

That Galloping Horse

SAMPLE

ALSO BY PETRA WHITE

The Incoming Tide (2007)

The Simplified World (2010)

A Hunger (2014)

Reading for a Quiet Morning (2017)

Cities (2021)

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Petra White

That Galloping Horse

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COVER IMAGE

Kez Hughes 2020, Ali McCann, 'Diminished Knowledge, 2018',
51 x 41cm, oil on linen. Reproduced courtesy Kez Hughes and Ali McCann.

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for Bianca

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Passing Through Chicago

Rivers of road, rivers of river, snow-clumped trees,
the angel, flowering in moonlight.
People would have muttered if they'd seen.
What good is an angel now?
His terrifying beauty, hidden beneath a wing.
If we think we could be rescued
from the fate we've shored up,
it is not an angel, it's a person, rising out of flames.
Perhaps the angel, fallen to earth as lightly
as a feather from a falcon, has nothing to offer but himself,
pale clawed feet in the dark street, his feeble torch
on this avenue of twitching flags, threads of a great anxiety.
He crawls into the attic of number 1813.
In the space between home and state,
the angel shudders, turns, cramped wings shake open –
through the house a molten dream, through breakfast and dinner,
through the silver sorrows of the city,
its lumpy cracked streets, its America, soaring in the snow.

Sorrow

Happiness, they say, is an outward duty,
misery best hidden. But sorrow
with his filthy robes visits everyone,
he flops in that green chair by the window and smiles,
sometimes he drifts out into dust
or grows a toenail in your soul,
so that when you speak it is sorrow.
Is that it? Sorrow to gladness and the
maddening in-between
where things get done, or vanish, where minds
prone to evenness shovel shit,
pave roads of solemnity between neurons.
Then the luxury of a problem that chucks the casting eye
up into the sky-spanned twiglets, as if the plane tree
can solve it in its lonely time,
as if it might melt into the brain's warm blue
and be forgotten, smiled at even.

Truth

Sorrow fills the human shoes,
it fills the life, enough.
The poor weak self can't help
but march towards joy, even if it is watery.
How far does beauty stretch?
The smile of a dog.
Silent as space, the heart steps forth
in all the moving lights of beauty.
O illumination, here is the tinder.
The eye on its eye beam pulls itself
from one beauty to the next.
Beauty glimmers and is gone, quickly
as a falcon lifts off in the engulfing blue.
Some say *this* is truth, thing that makes the eye
so glad in its socket, brain calm as a pale sea.
But beauty isn't truth, is sorrow
that shines in us all,
it dwells in the body, leaps into our arms
like an infant from a burning window.
Our lives depend on us catching it.

Beauty

Between dreading and desiring sleep,
which ends the day, brings the day,
a woman undressing in lamplight

hastily, flimsily, tripping on her knickers.
O beauty! in the springing seconds,
luminously and suddenly herself.

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