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Alien Signals: Poems after Stanley Kubrick

1. The Shining

Alone, I am two,
As the cruel mirror shows.
Fear lies in our silence.
Our symmetry holds back
What we cannot know.

Children too are doubles:
Minotaurs in the corridors.
They haunt all such spaces for one
(And one), even dreams, living
In us before they are born.

The typewriter, made for two hands,
Is small. It’s an anachronism
I don’t understand, and yet
It draws me; makes me repeat myself.
Such frenzies. Then this tidy ream.

Only an axe can break
These illusions, brittle mazes
Of ice and snow. I’ll chase blood
Heavy from the underworld; murder
The word, murder

The infernal light of day.
2. 2001: A Space Odyssey

Science fiction proves it is impossible
To escape our milieu.
Yet, wigged, powdered, we always do.

Thus simians, screaming at sunsets, defending lurid waterholes
With the blunt bones of the dead,
Are reborn as atmosphere, as astronauts.

Such secrets are obsidian.
Are we obtuse or malign? So and so,
Life, a modern primitivist, tries to understand itself.

Listen to the dialogue,
Eighteenth-century, tête-à-tête:
Of course, we are of reason.

However, there are grounds to suspect the silence:
Massive, it hates us as much as we do,
And such enemies (between the lines) cannot be trusted.

Paranoia keeps us civil, eagle-eyed.
But vision is this red distraction, this slow rotation,
This black space, these well-plotted minutiae.

In the parlour, indifferent, the art is pure, for show,
And dinner is served politely in silver domes
Like so many grotesque and ordinary secrets.

For finally we are mouths, the gently ravenous,
And devouring us, the quiet
Hunger and patience of the unborn.

Circles, after all – the earth, the moon – are alien signals.