Songlines

Iain Britton
Songlines
godot

1
proof?
the long arm
of the digital epoch
reaches for the brochure
on snorkelling in Samoa
stars thump
in the hollow of a night’s thought

2
a remarkable resistance ...
the fist that feeds the brute
raps on the table

3
you’re more than a curiosity
a tic in the eyelid
a trough of complexes

after the summer squall
a sundial
warms to my hands
and I stroke its path / stroke
the slide
of rain
as I dry out
under a bruised-blue canopy

somebody up there

restricts mobility to a stagger
wants me to wait
raps on my table
for attention

4

you stretch out
on a sofa
phone ringing

the sea / breathing erratically

you seem worried about my clothes
you unravel them
rub them up the wrong way / stuff them back in a drawer

5

I live in buildings with retractable roofs
in hills which have slipped into valleys

you've come down off your plinth

smashed corridors of glass / you drink fish

for dinner /

you're expecting

someone to arrive

the traffic lights are green / always green
nothing comes or goes / or resonates / trucks don't rumble
cars are historical / the 305 link passes / empty

in Samoa

the horizon's

a short-sighted egg-layer

dumping its load

islands

ghost amongst sharks

what's coming has the head of an albatross

the sexuality of a woman

what's real is the remoteness

of her rock

the remains

of afterbirths

of echoes

long

gone
factory music prophecies

scaffolding
packs down stripped of its
geometry & spit

the lush pink of Friday
dissolves /
an oleander tosses off stars
girls walk in stripes
destinations touching
heads & limbs
the fields of their unfurrowed fears

I flick on lamps
& birds
perforate the light
for the business of eating
they take bits out of the overall effect

I sit as if hog-tied to a table
I've this cupboard / full of factory music
machinery gyrating

new leases of life
can be viewed from inside from outside
mouths / eyes / skin pigmentationstend to get mixed up / / faults appear
ancestral priorities get muddled

I move hands only
& read why buggers like you & you /
bury my heart
3 paces to the left / / 3 to the right
good interpreters become priceless commodities
& people argue over
which is the best corpse in the house to hide in
camouflage is compulsory

who feeds the plants pushes at the prophecies
that push the green fronds /
what remains
marks time on the spot

a gesturing xenophobic
walks in my shoes
from

this morning's sequence
of a tree's dropped sap
a dog circling a power pole
sparrows at bread

- from this launched beginning
of a brief intake of breath
bunched nerves bickering
a man
with privatised fantasies
warms hands

his home is his refuge his body
the world / to him / is like a burnt biscuit
which he eats

<> and everyday he has his admirers
he needs them / needs their trickery
their duality
the forced poking of fun
soft needles in the ribs
the textbook drawings of a clown's posture

he looks for diversions
- from this spot
he picks a voice
to play with / pushes it in
worries it with his tongue
pushes it in
and
swallows it
the result: a regurgitation
a reincarnationist’s dream
his admirers praise condemn
dismiss him
- from this birthplace
built of bricks / we pullout select put on
newsreels record porno anecdotes play beelzebub horrors
I spend more time with him than I should
we live amongst bricks / woodwork / the stink of plaster
Grace Metalious has her place in his closet
- a voice from the wilderness
resonates a dialect
a spring season's vernacular blessed
the child who advertises

precocity

has gone
vamoosed

grabbed a thesaurus of verbs

high octane stuff

and packed himself off

with other people’s conversations

the child dressed like Freddie Mercury

sings for his supper his mother

for a bronze plaque named/dated

where goest now young piebald

in the light of the shade

in the limp lyric of the guest speaker

who has learnt the right combination for future travel

for written lingoes chiselled

on great blocks of buckled stone

##

the other day a very dead red-headed woman
was washed up on a beach beside the body of a dolphin
both had suffered had lost their meaty aerodynamics
for manoeuvring for flying through water

both had lost ghosts
I mollycoddle the moment
when streets burst their kerbs
    in tulips in daffodils
when trees whip out golden blossoms
    buildings unhook shadows
when Jericho comes shouting in my ears
    comes shaking bones
    and all the locals fall flat onto a football field
of disconnected commands
    vandalised rules

I enjoy the practice of  peaceful coexistence
    the lying down of families
    the staring up at cloud-pocked skies

the child has learnt the significance
of stealing bread and milk from his mother
    taking her prized possessions of surviving by word of mouth

he drinks a blood donor's kindness from a plastic cup
domesticity ...

