

Fear is here, death is close

For Clare Woods  
(Victims of Geography, DCA, 2017)  
R.W. Paterson

Close your eyes  
and against them press hard  
to the fleshy heels of your hand  
and see now in that blackened cave;  
the pulsing sanguineous colours of crimson...some sulphurous whorls of green  
and as you press harder still  
witness those haematic archipelagos drift  
then dissolve into a rain,  
of little morphing heads.

“Look at all these borders foaming at the mouth with bodies broken and desperate....  
I spent days and nights in the stomach of the truck;  
I did not come out the same.  
Sometimes it feels like someone else is wearing my body”

Open now and up!  
to be engulfed in colour and feel contained  
inside this raw and muscular force  
that pulls far into unworldly tones  
of explorations yet unknown.

“Calcutta, that great metropolis of the East,  
was not altogether alien to me...  
I used to hear many tales about the  
mysterious land of India from my Uncle”

To be here feels wrong —this place in between..  
who are these victims of geography?  
where have they come from  
(for we know, at least we think we do —that these innocents were real)  
dripping hollow-eyed and traumatised  
yet still we pry.

“I pipetted them out the vial and onto the provided dressing,  
then applied the dressing to my inner forearm.  
Within about 5min I got an intense itch.  
It feels exactly like you would imagine tiny larvae  
burrowing through your skin  
leaving raised flesh-coloured tracks’

*Fear is Here, Death is Close*

those are the given coordinates.

I say 'she paints as if she is dying — and you the voyeur is too'

a blank look responds 'I know' she said.. *you do?*

urgent now to this fresh seduction

a glimpse of acquiescence

in those unfurling forms and flesh.

"I called to the other men that the sky was clearing,  
and then a moment later  
I realized that what I had seen was not a rift in the clouds  
but the white crest of an enormous wave"

A skein of unbleached cloth lies waiting

(the witness to it all)

what apparition resides under there?

Let the captor reveal our nakedness

and see it in full light.

"Jute is one of the most easily dyed fabrics known,  
and the colours it takes on are bright and beautiful.  
The common dyes are quickly applied; but they are very fugitive"

Unhooded, a head lays slumped

those coordinates closed-in...

(You are here)

Now, close your eyes and see

in green, not of this place

but another.

"I saw colours that that had so many different shades and hues that I  
had never seen before. I have tried describing the colours to my friends and family, and the closest I can come to  
it is by saying that a particular colour looked like a mix between blue, green, pink and purple, but it was nothing I  
had ever seen before, in my waking state"

Voices:

Warsan Shire 'Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth

Dr. Bashabi Fraser 'The Scottish Jutewallah'

Account from an anonymous blogger who infected himself with hookworm

(also known as Creeping Eruption) to cure Crohns disease.

Ernest Shackleton, 'South! The story of Shackletons last expedition, 1914-1917'

Mr Warden, Jute Mill owner, The Staple Trade of Dundee, Friends of Dundee City Archives.

An anonymous NDE account. International Association for Near Death Studies. Website accessed 16/5/17  
<http://iands.org/ndes/nde-stories/nde-like-accounts/1158-uneearthly-colors-morphing-and-changing.html>