SAMPLER

Kelptown
Also by Carol Watts

*When Blue Light Falls* (Shearsman Books, 2018)
*Dockfield* (Equipage, 2017)
*56, a poem sequence* (with George Szirtes, Arc Publications, 2016)
*Many Weathers Wildly Comes* (Spiralbound/Susakpress, 2015)
*Sundog* (Veer Books, 2013)
*Mother Blake* (Equipage, 2012)
*Occasionals* (Reality Street Editions, 2011)
*this is red* (Torque Press, 2009)
*Wrack* (Reality Street Editions, 2007)
*brass, running* (Equipage, 2006)
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_Wild Notes, Marginalia and Related Reading_ 96
For my sisters, with love
SAMPLER
You ask me whom the *Macrocystis* alga hugs in its arms? Study, study it, at a certain hour, in a certain sea I know.

Pablo Neruda
Kelptown

1

Slippery condominium, finding a foothold perilous to a resting here, each green cell an inhabiting, each morning a remaking of us.

How do I live, tenant amongst your long fronds. Gathering the means to remain, my glutinous high rise swaying, extending northward.

I saw you southern among islands, your forests great and hospitable. Subterranean bark mimicking striated skin of whales, breaching kauris reverenced in terrestrial reserve, as if balance could be struck and mean more than fortune, more than my shaven head and a chance wind.

I saw you in a western bay, spreading sugar under sea planes and container ships, so refuge lay in invited anthropologies of relation that might give me entry. None but fantasies of attachment ballooning new galls from my limbs as if to compensate, made to become my own vacant property, as if a keening of orcas might echo more resonant from basements and kitchenettes, my studio compression. Your real estate. So here I am renting vegetal architecture, my body failing in form, perverse and vainly adaptive.
I am seeking you, unsuitable for attachment.
Distribution is sporadic, but here is a home
on friable shores, built from inundate truths.

Made and remade, no stone to grip without rolling,
depositional and uncertain, no holdfast place,
yet we live here, and daily discover this.
Unkempt we are. Sea hours catch us waiting, while cat-sharks strew purses more distantly, as if you might find poor returns scattered in the street. Keep your eyes down and scan for reward. Watch them born again, repeatedly, marine.

The way the word unnamed became unarmed. The way a blow to the head became a blow to the heart, how cruelty warps the tongue.

Yet the forest grows up and us woven in it, already fathoms down and singing cellular where the ground once was, and our words for world migrating. Our streets rise up, like ribbons, oar-weed, rooted tangle. Suddenly walking the vertical, finding ourselves swimming in uncertain light, gills breaking out, to adapt, if only to adapt without knowing what will right us without surface or air. Caught waiting in the doorway, he was shoeless. I am embarrassed, he said, looking down, the way pavement normalizes as home, as if a shoeless state would be no more than to tread softly and then their sudden
disappearance. As if all living devastations are rendered domestic in safe evolution, the next pair mutating to flip-flops and then to bloodied feet. Kicking water. Still he waits while the hours gather, those bright bubbles collecting underside.
Fleshy feet lost on the lee, to the receding
tide, sounding at night. The absence of footfall
and the screaming birds, their wider surround
given up until a rousing. But here, so much deeper,
the long chains sway, barely moving in the midst
of storms and currents, or in the paths of predatory
arrivals, thickets marginalia from a childhood
fable, thornless and accommodating. I can hear
the scrabbling of limbs above, the wash in
frequencies, informatic tones. Or venturing out
ahead of anticipated dramas, rapid explosions
of encounter, I drag my carapace along
for possible exit, that game of covering the eyes
ingrained and delusional. So is it you here, hen?
Working your economy, without touching mine.

Eddying past bondage wear, plastic buckets,
ladders and seaside gelateria, the blooming neon,
a florescence of night pharmacies provoking fury,
this plying of energy and survival meets
in the sea’s measure, like we might all become
supple as seals rather than rock-beached
angry as we are, and make from this rush
a shelter, by some form of caddis principle, husk
become home. To indicate a hope in metamorphosis
glued to our living, and buoyed up. Bladderless, but constructing subterranean housings, that change might happen in more than dreams.

Pure biofuel we become. Mucilaginous thrust, resisting direction, capture; firing imaginary will, somehow holds out beautiful making, still.
Held to place, unknowing. Or by a bruise, as darkening conduct under skin, showing up in small capillaries past impact sparking a fretwork in red lines. Attachment building from hurt, maybe pain, at that point where you think: some thing happened here, can’t bring it to mind, was it collision, or did it bloom social from beneath. Deeper disorders manifest, inevitable constancies just waiting to be read.

A system of ties, and the way the body shows its metre unbidden. I woke up with bruises. Did you see that happening, or is it broken auto-immunity painting out its plaint as if sleepwalking and nothing to show but sodden feet, and briny pathways dripping over thresholds, my own ghost, now guessing at a haunted lifeline turned golden green, black as sunflowers, waxy as that Victorian show on a beach front. See what happens to organs where pleasure goes coastal wild, how we all suffer!

What house is this now, raising glutinous heights? It has grown here so long chained to uncertain holdfast, with tools ranged in
intent, rusting saw, painted horse, scaffolding and underlay, balconies refusing gentrification in the rain. She came up flaring outrage. *How would you like it if this was YOU, with HER doing that in your street. Answer me.*