



GLASS

Rose Hunter

5 Islands
PRESS

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Biographical Note

Rose Hunter is the author of three poetry books and a chapbook in the United States. Journals she has been published in include the *Los Angeles Review*, *Cordite*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Southerly*, *Westerly*, and *DIAGRAM*. She is from Brisbane, lived in Canada for ten years, and now spends a lot of time in Mexico. More information about her is available at “Whoever Brought Me Here Will Have To Take Me Home” (rosehunterblog.wordpress.com).

for sean, again

for mum and dad

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mexico city

mixquic

i.

sean you are in mixquic where walking between grates
with *flor de muertos* and towering *catrina*, brim feathers
over the lily pad ears of wide-browed brahmans, river
speckled with cookie cream if this awesome
creature wanted to charge, does a brahman think then what? sean

you are in mixquic with marble and guilt pietà
and photographer, man, dropping cat cigarette-balanced james dean

and one for the road. if i get my redos and never weres. if
i am not yet so old as i feel sometimes (not yet sick then not
even so broken) you had other places to be like

the yellow house or the stadium or the white room or the *malecón*
offering me a green fan. the sky that day was pearled
and swirling as the ferris wheels that grew in your eyes. *alumbrada*
with dance music the photographer is hopping
and poking me in the stomach and i am giggling and patting him on the head.
is this wrong here or is this right. what do they think

of us all, tourists of their dead. if they passed for a snapshot
of your grave i would snarl and bark like a bear but you have no grave

and i do not know where you are scattered except for everywhere

mixquic

ii.

in this carnival river crowd steam and he says historical
also, churches and graveyards okay but *mostly*
smartass, this photographer and his photographer friend
ribbing each other and this shot a keeper or do it again, this way
with this light and lens, i was floating way up high
over *huaraches con todo* i too want to drop to my knees that way

how much more beautiful to mix paint pour wax
or chip away at a block than to tap on keys sean i think you
would say that too. sean you are in mixquic one of the smoke tenders

or *copal* blessers to drive away evil spirits, you believed in this
not just lighting candles in styrofoam or bicycle
riding in reaper robes chasing *manzanas acarameladas*. things

could be different but they're not. your death

mixquic

– *alocadamente*, that you would not stop

iii.

was another white wall. i focused on flip-flops

not sneakers or shoes you had to tie. on bloody newspaper photographs
and what people said. in my mind, your *ofrenda*: checked shirt
checked shorts your furry book bag, computer with its vaguely
aviator headphones, tangled your deep-throated laugh
and pictures of your sons. your two cats. the one like a raccoon
and the other one. *café de olla* in the parking lot

and bumping heads as the night lights swoop past is this tasqueña
cuauhtémoc ferrocarril hidalgo, *are you incorrigible* now or later

i will follow him to the hotel named after a beloved american president.
sugar skulls for playing puppets in the elevator, what then, now? but
show me what we need really do not hide it.

alebrijes

but i am not the only ghost maker and leaving
is also a veil. why do they play christmas music in november
not even halfway through? the *alebrije* parade, he's going to
photograph it and my eyes lit up! to think

not of the pictures but the pictures of him taking pictures, necessarily
he is two ahead and climb on this for the next, up the post
stipple-toed extraordinary show me your spotted elf, self
show me your fangs and swishing tail show me your *patas*

orange and yellow, show me your *fauces feroces* tongue
wings and goosebumped skin of hen, i would like to drink vodka
and dance in the street. what, still? *would like* i said but instead
show me your *patas*, orange and yellow, show me your *fauces feroces*

we will be as two *garras*, touching, hurricane
eye and little spoon crown. the butterfly pyramid you hold
outstretched the dragon head on your chicken back
turkey feet and cowrie legs. wattle dewlap quill cuttle
ventricular, come i will dab you bib you

we will be like the children we never were. show me
your pony gait your ice cream cone fur and jester ears
show me your sugar knuckles and sign above your head, it says
(look santa claus is not coming) remember don't forget forget.

