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Stuck Inside a Mobile
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Phone conversations act as temporary rooms
rooms for voices lifting out of bodies (and countries)
In these rooms where the boundaries of time and place
appear to have fallen away
what is buried might be given space to return

I can’t bear the economy of u
without a y to begin
no belly-round o can follow

You is not a one letter word
it is always at least two
a splitting of self to talk to oneself
or the triad of you talking to me talking to you

This is a tirade

When I first saw Superman’s hands-free
below the belt they were roaming
but they missed their connection with Lois’s thighs
he was talking to the sky

I worked with a man like him once
marched behind him up High Street on pension day
at the manic end of depression
he was punching the air
re-enacting the sacking of Whitlam
and his well may we say god save the queen

Our voices reveal what we are
uncertain and halting
slipped tongues rolling
throat catches
our breath

The reed flute never lies
The ney is played
unafraid of the sound of breath
the breath never lies
when it lies still
you’re dead

If life is just a surplus of breath
cry me back to my reed bed

- Time takes us apart like carriages of a train
  I shunt you onto a plane
  and like a caboose I think I can
  smile at your relief
  as you slip through custom’s door
  to lift your voice, body and all

Your relief makes me smile
and I forget
I was going to cry my way back to my reed bed
Instead I drove home to bed
to read

We undid the bounding conditions of presence
sped up the snailness of letters
now you carry a mobile
through the streets of Taksim
Like a big brother and not your lover
I can call you, text you up
anywhere
I could be the fright in your pocket
the fatal break in your eyes
as you weave through honking taxis
round the square in Taksim.
 * 
Spare me the economy of u
If the y hits the wall
then uh-oh the belly o

Elizabeth Grosz said
you can’t escape the building to get into cyberspace
cyberspace is not transcendent
of real space or walls

Hafiz said
write a thousand luminous secrets
upon the wall of existence

Let’s take a secret connection
and illuminate a lie
in green buttons inside your palm

Watch any man or woman texting in the park
to understand that life is no longer elsewhere
just approximately so
commitment falls into almost missed meetings
why can’t we just meet tomorrow
on the corner at 12?
A mobile means you can change your mind
a thousand times on your way

Another lie of connection
You wait on the corner for your lover at 12
he comes running and grabs both your hands
he’s just glad to see you
is that a mobile in his pocket?
It starts to ring
and what do you think
your position is now?
Bloody nowhere
You are cut and suddenly pasted
outside of time and space

u is the beginning of economy
don’t ask y he just left
and took away his diddly-O.

In the middle of a farewell speech
against the wall of a darkened room
a lone black handbag starts to ring
no one owns up
because no one owns up to hand grenades
at least not straight away

Down Burwood Highway
in the front yard of a church
the sign of a cross sprouts
from the opening petals of a mobile tower
mobiles come second to the One
because their omniscience is only limited.

Mobiles fill the silence before heaven
if your plane is plummeting out of the sky
you can phone your lover
and chart the moments until you die

I can’t bear the economy of u
The y collapsed and ground zero out
The ney is the sound of the desert
of hollow and sometimes angry air

Beyond red flags by the thousand
sickle moons and stars
that is where you are
I hear your voice in a courtyard
off the square in Taksim
We are growing small
delayed by the edge
of our breath on the phone
Our voices travel hours
in a compression of space and time
but we can't transcend the building
we have to walk through it to get outside

The walls might fall and bury us
beneath the weight of heavy secrets
we make light of our resistance
we are breaking up

What breaks us?
A bottom-feeding fish chewing on a cable
Or is it turbulence from the sky?

If we are breaking up
Does this prove that instant is not perfection?
If this is connection I'll remember that
if I am resistant I recognize that.
I have no desire for autogenesis
all I want from technology is to turn it on

I can’t bear the economy of u
u the unclosed zero swallowing
our y and o

There can be no heroes
if there’s no dying to the world
I'd like to be dead sometimes
vacant for patches slip from my mind
to a place where no authorial voice
can find me

Give me the sound of the desert
of breath blowing
inside an empty bottle of red

But listen
listen to the call for placeless prayer
like minarets without mosques
we can be free of telephone boxes
and yellow fangs in the wall
forget Clark Kent – he’ll just have to find
some place else to change

It is perfect that I can find you
although the keypad can’t predict your name
I have to spell it out between the sheets
so I can lean to you across water

Over Dili’s depression of sea
beyond Indonesia and amnesia
the hammerhead clouds shade the fading blood
of this darkening hemisphere
I am hungry and I have no one to look after.

Kuala Lumpur
a fairytale of black harbours
water city of sprawling octopus lights
godhead lamps whole serpents of them
To the red moon of Tashkent hiding
behind clouds of vacuumed up dust
dispersing till I can see that it is smiling
with pumpkin eyes and cut out teeth

It is perfect I can find you
as you buy a bag of cherries
from a street stall in Taksim

My hunger is surging and I escape this building
in a jumbo not crashing but heaving up the halls
I tuck in my wings and rocket up the minaret shafts
this low flying plane gracing the golden spires
of softly served purple mosques
my co-pilot from the department of statistics
has interest in this dream because he can’t remember one

Relationships are distant bodies
left behind but recurring dreams
like bigamy without marriage
and all our silly buried objects

I am wanting and nostalgic for return
to a more simply furnished womb
for two dollar shops to be swept off footpaths
and for mobiles to stop running
like a thousand children headless
to my pleas for quiet

If you march down manic streets
with blue teeth and talk to the sky
you might swallow a fly, or worse
you could swallow a horse
and you’ll die of course

If I keep repeating
switching words and letters in minute variation
will I achieve perfection like the Man-Man of Naipaul?
Angela Brennan said in a painting
mobile phones are no good for poetry

The mobile tome is written
upon a thousand lies of connection
filling up the space before heaven
whatever you conceive it to be

I keep repeating not because I repress
but because the past keeps wringing my present
its unfinished business bearing the paradox of burials
you love him precisely
because he would never leave his wife

If I can’t be below your belt
will you let me under your shirt?
Hands-free upon skin we’ll go roaming
beneath the minarets without mosques
collecting on hills above cities
like Eiffel towers with their legs shut
Clark Kent we'll have to strip in the wide open air

If we are breaking up make me one last prank call
with your breath so heavy it blocks out the sound
of a thousand walls wailing
with the fictions of our resistance

As you drop out of range remember
you are not my present passing away
but an unstatic being at the other end of flight

Bury my head without ostriches in the sand
and man if this really be the end
I want to be stuck inside your mobile
with your breath against my skin

Acknowledgements

The presentation of this paper at 'Lies: A Conference on Art' in Fiji, 5 July 2007, accompanied a recording of the ney (Turkish reed flute) improvised by Phil Carroll.

Bibliography


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