

Emerson Collins

Coliseums

An unmade bed where you appear still made  
swaddled, smooth and alive  
with pink coliseums under your eyes, tiers  
that stage your arena games.

Over the pink rims of rock in sunset  
You peer at me and ask if I still  
weekly purge  
The rattle of my mind under the ink  
Of sky? You know the answer, so why ask?

Reflected over the pink circumferences  
play commences with me pitted against  
gnarled palpitating jaw,  
your panoramic undoing of me.

You pick at your muffin one crumb at a time  
and tell me that I need not be surprised, then,  
to see you here, a reminder as constant  
as you once were a comfort -

Your world revolves and I revive  
my world made at the unmaking of yours  
your body unspools like the upturned  
sheets, daily made and unmade -

Unsleep and tooth-grazed I draw to the dawn  
The evaporation of our time burns  
across my forehead, fading  
In day to be made again next night.

## Reductio

The head lies in a heaviness, a hard shard on the upper orb  
The moon's abstinent comfort yet calls to the absent sun  
Damaged by doings that emanated therein, impulse  
As night's tablecloth is pulled out from under the stars -  
withdrawing from the hard hands connected  
It wanes waxy yellow to the moving night  
By arms of lead to iron feet  
to give way to wooden day  
my time it moves on  
and the hardness of  
light.  
Without me.

The moon's abstinent comfort yet calls to the absent sun  
As night's tablecloth is pulled out from under the stars -  
It wanes waxy yellow to the moving night  
to give way to wooden day  
and the hardness of  
light.

## Flume

The salmon-churned byways bubble and spit  
and morning's gloss gathers every pebble,  
the lines of stream and river bank polish  
into the roundness of the blue-sheened wild.

An ancient arm of fraternal oak  
Invites robin's salute to the breaking  
Light, which crashes upon the forest floor  
And spills into the damp of nesting dens

To set ablaze the worming carpet. Below  
The ground it can be said that more happens  
than above, decomposition of stick  
and body to return us all to loam.

And still the emerald river onwards slips  
imbued by elements composite  
of all beneath the sheening earth, to send  
us down the flume to gallop and to lope.

## Pocket Square

Standing in my parents' room I look down at the garden  
At colours of no uncertain shade  
And brazen birds with pointed beaks  
Gliding and thrusting from stalk to stalk.

My wedding day:  
Stitched around me like a strait jacket,  
Monochrome entwining  
my fraying ends

Tucking away my disparate parts  
To make a simple shape,  
Like lessons learnt at primary school  
Of geometry and needle work.

Guests are filling the soundless plot, waiting  
To witness my internment  
In this a demarcated realm  
Of stifling colour and corners clear.

The chairs are brought to line with eyes  
The rows before the palisades  
That sew the softening grass to form  
the scaffold of my greying days.

## Cradle

To the floor we collapse:  
Effigy of agony,  
the world crumpling in at the crease  
along the folds of all that was promised -

I rock to the waves emanating  
From the dawning life to be lived,  
The seep of blood, pulsating new  
Which will be and in being shall degrade.

A hand hot to the forehead in hope  
That the fever there can be cured  
With a pill and a cold flannel strewn -  
Or perhaps a trip to the clinic.

But if the force that crumples the crease  
Comes not from within but without,  
the crossed brows of ancient suppression  
embattled by the promise of life

which may then live to outweigh  
through the light of a cradle-side smile  
The weight that elevates a promise  
but compresses a reality to nil.

## Kingdom

A castle to withstand a peasants' revolt: heavy door  
untouched at the seams. The long-lit room beyond  
is not like I imagined: hollower and more forlorn.  
Is this where it happens, where the king's men meet?  
We peer around and catch our reflections in some implement encased  
in dust, both pointed and smooth in its subtle barbarousness.  
The familiar voice full of kind condescension calls from across  
the yawn of space. She strides to us. I offer brief  
genuflection, token expressions, symbolic displays -  
which don't appear to score detection, as she catches my child  
by the arm and takes him away to a desk at the end where he stoops  
and she circles, pointing and placing vellum before him,  
to which he bows with duty innate  
as I stand and swell, my pride conflagrates.