balloons

like balloons, we were way up there then gone.
it was not incremental. that first night, or was it
second, any case, *tacos de pastor* and
tell me about yourself there was no way
i could answer this question, phrased this way

ask me instead about cilantro or what
green means. and how you could talk with your
teaching trilingual and phds (i wanted
you or wanted to be you?) quoting
barthes and bergson also photographs

laughter then switch to, your hifalutin
like you have just learned to lean forward
and back, clicks and creaks in the joints and i'm sure
you own sunglasses although i never saw them
overcast or night on calle durango and all

i wanted was to talk to you. that irritating buzz
of the man with his stories of fishing. two for one
cappuccinos then at chapultepec then at monterrey
then at reforma i turned to see your
gangly walk and shivering hand cupped over
your mouth, even then it was cold, *wow!* it was cold

on the bus, clogged at midnight, all the way to
robles dominguez, to noë, reading your text
with smilies and *chica* half run past the tacos
sinaloense past the jalisciense past the tecate shop
run! up martha, windows, barred, reforma
la villa, guadalupe, *tacos de pastor*, *chica*

(and even if) not a lost cause like you for me thoroughly
to believe in up martha, phds, cappuccinos
photographs, what the hell (*tell me about yourself*)
why not! floating past *tezontle* past
copper past cupola floating. *vaya*.
the sky. that v there, top of the frame?

bajío

– the exhibition was about lost things
you see. leashes slack on the ground

i.

if we take a lobster for a walk well
how to put that harness and can they even go on land
and for how long? would they break their feet?
with the sky-teller i ate squid dashed against rocks

with a specified promptness or precision or something
for it to taste a certain way or something. from time to time
i decide i am something that i am not. look

i have eaten lobster only twice and still don't know what it
tastes like. listen. if you are talking to a person
on the street one day and the next they go out and die
like going for a hamburger or *barbacoa* like big deal they just go.

bajío

ii.

lobsters are popular and i understand
why, they are like polar bears or even
pandas. i have seen one panda, ever, chapultepec park

wide back squash against reinforced plastic, stubby legs splayed
floppy trout shouldered and flute-like munching.

no one else was there. it was just me and the panda. early

and some holiday i think. the panda wasn't a big panda.
i read there were three pandas at that zoo but two died
under somewhat mysterious circumstances.
i know the sky-teller thinks of me in precisely this way

even the cab ride out was glittering, and then we opened
fortune cookies. *that's safe to say*
since we don't get to choose and some of us will change
much less than we hope. a cantaloupe
is the fruit equivalent of a lobster and not just because it's orange
if you call it a rock melon this is far less true.

bellas artes

– and then we are at a loss. i didn't know i was running.
how many road trip window views do we get?
were we ever in that circus, glittering

listen. one minute he was stealing my words next kicking me out
while following me down the street while giving me
shoes. sky-teller, here is my part: i couldn't stop myself

from giving you what i saw you wanted, at least
to a certain extent. ten years in the circus taught me that
how *to do something different?* also
the house was warm with *chiles en nogada* pomegranate seed

strewn, fireplace mantle, couch cushions and books
everywhere! reading and discussion a dreamscape

i had peered into through windows, walking at night
in la condesa, rain soaked and glistening
and that he could be my father like he said. okay look
i knew that wasn't what he *meant.* i wanted

to eat rare food and drink fine wines for a while
he handed me a coat fit for a swan, i took it
then mistook it for a sort of suffocation or strangulation

? device. sky-teller here is my part: if you've ever
known fear of someone like your gut dropping into your shoe

then you know. it might be sun and pancakes
when the ice pick comes through, a drying dish towel

in a kitchen with tomatoes even here or in a thousand other

beautiful innocent places, a man is a fresh-carved stain, a blood
filled room, waking up with no idea how any of this happened.
everything was swimmingly that day he forced my drug head
down. my knees anchored in the sticky sweetness of my blood
nerve teeth quiet. where

did the traffic swing set groan and *elote* steam whistle
go, then? into a gallon drum stuffed
with our snowed-over secrets, ice at the burning heart.
lesson learned to see that open window

leap roll keep going don't look back. lesson not learned

make sure it's the right house you're jumping out of. but i do not
give up hope. in the hostel i feel i have
another chance at everything. rows of finger grapes

on riot shields tapping, tear gas and deep lines of scuffless boots
along madero tacuba cinco de mayo as far as bellas artes.

