

Peter Sirr

THE THING IS



Gallery Books

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Conversation

I put down the phone
and the years go by.
Twenty years later your voice
is unchanged, as if
as we paused to catch our breath
or press the receiver closer
our bodies lurched from us
and half our lives
fell through the conversation

or we go back and forth
and now as you speak again
I'm sitting on the floor
in an empty office in Merrion Square
clutching an antique phone.
Daily I abandon the typewriter
and the continuous paper
and leave the world on the table

to sneak a call through the crackle
as if we stood on ships in wind
and swayed: our two cities swaying
with small news. My copy's due
my roll of continuous paper
has rolled to the other side of the room
and now, much later, years later
now that the paper's gone
and the line shut down

somehow the conversation continues
somehow we lie in swaying water
and never alter, somehow the line holds
and the years stretch, snap back
and we fall out, come to, send

our signals out, always
finished, unfinished, always
plugged in to a ghostly exchange.

Café Song

There we are
by a pour of willows
in the slender
barge proceeding
from lock to lock
with such leisure
a mile is weeks, months
already they've
forgotten us, and sunk
in narrow spaces
we glide, keep
our eyes on water
and water's edges:
my captain's hat
your trusty
something, the lore
wobbly
for lack of study
a long narrow
house on water
all we wanted
or could imagine:
bed, board and appetite
adrift in the city
nothing to do
but manoeuvre
the racks and gates,
the machinery of slowness
such
stately ascents, delicate
fallings
and through the trees
a sand-bricked terrace
brilliant doors
these journeys

into yellow, into forests
of windows, and the dark
slow ache
of our bodies
in the stalled drift
of the voyage
from a café
hung with canvas
like a huge promise . . .

Lost Cities

They shift under the sands, their ashy streets
and arguable names, lost cities
the silk roads, the quick routes, the palaver
have drifted from —

from one to the other I have gone
dragging my secret bones, my silky tongue.
How lost is lost? Crowds on the temple steps,
the sniff of radar, the dead debriefed again —

Dieter Hofmann, lost father, husband, lover,
your face comes up on the graveyard site,
death is a livingroom in lamplight, whiskey
on a coffee table, you smile at us

from your lonely planet. These cities
beneath our fingers, these swirling stars: the loss
is all ours. We carve our names into the cliff face
and remember ourselves.