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 Literature Works



‘Complicating Fragments or You Are Here’
A poem by Quay Words Summer 2020 digital
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ENGLAND**

complicate | 'kɒmplɪkət |

Origin

Complicate early 17th century (in the sense 'combine, entangle, intertwine'):
from Latin *complicat-* 'folded together', from the verb *complicare*,
from *com-* 'together'+ *plicare* 'to fold'.

Complicating Fragments or You Are Here

We complicate
it is what we do
begin with floorboard of sand & make a story

location is the place I start to write from (CH)

Here there
what says either or
is already broken
cannot entangle is not fluid
3 planets from the sun and water breaks
weaves itself over us to leave us *everyhere*
& we are ourselves water – as ashes are to ashes
& that is all that matters
once here
all matter
no matter how far the body meanders can never truly be lost

But in the end, the place I belong to and am most comforted by in Exeter is not too different from the place I left behind (IQ)

All distance is hedgerow
procession where something moves further in the shadows
or else it is plains or hill or something else
fire or flood what does it matter but where you sway
in relation to either
while your joy – scant as it is in the world –
is right on top of us
let me imagine
that you are a tree falling in a forest

Or us as trees rooted in place but finding
we've too much blood beating to quiet ourselves
if we were alder & acacia, oak & chestnut or elm
we would know
this year eats trees with its teeth
& not the eye as is custom & what is custom
but repetition
the hours ask & ask as they fold & fold anew
I stand in the last light of summer
forgotten laundry swaying in my hand
in love with the air
& what is love but a discipline in distraction
it's a long & bloody business
living

Dad died a year later, after a long life of good health. It was a shock, as I guess it always is to lose a parent. The last picture I have of him is at Ely Cathedral, which was a favourite for visiting, from our early childhood onwards. Dad is standing just inside the immense wooden

door to the Cathedral, pretending to hold it open for me. He looks for all the world like St Peter at the gates to heaven. A rich irony for a non-believer! (H)

When this year –
like you then –
still had its milk teeth
we imagine every thing was in its place
that we held tomorrow in our palms
now we go back to place
shake off the moth-eaten sheets
in childhood's morning we are capable
to let it not matter
that this year is a rabid horse
& its name pestilence
or how it ambles on or trots
remains at a canter
remember memory gallops too
her mouth brimming with blue irises
until she falls into the next gate

At the pub all the tables were taken – it seemed as if all the inhabitants of Exeter had tipped out into the August sunshine to bask there on the riverbanks. We found a spot on a step next to the water, drank a bit much, ate a bit too little, felt dizzy with the sun and each other. Dogs flung themselves in and out of the water (TF)

we are always falling
I tell my husband
let us love that & each other
as the rain loves whatever will take its shape
soak it up
let it seep or pass
hold it

People bring their children and grandchildren in the same way they came with their own parents and grandparents. It is such a delight to see the little tots, dressed up as a bee or an elephant, pulling their little bags behind themselves, magnifying glass in hand, ready to be filled with wonder and excitement. You see a student, stilling quietly in a corner, sketching, a class of school children rowdily learning about Egyptian mummification, someone saying a prayer near the statue of Ganesh. (HH)

God of beginnings
where does home begin for you now
nomad that I am
my story is such
that I am a cartographer of lost
& found things
no matter where I travel from
I am my north
little river
I carry my empire of shoot and dirt as tongue

as song
as spinning self

every quest begins & ends as a question
what does not tell or seek to transform?

*surrounded by uneven ground, mostly grass, with a few trees and wildflowers, and old walls.
There is a ruined church accessible from the bridge itself (JT)*

& we gather from a distance
imagine angels in the architecture

you say tree and mean play
I say tree and mean memory
rings & rings
& the weight of it
but the tree is still a tree

This is what the explorers headed south never found -
nothing living is simple
is flat
we all arc between our origin and destination
each path whole or half or part of a circle
great or small

*And between the two grows a wild blaze of blackberry bushes. The tastiest blackberries to be
found in the city. Few people walk this path these days. Yet somehow every summer no sooner
have the blackberries reached full ripeness than they mysteriously disappear (O)*

My clay begins elsewhere where Okavango pours into the Boteti
& reappears here to watch this other water from a distance
I swap mulberry for blackberry
baobab for oak
bream for brown trout
I imagine all water knows all water
& where it can no longer pour
it turns to rise as mist
& returns
& returns

The wool is cleansed using human urine collected from taverns throughout the city (CHB)

Though you cannot imagine the dampness
the scent of it
you are suddenly grateful for the handling of time
how its origami whim has placed you here not there
not *then*
but not every ghost is a haunting
some gaze back
turn back like a river
return to unstitch their mouths from the shore

spit out woollen cloth or corn
fish or salt
tobacco or soap
finally speak for themselves

I ask the river where she has been –
she shores her body like the small wet machine it is
carries on
a constantly moving house
as though to say
to notice *is* to move
that there is now here

Every river knows the mouth can only speak what has been poured into it
as flower
as anger
as grass or bullet
whether we listen to it
eat it
beat or gather its queer shape to our own end
what we pour into it now
will in turn
return

*I'm no stranger walking into the unknown. Instead, I'm as much a part of this city as the
Roman stones beneath my feet. I can navigate by touch alone, by sound, by resonance.
I can feel the city breathing softly and it's that breath on my cheek that tells me I'm home.
That I found home (KP)*

Place is many things
I come in search of it
through the small window of time
drop weight like an anchor
wait for confetti or deluge to move me

I am born of false contradiction
in the grey muggy air of making
my heart is made of mud
colours my whole self
I wear that rag glad as any Sunday best
move from quay to coast
from heartland to shore
pour my whole unending self to loop as madder-coloured procession
that tastes of salt

between what we think place is
and what place is

all this world is a long room
with the same sea under it

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