plaza garibaldi

– that day plenty of talk and it didn't come in boxes
like here is my news and here is your news

in plaza garibaldi with agave *piña*
clubs in cornrows and dog-cropped ears
i am back then, humpbacked

and bouncing *topes* the sun wind in my hair face
toll roads and long-haul trucks past

tlaquepaque tequila magdalena ixtlán compostela
las varas into the dawning
of caterpillar and salt, to glimpse, finally
the ocean dip and flush
between the crags of la peñita, rincón

de guayabitos, lo de marcos, rusted billboards
and missing roofs how they crumble
with the fade of things past dated stamped, partially

bondojito

you know in questions of memory and desire don't we often
get it wrong, friends. whether they would be sea blue
or aquamarine or. mother i have dead legs deadpool
deadcushion dead, dead in the way on which are pinned your

hopes of something else. in the waiting room clutching
bulletproof envelopes of x-rays cts dopplers mris
like anxious job applicants and the children we always were.
 i know now we all come back around

and again just like this. that mossy grenade
 i put it on the chest of drawers next to the television
in front of the cable box. maybe it would ripen and then
we would know, what. but it only ever shrank and turned inwards
gathered insects until it became a thud and a rolling rustle
 parcelled with orange peels and mouldy bread
bottom of the alley past the three dogs. when you're young

you don't know what they mean when they say *when you're young*.
 you think you do but you don't. at bondojito

i left through those same doors you did. down the stairs past the
turnstiles and men stretched out with covered faces under the eaves
the hum of electric lamps burning and wrinkling the puddles
as i crossed eje 2 oriente, onto corzo to begin that walk home.

jalisco

mismaloya

i.

and i said he was lucky to go before all that
on a dusty road with his son, long-awaited visit
blindsided to the best of our knowledge, happy quick
we think as a starch-shirted briefcase march
jaunty and telling me ghost words
gazing bricks with mother-in-law's tongues
and pineapple plants that the finches love. yet

he believed in another world beyond this one.
mismaloya was not it. what did he see in that last light.
how was it really. the bend and the straightaway

have moved on. even the *paredón*.
cross marks the spot where i put it and now

someone else has put one too abracadabra i said where are you
i feel of course now we would have the most wonderful conversation

mismaloya

– and if they called it suspended they called it ground to a halt
abandoned and no matter imagine it

ii.

(i would not interrupt say less backstory say
cut to the chase say what is the point
of this story or i would but that
would be okay too) photos lie and memories lie

worse yet we want to believe we remember
some things for real.

la peña andaluza

or on the guitar with *te quiero mucho* and the andalusian
i will teach you norwegian why norwegian why not!
all in smile starfish when she gets her turn
you will hear her strum and growl. two hundred in tips

when wasted, *nothing otherwise not two dollars!*
and there is some new treatment for that
and she is hopeful i was hopeless
in the face of such things, back then
how do they cope, those other ones, those sick ones

and don't want to know all at once as though by listening
very much i could catch death

then i held at that large distance and never close. ramón
in peaked cap like trolley cart steam whistle stop
and the andalusian's waterfall mane *la fuga*

la fuga! do you know la fuga!
and slurring politician, *is that norwegian*, ha but later
i saw him in pitillal where i went with my dead legs
for a time i heard his moans behind the curtain
and when he opened the door, stood and looked out over

the dusty street, checked tablecloth with stray dog
tecate, pacífico, and trembling at the sidewalk lip
i saw how his legs were marble and beige

the andalusian, now howling air conducting
fork tines and a smoke-filled *fuga!*
over the street vendors and flip-flop walks past
the river wall iguana night with poker chips

dry ice from oscar's *have i listened to all of them*
no i've listened to none!
ramón says true the andalusian was once his teacher
and while in new zealand the norwegian
in granada and here we are fans a starfish says blue
in any case i would have chosen the green
because it was like the one you gave me, over from
the *bigotes* and pear pizza shop (gorgonzola and) sure

laughing at its gilt edges and evident *fanfare*
(*chácharas*) and other pocket-shaped emblazoned things
cotton wool and drum, piano keys under the bridge
the wailing sky the colour of whittling what else

to do but want some reaction some intervention. starfish
start your growl. the andalusian was not even
andalusian, but who cared; nobody.

