

Stephen Mead

Skating & Other Poems

↳ Skating ↵

Skating, this is like skating,
With my fingers on these
Panels, tracing
Laminations,
The ice swirling
All with the warmth
Of a certain expertise.
X rays, x rays—
What passion I find,
No skullduggery or frieze
Forensic, these wisps being
His breath, his lungs, his ribs.
If held up to light
The curls of my cigarette,

The thumb & the index holding it,
Combines with his life.
So skeletal, so spirit, that, his head,
The bumped bridge of his nose,
Those his lips, his teeth, his eyes
& he held inside me in the pulse
Of my touch.
Come, take me plate-pressed
While holding his face.
I know where our bones hide,
In what brain hills & black caves
Opening diaphanous.
This is no cannibalism, these votives
On film, only a deity:
X rays that when placed on paintings,
Each portrait of us, brings window
After window for a just beginning
Cathedral.
What is death?
Nothingness?
None of that enters in these rays
Painting
Song

↳ Bagoas ↵

Won't there be snow?

What cups our mouths would be,
our hands, helmets
taken off for a dip.

Homage is the greatest gift
to the giver as well.

Earnestness is the only quality
left to this loyalty.

Earnestness! Loyalty!

More pure instinct, my lord,
devotion, the whole soul,
and longing deeper than thirst,
the knot of it, love and fear
dragging on past the gripping.

Here, not even cowardice
can have any claim.

Cowardice——

the waterless days, the sands,
the gourds withering...

Cowardice——

the mica mist, the grit
feet stirred, the thousands pushing forth
through mirages, and through the dropping
of horses, the haze, the haze,

and with much farther to go...
That's why silence fills this keening.
That's how whispers fill the gulf,
and you, in fountain shimmers,
the spectacle of good sun——
How shall I know you
without your wounds,
the heat of them,
Sebastian's?
How shall I know you at all,
gentle tyrant, without the blaze of
your marks which my hands did fondle
'til we were both cool?
Here, waiting to cross another drying
stream, a different fissure,
visions come:
craggs this side of Eden,
and, Alexander, wars.
Did exploration take conquering?
Did freedom take funerals?

Now we are dissolute.
Now evaporative spirits rain up,
and how shall I find you?
Look. Snow is falling,

its wet feathers prayers
of spring, and I was only sleeping,
some seer in fever, but what
do these words mean
when your arms are so close,
when this tent has their heat,
and outside there's just the heavens?
Come, my lord, the men have struck water
and I must say nothing
of all that I dreamed.

(Recorded for the CD "Whispers of Arias", Volume 1)

↳Fractures↳

For Gennady Trifonov

What was done with the Russian
man who fell in love with another?

One more work camp punch

line

the lines lines of incarcerated

hearts.

How they beat in their cages,

beneath ribs.

How they beat in the minds

the spirits

unless broken

inside or outside

bars.

Lover, what was done with the...

maybe noose a belt

maybe turn informant

maybe close eyes reverse

steps enter the glass closet...

cuts scarring

along the cracks

the scars themselves

fractures

learning to lie hide

feel a brain

washed of belief

in order to pass

pass

& still

bleeding the whole time.

What was done with the...

untouchable, oh un-

touch the untouchables

brought out for target

practice, scapegoating smear smear—

examples made campaigns

for patriotism fear sticking in

raising flags on pyres of bodily harm.

Lover, but for a twist of the

screw, the rack undone, I could turn

into Marina Tsvetaeva.

↳Gulliver & the Magician↳

(for Jan Morris)

No wands waving, nor the embellishment of scarves
for doves, for roses...

No. We lie in a canoe, fog entwined by motion
of lotus...

What better place to exchange the wrong body,
to cease being a Janus made
between the split of spirit & of skin?

This being wrapped in the canal's tourniquet,
its droplet-laced breaths, is another Viking birth

born from the waves underneath. I know it,
embracing you

who I am to be, after having witnessed
an entire millennium of treacherous toy courts,
& the martyrs, incorruptible, their innocence
betrayed. How miraculous to now break

from the chain of destroyers, from times deadly
puppet-jawed regimes, & choose the magician,
capable as a woman, in her self-contained garden.

Of course, at the outset, it will be

painful, with these bandages bound about us,
with the loss of my surface person, while you,
even as strangers stare, slowly sculpted,
begin your ascent. How long it has taken you,
ship-prow profile.

How long for the wing-waiting miracle
now suddenly on-cue. Is this a fable

from Wales, a new twist to modern living?

It is certainly one most are told to shun
or stone. Now we stand, finding our level,
gender-blended:

breasts from shoulder blades & fiery life
yielding, with insight, from thighs...

I am you & my hidden self rightly, knowingly
manifested here, here as I step from the magic
boat of the surgery & back towards shore,
towards life's transformative travels, those
books I can still, somehow lighter, deeper,

write.

↳The Men↵

slept with

& little sleep there

really & love there

somewhere for the wrong

the right reasons & reasons the voices

of many different spirits...

you've given

the earth my body back to me says this one

given the country rooftop high in my veins

the veins in excelsis sky landscape roots

to remember to remember...

christ says another whose arms are these

now in somebody's some body's not mine

not so pure says a third you mustn't be

have a drink little bird bird here

a little blue pretty quiet quiet baby let

yourself be be ready self for gospel strains

night trains a wilderness city fill up

fill up empty out empty in in
innocence cynicism sin sin
religion in in time passing
passing time time up in up
in hurry slow oh
shut up & come

come kiss me

come kiss me

Author Bio

A resident of NY, Stephen Mead is a published artist, writer and maker of short collage-films. His latest project, a collaboration with Kevin MacLeod, is entitled "Whispers of Arias", a two volume CD set of narrative poems sung to music, <http://stephenmeadmusic.weebly.com/>

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