

THE QUARRY

Susan Lewington

Another Day Above the Ground and other poems

Another Day Above the Ground

Shrouded sleek secret burqas

billowing mesmerising

kohl – lined bullet eyes

glinting.

Gilded clicking Arabic

magical kinetics click

connect lyrical

voices.

Delicate dynamic

melodic prosaic verse

quelled rhyming

Arabic chants.

Alien identity

Diminished hidden beneath

Layers of bold cold -

Otherness.

Dwarfed in context time and place

I slide between imbedded

cracks of tortured tiles

- a puddle.

I am

the only

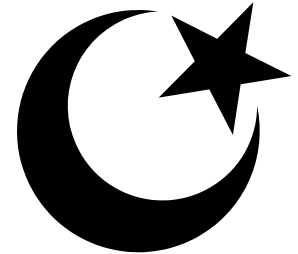
Outsider

Here.

Anatomy Dichotomy

Steep Bundeena bush tramping
Indigenous rock carvings
sacred caves burial site
vigilant vines lumpy track
intractable cliff climbers
shrouded sylphs slipping stepping
support gnarled knotty trunks
another leads ant-like lines
we form a narrow sprite shrine
- I am at the back.

Sudden shrill sharp screech shocks screams
shouts shatter crystal salt air
birds fly off flapping horror
clustered hallowed girls
huddled with bedraggled scarves
pointing to salt soaked shallows
below catching breath, look see
what has wrought this commotion
thank goodness - noted muted
mirthful murmurs giggle.
Hushed voices some have bolted
others stopped to peer and gawk
like heaven's messengers lost
in their holy veils and smocked



pocket uniforms hidden
'Move on Amanie, Sabah,
Madeeha' I chide relief
alive, no cataclysm happened
on this auspicious cliff-top
ledge we slide and climb.

'We haven't got all day girls'
'Ms Look, see? He's got no clothes
on' whispers Zainab pointing
through trees in contemplative
awe - gaze pursues her slender
hennaed finger pointed - where
I see a swimmer naked
standing in the joyful waves
oblivious of audience -
- invisible voyeurs.

Peek through acacia curtains
squinting in sun's bedazzled
beams, covered in layer upon
layer hot cotton rigid rules
on this burning scorching day.
Poor souls. His perfect handsome
surfer's body lashed by licking
waves, droplets, riverlets down
haunches bronzed by noble sun –

flaxen surfer boy

With bulging pecs body-surfs

God-given glory alone

with foam and flotsam

standing majestic splendid

white bubbles kiss naked skin,

blue eyes calm and free he can't

hear muffled whispers breathlessly

admitting interest, he reaches

shallows, water runs in ripples

off Coke can abs

I sigh at this dichotomy

of physical anatomy -

a shrouded teacher standing

glancing back with black burqa

being blown across her mouth

by a gust of carefree wind

- It clings on hollow bones

she freezes on the crest it flaps

the image burns my soul somehow

woman - veiled black mask.

Viewer, viewed, free, chosen, all

bewitched with emboldened eyes

brazen flushed faces heated
vermillion blushes, wide eyed
pursed lips numinous- I tell
flock to 'Move along' but them
cannot resist quick furtive
glances to their right - why not?

Must keep going forward.

They might
- Slip.

Cotton Fences

Classroom brimming desks end to end text books in piles on unkind tiles - Rows,
chairs, stepping over more stuff - Clutter, mutter, tick here tick there ' Put it down.
Mirror away Nadine, listen, pick up a pen. Do Some Work.'

'But Ms I'm different,

I'm going

to be a Star.

Spray water in bathroom splash splish splash endlessly shake out hair, laughter
mirrors basins hidden secret girls stuff re-appear dampened chastened modest
covered chagrined pinned buttoned huddle frown chatter whisper mutter utter weep
frown shout look in the mirror they smooth the edges of their scarves around their
faces - Again

I don't need to learn this,

I don't like it.

I'm going to be on TV.

An actress.

Or a model'

Slides her fingers under chin, loosens constrictive hijab, adjusts sharp pins that keep scarf, rules, codes in place.

'I can sing Ms

do you want

- to Hear Me?'

Peep from cotton fences faces bound by tradition cannot escape, their bodies - fenced in, captives tied up bound -hidden by religious fervour without encouragement shriek belly dance at the drop of a kebab. Leap up out of their chairs onto desktops challenging demanding trouble forgivable they are Allah's beautiful prisoners.

Minarets

Monday morning walking talking,
striped abandoned kittens
milling round nylon ankles forlorn.

Ignore plaintive mews, massive gates
black metallic spires
spiked minarets, huge rovers glide ride.

Hurry across road dodging wheels
sad voices reluctance
hostile faces nod or not.

Oh congested suburban day
drive by shootings headlines
treeless friendless aliens surround.

Feeling spaced out I remember
something I forgot
heart thumping faster sense bleak panic.

I gasp for the memory
of what it is, I have
forgotten.