

THE QUARRY

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A Matter of Style

These two poems, one light
and the other not, explore
different types of conformity.

Out of Style

I've clicked my selections on websites of fashion
but have often been tricked by the fit,
so I'm lugging a dozen garments on hangers,
their hooks biting into my flesh -
I've collected them all throughout my favourite store
and now I'm fitting-room bound for the test.

The first outfit clings to display perfectly
every roll, every blimp, every bag
from there it's downhill: I struggle to fill the hips and the rear
while the waist just won't meet in the middle.

Even the t-shirts this season are all so wide-necked
(for some reason) that my décolletage is as vast as a ship
just not what is needed to slim or to flatter
or neaten the middle aged figure.

I abandon the cause, head back to the shop floor
in search of shoes, way less affected by fat
but here, while there's all sorts of shapes,
heels come only two ways: skyscraper or flat.

After years of the former, my back is now buggered
- so stilettos are out, as are paper thin flatties
which provide no support. And I'm left wondering
about the so-called choices we're spoilt for,
and all the discretionary cash in my middle-aged purse,
trying so hard to get spent.

At The Gallery

Grey day
spots
start
falling to frizz my hair
then pellets are making me and my mascara run I nip
inside behind others asking for directions and all there is
is walls
tall white
over head
their bright lips are telling stories all at once
and loud and the noise grows
round and swollen
there are faces in the ochre dust
on ground that feels the evil
beating
hearts were taken from this place
'black velvet'
daughters being led away
a man is trussed and beaten in a cell its 1962
'and they just pissed on him'
they just pissed on him
my stomach hunches with the taste of blood and sand-grit, salt
I'm reaching for my tissues, pretend I have a cold
try to sidle slow and knowingly like arty people, not
racing through loud rooms of stories along white walls all tall
rodent scrabble-running out of here
past that name-tagged man
to exit
sunny
sky now strangely blue

Music-phrasis

The following are ‘music-phrasis’ poems, written to and inspired by two pieces of music, respectively:

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B major by Brahms, and

‘Can’t Take That Away From Me’ by George and Ira Gershwin.

Dreaming Young

You thought you'd keep my edges tucked
teach me how to move,
a lifetime's repetition perfecting scales in g and b
now everyone again, again
and we'll all be glad about it in the end
but none looked up to see me
stepping staircase climbing grandly sweeping up and up
and out and flying over roofs and roads and rivers
merging with the seasons suns and continents

can you keep up?
better cling or be thrown off
just try! you cannot meet me where I am
this skin slips free and I may march on over
you I repeat I do not care how often
I repeat I chime I sing across civilisations
I pianissimo to breeze, to delicate partnered dance

yes, try to keep me skipping in your palm
do not let me trickle up the keyboard
or I'll merge with other music irascible, untamped

I will get to where I am, I will
greet me, pause
selectively
for birds and
yellow flowers
then subside to glide to water, rest in ripples

before climbing once again
moving always moving past the roadside forests'
shade then light, striped shade of dizzy light
in restless swallowing of landscapes up to skies
see, I have finally flung you over
no more tucking
nothing holds.

Can't Take That Away

Eighty years ago

my mother took me to Manhattan

a sweeping suite on Central Park

white on white with floor to ceiling windows

deco plush and gleaming chrome.

On milky curves of Gershwin's grand piano

she taught me how to tap:

lily-slim she shimmers

sheathed in elongated satin snow

creamy feathers bobbing in her hair

that smooth-curved cap of platinum,

her eyes of quick warm chocolate

the only colour I can see.