

Common Good for Common Ground

I stand singing on a crust of earth everywhere
white flames circle like the laughter of a king,
I've seen them, what they do when the lights
spin dry, I've heard them, what they say when
they can, I've stood facing the better world
trying to reach out a palm, a solid word, to forge
an agreement with the rough sleeper younger
than me, I've stood in last century's waiting line
trying to correct the future. And when I stop
to think about it all I realise this; I've wanted
to help, to turn the tap on all the way, hold
the door wide open, I've trained myself to live
alongside a wet stone, a wounded pheasant,
to ignore the moon when it lies, what else can
I say other than this - pay attention to the way
we hit the ground, how hard it can be to get
back up, from across the water the sky is holding
itself up like a plate, the archer packs down his bow,
the developer logs off for good and here we are
on a crust of earth, everywhere is us needing us more.

The Politics of Expertise

On this day the professor discovered tomorrow's map, he put his best findings in a cup, passed them along to another man with small feet who said no, the professor heard the news and walked for miles until he stumbled on a brand-new rock, there he took a mallet and shattered the shell, the exterior erupted like a flock of bad birds, all through the valley, down into the sleeping hamlet bits of broken stone completed the ground, children collected remnants, one girl called her piece truth, another boy claimed his piece fact, and like this the children grew into war, they kept their pieces of rock close to their hearts, running at each other with lies, misinformation, with agendas and yellow spin. They ran at until their feet were the size of fists, and like this the children were no longer their age, they understood the temperature of power, the physics of control they knew what it meant to carry a body all the way down to its hole, interred, governed by more rocks and stones. The professor, older now and close to the last of his writings took his work out into the yard, there he screamed into the face of an empty rose, the hard eyes of a fence, he pulled at the roots until the entire lawn was igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic, just before he went back inside he stopped and all around he could hear the happy laughter of children.

Making the Most of Making

Mix the language with the mood I make myself better.
Today I'll stencil a smile onto the window, wish the people
a satisfying day. There is nothing more to be said only to be made,
the universe stands as a singular artist, I want to invent
the watercolours of a Cambodian rice field, a room with a view.
Around the circle we give each other gifts, say we made a thing
which didn't exist before, brought to life an idea, & through this
I give you that which gives you more of yourself. Feast on the spectacular,
mould the cold clay, knit slower, dance until the floorboards stand
in applause. In my pocket I'll keep my small life for when I most
need it. I've sold my cutlery, the first records I ever bought, I'm free
as the pots left outside, wherever one whistle goes, another follows,
imagine, everything arounds us once started off in someone's mind,
I want to pull the stars out of the sky one by one but I wouldn't know
what to do with so much darkness, so I keep my shoes clean, iron
what I can, I'll take my damage to the golden line, delete my battle
name and speak straight from the hip. Look what I made out of love
look what you gave out of love. Look up the love hasn't moved since
the beginning.

A Guide To Living In The Apocalypse

Does the door belong to the room
Or the room belong to the door?
I'm at the threshold wearing my
New shiny shoes, my socks however
are second hand but there you go.
What's beyond the door is critical mass,
is hope in the shape of a worker,
I keep my situation close to heart, I wear
The future with all the panache of an angel
Oak tree, how else do we carry midnight?
How else can we live beyond our homes?
If this were a tragedy we'd be somewhere close
to the final act, our hero down on his absolute luck,
on his knees and pressure points speaking of which...
Does pressure find the pressurised first? Or here's
an idea, I've been wearing this smile for years
now and all I've ever wanted is to be the happiest
on my block, I can see so many opportunities
When the day finally stops to take off its boots,
I'm planting my shadow in a corn field for posterity
Call me before you leave, chances are I'll be ready too.

A Planet of Everyone's Own

I'm at the border which means I'm home
again around me birds migrate towards the same sky
as yesterday they have no language for what we use
to contain a body, the wind sweeps up the dust
and the dust is off, freer than a whistle, my island
has a broken hip bone, my island voted for itself
in the chaos of itself, I don't believe everything
I read but I read and believe in everything, nonetheless.
Once I watched a man dig an alphabet from out
his arms, scarred with water and rain I sung him
a slow poem but his arms we're thick and wordless
tracks running through him like a bad dancer
I thought what would a bird say now? & what about
the dust again, smarter than us, I don't know much
about war but I know it lives in the body the way
grief occupies a throat, in the distance I can see
the bulldozers, they have my country's name on,
I'm at the protest with six others, look at me shout
Stop, look at me wave, no more. The protest has
Run out of steam meaning we are back where we
Started, at home, we put our placards to rest,
Take our shoes off, tuck our kids to sleep before
Turning off the news.

The Problem With Universalism

Chances are it'll happen to us all, on a Thursday
When there's nothing in the diary. It's funny now
Me and my son run from the same kind of weather,
My job as a parent is to contextualise the world
To put one foot before the other and say look
Your steps are yours, but the ground belongs
To the sky, if I could I'd share the world's suffering
Out like a picnic, like shortbread maybe if I could
I'd build a rainforest out of bad jokes. Knock. Knock.
Etc. The problem with me is usually the problem
With us which is as you know, my problem. The intersection
ends up holding so much more, so let's talk. Call me.
I'm about to leave you a voice note saying I'm about
to leave you. Saying I want the house. The dog.
This divorce better be better than the last, I mean
some of us do our learning in public, and some of us
refuse to learn at all, privilege is a betting shop, a gambler
told me that. Some of us should know better. Some of us
should know that in truth what anyone really wants is hot
running water, a wider telly perhaps the scaffolders to do
their job more quietly. I don't know about you, but then I do,
I really do sitting in a circle where everyone needs to admit
to one thing that pisses them off, but it can't have anything
to do with another human. Once the circle breaks, it becomes
a line.

The State in All Its Sates

What I vote for and what I get are two different things.
I wanted a country free of neck ties and plastic but what do
I find if not the floating fish or discounted magic wand?
I'll take whatever I can get heavy with, lick soundbites clean
until I'm burping out sexy promises. My posture is getting worse
with every bad faith take, interview, click bait media, I'll tell
you what I told my father the night before he drained the tank.
If I die because of an idea make sure you leave my most obscure
adjectives to the guy in blond, keep still his open mouth
don't worry about his small hands - floccinaucinihilipilification
and all that good old-fashioned stuff. My father wanted to be Elvis
he knew all the songs, one night I asked him why Elvis
he said because like any good king, you take what isn't yours
and learn to walk with it, nobody laughed, I'll leave my podium
mic on, have a party with the rest of my party while the rest
of the country waits by the curtain. I love how death teaches
us how best to live, and I miss the dead in all their states.
I've drunk from a hilltop, a ravine and dropped loose change
Into the hat of a homeless man who nodded as if he knew.
Tomorrow when I get in from work, I'm going to sit at my desk
To write my letter to the prime minister, addressed to nobody
In particular, a country unpicking itself, a country my country
Nonetheless.

