

Byzantium

David Erdos and Max Reeves

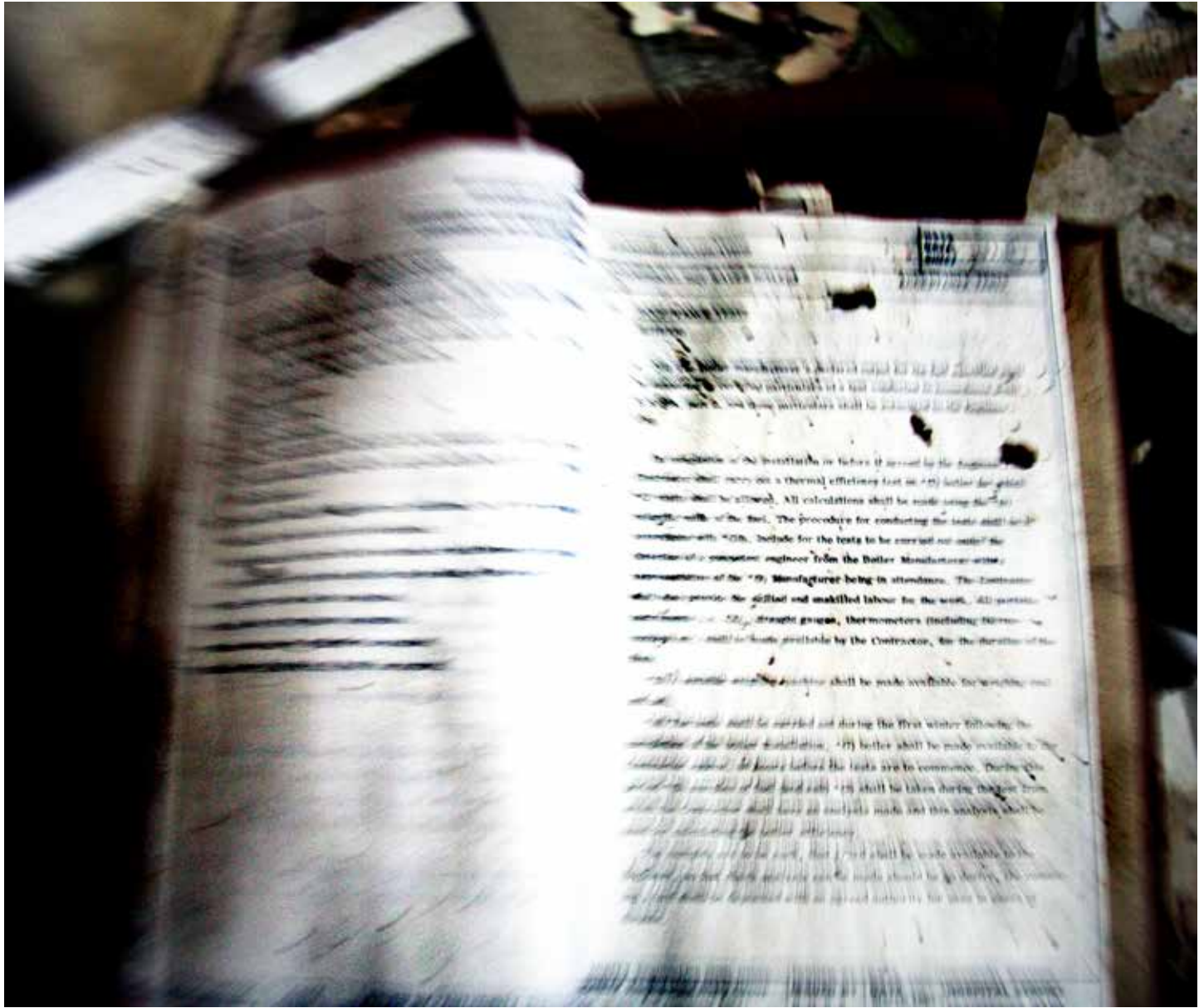


Byzantium

Poetry by David Erdos

Photography by Max Reeves

For Heathcote Williams



The boiler manufacturer's works of repair for the boiler shall be completed before the boiler is put into service. The boiler shall be tested before it is put into service. The boiler shall be tested before it is put into service.

