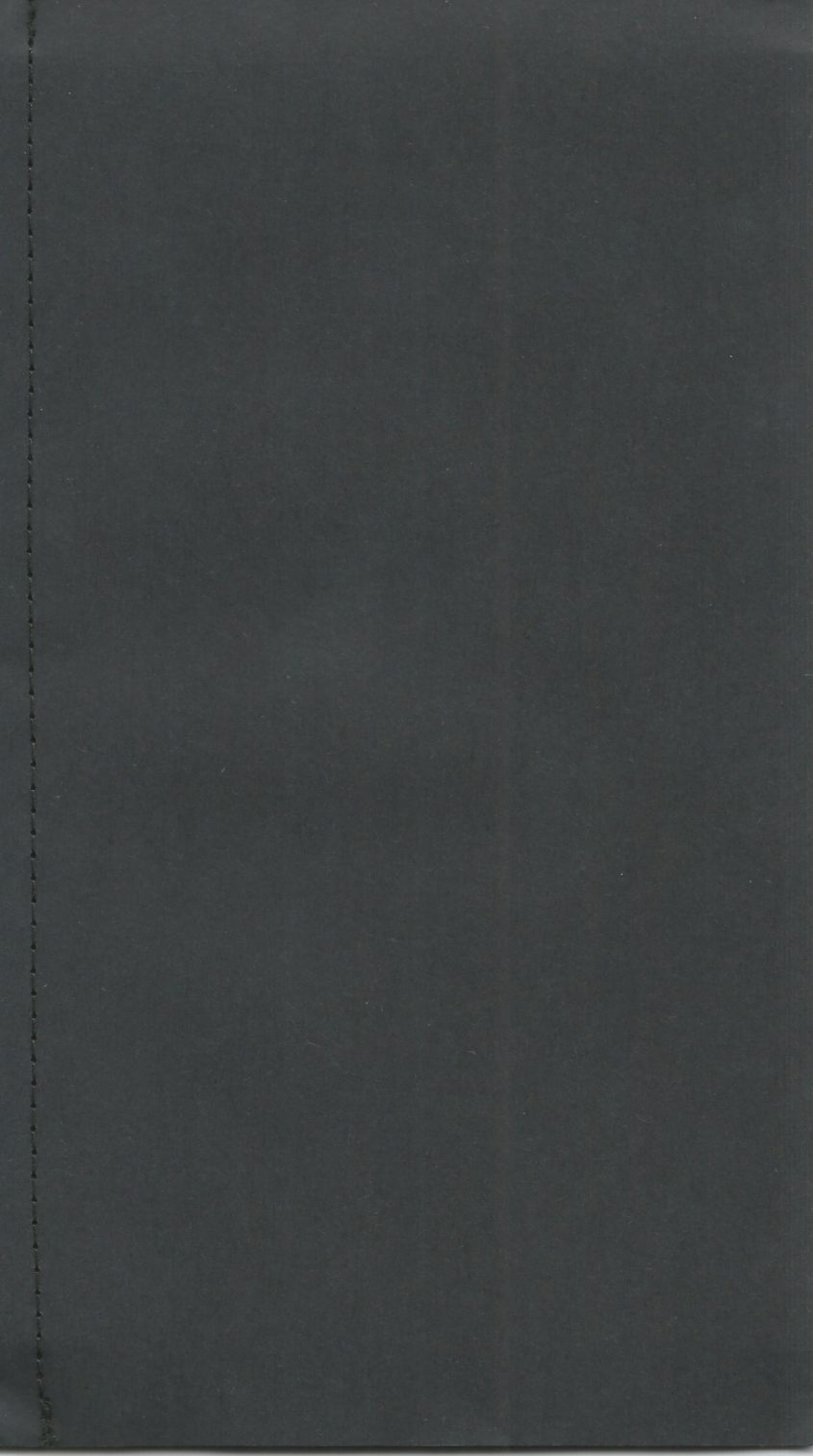


PUTTY

Rhona Warwick



A good thing is getting hard on your face
That head that's almost and building up
And then with you is a good
Impulse to get there

An eye is wide and you long for the connection
To be there with the others in the
And the simple this is the
And the simple this is the
pushes through -- a light shining on it

At last the leader begins to glow
stretching out in a light the connection
I. If you push it through
Now pulled apart you are the
Rising, rising, rising
up, up, up

But this is the end of the world
and the end of the world
before the end

Again
overcoming by the end of the world

NEEDLE for Hrafnhildur Halldórsdóttir

A giant thumb is pressing hard on your arse.
Your head feels intense and building pressure
against skin which while soft, is almost
impossible to penetrate.

