

Subduing the Kinetic

Jacqueline Sinclair

La prose poétique de Jacqueline Sinclair se déguise en texte de fiction. Alternant entre les aphorismes et les détails pratiques d'un récit, ce texte débute avec une Angela en larmes qui, lors d'une visite chez une amie, révèle que même les raisins secs ont des secrets. Les pages se promènent le long d'amitiés et d'amours, examinant inlassablement les connections linguistiques produites à travers des cours d'origami, des fleurs de soie et des cartes postales écrites en français.

It is because of the bedsprings upstairs, and the music below, that Angela sits weeping into her hands. She catches glimpses of the lovers french-kissing in the hallways; they whisper past her door, and leap the steps two at a time into each other's arms. Her tears move along her face like the sweat on their backs, warm, tasting of salt.

Her sobbing keeps time with the music below. She hears the man dancing, imagines him tossing the long grey ponytail over his shoulder.

He frightens her in his ambiguity.

She believes all men should grow beards, and have a barber shave the back of their necks. It is for this reason she threw away her poetry collection.

Angela decides to hold facts between her fingers. She doesn't believe in men who ignore baseball scores.

When Angela gets up from her weeping, her knees have fallen asleep. She slaps at them alternately, grateful for the decision to walk. Outside she will look to the clouds for rain. She will see boarded houses and understand no one lives there. The lock snaps behind her and she is reassured everything is in its place.

Angela has not slept in two days. Her eyelids scrape like sandpaper across her hardened stare. Even the act of seeing is violent. The wind is searing and leaves behind no hope for spring. It dries the tears along her cheeks. She will not sleep. Rusting eyelids can be explained, she is only tired. Dreams on the other hand, but she stops here, Angela is not a stu-

dent of Freud. She is only tired, and the fresh air snaps her awake. It is then she decides to visit Willamene. Willamene speaks English, and eats compulsively. Angela will eat jelly donuts, and understand.

Willamene is tossing orange peels into a dish and speaking about raisins. "They are really dried grapes," she says, wiping at her bottom lip with a wrist, "they aren't that simple after all."

Angela twists her shirt tails into a knot. Even raisins have secrets. She considers taking up smoking. She would have something to hang onto deep into the night. She would get up to dump the ashtray or look for matches. The air would be heavy because of the smoke. She could justify the difficulties she has in breathing.

"You look like hell," Willamene announces. Angela asks if she might borrow a cigarette. "Have a scone," Willamene frowns at her, but Angela notices the raisins.

Willamene stands, and crumbs fall from her lap like snow. The cushion she was sitting on heaves away her impression. The only reason Angela knows Willamene is there is because of the tiny heaps of food littering the floor. Willamene sweeps these away with her sock on her way to the kitchen, and Angela no longer remembers her.

She leaves before Willamene returns from the kitchen. As she descends the stairs to the street, Angela wonders absently where she was.

Angela took an origamy course years ago. The students sat in irregular rows, with books open and rumpled sheets of paper at their feet. She remembers the man who cursed under his breath at every turn. His face growing red under his beard as he chewed madly at the insides of his cheeks. "A mountain goat," he would tap Angela on the shoulder, and reveal a wrinkled shape he had held together with saliva, "or a mail box, as you like." They would grin at his creation, and Angela could always see flowers. "Daisy," she would say. He would nod at her enthusiasm. She always said, "Daisy," just to see him smile.

One day when Angela arrived at class, she found her desk littered with flowers. Silk flowers that had been immersed in perfume. They had bright green plastic stems. The man behind her leaned forward, "My name is Brian." He pulled a thermos from his ragged overcoat, "They will last forever."

Angela had laughed. She went later to see his rooms, touched her forehead to his chest. His long arms held her through her sweaters. He smelled of coffee and cinnamon.

