

issue 42

streetcake



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Overheard.

Voices drift down . A two-gender timbre
folded in discussion. Vocal symphony, where
questions, dark pauses mark an erratic beat.
Mouthed by a cluster of neatly barbered suits.
To hook into the branches of my mind
As a fish hook snares its victim.
Words hang and flutter like tattered leaves.
Each one redundant without its parental tree,
Its past and future sentence.
No meaning is clear in this overheard mumble.
I watch their retreating backs as they walk,
then huddle, heads close as petals on a closing flower,
clip-boards clutched to well fed chests.
They have finished with the girls, they agree,
nodding crow-like. A voice replies that they
must check the boys.
My heart quickens. Blood warms rapidly
in apprehensive veins. Eavesdroppers' guilt
is payment for my stealth. I inch away silently.
Expect a shoulder tap any second.
Wonder if my gender sits on the right side
of their decision, what consequences will follow.

Eastern Philosophy

A double rainbow
crossfades with the grey
and quietly recites

Newton's scale.
Its wavelengths
drift in

illuminating
wet slates, chimney tops,
and leaf-filled gutters.

You play some Jo Kondo
and weary thoughts are
released

from a fugue.
My mind flies.
Subject becomes counter-subject, becomes counterpoint.

Metronomic drip-drop turns spit into sprinkle, into shower.
Then seeds of sound are dispersed,
bursting into powdery crimson clouds

that point and bend
and question
their very existence.

Paranoia: Suite No 1

When morning gilds my heart,
light among the stained pale cactus,
up towards the vast and
barren;
lush, cool
promises rolling up,
building
from the West.

Would it hurt? Would it shatter?
Would the artist walk
heavy, and how far?

Burlap — burlap weaves,
weave together
and dry,
and hold a million smells
of old harness sweat tight around
my head.

*

Indian Summer is a false softening;
one eye, the sky was
false decay.

The town lay still;
to the East, on a golden cross,
hung Seth.

He'd often mocked the doctor of volcanoes:
"Drink and the doctor
organise religion,
in that order."

Seth eased forward
his queen's pawn, and the white king
fell over.
He found it hard to enter churches —
was the wrong shape, maybe,
head unbowed,
one knee crooked, one eye cocked,
one time screaming.

*

Winter spread out, sealed
and unimaginative, sprawled
before the fire.

Seth paced the pipesmoke,
fell heaving, lungs gone,
heart on a pointed tower somewhere.

Often Paiwa would sleep alone,
Seth standing by the window;
stars made patterns
interweaving city traffic
long-exposure film out late
one night on the hill
down from the Arts Centre.

The trees made
patterns in clumps of gesticulating hieroglyphs ///
cereal boxes with free plastic models of blood clots.

He had a ruptured spleen — Paiwa fell from a cloud
while dusting her geraniums; the flowers made
patterns in pottery pots, earth spilling
water muddied

parquet.

It could be said that they were happy.

Through a distant shot of a building burning

Spin-shivering screams fill the air, ringing in my ears, bouncing off walls. So improbable- yet incredible- that someone could be so shallow to conspire something so supernatural. I spit. How could such an absurd catastrophe happen to someone like me; in this well organized, respected place? What can I say?
10:27am, 102 minutes ago since it started...

9:00. my voice now recording - my whole life - everything I ever cherished, lingering on my tongue. So much to say. So many memories. People. Stop! How was I to comprehend what would happen today. 9:10 . It's like millions of grenades have been carelessly thrown at me; explosions erupting inside my body, leaving behind a distressing, disturbing, damage. The chaotic cries of confusion are more than any sane person can stand. Yet, how do I stand? Here, rethinking, recording and realizing how precious life is. Why now? Here...Am I bought back- like a child wakening from a sweet dream- to cold, harsh reality.