An eye is wide and yearning for the connection
to be bound with the something other
than this intolerable intensity
till darkness halves and the voyaging eye
pushes through - a rigid glistening body.

At last the leather begins to give,
stretching out at a point till eventually
[...] you puncture though.

Now pulled upwards you are running
flowing...flying... liberated
up, up, UP!

But this tethered rise only tugs deep inside
and chained to something far back
before memory.

Again,
overwhelmed by some invisible force

so driven by purpose
that helplessly, you at once both acquiesce
and resist.
Intense pressure builds in the very tip of your head,
a giant thumb is pressing hard on your arse.

* * *

Cocooned in the deepest black
she is bowed over,
a great mass of hair spills onto the table,
looms of black waxed thread unravel at her feet.
Slowly, an elbow rises and falls,
white fingers probe.
Her needle a glint of sliver is the only light...
to her right she has built
something resembling a shrine:
Ampoules of volcanic ash and sand
Charred ingots of wood
Great shards of the darkest obsidian,
jet and prismatic jags of hematite
An image of a skull at the northerly tip
of a black pentagram flanked against a wall
A skull mug used as a container for pencils

A handmade ball of stretched leather,
(the size of a human head)
Giant scissors
Long bobbed pins
Needles, all sizes
Swathes of the softest leather
A smallish cluster of golden bells.

Head bent, she pierces and pulls, pierces
and pulls, then turns a record over.

Let us consider the lip
that rim between inside and outside
from thoughts to words

And equivalence.

Take the cup - too thick and we dribble,
too thin can scald or crack
and then lip against lip to the mouth —
a soft place with two and protection for teeth
for to survive is to bite: to eat, be nourished and live
(do we colour them bright to remind us of that?)

But to drink from a cup lipped in gold can upend
and against that cool smooth edge
every slow sip
tips beyond
to a liminal lip, a threshold.

There!
at that brink between two colours
between Celadon and Cerulean

between Jacinthe and Nigrine
between Atrous and Icteritious
between Cyaneous and Niveous
There!

between Pier and Ocean we see the wavering line:
a horizon, that burnished blur between two worlds.

Islands are often defined
by the slip where the sea meets land,
(think of the shingle, the jetsam, the sand)
and remember
how as children we ran in mock horror
from that snotgreen creep of ocean
menacing shoe leather with crystalline tide lines
till, with hammering hearts
we watched in its wake
as traces of silt became shadow.

A lipper they call it in Orkney -
that little wave in the tideway,
and to be given a word...well that's what lips do.
The language of waves as Joyce imagined -
seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, ooos
say those words!

With pebbles in the mouth feel how the lip gives form
this is wavespeech
hear this

And pause.

Onto those moons on our fingernails
we press delicate tellin shells,
those little pink ears quietly listening,
from a sounding line
that crunch beneath boots on the shore.
Bare arms become lithic
in shielding the light from our eyes
Out on a limb but not all at sea
and a lip in time begins with
the slow slow slip
into clay

and so together, by hand and eye they build
an orrery of gilded words and vessels and colour.
Tilted upward and glinting with light,
a mirrored analemma perpetually pursues
to the rhythms of the rolling lipper.
On wheels and waves

they submerge below in search
of that quiet root
that grows up and out towards a lip
to where - between them, two words are formed.

TETHERED for Tessa Lynch

I walk every day at the same time for around an hour. Mostly I see dog walkers, joggers and mothers pushing prams each, I've noticed are tethered to something; a lead, a pram with a strap, earphones, a backpack.

While walking I find myself thinking not of the exposed tree roots or the shifting skies but of intimate interior spaces; the pile of dishes in the sink, a table strewn with papers and apple cores and dinosaurs, an L-shaped room.

