

Daphne Marlatt / THREE REVISITED

Hands on the Table

for Edrys (1918-75)

i

hands, in dream there are hands, small of a child who goes off
into the abyss alone (hear someone cry? & stare up into that space
he sleeps at the top of as if it were visible, this sound — a false
signal, a turning away he doesn't cry, my five-year old, he sleeps

who cried then? cried out in sleep, turning on the other side of
dream awake, slides easily out & howls in pain of being here
which is not here, not yet as there

was a place
where two could jump off the known still holding hands & then?
one was alone? awake?

you wipe the table bare there are imprints on it hands that
come up in dream but not our own

why this? why should i dream of
hands that stay when you constantly wipe our table clean with care
'thorough' you say, to sit, 'sit at' you who sit easily separating the
cigarettes, the cup, & thus acknowledging all your habits 'that do not

weigh so much' to make a place we sit down to, bare the table & place
what belongs, so spare, & then make visible, perhaps, that which comes up
out of nothing & lifts us, like a wind, into recognition

ii

it was bare, swept clean by fire, & black a gutted church (the church
she was wedded in, my mother before the bomb, before the beggars
light falls sideways through what's left of the wall only a few charred
timbers, only the memory of light, of many hands held up to receive in
supplication, out of need, asking for food, for anything

before

a communion table, there *was* a rail these supplicants knelt at
in engagement, in a vow ('engagement' had nothing to do with
this interpenetration of light & dark

bombed by the time i saw it, & his face
so dark & he so curled apart, like some child, a hand thrust between his
knees in the comfort of sex to ease what must have been always present,
given his bony calves, like sticks, this beggar curled a child or like a child
where the light falls all around a bombed-out church Sir Francis Light still
stands erect outside of like some dream in the back of a head, a flicker of
frames casting their imagery of light on the dark remains who stays or what
inhabits the broken belly of this church stays on in pain in the dark his hands
press past, eating away at the continuity that says

always there is someone who stays, who keeps faith

always they said, when the image arose, this is the church we were married in, this is the church of ruin, my image now she was all in white when they knelt & later stood on the lawn where the cannon stood & the cannas flared she knelt in the law & champagne poured though she knew nothing of bed & he wore a white carnation under his jaw

always there is this other who sleeps in the bombed-out building of my mind as the wine & wedding were for them mother & father who stood where they were to become in turn separate images of the law as the dream grows always there was this other, a child a beggar curled in the bombed-out building of their vows they held hands & the child in the dark of the dream grew the more they held, they held on

iii

it was a book i held in my hands in the corner of what was once a church ragged fireweed, blocks & ruin, rain so it was a different place but still there remained an inner sanctuary where they knelt, the ones who were left when the bombs went off i stood in fireweed out in the sun where day seemed to have distanced all that except for the book i picked up a Common Prayer-book so fused by fire it had become a box of pages eaten away at the heart —

turning it over there in the back a child's hand transfixed from
wrist to fingertip strands of charred hand imprinted by light
across a blackened book

iv

her hands, when i saw her dead, were halfcurled like those of a child asleep

v

hands, in dream there are hands of a mother who becomes a child who goes off
into the power hole alone (& the cry, reiterated, comes from very far, we thought
we heard a cry let it be the other side of dreaming, that other being born
into a world made visible

so wipe the table bare, this table where we place our different hands that have not done
with making books or bread or any of the offerings we bring you wipe the table bare
you wipe it carefully, completely &, in the wetness of wood shining, here is not your
table or our table or their table here is a table we sit to where our hands rest or move
as the words speak out of their separate quiet speak of a strangeness our hands
fail to remove.

New Year / New Where

for Jan leaving for Japan 1975

pot earth under a fingernail comes alive (smells only when
wet) somehow ferns survive dry our forgetful hello/goodbye
driving habitual roads last night arrival calls under the bridge how
roads converge the bridge is all approach & curves into memory's
late-night daughter who arrives as we smell earth rise up in winter's
pre-spring warmup

she so much your daughter, quick to leap
black hat with feather (grouse?) with the quickness of flight for somewhere
else

drawn to a litany of arrival we follow
the road under granville street bridge "island" quiet now tracing our
curve in the dark these struts support this bridge-approach & turn
left then right to cobble end old trolley-train track & wall of brick
blind corner past molson's parking lot the plant itself
burrard this pall all fiery dust the traffic raises
fast & gone

on edge, on the edge of departure, innocent
of roads to take she thrums up anyhow out of old grief's familial
bush she wants to beat about those roots on other ground we urge
keep us in touch with how life there curves into you

how right
at breakfast it occurred to start the year in february when life its ghost
begins to rise up into these matted & winter-saturated stems leaves even
those indoors recessed into themselves in want, in want what can any
one provide?

she flies off just as the year begins & we lose sight of what
makes us come alive this curve of connecting points this drive under the
bridge supports their strut & curve the road we use to get home turns
at a blind corner

— *sleeping the sleep of the worn* —

while unseen leaves illumine moon a ceiling starred even under the pall
of traffic we wake to place & then it fades stretching new fronds into day
hair down brushing it out in the open air sprung, Jan, you've flown
your coop here's to arrival wherever there

A Series of Takes

Because speech is not a weapon. It's a place.

Marguerite Duras

it's rain repeating us, not anything light, shining half-day bursts through cloud cover, all my raspberries tight-green dwarfs. as if we waded in suspense, not towards summer but away from ourselves. similar. even the lawn wet & the cat's mud paw fishing through slats for mud hands planting would-be flowers. comparative. everything swims similitudes of flourishing — the too-green light of elsewhere, fancying what or who?

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rain repeats. we'd gone fishing for change. heads it was Pasolini, his Boccaccio tableaux illumined by the story-teller's fancy, wilful even as those gods in their carefully structured garden gave him sight, a blow across the eyes like retribution likes. he fancied (torture in that caress an incandescent fact), fancied himself a lover

contemporary in this, liking the limelight, inserting himself as author into what he makes, or who . . .

came forward to greet us on the brink of a greek terrazzo after words, another set of similitudes, *my friends!* we barely know this angel with the

ingrown eyes grown loud downing brandy after brandy, off to the Bahamas, money in his hands & poems in the offing. such high stakes. *i'll get him, i can write circles around him*, infernal still at the centre of his doubt, who took him for love & found love's rivalry a hell

Pasolini was good in '74. in these circles of better, best. repeating the same frame. reversing their roles (who screwed who). writing circles around the divine still blazing up in his mind. *i'll get him* he says. *you'll see*.

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see rain repeating rains desire in a retinal caress, as if muscular, as of some inner eye a flickering set of images will give. *in the early morning when your eyelids flicker i know you're watching your own movie* you say. & whose film do you fancy then?

caught in the visible, everything swims in parallel. & out of touch (this green light go-ahead, this gel that holds us in suspense & separate). we could see ourselves in a serial light, a series of other takes. deep below dream & given to nothing but place.