



Poetry collection

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The Graduation

Time ate you. And left us, alone
 In the garden.
 The path now, instead, leads us to the
 grinding indifference of past tense sympathy.
 After.
 Letting off Chinese lanterns, with words
 Put on the page. For you,
 they might reach you
 when we did not. When I try
 to picture you, its him that
 arrives instead. Fourteen and furious
 sweatshirt & shorts
 Nike socks, still chosen by your mum
 the impossible smile which says,
'I know I'll get my way.'
 The chain on your bike that used to
 lurch. Where that branch
 that wasn't supposed to be
 was. Later, cycling back from a
 party, this would come to haunt you.
 Showered in cuts, like we were
 Once. Showered by summer stars
 drinking stolen Jack Daniels.
 On Sunday's drifting downstairs like
 The oar you lost. On the Saturday before,
 stolen boat on a manmade lake
 the escape made you miss your break.
 These jolted thoughts come,
 When I least expect it
 No more purpose in me, than in you
 When you decided with juggernaut confidence
 To anchor us, grounded invisibly
 to July 14th. I watch
 the red ovals float
 with decorated golden tassels, like
 the graduation hat you'll never wear
do you know that I'll graduate this year?
 Floating to the other side's interior
 Where, if I followed, I
 would find. My life before, before.
 Towards the sun, now a red door
 which you, in your own time, would open,
 To ask, if I would come out to play
 And we, would be fourteen again.

April hue

April hues, of sympathetic flowers
Yet, all are violets.

Her withered winter's walking coat is
Showered in blue mist. *'Do I
Remember correctly or do I,
Mould the memory?'*

The long labour of
Earth worms
Thoughts
Hung like a washing line!
Strung like a daisy chain!
If remembered wrong, let this be right
April hues, of sympathetic flowers
If remembered wrong, let this be right.

But the sunset? Where
Did she stand? The lonesome,
memory
of
Wanting to be
Where
I am not.

Beth's prose poem

'You like poems, though; smart women write poetry.' I do; I like the rules of grammar and syntactic structures and the way the lexis climbs the trellis. How the punctuation can possess an absence that the diction cannot. And when I'm not writing, I miss the periods of intense academia, the impotent white walls, and the dull ache from forgetting to eat. Leaving the library as the sun sets like bougainvillea against a Greek taverna. Those sentences such as *'the subsequent, abstraction of the self,' 'that to revert to tropes of reproduction,' 'syntactical dichotomy' 'conceptual mapping' and 'painting a psychoanalytic portrait of...'* seem to float into my head as though they had always resided in my garden, with squatters' rights. The view from my taverna is an ocean of critical theory: Marxism, poststructuralism, psychoanalytic, feminism, and modernism. These, I compress down, bottle up, debating how they could be (...), but they are(...). Poems are structured formal elements dictating the tides and flower arrangements.

'You like poems.' It's true I like reading poems, the cherry blossom of similes, hanging baskets of abstract and concrete nouns, uncovered from the dunghill of language, and the outlines of meaning that reveal themselves like the rash of a reaction to poison ivy. My father is allergic to poison ivy. If it was my poem and not my analysis, there would be multiple scholarly articles written about my choice of metaphor. Instead, it is I who unpack their climbers and chase the threads of the living willows. I draft like driftwood until, I conclude the final arrangement at my own Chelsea flower show.

'Smart women write poems.' To be a cliché, my passion began with Plath, although I quickly learnt the counter-cultural that existed in the shadow of her figurative language. However, I learned one thing from Plath, not to make poison ivy my centrepiece. As I got older, I loved Levertov, having decided at twenty-one that I should have been born in America in the sixties. A child of the flower power and protest poetry.

'You like poems, though; smart women write poetry.' My friend told me when I told her my worries. *'I have to complete a portfolio of poems twenty credits of my final grade.'* Because *'I like poems'* and *'smart women write poems,'* but as I sit here weaving a plant bindweed of personal experience without my theoretical framework, I cannot connect the thread between the concepts.

35mm film

Ruined

35 mm film; myself; then, still new
 the cushioned camera case. you-
 captured. unchanged separate self
 the backward playing tape of country life
 tennis tentative shoes
 crossed your hot court, gently
 the village intensity

of

cinematic childhood
reels of sleeping august afternoons
 bleached jeans, bleached faces
 yawning slice serves into another life
 all roads lay
 too open.

perhaps

if you had worn different shoes
 instead of
 sneakers stringed. we had all heard of
past tense's developed destination
 and the passage through courts to mark transition. you
 missed.
 instead, only
 the blare of silent pictures.
 the tending to your plaque
 became
 a little hobby of the living

you,

stained orange ivy
 momentarily lasting,
 only as long as humidity
 yet,
 the years of shadows
 negatives unlived.

