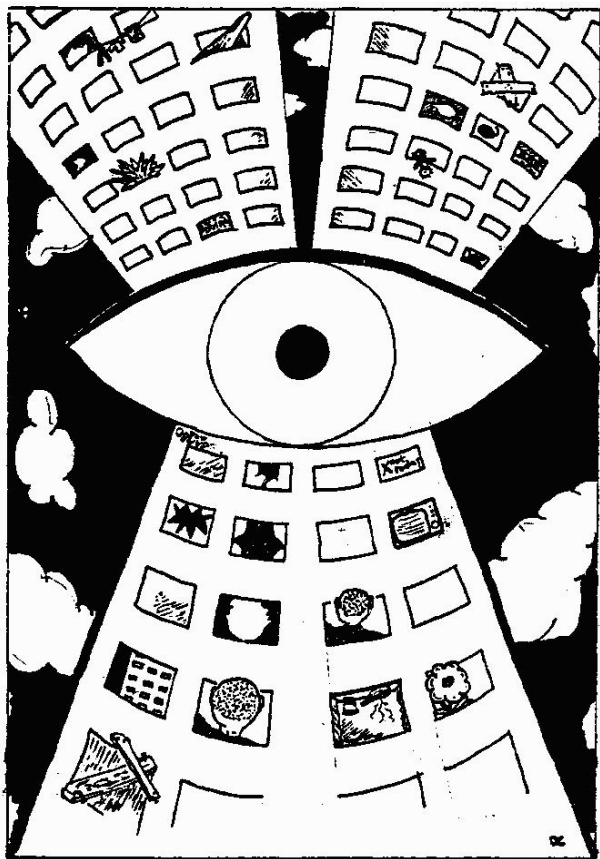


A Vandal Remembers His Love



Alan McDonald

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Alan McDonald : A Vandal Remembers His Love

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ADRIADNE IN BLUE JEANS

Out of the labyrinth
she whispered secrets
of dolphins and the double axe

there was heat and blue water
the clearness of laughter
smooth stones on the sea bed

& once I watched her
make love to herself
on a sun-slit afternoon

It was just an adventure
we split up later
she hung onto the thread

WELCOME

the trees, white-pencilled
trellises along the terrace, yes
the birds, wind, a cold sky
drained of all but blueness.
the shiny black streets and I
are ready to bid you

welcome

Are you flying now?
suspended over foam?
peering out for a glimpse
of seas and countries?
anxious for a foretaste of your

welcome?

Waiting open mouthed
the black-floored white rooms
and the man here, a year
older than when you last
breezed and buzzed this way
we are all, all aching for your

welcome

BODYSCAPE

My body has the texture of parchment
oily, slightly roughened

My body has the taste of salt
the smell of sweat, the sound of hardly any sound at all

It has the look of sand, greyish-brown
swept by wind, shimmering with the illusion of water

Where your fingers trace messages
in languages that before were unknown to me

HOURGLASS

The cathedral shadows the tenements.
Its brown, headless shoulders squat
threateningly on the hillside; its dark
bulk slumbers with the purr of engines.

Wind rattles the metal sheeting on derelict
Georgian houses - roofless, the stucco peeling
as we walk by. Our breath steams on the air,
our laughter clatters along alleyways.

We make love in a dying city; the politics
of despair trickle through the hour glass,
but inside ourselves something forms, and opens:
the sand suspends. A hand might turn the world.

THE BLIND DANCER

You tell me of the blind dancer.
He feels the lights,

embarrasses the seeing
audience - a hum, a blur -

with a mime extempore, a mock
striptease; and I remember

how our clothes seemed ourselves
and our flesh, disguises.

Now you, naked, tell me of the blind
dancer, and your skin.

brushes against my skin
like wind against the curtains.

Reading my body like braille
in the dark, you

know me by touch now
whatever our whispers say.

JEALOUSY

My lover gets angry these cold nights

- jealousy bites.

The clouds are grey blood in a black sky

- jealousy watches me cry.

In the streets motors buzz and howl

- jealousy calls me cruel.

All the gentle insects in the walls are dying

- jealousy says I'm lying.

My fingers have turned into poisonous flowers

- jealousy sneers.

I have nothing left to offer or believe

- jealousy spits out my love.

I am laid out on the bed like a corpse

- jealousy weeps.

My lover gets hungry these long nights

- jealousy eats.

MERELY LOVERS

If they could have broken through
into companionship

But she kept turning into
moving pictures of herself
and he at her shoulder hooded
some shadow darkening her

Until he desired her as a thing
and she dreamt suffocation
and they thrashed around in the net
of merely lovers

Dragged by the years through years
gasping for air

THE BULLDOZERS ARE WAITING

Corrosive taste
Of cold steel in our mouths
 - too many habitual cigarettes
 & kisses

Words we used
flung somewhere
abandoned
on a heap of old and clapped out vehicles
 - maybe the steering went
 - maybe they just wore out

Maybe they were never really up to much
you say, as we watch through the cracked window
hungry seagulls pecking at the rubble
refugees from some lake the ice has taken over
 so white against the city snow
 so soon fly off into greyness

 and our footprints
blurred by the tracks of other lovers
and by people going about their business
 they lead only here
 this bare room where
 the whitewashed walls are crumbling &
 the water's been disconnected &
the bulldozers are only waiting for
 a change in the weather

AFTER THE DREAM

I woke embracing
the empty space where she had lain.

The room was full of memories
of images of her.

Later information
reached me in her handwriting.

The signs seemed merely
tokens of distance.

Now her costumes hang
empty along the walls of my imagination.

I do not open the door.
I have turned all the windows into mirrors.

I play at trying on my faces.
None of them fits.

A VANDAL REMEMBERS HIS LOVE

a high rise affair

I tore at the roots of our time together, yes
on the walls of our love I scrawled graffiti, all
the short fierce words I could think of; then
I pissed in the lift of our dreams, I ran
screaming and swearing along corridors
between the rooms of our affections, I broke
into the rooms and smashed the furniture
of our words and smiles and promises, I
punched broken glass out on to
the dead grass of our lawns where trees
that I defaced stand, dead from the roots.

Finally, exhausted, I lay down;
I have moved away now.

But I still remember our love, remember
the architect's drawing: the anticipation
of elegance and serenity, a tall building
that might tower over others - & oh God
it still does, gaunt, oppressive,
pinnacling the skyline: sometimes all night
I watch its lights blink out one by one
and pray it will be blown up by the morning
but it never is, it never is -

The scarred monument still haunts my horizon
however far I move away

MOONRISE

stick pistol rocket
men dream explosions
bodies burning

women dream waves
that surge from undersea
caves clefts crevices

to break against beaches
over and over

purple moon rising

red sun drowning
horizon of flames

MERSEYSIDE POETRY MINIBOOKS SERIES

ALAN McDONALD was born in Leeds in 1949. He now lives and works in Liverpool. Among his radio plays have been *Swimming and Flying*, *The Britco Three* (winner of North West Radio Prize 1980) and *A Fool For A Cigarette*. This is the first collection of his poems.

WINDOWS

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