

The New Criterion

Poems

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The legend

by [John Haines](#)

I.

I understand the story of Gilgamesh,
of Enkidu, who called the wind by name,
who drank at the pool of silence,
kneeling in the sunburnt shallows
with all four-footed creatures.

I know the name of that exile,
the form that it takes within us:
the parting and breaking of things,
the distance and anguish.

I know too, in its utter strangeness,
that whoever asks of the sun its rising,
of the night its moonstruck depths,
stirs the envy of God in his lofty cabin.

And when Enkidu awoke, called
from his changed, companionless sleep
—singly, in glittering pairs,
the beasts vanished from the spring.

II.

The forest bond is broken,
and the tongued leaves no longer
speak for the dumb soul ...

John Haines

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