9:20 Am. But how foolish and malicious can someone be? It's like the devil himself has swept through this building- spreading darkness- stealing souls. Dear God, please, I have not sold my soul. Are you watching? Watching. Are your eyes believing? Believing? My silver encrusted chain and cross hangs around my neck; like a dead snake- its eyes still glistening with hope. Save us. 9:35am. This disarray and disorder is like a dagger, slowly, painfully, plunging in to us all. It's suffocatingly dark now; im feeling so alone here. But how could I feel so alone? Voices are screaming, crying out into the blackness 'Help!' 'Save us' 'No' absolute pandemonium. My breathing now grows heavier; hurling myself up from my chair- like it burns. My body; a turmoil of helplessness. My head, triggering anxiety and despair. So why would you pick on us? A tiny speck in the sky, through a distant shot of a building burning...

It came from out of the blue. 10:00Am. Panic now drowns me, as I think to you my darling husband, sitting at home with your newspaper, not knowing at the same time I am slowly failing- pandemonium. It's strange that in the blackest of despair one searches for love. Time spent with you feels like eternity where hours turn to days and days turn to years. The absolute ecstasy I feel with you fills me with blissful, excited, lust; it's what makes my breath get shorter, faster, sharper. Contrastingly, palm-sweating - my knuckles, tightly gripping on to the chair now turning whiter, paler, and bonier. 10:08Am. Like tiny bullets light rain hits my skin cuttingly, as I wearily lean out on to the window ledge. A radiant bird goes by - its wings are stretched gloriously, flying, soaring, and circling the sun; the bird is free, oh to be free. 10:12Am. the beauty and high proximity of my life seems to have gone now- drizzled away- it's almost non-existent. The future I had planned to have with you my love: burning, blurring, collapsing. 10:20Am.

Finally, it's your turn for me to talk to. I feel your tiny heart thumping, your doll-sized legs kicking. Apologetically I whimper, why did I bring you here? Into this world- a spiteful meaningless world; knees stiff with fear, instincts roaring, I cling to you, my princess, my baby. So warm, cozy and tranquilized in your home inside of me- its ok mummy is here now- it will all be over soon. 10:26Am. Why, the other day I bought you a rattle (pinky-peach, the colour you adore) with silver balls that rang like sleigh bells if you shook them hard

enough...You would have loved it. You would have loved me. Alas, we cannot experience your first day of school, boys, traumas and birthdays. We are here though, at the top of the north trading tower in New York...10:27Am. The wind wails behind me. I'm sorry god, my love, my baby I'm failing now- the wind no longer wailing but howling and driving. Here I go, a bird as free as the sun that shines at 10:28Am.

christopher mulrooney

the tiresome lovers

it is the dawn and Juliet is doing her sums
for it is the crackpot hour and all must be made well
must add up anyways in any eventuality
backwards forwards upside down or right
to prove what is invincible over night

We Cross the Street to Meet the Inventor of Mayonnaise

To say you invented mayonnaise is like patenting quinine
or deeding the sunlight at your feet.

When eggs neither hatch nor get eaten by foxes or crows;
when a bird embryo hears too well whats outside
and knows the purest rainbows shine at night.

The smell of a summer wheatfield at 4 is schematics for a toaster.
Did we forget about the milk so it could become cheese
or did the 2-legged cow inside the milk croon us into diversion—
chase the pigs, tattoo the chickens.
It's cows who make the sun rise and set each day.

I tried to forge armor from sugar cane but was mistaken for tall dung.
I made tea with boiling oil. I ran a tree's movie in reverse
saw so many teeth i never went back.
When my hair gets too long i dance in morning rain.
When my eye offends me i hatch another satellite
spooning macerated books & video into its dish

Cause nakedness is bad for business our wings atrophy
neath our sweaters and silks; most of our river deltas
have long been dammed & diverted—the persistent drip
lifting me from bed into the thousand rain clouds being relocated
so we can trade our roofs for plastic bottles, canteens like giant corpuscles
taking everything from water but the grit of foreclosed reservoirs,
interstate thighways marinated, cured and waiting at the drive up window.

I learned to drive before i could cook; i replaced the brake drums
with mirrored speakers—get out of my way, neil young's solos coming:
“they were hiding behind hay bales; they were planting in the full moon.”
How can buildings that tall not be rampant with termites, all that meat