

PS* Poems

Diana Reed

*Published Somewhere

Against Authoritarianism

Whistles should have holes
To let the intensity of their
Scream be muted, mutated,
Mutatis mutandis,

Into the soft clay ocarina,
Into the silver flute,
Into the magic of modifying
Time into tune.

Never just one hole.

Choices

Pears are more desirable than apples,
cherries are more desirable than pears,
but apples make better chutney than either
though the child's voice cries for

rich and red and ripe and here and now
with the joy of the slug tail out, mouth in
sweet flesh, rasping out his hollow heaven
then curling in a soft, ecstatic round.

The art of making a decision's not
straightforward. Write the pros and cons in columns
then let loose your honest inner accountant,
and what emerges from your eyes and mind

is a box only holding opportunity,
to be tipped and stretched and questioned,
remembering that all we have is ephemeral;
a patterning of nows in undetermined time.

Unfixable

When did her friends start calling her 'mad'?
The whole and happy ones, who meet after work to talk,
When did they reckon the round-shelled smoothness
of her lip-gloss ways, her high-heeled boots, cracked?

'She's messed up. Broken.' What else to say
when someone suddenly steps off
the big-city bus, ending in a failed place
where no-one in their right mind wants to live?

But was it then, I ask. Or was it earlier?
Back in school when her firework brain fizzed,
found divergent paths through sets of mazes:
plus, minus, equals, therefore. Brilliant. Unmasked for.

Or was it long before, when the arch-backed baby
with quivering lips cried beyond comforting
from the pain of being alive?

She says, she never broke,
she is as she is.
Unfixable.

So get over it.
If she can live with it,
you can.

Sic Transit Gloria

Wow. Look at that car.
Mercedes-McLaren SLR.

It succeeded the Merc,
that came after his Jag.

It was the tops.
The icing on
the ultimate cake.

He loved that car.
Worshipped it
with his body.

It was his
exoskeleton.

It had the legs
for speed.

And he ran.
Passing on the right, passing on the right.
Always in the fast lane.

The Hero Machine is him,
and he the Hero Machine

that –

fell to high blood pressure
fell to failing eyesight
fell like space-junk to the
earth of age and illness.

License withdrawn.

Now
his wife
takes the wheel.

His grey wife,
who goes slowly round the bends.
Driving him,
cautiously,
to distraction.

The Baby Jesus Gets Religion

There are faces everywhere: in the grain of wood,
In flowers, and mud, and in the cloudy sky.
Until he reifies the world between baby hands.
Things separate out. Cup and toy. Mary and Joseph.
Other children, mirrors of himself. Always
Fascinating, fascinating: other people, other things.

The faces are driven from flowers and clouds.
(No polytheistic culture, this.) How should
A child give meaning to the world of things?
Mother says: 'Be my special boy, and I'll love you.'
Father says: 'Be like me, and I'll look after you.'
Caesar says: 'Obey the law, and my soldiers will not kill you.'

Words, like coins, press their images
On the hardening clay of the child's mind.
Because you are special, you are loved.
Because you conform, you are cared for.
If you obey, you will not die.
And our childhood's measure finds his God.

Dali and 'The Architectural Angelus of Millet'

Dali was a show-off and a cheat, but these huge figures
tower smooth-grown and true. Incapable of tears,
she bends in acceptance. Her womb is empty, scoured.
He reaches with trust, or lust, and pity. They reiterate
the patient man and woman in Millet's evening field, where
father and mother stand bowed beside a painted-over grave.
Death is there, but only in their mourning. Dali transmutes love
and grief
Into unmoving stone, changelessly comfortable and serene.

Dali was a fantasist and liar. He swam strange tides.
Clocks softly melted to question time itself.
Sibling monsters ate each other in uncivil war.
Here I see strangeness in the towering clouds
above the far-off tide and over-coloured desert;
strangeness and pathos in the unbalanced figure
Resting on a tiny crutch and this dusty red rock.
Brilliant strangeness, strangely comfortable and serene.

Dali was unique. I love this picture.
I love that a small, real man and child walk
below the great shapes, from darkness toward light.
I love that the far-off town shines, small and human,
in a bright and shaded land that could be Spain, or Mars.
I love that partway to the town a figure of line and shadow
anticipates the family made whole. I love that this image
has hung on my wall for forty years, comforting and serene.

Link to 'The Architectural Angelus of Millet' by Dali:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/artspheric/6075340699/>

The silent dog

We hit the streets on a mid-week May morning,
Dancing up driveways, sashaying round cars.
A leaflet in every letterbox, and listen for dogs.
The ones that don't bark, bite the worst.

'It's time for change'. We take the message out,
From door to empty door. The blues have posters up,
And so have we. Not as many as there used to be.
More green than before, and yet more crazy purple.

We want to feel 'there is a tide in the affairs of men',
A surge we'll ride to fairness and prosperity.
But always lurking is the silent dog whose name
Is 'Vote for change, and get the same again.'

Envoi

We could have had that dog put down
If you'd all voted in the referendum.
But explaining the Alternative Vote, or AV,
Is even harder than forcing it into poetry.

Questions raised by reading Robert Graves

Gannymede

Hebe was young and pretty, and a Goddess,
But Zeus
Didn't want her there all the time.
She was his daughter. So
Bye-bye Hebe. Zeus gave Gannymede the girl's place.
'Gannymede' corrupted to 'catamite'. Forever
lovely and sexy; never dead. Don't
call him happy.

What I want to know, is -

did he ride the eagle's back as a rodeo cowboy,
or
was he the rabbit clawed up by the bird?

Tithonus

Tithonus, much like Gannymede,
Was also mortal.
Properly fucked over by rosy-fingered Dawn,
he aged and aged. She kept him caged,
hidden away in her room.
Was he a nuisance there?
(cursed as she was with love for pretty boys)

She wanted him never to die, but forgot
To ask great Zeus for ever-lasting youth.

Did his mind and memory
shrink with him, leaving him only
a grasshopper present?

And when he escaped,
did she feel relief?