

Poetry at Midday 29th of May, 2024

A talk between the poet Victoria Kennefick and Gisele Wolkoff

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Hunger Strikes Victoria Kennefick

She punches her stomach loose,
blind- naked like a baby mole.
In the shower she cannot wash herself
clean the way she'd like. Rid herself
of useless molecules. Would that
she could strip her bones,
be
something
neat,
complete.
Useful.

To eat or not to
eat, switch table
sides.
Stuff cheese sandwiches

and chocolate blocks into a
wide moist orifice. Or,
alternatively zip that mouth
closed like a
jacket, a body
already contained
within.
It doesn't
need to feed.

*But I have set a table for us all.
For us all, a feast!
On a vast, smooth cloth, already soiled.
Let's take a seat, eat our fill.
You know you want to,
dig in.*

TEACHING MY DAUGHTER HOW TO BREAK AN EGG

She hesitates. She who is told not to break, who is asked
did she break or why did she break.

Go for it, I tell her. She looks at me and taps,
Harder, I say. She laughs and raps. It shatters,
not a clean break but tiny catastrophic fissures, miniature tiles,
a mosaic of destruction. Once more, and the insides spill out.
The yolk is punctured and brilliant orange.
We smile at each other; her fingers are sticky. She hates that.

I do too. We wash our hands together under the cold tap,
wipe them dry on a tea towel. Now, we make sure to stir the egg
into the mixture so all the ingredients are indistinguishable.

We plop it in the tin, the gloopy mess, push it
into the oven's hot womb. There it will solidify into an edible brick
for us to break again. But now all I can say is,
Careful, careful you don't get burned.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EASTER EGGS

A formerly forbidden food during Lent,
eggs were painted and decorated to mark the end
of penance, of fasting.

Sometimes dyed red to mimic the blood that Christ
shed during his crucifixion, then given as gifts –
bloody, bloody eggs.

I've always hated them, unless disguised
in cake, or cake. The eggshell is the tomb of course,
the chick inside, Our Lord, cheeping through the crack
imprinting on whomever He happens to see first.

During Holy Week the chickens just kept laying
so the decoration on the shell gave away the age
of these symbols of freshness and fertility.

In this case, old, in this case,
last Holy Week's news.

Give me a break, and a chocolate one any day.
I like to hold the whole, hollow egg in my hand,
listen to the silence inside, beyond the foil and dark shell
and bang it over and over on the table,
until it shatters.

THE HUSBAND SUIT

Wound up like a doll in a
jewelry box I spin and
spin
– look at myself
in the tiny rectangular mirror –
fleetingly –
dream of you with your soft, long-lashed
blue eyes, the veins high
and noble in your arms, and that
look of furrowed
determination to
stop the rotation, to give me peace.
Ha! A mirage, a holograph,
lled- in like paint-by-numbers – a
version
of a husband quiet and calm, silent
and hard-working, smart and stiff.
He was lovely, we both
thought so. How beautifully
constructed,
I didn't even see the stiches, how the suit
frayed near the pockets. I was spinning, you see.
So, so, so fast. And his face, well
it looked just right speeding by, and the
animal warmth of his hands seeking to grab me.
And those lips, how we softened into each
other on each turning only to be
ripped apart.
Again. *Turn it off, turn it off*, I
would yell and he would nod but keep
winding,
in his pleasant grey pinstripe
cashmere with a blue tie the exact
colour of the sky
on our wedding day and of his sequined eyes.
And what now that a thread from the suit got caught,
and that it ripped right through the fabric from ankle to neck
and that it stopped my spinning
and made us see in the
stillness that you were no
husband at all?

There is a corpse in our bed.
It is Jesus, down from the cross, the blood spattered across
his rippling torso, the crown of thorns ripping the pillow slip and the flesh on his forehead. I don't know
why
He is here, with *that* heart exposed, His eyes
closed. He *is* dead,
I think. But you know how men can be, they say
one thing, and the next thing you know they're on the road
showing off their open wounds while back at home
the women weep.

PELVIS

There's a sheep's pelvis in our garden now, bleached white as truth, white as purity, white as teeth.
It's bowl-shaped enough to hold up the garden, our house, the whole sky. I walk by it every day, going out the back
door, sneaking around
my own house, sneaking around my own life.
Not wanting myself to see myself, not wanting to be seen.
To confront another person is the same as confronting a sheep's pelvis on the step of your own back door.
The Shock of another's face. The shock
of another's expectation of you. The shock
at your own face trying to present itself as a face to converse with. **T h i s** sheep's pelvis is whitening,
brightening, blanching each passing day,
through the seasons. I cannot move it; it won't be moved. It will just stay there like the sky, like my face,
holding up.