My nosy little vice is peering into windows often the basement flats of other peoples homes, and wondering how they keep their orchids alive. Imagining what it is to be in that life framed in those photographs arranged on the polished baby grand.

I always thought walking

was freedom from domestic space—
and of those great flâneurs who flitted
between streets
being *seen* and *seeing*.
Walking in that philosophical manner
the head tilted, just so.
Nature, Architecture, Urban design,
The Human Condition,
all crystallised in the faceless crowd.

But like those others on my walk I too, am tethered
by last nights greasy strands of spaghetti that lie
waiting limp and coiled in the sinkhole.

I almost never encounter another me
no solitary women without apparent purpose
- to jog or shop or mother
I look for her, in the streets, parks,
back-lanes and renegade desire-lines
but I never see her
and wonder if I did.. would she see me too?
would I smile the way I oddly do
to dogs separated from their owners,

as we pass one and another by?

With each step, the shake-down takes me deeper to
that quiet root inside
to think deeply about sinks and skulls
and those greasy antennae growing
in abeyance back at home.

Sometimes,
to ease the monotony of washing dishes
I think of sinks abandoned:—
piles of dusty plates with decaying debris,
from the cobwebbed Xanadu
or Calamity Jane's neglected cabin
before her womans' work was done

and somewhere in that arid space of frozen time

I locate a little joy
in the feel of my pink hands guddling
in the hot sloppy suds
and in the purposeful sounds of rummaging,
rinsing and draining.

Coiled and redundant I leave the spaghetti
with those suds
and I go for a walk, to get away, be away
and disentangle from those strands.

I tilt my head, try to fall into a thinking step
and my mind returns to those great flaneurs
of Wordsworth, De Quincy and Benjamin

and wonder if ever they thought
of the spaghetti strands in their sinks,
waiting back at home.

Close your eyes
and against them press hard
to the fleshy heels of your hand
and see now in that blackened cave;
the pulsing sanguineous colours of crimson...
some sulphurous whorls of green
and as you press harder still
witness those haematic archipelagos drift
then dissolve into a rain,
of little morphing heads.

*Look at all these borders foaming at the mouth with
bodies broken and desperate...
I spent days and nights in the stomach of the truck;
I did not come out the same.
Sometimes it feels like someone else is wearing my
body.*

Open now and up
to be engulfed in colour and feel contained
inside this raw and muscular force
that pulls far into unworldly tones
of explorations yet unknown.

Fear is Here, Death is Close
those are the given coordinates.
I say 'she paints as if she is dying —
and you the voyeur is too'

*I pipetted them out the vial
and onto the provided dressing,
then applied the dressing to my inner forearm.
Within about 5min I got an intense itch.
It feels exactly like you would imagine tiny larvae
burrowing through your skin
leaving raised flesh-coloured tracks.*

So urgent now to this fresh seduction
a glimpse of acquiescence
in those unfurling forms and flesh.
A skein of unbleached cloth lies waiting
(the witness to it all)
what apparition resides under there?
Let the captor reveal our naked form
and see it in full light.

*I called to the other men that the sky was clearing,
and then a moment later
I realized that what I had seen
was not a rift in the clouds
but the white crest of an enormous wave.*

*I saw colours that had so many different
shades and hues that I had never seen before.
The closest I can come to it is by saying that a
particular colour looked like a mix between blue,
green, pink and purple,
but it was nothing I had ever seen before,
in my waking state.*

Unhooded, a head lays slumped
those coordinates closed-in...
(You *are* here)
Now, close your eyes and see
in green, not of this place
but another.

ARMATURE

ARMATURE

Putty is excellent for filling holes and voids
it can be pushed and smoothed
so that no-one need ever know
about those holes and voids.

Without armature sooner or later
putty dries and disintegrates
into crumbs and lumps and bits,
debris to be brushed away
scooped into a palm
or cast aside to fall as Etta sings
like sugar on the floor.

Now, two palms atone
and instead of pushing
to fill a vacuum
they shape and hone a landscape
in the space between two hands.

