

SAMPLER

A Berlin Entrainment

Also by Peter Hughes

The Interior Designer's Late Morning, Many Press 1983
Bar Magenta (with Simon Marsh), Many Press, 1986
Odes on St. Cecilia's Day, Poetical Histories, 1990
The Metro Poems, Many Press, 1992
Psyche in the Gargano, Equipage, 1995
Paul Klee's Diary, Equipage, 1995
Keith Tippett Plays Tonight, Maquette Press, 1999
Blueroads: Selected Poems, Salt Publishing, 2003
Sound Signals Advising of Presence, infernal methods, 2006
Minor Yours, Oystercatcher Press, 2006
Nistanimera, Shearsman Books, 2007
The Sardine Tree, Oystercatcher, 2008
The Summer of Agios Dimitrios, Shearsman Books, 2009
Behoven, Oystercatcher, 2009
The Pistol Tree Poems (with Simon Marsh), Shearsman Books, 2011
Interscriptions (with John Hall), Knives Forks And Spoons Press, 2011
Regulation Cascade, Oystercatcher, 2012
Soft Rush, Red Ceilings Press, 2013
Quite Frankly, Like This Press, 2013
Selected Poems, Shearsman Books, 2013
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Peter Hughes

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Contents

Part I

Ramblin'	7
Auguri	8
The Aselline Starlets	9
Map	14
Lift	15
Poem at the Equinox	17
Plenum	19
The Spirit of Cricket	20
After Bach	21
Hard Yards	22
Stir Fry	23
On Leaving Cork	24
Talking Windows	26
Poussin	27
A Beer for Ulf	28
Old Rope	30
Song-song	31
Inside the Painting	32
Hike	34
Life Writing: in memoriam John James	35

Part 2

A Berlin Entrainment	37
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SAMPLER

Ramblin'

a bunch of pink & nosy roses
climbs in through the bedroom window
looks around in late May breeze &
wonders where you are while Jack
O' Metty the excessively leggy lemon geranium
falls out of the bathroom window whenever
I open it to song courtesy of this fabulously
normal blackbird on the aerial opposite
& way above the place we put the bins
the day after we're supposed to & somewhere
you are wearing clothes & talking
to the neighbours as the Brad Mehldau Trio
sways its way around a bend of its own making
before mooching along Eden Street Backway
the days go by for the survivors & you
are now reclining in a European garden
relishing asparagus & Grüner Veltliner
well it's nice to take the weight off your head
shoulders knees & toes to reflect
upon another complex spa experience
& all those layered shadows in the forests
dank & spongy airmax footfalls
hush: all ECM & siskin nibbling seasoned timber
nameless seeds & dented nuts & sampling woody herbs
& as I water ravaged salad
I have the thought: why don't we whistle too
you know just whistle whistle
everybody whistle back

Auguri

for Denise Riley, on her birthday

was it Ewan's lipstick
in the corner of the dark
blue pamphlet in my heart
well that'll do the trick
the direct line
along the spine to
London & then north
to Cambridge or the lane
past UEA to Yorkshire
then the longer prospects of all
the pictures you know the ones
in other people's houses or
wherever the galleries store
the current unselected staffed
by those who find it hard to park
& switch off the car radio
echoes with our passions
& we step back out
on wooden steps
that lead up to a cloudless sky
the top one loose

The Aselline Starlets

I

I said this imagery
was mental but
she claimed you
can't say what is
happening within
a composition
as the flicks & swerves
are too precise &
fast to verbalize
& also donkeys
are usually top heavy
as well as too
massive to catch when
suspended from your
thoughts & old arts
carry memories
of awkward turns
& ecstasy
each thought is made
of temporary nodes
we sometimes fresco
on the ceiling
but usually do not
because you know
death intervenes
or we get banished
from our provinces
by the council or the
gravities of love
& cooking then learning
this new scale or
trying to catch a flatfish

or anticipating flight
again become
the medium in which
these things happen
but we nearly know
it's impossible except in
certain kinds of art
to fly forever

2

we try to fly
above the heads
of propaganda
we partner novel forces
& the fatal graphs
of lost momentum
the show's constructed
on a person's wrist
sweaty & chaffing
lost in lights
made up
accommodating
glitter falling
balancing above
a couple of tunes