For Sue, aged eighteen

I learnt

To love literature

from my mother,

aged three

listening

to the life force wither from the page

life is attached to bone

*'you're doomed if you do and
doomed if you don't'*

And the fact that

God was

mortal and definitely a man

because the patriarchy is a pyramid.

In which

Unless,

I am 'lucky' enough

to have

'Pretty Privilege'

so that

instead of outcast I am objectified.

Because puberty meant that it wasn't just my body that changed,

But world around me too.

Reaction and attraction

'What I'd do to you if I was ten years younger!'

'it's not a curse to grow up pretty!'

'Now the party's started!'

'You've really filled out!'

'Show us your tits!'

'Give us a feel!'

'Look at you!'

'Slut.'

'But, don't' you look beautiful,

I'm sure it's all anyone has ever told you your whole life.'

August Almonds

Almond butter spooned by ancient agars, clumps to
bitter (sweet) burnt memories.
you would park down my street
and at dusk, I'd sneak out the gate
behind the guise of seeing a mate
I thought that night without,
a roof and the
canopy of camouflaged conversation. The empty elms to which light hadn't reached
(*silenced summer solstice*)
and the jetty we sat on,
was mirrored in the lake
water waxwork of sculpted embryonic profiles
this upper sixth tranquillity conversation, like
symbolism the squashed splendour melting, like
the strawberries of outrageous youth
I despised the uniformed orderliness
of domesticated debris
And I think I liked that you wore
your Sunday best on a Wednesday
top hat like
an embittered tortoise pointed, dead set
towards a diminishing vermilion tiger-lily sunset.
When Grenfell tower burnt,
we were lying in a field sharing
thoughts on the recent local government elections
even though,
we couldn't vote. There was a paradoxical power in that
Later.
In September,
when the almond tree's tears, had scattered mercury into our reflection
you told me, '*It was better to leave things in August*'
But, on the drive back I noticed,
trying to steady my breath
how even scrap cars are piled neatly for death.

Poetry collection

To swim.

It is true- you didn't know

easier-

For the fishing rod to cast,

you the machiavellian

But, for all that, I have seen you. I was a Kingfisher and you a Threadfin Butterflyfish

Risked you,

naked,

vulnerable

In the moonlight,

Like some strange companion of Poseidon.

Yet, it is I

left with

convulsions

on the shore.

Sorting: Odds and Ends of February

(This poem was constructed from a selection of entries from my journal across the month of February)

1. This morning, I saw the sunrise over Buckden for the first time since I was in school and waiting for the bus to arrive. Pink swirls with dark red droplets of dye.
2. I think three multifaced sides of me manifest themselves through my three best friends.
3. The work I am producing isn't of high quality; I am fixed, obsessed, driven by a vast machine of failure.
4. Sometimes, I think I can feel time physically moving around me. At night when I'm conscious of the fact that breath is, in essence, breath.
5. Writing this on the eve of my 22nd birthday and feeling beautifully content because (...)
6. Today was the worst day of my academic career.
7. If I neglect my thoughts, do I, therefore neglect myself?
8. *'Man, you man, are too funny,'* the neighbour laughed as he strutted into our house with the swagger of a plumber. The electricity had gone.
9. I must write this on the train to Erin's in London. Happenstance, yesterday it appeared I had lost the plot a little (...)
10. Independence is not a virtue I possess.
11. I look in the mirror and imagine the bump.
12. I have reached that stage in my existence. Again. Where I have come to dislike myself.
13. Spin classes helps. The sheer burn, unable to think of anything else.
14. Russia has banned Instagram.
15. Yesterday, as I was leaving the Trent building, I was hit by the smell of spring- a certain kind that I hadn't smelt since I was eleven. Daffodils addressing the past.
16. perhaps I really am a terrible person?
17. Having seen...on Saturday, I have become obsessed. What strikes me the most is not the concept of your existence but this in-between existence. The conscious liminality of our four years without conversation.
18. I have been far too occupied yet paradoxically idle.
19. I'm not cursed; it is not karma, but simply and plainly, although perhaps most poignantly, bad luck.