

BLUE ANGEL

Down on the farm
a gate had fallen
crushed the throat
of a blonde haired child of two.
Her dead blue eyes
had given up pleading
when the violet petechiae
came out in flower
all over her face.

Her death had grown
to a bloated size
defying the technology
of cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
We worked on her
for half an hour
for the sake of the ambulance men
who'd worked on her
for half an hour before us.

HOOKS

isabella rossellini
has taken my arm
and is leading me through
the museum of anthropology

like celluloid
she can be a fine distraction
from the serious exhibits
put out to remind me
of the dark fruit swelling
in the belly of history

sensing my pain
isabella skirts the rack
where the big brass hooks hang

all gloss and gossamer
she flutters around her own
framed photograph and draws me
like a moth to her story

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this picture was taken
whispers isabella
when i spent a strange day
broken down in the desert
with martin scorsese

the engine stuttered
we drained our pellegrino
the buzzards circled
we began to quarrel

over the bare hills
the tarmac steamed away
relentless to infinity

sailing boats appeared
in the shimmery patches
i saw robert duvall surfing
wearing a big hat
badged with crossed swords

in a cloud of dust
down that molten highway
wim wenders came
driving an audi

in the backseat
we breathed sweet relief
and drank aqua vitae
indulging wim's whim
for still photography

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i take a step back
forcing isabella
to recede into the frame

my attention returns to the hooks
allowing the pictures to come
in painful flashes:

a polish girl
whose mind had broken
labouring in auschwitz
hanging corpses on those hooks
to await incineration

a jewish ballerina
whose survival hung
on blue eyes, blonde hair
and a private arrangement
to dance for josef mengele

and walter benjamin
clutching his ticket to america
like a shell-shocked angel
blown away by the storm

forfeited his life
for want of an exit visa
to appease his hunchbacked saboteur
at the franco-spanish border

SCATTERING YOUR ASHES OVER BRISBANE

for Gwen Harwood

reduced in the furnace
to carbon
and dust

lifted
from the earth
in a functional vase

to be thrown
to commune
with the traffic exhaust

the fire you burned in
blasts my bones
with each gasp

CHEDI GONG

I

on a marble board
at the platform's edge
chess men stand sentinel

watching the jungle
tumble into the gorge

a blonde woman
in a dark sarong
reads jeffrey archer

steps lead down
to an empty throne
on a sandstone shrine

II

poolside
japanese women
fan up a storm

my wooden banana lounge
kindles as tinder

a dive in the pool
puts out the flame
but desire still burns

water spills over
hot slate coping

the mind slips away
the body grips the sign:

DEAR GUEST
FOR SERVICE KINDLY
HIT THE GONG

ONCE

III

striking your absence
the fist is a hammer
sending out shockwaves