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TEXT poetry

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3 poems

Looking for the cormorant

in a shaft of mirrored setting sun – i'm shot
but in that hot film's black emulsion
in that balm of mellow orange flame
its khaki plumes imploding
fix an after-image in my head
its dendrites' furious stacking
inks in green
a heartbeat's nesting brain

~

midges
rove amorphously in company
ducks silver-ice a deeper lake
dragonflies
tread time with iridescent bling

the shoulder-blade wings
of this mythical snake-headed combo
could be a silver-cast figurine dragon's
poised to leap the crystal-ball rows

of two-dollar-shop replication
or simply – wet umbrellas propped
they hang out to dry

arm crooked
to throw a striped-yellow javelin
her neck and beak instead
offhandedly tweak tail for oil
execute a shining liquorice twist
an esther williams back-flip dive
to crimp and preen
careless of the wider screen

stout as a weathered stone
from a singular log – she observes
smooth as a chocolate silk stocking
gently squeezes – sleekly wrings
all the rigmarole
the fuming bridge-stuck manacle
obligatory whistle – mandated ding ding ding
the walk track's zealotry of marching
from her back
even the punctuating spat of farks and farts
the distant wail – leaves her ethereal //

and there's you
sweat pricking in the shaft of your own
heavyweight beam
where green implosion pounds insistence
that death is just a sentence short of living
that the hot exhaust thrust up your tract
determined to expel you from the universal ileum
demands you alchemise some luminary valium
else be floored struck dumb – a block of stone
before its spreading rash of lava flow

for where a photo
eviscerates your tree of person to veneer
where your genes are scuffed of half their paint
by baton pass

by design intelligent enough
time's attire will wear your brand name
on the other side revealing who you are
stave off reflection's – insidious anonymity
in your decrepitating mirror

from the grave of my moment
a mournful aaaark parodies my silver-rose
my apricot-quicksilver closing day

'eternal lines may garland gods
words fork lightning
but when your black wells black and fathomless
when the cinematic lake has put to bed
the technicolor sky
brilliance soars alone in empty gliders
your body's existential thesis – logic barbed
your stiffened wings hung out to dry'

in the light of that shaft – i'm stilled
but in that repellent flash
in that rush of reel's unspooling
a wingspan's warming cloud
will sometimes plume around me
a dendrite nest
... be stacked inside my brain

when the grave is shot to pieces
on each occasion
my *nom de plume* and i go gliding
our flesh and blood transcending
far beyond
a pedant's mortal plane

Ref: 'eternal lines': William Shakespeare
'words fork lightning': Dylan Thomas

The build up

*It's just the thing to settle dirt
my ghostly grey bloom
the feel lingers before it arrives
redolent pheromone heavy and thick
i tease the nose brush the skin
elude the frisk – crack concrete*

‘pasture wilted and spent
if only that indolent odalisque
would let down her milk’

*– and to aphrodite acclaim
coax impervious pentagon
disarm oil slick in its deflowering
relieve bitumen of its black steamy heat?*

*xenoglossiac insect
stung by my tantalus eye
you ping the patois of bloodstream
soar its glissando-ing pink-water froth
the caprice
of its rapturous quickening*

the heat of her long season
passes through my broom
leaves a handle
unencumbered by white plastic bristle
blunt hair falls from my calves
a neat pyramid endows legs
with a close shave and fine

you rasp at my skin
my winters hone parchment
by glimmer's break –
i wax shine with your rain

Learning to fly

can you conceive of an actuality
without detritus?
as Ravel places your fingers on its keys
your being augments into becoming
it rives you – even as you cleave to it
strip the earth of her autumn leaves
and beneath lies her dark damp dirt
and the worm
enriching everything with its cast

one strings catgut to lace feathers to bone
in whose hollows they find their burrowing
another plays the harp-found strings
in a sycamore seed's vanes
lofts their net to capture the lucent
in a bubble's iridescence flying
or in the glassy gauze of veins flown
sundered from their torso

they cradle wings in their arms
together apart they tunnel within
and without
without – and with everything

their guest sites its strains to arrive
as a series of lights strung in stars
it is all or nothing
wake up and the ring in your nose
switches the lights off
to find the stars gone

and its underground city's audacity
discards a hydra's impertinent
shunt of their chopped-liver selves
into aspic – jumps you
one loon ahead of its crack's crazing
both impelled and propelled
into tunnelling tunnelling

towards your damp-dark earth's
everyworm's cool pluck's arriving
your torso-held wings
 latched on into flying

Judy Durrant's poetry has been published in The Age, Cordite, Meanjin, Overland, Prosopisia (India), and LinQ amongst others; shortlisted in the Newcastle Poetry Prize and others; second placed in the Overland Judith Wright Prize and first in the Welsh Poetry Prize. She has a BA in Languages from Monash University and lives in bayside Melbourne. japant@bigpond.com