

Peter Sirr

NONETHELESS



Gallery Books

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The Writer's Studio

(after the Francis Bacon Studio in the Municipal Gallery, Dublin)

They've been worrying for ages
how best to show your chaos.
Two days from the opening
a curator rearranges papers,
spills ink on the floor, half-eats an apple
and throws it in a corner, but still
the disorder comes to order;
the flung pipe, the forgotten shirt
sculpted and composed, with the notebooks,
the scrawled-on walls and mildewed postcards.
It's all there, through the peephole,
this reconstruction of your mind
from which you are entirely absent.
You're in heaven cursing the dullness of angels,
throwing your clothes around like clouds,
prowling the fragrant avenues
for a fight, a drink, someone to talk to
or sleep with, and if some freak wind
planted you here among your own things,
you'd sweep the lot from under our eyes,
tear it all down, rip the postcards, the T-shirts,
rob the till and drink it dry and float
back up to your high bed and wake up
having forgotten everything. We
who so loved your life we made a fetish of it
will stand in the air, hoping to catch
whatever falls: broken crockery, a smashed cloud,
we'll see your hand in the wind and rain,
hear your voice in the roaring streets,
follow you from porn shop to pub
and back again. And then a tree will fall,
or a leaf, someone lean out a window,

a cat slope
down a laneway
and
at last
we will understand you.

'Cobalt door, yellow walls . . .'

Cobalt door, yellow walls
wooden frame where the name will go
though still no name appears, the shelves are bare
this halal temple grocer spicery
sells winter and nervousness to the waiting street.
Next door in the off-licence I buy my paper
from where the beans used to be, find
the wine has moved, the coffee shifted, the counter
is repositioned. They're ready for anything
though still no one comes.
It may never open, it may be
the deal's fallen through, the tenant run away
to Sark, to Lundy, to Sikkim,

exactly now he is unrolling his blind
and selling his first umbrella of the day
while here people are travelling for miles
to come away with one hand
as long as the other, to enjoy the unfilled shelves
and conjure names into the wooden frame.
It could be theirs, this blue and yellow beacon,
this fading radio station whose signal
keeps sending us home
to change our lives, to move tables, chairs
and sit on the floor in a great
cleared space imagining the shelves
of Athos, Punial, Andorra . . .

'Out of a dream of argument . . .'

Out of a dream of argument
you come to me, waving
all your minds, feeding dark with dark,
the air with thunder, throwing up your arms to form
the milky flashes someone steers by: *Harm's*
Way, The Broken Bow . . .

The moon shows, white hole
through which ease slipped.
Something heavy, stupid
is labouring to pursue, there's
the too near clump of boots,
my body flattening the grass

of a hollow — all of which
put down to the mind's slowness,
its obtuseness in sorrow to delay,
to lie low and then, wittily, to remember.
Grandly it flashes now: the limbs
twitch, the images pulse, the hollow's

stumbled into. I wake to inquisition
and the ebb of your body,
the miracle of your life elsewhere —
as if, in this morning fire of separation,
your hand had only now descended
and reached in to pick the bone . . .

'Somewhere the mild . . .'

Somewhere the mild
unassembled cities
the gods let slip,

empires we won't be queuing for,
public health projects
and planning laws,

the farmers in their fields again
sowing the seeds of oblivion.
Here, though,

every bulletin brings us
the eagle-man, obsidian, the flayed god
and his strange people;

here the drugged boy stares out
mad-eyed from the poster,
temples glare

and as always the knife
'is delicately inlaid
with turquoise and mother-of-pearl'.

Somewhere the quiet life
un-gaped at, its pots and pans,
billhooks and receipts

but here the gods wake up hungry,
everyone's hungry
or hungered for

and *when the dawn came*
then they made them leave
that they might go to die

for during the entire festival
they were all flayed
and those captives who had died

they called the eagle-men . . .

Somewhere the museum
of trash tv, forgotten dinners
and the yard swept clean again

somewhere the vast spaces
where for hours we linger
over histories of air and water

where we listen
to the lost in their snug valleys sending forth
nothing whatsoever