glue

and now i am back in the cherry red with you, winding the passes
to san sebastián rolling with the metal in my mouth head out
the window a dawning question intensifying
then buckling by the side of the road, stomach clutching tears
were coming out of my eyes and then you were too.

you were pouring out of my eyes. showman peacock strut
magic carpet rollout for you to *splain it*
tail swish and button ears, goofy lion with stumbling
feet too new for the world new eyes on the world
all of it what we had in common we
wanted *the whole world*, just like that with bubbles and prancing
also the pines would not stand still amongst the seesawing
brightness of things. *putting two and two together*

means coming up with oops *why didn't you tell me sooner! oops*
i am not going to notice! and your story, the eleven-year-old
asleep with the can around his neck. you were thirteen
and have never forgiven yourself, absolution is not a thing you

believe in here, now so many years and miles away
from that cold suburban shack. later we bought mulberry jam
and walked around the square. in the graveyard
i thought how it would be if we could see through
to all we were treading over. in the restaurant

i took pictures of napkins hot sauce and your cowboy hat
not the black one but the other, the one you rarely wore
well many things were different that day for starters
you were back on the *chiva*. a few days later
i broke the plates. it wasn't so i'd remember

what you'd said and understand it finally. forgetfulness and wishful
thinking and *things will be different this time* sure
in this way not a lion but i kept myself in that particular circus.
we don't like to admit that we could have just left anytime

but we just couldn't leave anytime. *damage plus damage don't work*
but your arm around my shoulders had a kind of care
but (you said) we were both high, *ha!* momentarily
there were lies and then there were lies and when we finished
with those. you were the one losing your sight, but i
was the blind one. it's only hindsight that makes us different.
your eyes too once staggered above rags juggling machetes in a slow

floating, death row cabaret. i watched the space you left
dissolve as a man with knuckle rings, stepped in cautiously.

yellow

– for woody

i.

with eyes on the wing like a kind wide sea he called me
kiddo, i called him clear-eyed man also zen master
of the type who knew no zen. later i saw him
on insurgentes, drifting like a lost man
and said re those tests. i was as helpful
to him then as they are to me now. *take care* they say. ok.

i can be counted on to *take care*. i choked on this
but instead of you i coughed up my memory of tehuamixtle
i mean the pictorial evidence like that shark statue
and onto more falling down what does it mean

yellow

– i don't know, why is the moon even here

ii.

with prickly pear and organ pipe overlooking
gravel outpost and bay, kind of stand around
blinking asking what now salt flat
vista hermosa corona extra restaurant bar
shelled out in the way shelling is

yellow

iii.

bucket man: san javier parking lot
in front of the potted plants they said everything
he died of everything. ice cream man

they said an overdose they said he was killed
by the river they said it was done with blue fur.

but one day he turned up undead
it was easter but let's not think of a resurrection as
one occasionally brilliant, non sequitur after another

really, poetry, is he even brazilian
some people say they have heard him speak portuguese
maybe he just *can* or about where he's been which is
all over all over which is *michoacán, michoacán* and

all over and michoacán. ice cream man undead but
clear-eyed man has not come back. in the garden
next to the waterfall he took my secrets with.

now he sits in photos only, panama hatted, small couch
cornered, sable and beige and wet duck brown words

yellow

iv.

and signs spiking his collar. the tattoo lady called it
this marking up before the end. look

what we've done to ourselves but who knows.
i was in there crying about that. whether it's worse
if it's something we so to speak caused, or not. i would do
what if we could go back to the garden

yellow

v.

or insurgentes where he was drifting and i was
on the bus on my way somewhere so unimportant
i couldn't stop. what
did he think in that moment he was told? what

was in the room? here there are pictures
a child a dapple-grey a knotted mane a boy a ball
an easter parade, i want to make some comment, they
suggest the figure facing me is human. clear-eyed man

were there snapshots or endless loops of
chateaus or paint by numbers. was there
any kind of heart beating in the way yours did.
the cancers all three of them
(*since one was not enough*) were in you then.

