

A Potted History of Fevers

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The just war was slow weather, sunburnt skin
a crude map, lips chapped. In this damp
righteousness buzzed, was a business that kept you awake.

Land a thing ownable by reason and natural
law, you made every town an authentic document.
Having travelled with god, you sanded our feelings
until through us could gleam light.

You taught us how to handle water, rain no longer
the unappeasable deity our crops
died or survived on. Every town in exchange
cupped with both hands your fevers,
afflictions that clung through storms to the oak

of your galleons, covered in the hull,
at last knelt on the shore, new and noon-painful.
A secret pact you unnerved us into. Lesions
the size of fingernails manifested our happiness.
The priests taught by your saint to walk barefoot
wore pattens to avoid refuse, traps, and snakes,

your saint the kind who enjoyed poverty
the way one born into wealth would. Someone dead
was always being brought back to life
so every town, breathing around the miracles, could give
in. Houses, all made from the one exhaustion,
trees planted to withstand the hostile weather.
We enslaved one another, by you henceforth possessed,

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you stealthed through land. Not to conquer
but pacify. Some of us were all too happy
to kill you. Thatched in our houses, we burned.
Fish nibbling on loose skin wherever we washed
our fury. We've several words for blood mixed with shit,
haven't we, agreed on a better species of ownership.
We'd never, there between you and us convulsed
the true feeling. Every town you wanted burned.