is a window a condensation hole for the eye

a shabby curtain

she overthrows a fanatic’s impression

of a blue sky

sees what I see

a fountain in the mouth

of a girl

dolls lined up on a hot day

new clothes already old

she procrastinates

a pleated look is the thing

the minas spark in confusion

what exits the house
will be far different
from what enters

she pursues the behavioural habits

of a heavy electric stage band

which brightens the city

excites streets

the curious of the streets

the walking sleepers
the universal ventriloquists
practising conversations
  on a night’s exhumed corner

the expectation
is a second-to-none instalment
of living for the minute

she ignores why I’m here
  black hands
  sketching mythologies
  of orchids / white geraniums / a grape vine
  trapped on a trellis

she’s labelled her garden
  for the hard of sensing
written of love’s pictured pedestal
  in a ghost story
warhols of this world

guttural echoes

       make it to the surface

I favour the rocks some way off

anticlines unlayering themselves

anatomical probes

amongst wigs of kelp

the warhols of this world

       sketch dawn singers
          on sheets of yellow sky

I paddle the skinline of the sea

unlocking a diary

       showing blank entries
          pages never turned
             a pencil never used

a thought /       scalped bare

my code /       reduced

       to a cough

this rock-star comes only once /       a deity left
for the cleansing interests of flies

he pads his fingertips across soft terrain

he makes news

signs autographs from a distance
the beach shifts its sunspots

the weather vane
clicks / above the green pavilion
the weather vane
spins for cricketers
for girls surfing
for summer stretched out like a coloured shirt

I favour the river fizzing
towards the sea

I plot the route home
listening to music dialogues hatching
magpies being shot at

people in a car wake up
their kind of loving
dissolves
in a flash

reaffirmation is a brief exchange of turning up the volume

what to write
to say

my hit list changes rapidly
loyalties form splinter groups

I try to disregard the onslaught of influences

my instinct is to hide

in the middle of a paddock /

some way off
pastoral staircase

measure the changeover

how long it takes

the staggered foetal start

plagued by the grubbiness of veneration

by tomb-like touches gone soft

and I’m it / the person

selling smutty pictures

cheap massage sessions

promoting back-street practices

favours

for favours

the physical remake of a dreamer

I’m the person

outside the butcher’s

watching hooked-up sheep

their paddock life / a flayed-alive pastoral

you shake your hair

and the sun flares up

windows ignite

small quasars

spin
pulse
    get organised
    like haloes

and you braid them into your hair

    I parade your vivaciousness
amongst ancestral stones

    long-drawn-out days
the houses turned back to front

    whores and holy men
    making love against walls

(a warped grandeur has hardened with age)

    I'm the Halloween mask
which lights up
    to catch moths / bats
the worms
    which sodomize the night

we meet / / always

    in this savagery of sequels
eye-shaped capsules
    capturing
where we'd like to get off
town street country?
you make the call
    pull in the dialogue

we exchange

this summer’s dive into a fragrant upsurge

white sap

from kisses

blurred insinuations

    burnt atoms on the bodies of plants

you make the call you cut your hair you climb / stairs
holes for seeing with

1
she stoops
and inhales the pungency
    of a future unsullied
        unspooned
a gruel delivered        thick and vaporous
2
dipped bread /    oils her lips

the appetites of people
    queue
        like eucharist hunters
wanting stories
    to wrap in their mouths
        to last and last
3
she's like a cat
    curled around her milk
        a possessive reaction
            of what's mine is mine

I mop the floor
    rub in the sun
colour-code a family
amongst the reflections

4

a hole for seeing with

isn't sufficient
to persuade my parents
that it's me at the top of the street

staring down at the sea's great wash

of the morning after

when the night's fight
didn't come

the teeth in the neck
didn't puncture the skin

5

I stare down

at the torso

of our house

at the knotting wisteria

the pagan attention to detail

I pursue angles

a walk in the park / an elopement /

6

a calendar

scribbles over homilies
dates are crossed out / magnetic

stickmen suck in numbers

around here

nobody’s interested

in what she wants from the boy next door

7

a hole for seeing with

is repeated

raw recruits

are trucked in as required

for the preservation of peace

for the one

who assumes he needs the practice

the sharpshooter

obeying orders

the one

who has the privilege

of choosing / what’s most effective

what to hold

a silencer in the flesh my friend
songlines

catching them
  requires a net
a barbed hypodermic
a mouth wide enough
  to suck in daylight

and all the archangels
  the posse-types chant
  for bullet-proof bibles

catching songlines
is a privilege / like

going on a mind crawl

from brain
  to brain
latching onto rainbows
  splitting all colours up –
  being slurped down

the gullets
of famished children

_________________ 

from hoardings
  jumbled numbers spin upwards
  through streets
  through cantankerous clouds
a crooner sings in the shade
alleyways snap at ladies' legs
at boys where three's a crowd

I've come out of the sun

to songlines bucking / twisting
    musical chairs running for cover

someone

    has cleared the riff-raff
        from crapping in paddocks

on concrete steps / on paths
leading to homes built on homes
the inhabitants competing
    for totemic perches

