

Fiction and Poetry

Stations
A Poem

by Simone Kotva

For the Bird Sanctuary of Adams Road

Voices

Coot Keeper (*Christ*)
Naturalist (*Simon of Cyrene*)
The Land (*Mary*)
School Children (*Crowd*)

I

Caught crowned
the Coot Keeper
made by circumscription
from the interval of walkways
made easier to
meet greet revere
respectful distance
from which to assess
 how he managed today what
 species has he gathered together
 (how many the baubles of mistletoe).

Caught crowned
unrecorded arrival
(asylum/athlete/envoy)
the cry is
he has run his course
stumbles, most likely blind
it's difficult to tell
with eyes everywhere
or overgrown, as his name:
cluttered
drawn with creepers, bird-droppings
digesting light and atmosphere.

Fauna mapped out
careful co-ordinates
audience limited
(to the daylight hours)
royal leisure increased.

And do you
feed him sparingly
but well.

II

Fenced folio fox-trodden
how goes the natural death?

Visitations, queries
prized behind padlock
viewed piecemeal from
hides and vantages
so slow his fading lists to
notes sightings statistics
 mallards
 wood pigeons
 siskin
 blue tits
 coots
 crows
 black cap (heard)
 kingfisher.
 Also a deer.

Fenced folio fox-trodden
altogether: he bears it well
the liling close
in need of higher railings.

III

The fall of a first dependant
or rather its presence petering out
the Keeper senses a tattoo:

incisions and pin-pricks
fewer nests and noises
the space where the fieldfare was
accommodating the lack
of new arrivals.

IV

After the confinement
he loses his voice
(trauma, aphasia)
so she weeps
at his weight
static almost, being neither
within nor without her body
as when birthing
except: the beloved tenor
doesn't cut through
that carpet of jays, magpies
and other diminutive calls
they become
vener to his voice
bespeak extensions
he can only dream of:
pastures fields forests
sticks hollows hedges
another chorus without.

This physical thing
how weak
maybe she'd thought
its sharing of herself would create
infinite plasticity but
varied natures are spawned
from the same mother
and hatch
and breed in the sun
and sometimes perish.

This one
and all the devils.

V

*How was it I entered unwittingly
walking with him alone
slipshod how was I trapped?*

*But convey this that I
will stake out his terrain
will come each day every day to
see touch believe learn the
calls words signatures
assemble and remember
whistle them pattern by pattern
within him
become impalpable to myself
because
death must be lateral to him
no need to propose
additional dates for my recomposition
I will stand up again: here
in a delicate trunk
growing into
a general resurrection.*

*Now father mother
let me follow without looking back
take up grass-blade and thistle-burr
become stronger for
cutting you down.*

VI

Seen touched believed
albeit reduced
mostly parts
beside parts:
not all still limber.

At least we didn't doubt
his presence but found
the correspondence true
between image and flight
markings and individuation.

At least we have: imprints
copies and characteristics
types for when
we need to reinstall him
feather by leaf by petal
tail bramble and branch
at least then
knowingly
we can take our implements
neatly stitch up those wounds
lathe him into something
more cosmetic
to be trusted also.

VII

The fall of a second dependant
or rather its presence petering out:

accounts, retellings
the Keeper strains
for familiar songs
walks more slowly
but the vanished are
slower still.

VIII

Here they come
(final indications)
skipped past, paying homage
mind the ancient Prince
rub him down careful don't forget
tomorrow there'll be displays
 parents and boys
tidy now, don't forget the signs
 boys and brothers
girls, signs sprawling on his fingertips
in little buds, everything tightly folded
folded. Laughter. He wishes
to smile but things impede
constrain, things careering
 oh miss miss miss
 I think we pushed her
 though she could've dived
 and did we like her anyway
 maybe she's gone maybe
 miss don't leave her alone leave
 her and run run run

Shouts. He can't stomach
even the reluctant sacrifice:
this the final indication.

IX

The fall of a third dependant
or rather its presence petering out
the Keeper hears it: barely
the leaves a muffler
rot and bury beside
titter-tatter of sidelines
authorising his lamentation.

X

For these new ideals
the verdict is:
search strip dismantle
pluck.

Call the taxidermists
there must be memorials
in every place
draw them up
before the fluids stagnate
apply the laureates
for nominations
to nature
his graceful state.

Call the curers of hides
we need souvenirs of his stages
undo a wingspan
examine, smarten vulgarities
all those common names:
cluttered.

Disperse his goods but how when
of course distribution is never
fair but then ah he was not fair either
was he would you say consider
this savagery spells equality
the way they tear at each other not quite
Biblical is it? all that blood no
yes we've extended our weekend opening
hours including the aviary bring your
daughters then why don't you.

Pluck gather install
all diminutive enclosures carefully
modelled on proportionally
greater examples.

XI

At gun-point: diversions
from this action too superlative
into other battles
more ancient more sound
 stands the green-froned sleeper
 earth-planted giant in situ
visitations, queries
we have made extensive investigations
 glittering womb guarded
 against
what greater or lesser than
a protracted diminishment
listing to an end, increase of morals
 nothing bone-rubbed from the workbench
 can breach this rocked shield
apologetics for incapacity
when the moment came went passed
waiting perhaps too patiently
 except mind-forged diversions
 that dispossess her ores
now: aim: inwards
down
reconfigure
the graphics will ameliorate
as will other stories.

XII

*How am I weighted
bent down when did I
acquiesce?*

*This new mother
you give me to tend
see here: I cannot be distracted
upset, the workplace
I had hoped
a rendezvous
a goodly retirement
and what environment
am I, ageing
how could I think to
bear this, please was I
not young newly fledged please
hold your breath a little longer
don't give like that
always your damned spending
let every cell reproduce until
the endpoint, don't you see it's
yours that point
I wrote books about it
diagrams, your life
breathe I say
and your mother
you needn't worry:*

I will revive her.

XIII

Paws prints pinpricks
so many piercèd skins she
bends down close to see
is it him really hers
is it can it be?

When the confinement was ended
there was no new birth
only burdens superadded
 look small one
 how I am underhanded
 by your weight
 too young I am
 too old now to become
 identical to myself
 one clod after another
 soiled, reddened:
 created.
 It seems a long time,
 we have both become
 more glorious share-holders but
 my body I wish we had seen
 touched believed: this

 not merely ourselves
 the messengers

Scratches teethmarks tyre-tracks
for a solid love
strokes and winds them
herself in fair shrouding.

XIV

Afterwards
there was
a still place
reconstitution
cultivation and labour
digging of lesser gardens
lumbering of new posts.

There was assessment
 how long did he suffer
 progressively
 from one clod of earth to another
 out cold by the end
 did he even notice
passing into something different
dependants dispersing
going to ground.

Add this the reason: anaesthetic
to avoid the shock touch collision
when it came the
prodding counting recounting of
seeds shoved in
(well we needed more
amenability).

XV

*How was it I saw him again
revolving returning
how was I trapped?*

*I say in my hands
seeming to speak
searching like his
across the earth
though hadn't I
crushed him into
this order
into this spade
even this spade
mother father
forgive me
this order
when in the down-stroke
something missed a beat
loved: hands: not mine
caressing not mine
from one clod of earth
to another
always
the fibrous parts
were his
leaf tuber stalk
turning: hands
stand up those hands
shaking from surgery
have I cut what have I cut
down myself these hands are not*

*mine stitched to my wrists
like the gardener's
they move
are they
proof of my purchase
body and soul
heart lung liver and tongue
are they with me
to keep me--*