

Phyllis Webb/FOUR POEMS

“KRAKATOA” AND “SPIRITUAL STORM”

Hot magma
 indigo dawn
wild yelps
 of pure physics
crack open deep sea
buttocks thrust up love lava
world heart / broken / cardiac
arrest.
Krakatoa. Krakatau.

The small gods gather
for countdown, each lifts
a finger to the wind (quake,
tide, tsunami) tastes
the cost of all-paroxysmal
sexual storm, lid blown off,
creator creating, a whim,
wham of blowup on shores —
Java, Sumatra, Hawaii —
blasting away 2200 miles heard,
Krakatoan wind circling the dust
up high enough. Radiant

marvellous sunsets for years.
Spectacle. Le monocle de mon
oncle sent flying into the eye
of the storm (*spiritual* for him,
timbre just right, *pinhead*).

God how I suffer to get this down as if I'd
been there watching the lava hit and run after
dogs and children and hens, cone island collaps-
ing into the sea. Always this me. Tourist,
back-packed, camera at ready, lens cap removed.

and the big gods come, finally, to the Pacific
for 36,000 dead, fallout, cinders, oracular
birth of Anak (child of) Krakatoa. Bad mouth.
Ash. Devolution. Darkness at noon.

So be it. So it was: May 20, 1883, "paroxysmal"
blast August 26, "climax" eruption August 27,
10 a.m. Masses of floating pumice near the
volcano so thick as to halt ships. Surrounding
region in darkness two and a half days.
Temperature world-wide lowered 0.27°.
Plant and animal life gone five years.
Anak (child of) Krakatoa active into
the 1980s.

Genetic spleen

Time lapse backwards

Mortal fear
Cassandra
Nostradamus
"Sons of guns"

I cannot surprise you. Not with the blue jay's
return. Not with the velvet yellow of pansyface,
not with my held-back fire. Apocalypse. Every-
thing predictable in the book. Ominous ocean.
Glacier waterslide. Occult fecal blood's old
testament. Rotted bodies. Sun's eclipse.
Venus swinging below the moon.

Veracity. Storm, calm, dilemmas, ditch-jumps.
Capacity for wonder. The spring of the mouse-
trap sprung, we are caught — thus and so — in
this pose, shadowed beyond doubt. Fire hanging
back for a more effective, filmic test-site,
for dessert bloom.

Dedicated to Dorothy Livesay and bill bissett

“DIPLOMATIC POUCH”

Alfred Hitchcock steers his stomach across the screen, a pregnant pause in the action, the pit of wit. A note passes from hand to hand, a message on form and function; female fear splits the bathroom tiles, “improved binoculars”, “Pain Fountain”. The romantic couple cast long glances and smoke from their silver lair; birds zoom down like missiles, testing, testing?

I loved the sophistication of every move, sly camera angles, clues and accents, that touch of class. And the neurotic gloss on the whole murderous enterprise, the old master’s nasty mind that took us for what we were worth.

“SEEKING SHAPE. SEEKING MEANING”

Hot pursuit, or languorous. We are in. A blue lagoon bird stands on one pale leg, a picture of reflection, nothing ruffled. Waters lap, ingenious insects walk on water; thoughts bloom like algae, fluorescent, many-celled, liberated and dying in their own element.

The syntax of deep structure composes on the harp, strings along.

Red hot spikes. Fire-walking.

Cadence in scene, in the *seen*, seeking out pattern, finding where the eye catches, heart hooks, tangible order, a cadence. Tantrums of tears at such pure spirit, radiant things, on which the eyes close.

“Mind is shapely, Art is shapely.” Ginsbergian insight, Allen afloat on his untidy chaos, his good humours. Ahoy!

Fragmentation: to understand the parts, reify certain curious particulars to our habit of framing. (Management techniques — precious jewels in the Swiss watch, the Cretaceous period slotted between Jurassic and Cenozoic. See chart under GEOLOGY. See geology under the chart.

Some of it makes sense, shape, meaning meandering river of biologic “soup” on which fish, birds, insects feed, that feed us. River on which we move undulant, forsaking all else for this infectious cruise.

IMPRINT

The first plate in the volume is the key block giving the outline. It is easy to see how each successive color is added by a separate block to achieve the final result.

The Making of a Japanese Print

Eye contact, and it's forever.
The first circle.

And then the breast,
the left or the right.
So choice.
Or grab what is given.

Rosebud and at the
periphery / eyelash,
dark sandals pass by.

Add a chair in the corner
with a white chemise.
This is the only way to go
—outward.

Door behind the mother
closing as father in blue
blows out.

White filled in, hatch-
crossings for negative space.
Decadent life.

Flesh tint laid on
with extreme caution.
All moves are dangerous:

open the door and wind pours in
with dust. Lift the head
of mother an inch,
her attention goes
out the unseen window.

If baby sleeps,
hand falling away from
the opening bud, rose
becomes dream, memory
a praise of distance.

*Technique is all,
a test of the artist's
sincerity. Oh,
we are sincere, we go
for the blade, cut close
to the bone. The splotch
of red in the lower right-hand
corner, a sign of the happy
maker.*