i couldn't detect them in the trickle of the fountain
or the thud of a mango on the roof. i was crying
over some spilling i was spilling out more of the same
what i thought vast guilt i still carried. he said really

in that case he must dye his hair and i said no
i have never seen it and he said *yes yes* and we laughed

yellow

vi.

and he gave me the yellow one you
know the one i mean the yellow one that i still carry.

glass (i)

– were we so careless with others' hearts and
did we then rail when they were the same with ours

if we want to die of gangrene and shutdown of vodka and
mattress i called it, boat moving that giant frond like

moving memories like bear thundering over
the vodka will not kill me today! and true i peered through
the cobwebbed gap, over a lake of age-warped flyers
fallen masks and dust-encrusted chairs stacked leaves

carpeting the deck. it has taken me these years to realise you meant
what you said when you said *this has nothing to do with you*

say it now say it even to the jungle palms applauding

know it. your voice a grimy dawning, barbed wire
and serpent's skin chimney-sweep blackened dead foot
knuckles dragging. if we want to die of gangrene
and shutdown of vodka and boat

no one will check. no one even phones. i don't remember
but don't doubt i said it, screamed it, threw something at it
in those days drinks plates cues buckets chairs glass

to give up so thoroughly is not the province of the weak at heart
(you are not half disappointed)

you said i rarely think of you, you said i think of you often, you said
well we didn't do much you said well you were the last.
this tinderbox in dry season memories of our crackling
undead. i want to hold the stench to my mouth

then i will bathe you clothe you feed you wash the dishes
hide the bottles take out the empties
call the doctor tie you down. now i will reel you back

from your brink. sure i tried it before but i'll do better, this time
i'm better now, fault me fault me you were never correct either.

pretas

– talavera, as in bath as in skin as in bones
ok she can stay she is for real half gone

and not merely something blurry between spikes. vallarta
was a city of ghosts i had to leave in the walking past: hidalgo

up that alleyway (*for you kid, i don't inhale*) or
flailing down stairs forty-five degrees, langostinos where you yelled
at plankton madero jacarandas aguacate where
we yelled at each other, insurgentes and cárdenas where you dropped

milk thankfully not vodka, *phew!* villa not much by the sea
where we lay, how to forget what we've done to each other
but open the window *no way*

basilio badillo where we smoked olas altas
who fell in the plant box who picked each other up alley

unnamed, where i fell, alone gutters and red
running, your warm hand on my back, drug sick heart sick
rise and fall iturbide cuauhtémoc

skipping down stairs to meet you a smile to break a face
to meet you or further down guerrero, *couldn't wait! malecón*
how could i get to you fast enough thinking of things i had to
tell you and what would you say and how you would laugh

your gravelly delight in the salsa aisle in the toothpaste aisle
on the telephone on the way to cinco de diciembre in the R04 in the
R08, *couldn't wait!* on carranza your greeting smile
through the bars back when you had flesh back
when we could smile at each other back then.

central camionera

– because i would say they were clapped eyes mine

and now i find the orange tree? three years
give or take and how is it i have never climbed
to the top of these steps, leaned out over the jungled lot
and pulled aside the branches to see oranges here
small and cannonball. i cut one in half on a plate
with the knife crossings of years, thinking of the people
before me who have sat on this bed
also facing this square wire
and shade cloth squirrel shake with plant boxes

or puddles, rainy season facing the black
streaks on the moss-covered brick like the pain
in your arm steam like the longing in your arm

habitual i said even to the head bent
orchid leaf papaya or mother-in-law's tongues
quivering between peg and tree or chipped
curlicued crumble of castle turrets
termite-infested bed. you become irrelevant
to the place you're leaving right before you leave it.