So, I construct an armature
with what's to hand (rolled tin foil, I think).
Then I press and push and thumb and smooth
building out and squeezing in

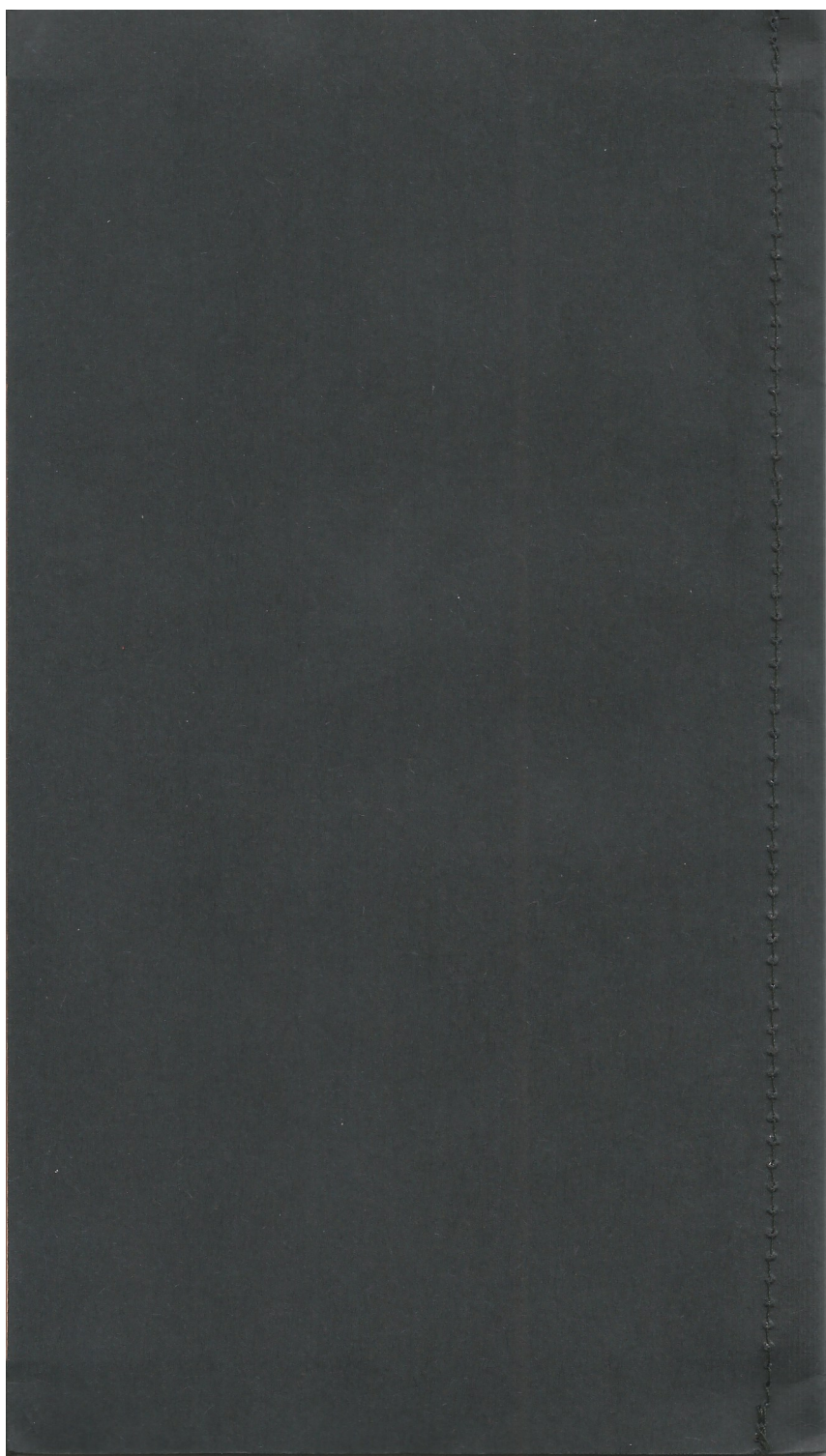
all the while generating
warmth
till everything loosens and nothing is known
but the touch and feel
of putty.

These poems have been commissioned by artists as a response to their practice and have been previously published as exhibition texts. Huge thanks to Hrafnhildur Halldorsdottir, Tessa Lynch, Edmund de Waal, Clare Woods and David Ward. Thanks also to Jamie Bolland for convincing me to bring these poems together.

Rhona Warwick, Aug, 2017.

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