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*As remamed from the Greek, Byzantium becomes every city,
New Jerusalems, shining are dreaming themselves through the stone;
These parallel provinces are crowned through art's firm transcendence,
Heralding calls from the visions that the mystic and mad each intoned.*

*In Modern London we walk, but these are acts of time travel;
From new Bohemias to lost gardens of magic and muse, prayer
And death, we cross dream's border states to chase imagination's true
Kingdom, where an Asylum's caged power revives the minds broken*

*Who are brokering loss, with skulled breath. Contemporary traffic argues above,
While the ancients ascend through the graveyard. Magick and philosophies, buried,
Are rivering now through the flat. And yet the conversation flows on, despite
The obvious decay of the Angel, restoring blood to the bloody through the liminal form*

*Of a bat. Blood will flow. Life returns. We see its blush in each flower.
The forgotten codes and calls achieve purchase as the parallel structures
Combine. What was lost, reappears, as the freedom to see past the portent
Opens the Shangri La portal through which the shadow of death redefines.*

*If these Byzantiums are not grasped, these neglected states, these old visions,
We will recede into darkness, that no warp or wind will affect. Five sacred steps
Lead us there, fired by a kabbalistic ten. The Bat watches. Unbidden, we can make
Fate our servant if we connect our first forces somewhere between death's feared grasses*

And the final closing seal of the X.

RESPONSES TO BYZANTIUM

Byzantium divines a fabulous lost landscape of myth, magic and madness from haunting fragments of its missing light. Scrying the beautiful photo-traces of Max Reeves, David Erdos shapes his lyric information into the ghostly blueprint for a marvellous new empire of the mind, builds crystalline towers of meaning from Kabbalist grave-moss, séance gardens and warlock ruins. A wonderful piece of work.

Alan Moore

I marvelled over the velocity and production of David Erdos' poems and the richness of Max Reeves' imagery, as Andrew Kotting, Anonymous Bosch and I rambled and slithered over the tracks of heresy in the Pyrenees. This book seems utterly essential. David Erdos is out there now, high among the ranks of the great but unappreciated. He is a trawl of necessary resistance and swift, heart-stabbing tributes in a time of cultural diffidence and confusion. Long may he sing.

Iain Sinclair

Byzantium is a rich and special thing; prophetic and powerful words given the Albigensian landscape that we have (just) managed to escape from; chaos - meted out in spectacular splendour

Andrew Kotting

Does David Erdos know how to talk to the dead? He seems on remarkably close terms and even entranced with their realm, including the ancient London netherworld of Jewish cemeteries where, like most dead places, the silence is misleading and mysteries will unfold through the details of lore and incantation. Erdos guides the way with his poet's intuition and even when the going is uncomfortable, his travelogue is in language rich as spiced honey. The Rabbi Samuel Falk's modest and nature reclaimed tomb is a starting point... Falk a lesser known occultist follow up to Doctor Dee. The Byzantium path takes us on to Boleskine House, where Aleister Crowley, marshalled demons and where lore has it a church once stood and within it a congregation burned to death. For Crowley it was the ideal place to summon the Magic of Abramelin the Mage. For Jimmy Page the place to pine for Crowley and practice his take on the Devil's hot licks. There are cultural references, visionary guest stars around every corner. There is no precedent but along the way similar explorations come to mind: *The Rubaiyat*, *The Conqueror Worm*...maybe *La Comédie de la Mort*.

Jay Jeff Jones

In Erdos's spectral world, the past is disinterred, shedding new light on what we thought we knew about the present. Like Eliot's "unreal city", where the narrator of the Wasteland observes that "I had not thought death had undone so many," in Byzantium, familiar structures crumble. The lines between the esoteric and intelligible, the living and dead, the physical and metaphysical are washed away but they are held together by the vitality of a cosmic and psychic life force. Accompanied by stunning and disturbing photographs by Max Reeves, these poems challenge the present through the prism of the past. Reading *Byzantium* is disquieting, but necessarily so.

