

Amelia Earhart

In 2010, a team of researchers from The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery discovered the remains of a 1930s female American castaway on the remote and uninhabited island of Nikumaroro in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is strongly believed that the castaway was Amelia Earhart, the pioneering female pilot who disappeared in 1937 whilst attempting to circumnavigate the world by air.

i

For someone so accustomed to speed,
silence and stillness was something.
It fell to a hum.
It widened.

First, an inventory of quiet invaded and took root.
Each variety lived
and sang one note.

But this shelf fell off, deeply,
plaintively cut to the igneous core.
The air plucked at bird string,
marsupial chatter, and
tapped irregular fingers to it.

Each scrambled song an insult
to one who craved an engine and a wing.

At first, she went mad.

ii

The damning thing was
the finger bone. Hers, they said.

That and the pre-war American cosmetics. Misplaced
in a land without a metal press or edges,
nature powdered to a pigment,
or hands to press the buttons.

That, and the upturned oyster shells,
shallow buckets laid out in rows
to plug up the sand,
drain the sky, resist
the wretched equatorial
heat.

The desperation that brands the spot
where the star imploded
in the most sparse
edge of the galaxy. Unnoticed

surrounded by star birds and star crabs
caught in the gravity
of their own orbits.

iii

The crabs ate her,
crushing the bones that
once hung bravely,
eyes that held the earth's curve,

the heart that burst adrenaline
drilled it to the tips of grasping fingers
feeling life, even in the face of the spiked sea.
Electra's crunch and spasm groaning.
The sea church settles
and takes pity.

iv

Amelia fell upwards and
was laid like a pearl on the shoreline.

v

I imagine her whole and tanned,
her clothing dirtied but intact.
Her right hand loosely on her hip,
the other shielding squinting eyes
from sun which levels her up.

She looks out before looking in
to the mountain tip of her new island,
the horizon as empty as the stomach.
Birthdays pass, Christmases pass.
The slow collapse
into new years.

She's stood there, blinking.

Water Music

The stream is coughing notes
up on the rocks,
frothing them out
and hissing

trails of bubbles,
a troop of dancers;
racing stone edges towards the
width and drop ahead.

Full rain
pitches her lungs,
splits them on flint islands,
bursts on the gravity
of the fall's edge.
Unbound by physics,
she collapses into
white myth.

Down the river, a quieter affair,
dull percussive chords.
Irregular salmon vault and
side slap
the calm on descent,

clawed back
by the estuary
in aubade, singing
to her sons of the sea,
calling them home.

Nuclear

Here all of us are
crackling anxious
to love.

But there is an alchemist
wanting for myth
to buy his way in,
with his strangler's
verve and bargain.

The air is tattooed
with a pulse.
Something lives
beyond the body.
A shattered blissbox.
The thighs'
wax and wane
remembered.

The white windowed
filament of time
is burning.

Winter for the Robin

The night had broken down in inches,
marked by raised choirs of bird noise.

The robin was face down when I found him.
His wings, glacial triangles,
mocked his form,
strapped him down
to the newly found grip
of the pond.

Now, the snow-packed mountains with baby faces
still on, loosen their robes
shaking out survivors of stiffened sleep.
Later, the canvas of snow
unpeels from the hills,
shows the grass
stalks fighting a tightened
earth
to get loose.
Air has wrung out each stray atom;
it is a naked face of glass.

Unknowing, there is a fight
at the bird table.
Fattened thrushes, winter broken.
They are not mourning the missing friend.
The hardness of the hardest of seasons
is designed to kill.
That is what the winter is for,
to divide last year's from this.

One robin
is broken and cloven
from the red,
and startled to sleep in white sheets.

The Beginning

My conception was a blur to me.
The first I knew was the
warm hand over the smutch
of me.

For a month I lay yellowed
in her fabric, adulterating and eating.

What was my shape? I couldn't tell.

I grew –
stretching my fingers
skywards, corrupting the
backbone, my jaws
at the womb.

The doctor said I had potential,
tried to scissor me free
from my mother.

That sky opened right up.
A shrieking red blade
was cursing me in waves.

I divided, divided
over-expressing myself, apparently.
A bloom of atoms
ranged from the blood.
I hid inside
the bones and shivered.

They sent sticky sinews,
arrested my
many faces, blinded me,
froze

the chromosomes
that made me.

Japan

i

From the classroom, the first
shriek of Japan's black lacquer
cracking.

From the street, the head funk
of raining brick and concrete,
the red flair of towns.

From the cities, a mouth not quite deep enough
to swallow the dead
in the collapse
of a country's scaffolding.

From the people: a love prayer
to tables, to save them.

The landmass falling
eight inches east.

ii

The water pulls flat, sharpens as
the gun shot rips across
stinging
a hem of metres,
standing
on hind legs.

The ocean screams
as black flesh swells
a rock wall,
bends a target.

The oiled waves are coming.
The oiled waves are coming.

iii

And now the cats in houses
and now the cows in fields
and now the children in schools.

And now

a mud flat, an estuary sweep.

iv

Now the air is flecking with
a microscopic hail, gelling fibres
to skin and cloth, finding routes in.

Making clay of organs,
making clay of this nation.