

The Paper

Pithy

I see you sitting there
With your headphones on
And eyes stretched up
Thinking of everything but here

I wish I could hear your thoughts
Feel the nail stuck between your teeth
Try and get it out with your tongue
Between stitched lips

I only wanna see what you saw
What was it?
What was the last thing you clocked
When you left the world above?

When you came down here
You joined the rest of us
Left your body behind
Became raw like fruit

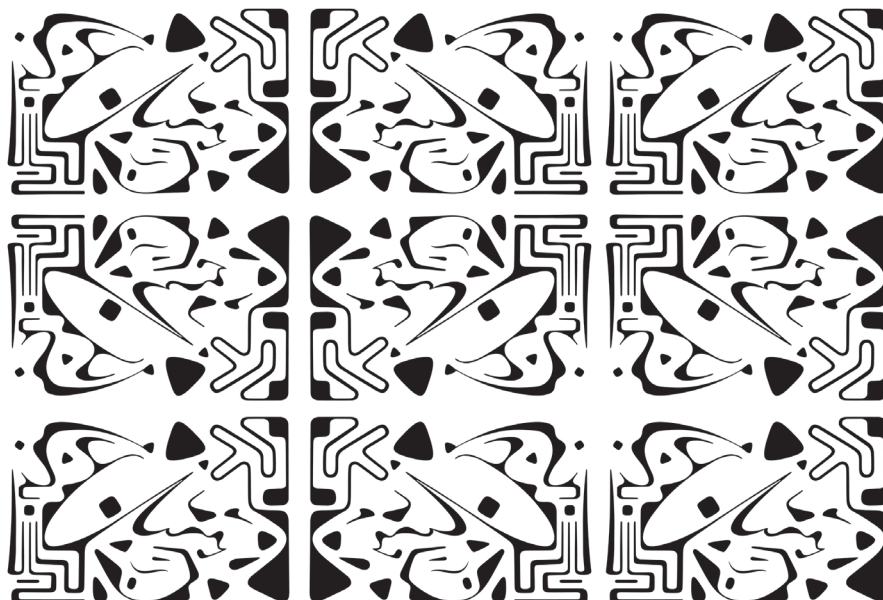
Peeled down the bitter rind
And left only the sweet juicy insides
Fresh and sharp
And ozzing through my fingers

Shed your oily skin
And spew out the sugar
Scream out the pips
And burst at the seems

Pick them off like petals
He loves me
He loves me not
Leave the bits behind

Scattered on the subway floor
Bits of you
Tears and blood
Everything smells like orange peel

{HS}



{MF}

22022022: A Glut of Palindromes

The palindromic date 02/02/2020 (forgive the slashes) was day number 33 of 2020 with 333 days remaining in the year. At the time, I was repeatedly listening to a cassette titled *Reduction* by AnN. I noticed that the final track had the almost perfect palindromic title "Nuuun". I use the words "almost perfect" due to the presence of the capital "N". In order to celebrate such a glut of palindromes, I set upon listening to "Nuuun" at palindromic times throughout the day. I listened to the track at 10:01 in my car whilst driving to Coventry, then at 11:11 in my car whilst parked near Fargo Village and at 12:21 in my car at my in-laws', in readiness to drive home. During the journey back, the car's low-fuel warning light came on. Shortly after, I stopped and filled up. My wife rolled her eyes when she clocked the pump stop at £54:45. I listened to "Nuuun" repeatedly at home in Kettering at 13:31, 14:41, 15:51, 20:02, 21:12, 22:22 and 23:32. Possibly the next day, but almost certainly within a week, I discovered Afrikan Sciences had released a new album titled *Journey Into Mr Re* on 02/02/2020. Track 7 on the album was titled "02022020". Just over one year later, I attempted to ease my frustration at missing out on listening to the track on its palindromic release date and listened to "02022020" at 21:12 on 12/02/2021. On 22/02/2022 to mark what will be the last palindromic date for eight years and the fact that The Paper saw fit to publish these obsessive, repetitive ramblings, I will upload 22022022: A Glut of Palindromes to Mixcloud.

{SG}

Trina's Influence

Trina is a free spirit, which is why she smears yoghurt between the pages of all my books. The first time it happened, I asked why, and she looked at me like I'd just ripped the wig off her favourite clown. She kept both eyebrows raised for several minutes, then explained: "It's all about what we call The Fun Factor. I mean, have you EVER had a laugh?" I shook my head and realised that it was actually great what she was doing, with my yoghurt and everything. So different to how I'd ever want to spend my time, normally. It must be good.

I lived happily with the stench of True Crimes and Tragic Lives curdling on my bookshelves as May turned to June.

"You're so uptight!" screamed Trina, sticking my head out of an open car window with one hand and steering with the other. "Smell the pine cones! Live for now!" she said with a mouthful of Revels - all different kinds, doesn't know what's in them, she's wild like that. I badly wanted to disprove my being uptight, but the truth was there were no pine trees to mime enthusiasm towards, and we were just circling the same Halfords-adjacent roundabout over and over while she half-drove, half-vomited-all-over-the-

dashboard. I worried about how I could explain the ruined Beanie Babies to my mum upon returning the car, but as Trina says, "You can't take the motion sickness out of emotional sickness", and she's quite right, I think.