their concerns look strange to you, the leaving one.
also their jealousy, forgetting you have often been jealous of

leaving people who are always on their way somewhere
better than we are now, regardless of where they are going.
and there isn't any amount of looking you can do that will

save anything contrary to what i said to a lion, once
(who loved it of course, it was so dishonest, such a

stance). once i saw him driving, shirtless.
tuft of mane and mountain spark what else?
one you don't have a picture of, or you have a picture of
the wrong side of it or the bit you want is in the dark.
long before i dreamt of a desk overlooking the street

taco stand smoke over music and shouts and open doors
and people who sit out to talk into the night
well the desk has never overlooked a street
or had a window near it really ever
but the rest has been true and that's not bad as it goes
for a dream. yet you were dead, six months to the day.

glass (ii)

– beyond the window, a labyrinth of a different type
plastic and holding pen attendants
for the dying, dead pronouncers for the dead.

i.

and now here but with windows of looking-only glass
a macaw man lurching drinks and picking at feathers
do you know a macaw man has outfits for every
occasion and raising his wing
look at this that tugging insistence

la estancia but the bandstand wasn't the same this time
there were no sunlit roses and no man with wide-brimmed hat
standing pensive, just the *tienda comunitaria* where he bought
more of the same *cerveza helada* and stairway to

a missing roof, look atenguillo i saw the turrets
and hills like horns framing this odd mall-like
display with arch and stone and waterfall
between two dusty roads i gagged on
cologne cigarette and air-conditioning guadalajara

i was waiting for your open windows but the smoggy sheen
of late afternoon falling over those windows
turned out to be, of looking-only glass

and this hotel being the idea of a hotel
with gym rooftop tennis court and canned air you know

you know how going back to a place how
i think there will be something of
you/me to be found there but there isn't

glass

ii.

but think of all the creatures, a macaw man says, lighting up
think of the *trillion gazillion* creatures which are

too many to conceive of we are covered in creatures right now

! one sleeve to wonder

at our human lives being rare and precious

armchair levitating, in what is that sailor

cap? as another episode of *csi* or is it the same *csi*

channel macaw man you know sometimes.

this rare and precious gift! we are smoked

glass

iii.

glass and ash, pureed behind windows of looking only
we are not the same person we were and we can't fathom
any of those others. i wanted to get home

but where was that, so i picked a place
and skittered in through the missing window wire
like the hummingbird did what a waste
even to think about waste, blood

glass

– *un vehículo bugui tipo arenero tubular de color
azul con placas de circulación JHY-649*

iv.

and dust and roadside *paredón*, mismaloya and you. coming back
from el edén sure. that gauche attraction all dream
and no lie. you really couldn't control that vehicle.

brisbane

compostela

remembering a shot or two, or ten and a half cutting
the grey plastic rim under the grey bottle cap, until grey disgust
covered my grey concrete floor grey shards of grey orange rind
 like grey confetti or one of those other
organs that were going to go wrong, they said for now
my gut, and there was no one who could tell me why i was
 here, why any of this was happening or why

back then i had such luck such dumb luck. now there are tests
and tests and at the end there are tests and we just don't know why
i have dead legs. this sad flash, when the loss side tips the scales

after all had i brought this on myself in some way like he said
had i with full lion weight but what has a lion ever cared

about what he said, ever and was this before or after
 i knew him to be/also the wolf? i made no sound
but woke to a memory of compostela that time i watched
the orange sun push past the burning curtain, pothole
 mist and other worldly jungle climbing

 the dubbed shootemup bated the children
crunching *chicharrones*. did no one notice something had
passed over. if i could go back to that day. i would do more
 than take a picture of you, your shirtfront shadow faced
over the tattered flags of the *pangas* barra de navidad

wickham terrace

i.

when i am crying into my father's handkerchief
and even more for the thing itself, the soft border
the triple underline square of kiteweight
nostalgia in the offices of one after the
other before you can get off the stain

of the previous pavement gum on crook of elbow
elevator music to hold your breath to, as you

borne on mystery wings into the maw jaw of another
black dream, a button a sea slug a caged commotion
inside this forever seeming

in waiting rooms gagging on air-conditioning
bad art and worse magazines, thinking of el tuito

red brick urns in fields of cornstalks past
gates of dogs with rusted pelts in the gleaming
froth sun river i climbed that hill to see that
tinaco and full view to the valley below. then

i had not dead but legs that liked to go up hills
way up! and did not want that man to follow
just me and my legs now landscapes of france

in a polished flatscreen box. this chateau and those
chateaus. there's a lot of them, my father admits
leaning back, eyes closing gently. hiccups at the shoulder
a gesture towards where a laugh could have been

i have already looked at all the paintings of flower
arrangements i ever want to, and the glazed parrots
facing the tree with trinkets looks vaguely
christmasy, hang an angel on it in december maybe

problem solved. my father whistles through his teeth
lifts one foot, then the other touches his hand
to his mouth. his glance a thrown bus. time

wickham terrace

ii.