Douglas Field

Fall under the spell of Erdos 's hypnotic lyrical landscape . An anthology of naked power that accompanies the emotive works of photographer Max Crow Reeves

Saira Viola

Poetry seems to flow out of David Erdos as naturally as water from a spring. His response to Max Reeves' enchanting photographs is an evocative, visionary journey of psycho-magic, populated by the ghosts of our past. And Jimmy Page.

David Bramwell

Like ghost detectives ransacking lost cities and decaying architecture, Erdos and Reeves crack secret codes and enter dark chambers. Buried in the dust of the dream library they unearth this grimoire, a Ouija hoard of haunted language.

Jeff Young

Great evocative ghostly pictures from Max Reeves and David Erdos' many fine words form a perfect complement.

Pete Brown

Max Reeves' haunting images and David Erdos's brooding, enigmatic stanzas combine to powerful effect, conjuring eerie spaces and states of mind far beyond the everyday. 'Byzantium' is a thrilling psychogeographic foray into the inky, shimmering depths of the imagination.

Suzi Feay

Such drama and magic lies behind each word of Byzantium; dipped in beautiful undertones that lament of near and distant pasts. Passages undulate from darkness to shadowy light to sparks of the most brilliant yey insight. My heart pulses with the essence of David's poetry taking me away from the normal and casting each haunting image into a thick underworld of possibility somewhere unfamiliar yet at times reassuringly soulful while in other moments – hell resides.

Clare Nasir

Max Reeves's spirit raising photographs sit well with David Erdos's reflective lively poems, written in response to these evocative images. They take us on an alchemical pilgrimage through burnt out and forgotten memories - Roschach puddles of the mind. From Falk - 'The Rabbi beneath his own message' - on mossy forgotten stones off Stepney Green to Boleskine House and Crowley's ghost who helped Jimmy Page write songs. A fairy eye visit to an ancient Physic Garden reborn out of the ruins of the Blitz - crawling with a resurrection of healing plants. Then Hellingly, now demolished, a scarecrow to asylum history. We travel to the mind's Byzantium via faded ghosts of insanity - the walls of suffering a superfetation of memories in decay . On lastly to Fenestrations - Reeves and Erdos stretch open old blinded revelations, eclipsed and faded in the patina of time, opening up forgotten tomb robbed histories on our doorstep. This is an exciting collaboration - apothenia blazes on every page.

Stephen Micallef

Max Reeves is a poet of the lens. For years he has been recording and recreating an anarcho-surrealist London and its insurgent shapeshifting populace beaten back from the gates of Utopia by a policeman's truncheon. In the depopulated Byzantium he broadens his gamut by focussing on the burial site of the legendary East End kabbalist Rabbi Falk, the astonishing burnt-out remains of Aleister Crowley's Boleskine House in Scotland, the healing naturalism of the Physic Garden, and the tortured ruins of the aptly named asylum Hellingly in Kent. A curious and intrepid explorer of the near and far, Reeves is also a unique, versatile and prolific artist.

Niall McDevitt

An epic pentagram of interwoven magick heroes, where the occult meets ancient Kabbalah, the classic Erdos lilt takes the reader on a Blakean mystic trip from East London to Jimmy Page, Chelsea Physic Gardens and the madness of great asylums.

Kirsty Allison



BYZANTIUMS OF THE MIND: An Introduction

In one of his many seminal books, *Understanding a Photograph*, the great John Berger described Photography as 'a strange invention' with its 'primary raw materials being light and time. And so it proves here, in this linked collection of responses to given images received and filtered through the prismatic gaze of Max Reeves' lens and this writer's pen. As the photographer seized, so the poet reorders, attempting to respond to sensations that the photographs bring to the world. In '*arresting the flow of time in which the photograph once existed*' we stumble across new worlds of being and interpretation previously unmarked, or, for that matter, charted. It is hoped that this will allow the viewer a range of free associations and approximations relevant to how the photograph was achieved in the first place, along of course, with what it was trying to say.

