessness,
Various 5,000-year-old moon maps,
Various blindmen feeling across the heavens in braille.

Various gods making beautiful works in bronze,
Brooches, crowns, triangles, cups and chains,
And all sorts of drystone stars put together without mortar.
Many Wisemen remarking the irregular weather.

Many exile energies, many low-voiced followers,
Watches of wisp of various glowing spindles,
Soothsayers, hunters in the High Country of the Zodiac,
Seafarers tossing, tied to a star . . .

Various people coming home (some of them kings). Various headlights.
Two or three children standing or sitting on the low wall.
Various winds, the Sea Wind, the sound-laden Winds of Evening
Blowing the stars towards them, bringing snow.