I've scrutinized the caged-earth policy
    of a woman
        digging up her lovers
sitting them cross-legged /
    like damaged gods

from his voice-box hole
    the crooner
sings for the squalor
    of pigeons
for some individual to step forward

to give instructions /
on how to avoid the rapacity

    of hands

clutching at wingspans

    over Asia

the cooking pots /

    rimmed with teeth

_____________________

like damaged goods

    I place on a shelf

the many growth spurts of this woman

    her shelled fragments

    the ultimate incarnation

    of her soul's head

    on a block

the carcase that’s going nowhere

_____________________

on this shelf
    there's evidence of something

not quite right – an organ donor

    pinned

to her plank of silence

the squirm and thrust of her discomfort

    the hip-knock
of her arse /
    offends / appeals
shakes Sunday do-gooders awake

her landscaped purgatory
  blows sky high
  and animals rain down hard
on wet-creased streets
  for 40 days /
    off and on

catching songlines
in this climate
is for the privileged only

  relatives
  boxed in with thoughts
  talk of home invasions

* dial a chinese / / for a change
hydrangea translucency

hunched converts
barricade the only road out
they huff ‘n puff into groups -
with long-stemmed bazookas
tucked under fierce thoughts

all walks of life front up uniformed / and ready
to take sides
choose colours / mascots / a sponsored drink

***

the blue hydrangeas hang heavy now

***

mine enemies

have chosen the ghettos to play in / have infiltrated the ranks /
intermarried / mongreled-up their relationships
and encouraged a squashed-in / each-to-themselves
failed mentality

    I’ve chosen to be

where forests of tower blocks
peer down from penthouse heights where sacrificial lambs
breed randomly

oblivious of the promised slaughter

***

once cut

the blue hydrangeas stoop to conquer
***

with you the day's heat

has a lot to do with people's actions – it's a question
of summing up a scene – charging at the logo'd
firebrands – splitting asunder the cordons
of do not enter this estate – a question of how to proceed
to the piled-up resistance further on

a strange translucency makes the going clearer

we're set on blowing the hostiles

straight up the chorusing chimneys

you show me

    a gap in the horizon's wall

    and mates rates for a holiday

        free of book-banging rages

    you display mug shots

in favour of John the Baptist

***

    I smell meat loaves cooking
        cooling
        being sliced
        for human consumption

the house I built

    floats on a red sea of dyed grass
rarely ...

do I sniff
the line breaks of your skin
step up close to feel your hands
attracted to

   universal epitaphs
   public announcements

   the locked atoms
   with all your answers

   buildings     glassed in /
   by tiny people

   tin drums /  cymbals marching

#    #    #

rarely do I occupy
the cones  the silences of where you've been
or skirt the barbed-wire fences
that encircle the city  the bodies
hooked into submission
    uncertain

their clothes      kicked for rags

#    #    #

I walk the grooves of primitive wheels
the camps of skin
families who scavenge

you hot-foot it
through hostile places / wrap
coded messages
in ragged disguises
charms (self-made)
clip-tuck your hair
the look

to find the light
    that’s searching
all encompassing

    spooked niches
    breed infant shadows
    perfect / lively /    endgames

tumbling into puberty
too quickly for mirrors to keep up

  ***

it’s a race

(the clobber of boots on concrete the iron-in-the-soul indoctrination
of one monopoly’s Midas touch one solar surge into another)

it’s a race

    the counting up
    counting down
integers in their global equation
    of when
    or how many -
do practicums work?

    it’s the look / the matter of look
    of time

  ***
I admit tampering with her bracelet / necklace

the red coils of her hair

I admit soiling the words

smeared around her lips

the dyed in the cloth image of her hanging

from optic gossamer

over sunburnt gardens

the crushed clutter of residentials

the mega-bite wounds

of suppurating sea cliffs

***

her hero's beard

is caked with additives

and she licks him like sugar

like salt

she licks him / slicing through with her tongue

the taste turns her

to the addict in her parlour

the powdered white hand

the glistening dewfall

***

to find the light
the look of capturing
the marked
the unmarked
the river defecating
the city shrugging off
it’s goodnight rebellion
its men
ulcerating at work
its women
bundling up babies
to adorn their sideboards

with her / it's been a romp through transparent forests /
dimensions with difference / trials by practice / orgiastic
clarities of highs and lows /

she associates only too well

and turns to the addict in her parlour

I degrade the vision

cut holes in its expanse
remodel the earthworks
of who shall cross its threshold

***

she shows me around / as if from room
to room
pointing out the death beds
the birth beds

the avuncular figure

    in love with his clock

the sky’s hard lines

castles rotting in trousers of wood

she unclips aspects of herself

for me to look at

to hold / / fondle

I stare at the waters

    of a calendar continuously

    breaking
selves incorporated

one by one    I stand up

    stand down

    self helping

    self replicating

persons unknown tighten screws in wood

    tighten voices in boxes

silence is fleeting

    in this deep end of the forest

    a parrot tunes up its windpipe

    a horse snuffles messages in grass

        a steer locks horns

            with a zodiac punter -

I pace out

    my peripheral notification

and keep to the outskirts

    of where I live /    / amongst houses

which burrow out of sight /

which sprout periscopes each morning

my focus is full on

    beyond the boxed-in estates
wooden palisades

the incestuousness of families

possession by conquest

makes groundbreaking progress

my chimney’s calligraphy

suggests a shrinking of substance

of head space

of where to stand

what’s in it for selves incorporated

I contaminate the gardens

of my belonging / I do it silently

as if it were a privilege / a duty / a thing which has to be done /
a necessary marking of carved posts / a smudging on the silver-green
blades of summer’s new grass
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