In responding to these images the poems attempt not to unravel or decipher, but simply to represent. Of course, these photographs, artfully composed and presented in their own right, are also their own form of writing, non verbal arrangements that offer their own voice and meanings for each object and location experienced. In relating to them what has been adapted into words attempts, if nothing else, a form of 'synaptic empathy' in which the poems, in essence, are trying to become photographs. They are not there to encapsulate, influence, or preclude the viewer's interaction, but simply to induce the reading of what has been shaped for the eye. These pieces are in effect, their own form of mirror, with each spread and page a reflection of something else kept behind.

From ancient magick that could be felt through the stones of a former England to the random collision of schizophrenic response, these photo-poems challenge the redundancy of current responses to the so called known world around us. Byzantium as well as being a lost and forgotten city is also an artistic bohemia in which the images that first inspired us, can return despite the forces that have occluded both insight and foresight. The originality and discernment of the photographer has led the poet to urge the reader and viewer to look again at a world that seems to have denied the crucial aspects of connection and transformation, and entirely neglected its vital founding sources. Progress for progress's sake is the continued and current credo and the cultural ransacking it leaves in its wake, is revoked and in some cases haunted by the objects, ruins and scars that feature in this book. What we saw as sanity and assumed would assist us has descended into disarray and its own form of madness. We have, in many ways, started to resemble those lost to an unyielding wilderness, especially at a time in which our own fragile Atlantis is threatened, teetering and sinking into an increasingly narrow chanel. We'll

certainly need something to lift us from the mire and alter our methods and means of response; some change in the air, or new form of perception. And among this book's aims is the encouragement of that resourcefulness or viewpoint.

However, from such darkness, hope rears, as Byzantium still awaits us. Its gates have been opened, and despite threat and totem and corrupted bat angel, fresh guidance is forming, growing like weeds on a grave.

Orthodoxies are breached in publications like this one. It is an art book, quite proudly as well as illustrated poetry. But something more, also, we hope; the journal of that lost, last survivor whose travels across sacred land - despite the lack of godliness to it - is written in patterns of time, word and light. I hope that the poems transcend their stated form and appearance and that they may chime with the feeling that these images introduce. Books like this show fresh ways in which experience can be quoted. And so, from the combination of forms, we aim to present fresh responses; novels birthed in the daylight and completed and bound by day's end. Each observation, each thought contains its own story as we witness the truths lost beneath us in the city (of which we still know very little), as well as the far, exiled regions that were built and adapted to shelter all of the things we can discover and none of the things we suspect.

*May your own Byzantiums break through the earth,
Bursting the banks of stopped rivers,
To release the starred glories
In all of the dreams we expect.*

David Erdos, January 2019

Byzantium

I

The Ba' al Shem of London

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From the carpet of sleep, wake to find new earth covers.
There at your pillow, a prescient reminder of home;
A future face forged from the past, while adding irony to your present,
Framed by a many fingered crown-hand or template,
Leaf fed reverence framing this morning awareness
Of death's patient practise and the kisses he grants, bred from bone.

We stand in Alderney Street, one of the many jewish sites that sit hidden.
Forgotten ghosts line the pathways to make themselves known through the stone.
Each tomb here is split, squandered by time and occasion
As these former kings of religion, these Rabbis of old, forsake thrones.
Each death house is masked by a face like this; a skull number,
In this neighbourhood of removal all residents simply tire of sleep.

After three centuries rest, the dovening dead pursue promise,
To rise as dust in the air and recolour leaf, stone and ground
From death's keep. These sacred sites line the road as the profane present
Surrounds them. Each pocket of loss has been given new gifts of earth
As we look. In this image, the crown of that re-gifted breath is a herald,
With the faded inscriptions wrecked cover for the lives lost inside

This stone book. We covet the Jerusalems lost through the nightmare tread
Of earth's Golem; reinvigorated it seems by the callers, singing now
Through Limesong to settle the riven ground where we trespass,
In search of the havens that from prayer to neglect these priests took.