Trina has really opened my eyes to how repressed and mentally incarcerated I've always been. I've locked myself in my room for now, just to create a little time to reflect and practice gratitude for everything that she has brought into my life. I hear her nails scraping up and down, up and down the other side of the door and wonder how a good-time-girl like Trina could ever go for a Middling Mildred like me. I hear the familiar splash of petroleum in the hall and it startles me to think of all the years I treaded water with dull Wendy, who never once tried to wax me in my sleep.

Yes, the appalling municipal-carnival-caterpillar-ride-accident that killed Wendy was in one sense Trina's fault; yes, she happened to be Site Safety Officer at the time, but that's just one facet of her personality. Can you define a person's whole being by their job title? And just forget everything else about them, like their neck tattoo of the H&M logo, or their collection of Please Give Blood stickers, mugs and plastic

macs? Trina doesn't believe in giving blood, as such, but she is a firm believer in not allowing so-called "free gifts" to just sit there trapped in the community centre annexe, or in someone's hand as they fall asleep over a weak blackcurrant squash.

Smoke is rising up my one good nostril (the right one; Trina had Lefty stapled to my septum for Christmas), and I'm sighing contentedly at my own good fortune, not a care in my head about the remaining clean oxygen that this might be said to waste. She really has given my life an 'edge'. Look at that, I can hardly see the light from the standard lamp, and one of my arm-rest covers has gone up in flames. Nobody could call me, here, now, boring - not the pre-screening questionnaire for Big Brother, not the three-minute personality quiz on Yahoo! News, nobody. That worrywort, that fusspot, is dead.

Did you hear that Trina?

She's got her tunes on. Dane Bowers.

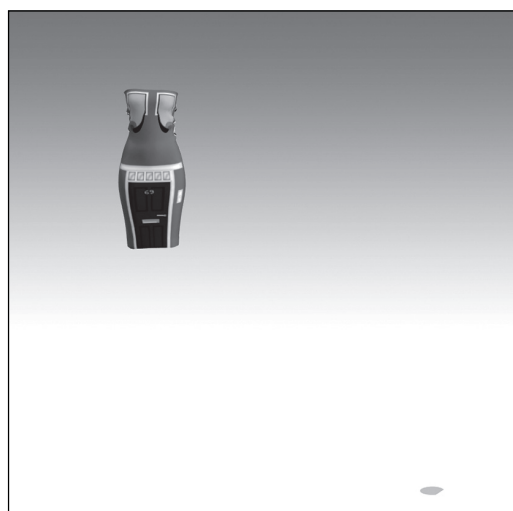
Trina? Trina, love?

THE FUSSPOT'S DEAD!

{LJ}



{KG}



sheep head in the well

tra la la la la

there's a sheep head in the well

tra la la la la la

sheep head in the well

tra la la la la

the water tasted funny all week

{TS}

mountainside dance

unknown, if we were water, we would be a fluid body of things: running across the mountainside, we are silent.

and after the moonlight rises south, i'd imagine a body, a curve.



{RM}

somebody peels an orange at dawn, north of the mountainside
another curve
(a glacier of assumed stillness.)

no matter how many times I spell soil I always spell soul. our tectonics without monday's tiles.

we are mellow tenderness, soils within silent mountainsides.
where I am before, until now

{LG}

Cathy Wilkes

room with just two paintings, [square] white, with fabric on top.
frame frame frame. On landscapes
turquoise canvas framed by mouldings.

+ brillo pads

dish on shelf
paper pad on floor
dirty clothes at edges
grey material - hanging
jersey backdrop

pineapple, banana cotton

{EJ}

{CF}



Ryan's House

some futile night or morning, depending on
which side of politeness you find yourself
on after a drink.

A tunnel, an omnichord, a toy piano, a bag of
inedible drumsticks. I cannot find the
missing F note, so I ask someone to play it for
me.

We indentured ourselves to tomorrow's
unresolved sleep by shoving gasoline up
our noses because there is no reason why not.
Tomorrow, we will be abstracted from
the choir of spackled voices.

In this way, some people wrack up acolytes.
In this way, some people go back on their promises.
Will you win awards to Hollywood and all its sirens?
Or will they just keep you up at night?

I play a game of mercy for how many days in a row
I can moonlight as a barmaid.

{LH}

Contributors

Calum Ferry
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The Errata Slip

pg. BEGINNING, line START – for “love in all
forms”, read “sex-specific”

pg. MIDDLE, line MUCK – for “for you, I stood for
hours in sideways rain”, read “carefully came the
freefall”

pg. END, line LAST – for “lack, the end of it all”,
read “departure was the consequence”

pg. ZERO, line ZERO, for “in the beginning was the
word, you”, read “no consequence left unturned”

{LH}



GREY HERON
(ARDEA CINEREA)
SPOTTED CATHCART ROAD,
17.01.22

{HJD}