Brian wrote greeting cards early in the morning. He painted in water colors. Together they bought rhyming dictionaries. He would put his knuckles against his eyes and ask, "What is another word for eternal?" Angela cooked stews in cast iron pots, and didn't know.

Together they learned French. They would make love and whisper, "*ma chère*," laugh at their accents. Angela would drum her pencil against the table top, recite verbs and present tenses. Brian rolled his R's into the mirror.

Together they learned how to say nothing in two languages.

After leaving Willamene's, Angela plods back to her apartment. She is determined to annihilate all possibility of alteration. She will build a world that is safe, without raisins or daisies. There will be no change. It will hold firm. There will be no leaving, there will be no room for surprise.

It is two a.m. and Angela is seated amongst folded seagulls and creased lilies. She is pleased with her efforts and bends over thin card board envisioning row boats. She turns cereal boxes inside-out and constructs garages and higher buildings. She rolls newspaper between her palms, fashioning lamp posts and trees. She places each construction meticulously along chalk roads she has drawn on her carpet. Angela does not hum as she works.

She sucks at the tears on her lips from the paper's razor edges until she no longer tastes blood. There are faint red prints on the sheets of paper where her fingers have been. Her hands sting with each crease. Birth is not painless. Angela brings the streaked paper to her mouth, biting the first pleat. "The Gods perceived this ecstasy." But she will not be so careless. Her chaos will not echo theirs. Her world will remain constant, she will be diligent in her execution.

Brian began to move incessantly around the apartment at night. He spoke with his hands and would tap his feet to some invisible melody if he sat. When Angela was out, he would rearrange the furniture, open all the windows, move the silverware from one drawer to the next. He moved from her as he slept, his caress urgent and cruel. Angela lay awake listening to the wind lash at the windows, imagined mountains sinking, rivers crashing to the sea.

Brian left one morning. He took his shirts from where they hung in the closet, collected pictures from the walls. "Nothing remains still," he had said, "even stone changes." He had kissed her mouth. The plastic flowers he had given her stood in a vase in the hallway. She had not watched him walk away, but had looked at these flowers until the moon rose. Even they

seemed to sweep with the shadows.

Angela's chin leans into her chest. She licks each of her fingers, and glances sideways at the room. She sits still. There is a movement with the dawn. She holds her breath, senses the flutter of paper, a shift. She pulls her shoulders back, straightens her spine and glares at each creation. As if by sheer will or determination she can root her world to this spot.

Yet the motion begins. An almost imperceptible sigh washes the room as the morning fades night to grey. She has forgotten to draw the blinds. A fish with jagged fins falls sideways, beside it, a butterfly rises and settles in the light burst of air. Angela feels her rib cage clawed at with wire talons, her heart begins to thunder, slamming itself beneath her breast. The colors of the various scrap papers swirl to a kaleidoscopic wavering. Her hands tremble, and something presses itself against the backs of her eyes. She feels her head drop backwards, off her shoulders.

And they are standing above her. The radiator hisses loudly, and paper scrapes along the shelves to drift finally to the ground. One picks up the rice paper sailboat, holds it to the light. The others smudge the chalk highways with their bare feet and slippers. The door bumps against the wall.

She feels herself lying flat out, like a child about to make snow angels. There are collapsed moons in her hair, what was once a swan rests on her stomach. She watches it rise and fall, as if it is about to take flight, as if it were struggling to fly away. The lovers hold hands. They gaze on her with concern. The man with the pony tail bends over her, his hair not yet caught up in an elastic. His hair falls about his face like a young girl. "You must stop screaming," he says. Just like that. There is no music in his voice.

Angela raises herself on one elbow. The lovers step twice back. She closes her mouth and the shrieking stops. She has found another word for eternal. She will write it on the back of a post card and send it through the mail to Brian. "*Je suis fatiguée*," she says, and so sleeps. Her neighbours wade through the ruined origami and close the door. Angela lies on her back with her eyes closed. The fingers of her left hand jump erratically as the sun rises into the sky.