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3

all the goodness
sucked out of the
neighbours & bound
to a stick with

mallarky & duct tape
was what they opted
to salute & strive for
songs of old rope
& sail-cloth embellished
with the sooty mould
of who gives a shit
we proceeded to erect
this monument to
the history of art
about camping & sex
with crumbs & mildew
where the nearest
place for milk was Wales
it's as if you go back
to an old town that's
dead in you forever
each time you open
your mouth to speak
& no speech comes

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4

we dreamt there'd
been a rupture
in the weather
& we were entering
Steve Swallow's
disco period sideways
late into the night
I read the tattoo'd lady
without really
taking it in
the waste-ground
wind is whispering

we each have
decomposing caravans
parked inside our heads
rats' droppings
sketches &
rubber jewels
wait for the moon
to make the first move

5

no-one came from
miles around these fields
of moonlit pumpkin
the substitute ring-
meister can't decide
whether to dance in
bed to Chopin or lean
out of the flap to see
if it's the bailiffs
one of the flying goats
is off on an away day
to express this
play any note
well not that one
a semitone higher
or lower
& nod

6

I'm no longer
with the circus

except sometimes
briefly in the memory
of strangers
I reached a point
where all I saw
were messages
from Mary
cross-stitched on
those overarching
canvas skies
still I do do the same
route at the same times
sleep in the car
register the music
now & then
with the window down
when the wind is right
but we don't interact
the time for such things
closed its eyes & rolled
back under the waves
they never see me park
or circle the compound
or swoop overhead

Map

it's hard to start
new notebooks
so I usually fill
the first few pages
with my new addresses
& the name of the local
bar & station
which is Sonnenallee
quotes are also good
while the sun on the floor
of the library
creeps all the way up
to my shoes
I should've brought water
as well as a pen
the city's full
of verdant spaces
but by the time I leave
they're turning grey
& changing demographic
all the dirty lights come on
& sing through the heart
breaking fragrances of hot vegetable oil
night walks
across the squares
& pages & a map
of the last town
I found in my back pocket
crossed with worn out creases
that open into gaps

Lift

for Jennifer Wiseman

I

*

night buds
listening to whispers
of the past
& present
darkness sensing
a dismantling
of the garden
colder waters
insinuate
themselves
under every door
listening in
to whispers
of the past & present
darkness palpable
starts of intuition
which one
night come to consciousness
of other wings
& flights
& listen
to the whispers
stars are blossoming
thoughts of their appearance
harmonising what is
left of time

* *

for weeks
we remembered
to water
the plastic tub
of salad plants
I lift it up
to give it
to a neighbour
as we leave
& am caught off guard
& startled
by its lightness

*

SAMPLER

(Dr Jennifer Wiseman works for NASA as an astrophysicist, and is the senior project scientist for the Hubble Space Telescope. We overlapped as visiting Fellows at Magdalene College, Cambridge).

Poem at the Equinox

I've started swinging tins on string around my head
to try to talk to some of what still squats
the boarded up accommodation of the sky
crackling & pulling
especially in afternoons of thunder
when what comes next darts past dressed up in night &
kitchen light
feels like a cheap betrayal of two or three imaginary friends
the wet dog English dusk hits mud
but now you've got it up
& swinging you can hear the ocean
or maybe the soup & all the pressure making crimson lines
with white surrounds across the hands & seas
to company that shows no sign of coming
to an understanding of funding or independence
or distinctions between centrifugal force & hormones
& here's to a host of absent friends
who have all moved on through currency
fluctuations & access courses or class cleansing
one could do worse than be a swinger of tins
you don't have to listen to soup or wind resistance
turned out they'd just been once around the block
we had a conversation on the nature of attachments
we could listen to each other or shorten the line
we could change our names & just play modern conkers
I dented some old constellations
& left a few abrasions on my shins
& I is just a section of the gaps between the doors
& frames which get a little looser every winter
tie tin to string with granny knots
or pop it in the orange net the onions came in
stick your finger in the sky to check that it's still there
watch out for frisbees & apparent UFOs
watch out for crop-circle spotters

watch out for the uniformed helicopters
watch out for the police who help us all breathe
we're swinging tins of soup around our heads
mine is made of squash & bits of bacon
it's really an unfunded installation
it's also an affordable weapon
it's basically a satellite of love

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