

POESIA AO MEIO DIA
FEVEREIRO DE 2024

“St.Brigid’s Windfall”

So this is love – your step
on the watery stair,
the sheepskin nuzzling our feet,
a kept flame in a tower
and nothing to repent.

I am the ripening moon
like other women at last
glowing under your hand.
Now the hopeless war is past
I sleep content.

(O’Malley, Mary. *Where the Rocks Float*.1993, p.73)

DISTANCE

*’Vai buscar quem mora longe,
sonho meo’*. Dona Ivone Lara

For years visions of you assembled
in the air, hologram after hologram
with your laugh, your sweet voice singing
‘Sonho meo, sonho meo’,
a flower swayed by the wind.
Then there was less of you, more traces,
schoolbooks in the porch, your birthday smile.
A cloud of hair came and disappeared.

Then only the echoing spaces
where I stayed. Echo.
I don’t know when I started to fade.
All that is left are a few outlines
and the prow of this ship they tied me to
when I was still useful. Soon
even that will be erased and my bones
will become stone. If you strike them
they will sing ‘Sonho Meo’.

ERASURE

Least expected from a low sky
a man-shaped star or satellite
came unwanted over the gate
to the door, and hospitality
demanded I be polite, serve cake

and tea to his small retinue,
milk to his cat. I thought I had done
with stars and their emissaries,
figures etched out of the scarce
dazzle of daylight, all that.

Finally he spoke. 'I', he said
in that quiet way they have,
'am Azrael. You're in my book
of course' and sat there, erasing names
as he drank my tea, ate my cake.

'Did you come to rub me out?' I asked.
'Oh no', he said, 'Look' and I saw
my own name faded like an x-ray.

'Your own kind are doing that.'
He spoke kindly I thought.

THE SHARK NURSERY

I am Dogfish. When I hatch,
I threaten nobody. We gather
in nesting places, in rock
and coral. I am harmless.
Thrown back by trawlermen.
Nobody eats me.

Today we are in the news.
Scientists have observed 'a rare shark nursery'
off the West coast. Now we have status.
I am a shark, suddenly, and my young
safe in their mermaid's purses
are treasure in a coral room.

I am a blackmouth catshark now
shown some respect.
That's nice but inside
I'm still a dogfish, reviled.

THE SINGER

I gcuimhne Josie Sean Jack

The sharks in the bay keep their secrets
from experts and tourists.
They have few other predators.
They guard their language. Scarce

words are stolen and kept in banks.
Who could afford to buy them back?

The words with old-style glottal stops
and the broad vowelled diphthongs
are gold and silver to the singer,
encoded memory. Some
are afraid 'bask' will be stolen.
Then, it will be all over.

When the coast is clear I ask
if they are still composing songs.
'Ag cúirt an ciúineas ata muid anois'
they answer. 'Ach o am go h-am, guímid.' *

*We are courting silence these times,
but from time to time, we pray.

“James Joyce Impersonates Pessoa”

I am plural. I know and relish this.
Heteronyms live in me – Alberto Caeiro
is master. Others make do with an alter ego.
I have multitudes, a rush of voices
Jumping upriver – Anna Livia Plurabelle.
Some don't make it. One of these days
I'll finish my long book
set in Lisbon on the eighth of March.
That'll make them sit up.
One of the others can get on with *Dubliners*.

There are nights I am afraid to sleep
for fear of Alvaro's dreams.
I am not mad, only short-sighted.
Ophelia Barnacle Queiroz,
where did I leave my glasses?

(O'Malley, Mary. *A Perfect V*. Carcanet Press, 2006: 28)

“The Foreigner”

He had the voice of an Englishman,
wherever he got the name.
He was English to the look in his eyes.
He talked with the voice of sureness,
the voice of governors,
the voice of arrogance,

the seductive cadence of power.

He knew words of ballads
but he spoke them in the voice
of high opera.

An accent like that
is a dangerous thing,
lethal as opium.
You could get addicted
to a voice like that,
an accent
to intimidate the sea itself.

(O'Malley, Mary. *Where the Rocks Float*. Salmon Poetry, 1993: 5)

LISBON REVISITED

For Eli

There were nights I hoped
the children would come,
assemble themselves out of sun and roses
and I would dance with them out of the rain
down Avenida de Liberdade,
the seeds of time in my hair,
the moon and stars in my arms.

(The Shark Nursery. Carcanet Press)