is lost no matter how you lived it
time gone being time gone. i look to this
for consolation. but you know i often did pause
top of the alley look out over

the road made river mud plunge and know how wonderful
the hot rain on my toes, often i exclaimed
to the night storm i said it into
the tattered shade cloth just to say it
silver-beaded steam rising and downpoured darkness
i felt it, knew it, i did not take it for granted mostly

now all i want is more, we know this song. the magazines

wickham terrace

iii.

are the same magazines as the magazines before and before
and twenty years before and they tell you the same thing
with different faces that are also the same, as are
the stories of people *overcoming* things
how nothing could stop her but what about the other ones

were they not brave enough did they not fight enough
did they not love enough. legs

are for walking up dirt track hills in el tuito
pine and green lizard flitting past loose gravel, back tip
forward jolt uprighted, no problem. hand to ground
this path being where the rain river flows
a pipe-sized jag down the mountain, gush carved

sweat brow and small of back. i was the one who decided
to climb this hill ergo my hill why
is he following, but can i be kind. he is not content
with rust urn fields in bricks of cornstalk river sun

if there is no one to see them with
or the shadow of abandoned *tinacos*, what
is written on them and how they crouch
next to bougainvillea compared to orange blossom or pine

coconut

– last time i saw your blood it was woodpecker and lily
on taupe can we say (*gris pardo*)
i got out those swatches, the ones i collected for a house
that wouldn't take off its sunglasses for me

it was a question with a point, to find out what kind of dead legs
and whether they could become undead. oh but humanity

i said re being kind if they won't then they won't and they just
won't. you can sit here wishing it all you want.
up your driveway black dream i was trespassing that was

first thing, past the tile guadalupe, faded and the ruts in the road
deeper wilder canyonesque, a horse not a foal a hotel
where rolls of rebar used to be, under the *huanacaxtle*
the gate was open and i can say i hesitated

briefly. who was maria. a pretext if you could have heard it
the *lameness* of it and was that when you put a spell on me
or was it one of your voodoo girls. are they her needles

deep in my marrow now? of course i made you up, partially, so
what. you have your family, the one you always had
(i had been trespassing for years) *damage*
plus damage don't work you said but i said no damage is a fiction
but we weren't talking truths just slinging things

catchphrases and the like. true, i wanted to see what it meant
this ornament here now this tree died and this one grown tall
how you'd stop by the *papelillo* leo lion
breathing skin bark before you dusted it away

clapping hands over bougainvillea over bodhi over coconut
you were a green dirigible blinking in front of my eyes
if we knew then. so now we know.
in the case of fire what would you do the needle-sticker asked.
drop to the floor and roll

las vegas is my father's port pirie

or is it simply what happened on the way to port pirie
and therefore part of the story port pirie

which my father has always remembered, *hot as hell*, the hottest
he's been *in his whole life* was that time in port pirie.

i thought of how we remember such things.
for me, las vegas outside the tropicana
somewhere on the spatula side of that wide white tarmac i imagined
my insides like onions on a grill. i understand now

you can keep death close and that is liveable, or far away
what you can't do is keep it middle distance. i hugged death

to my bones and then it was time for the funeral. my father
was putting on the three-stripe *last tie he owns*

watch him struggle with the pulleys
frankenstein poppies, remembering how i'd sneak in his room
to see the ribbons streaming from the violin bows
in his closet raining beaded doors, milk bar
ventriloquist and conjuror trail running

my fingers against them like you did against my diamond wire
leaving late even that one with spots and

like crepe paper, there was a story he said, behind
that one or was it alongside that one like that is not the tooth
after all it was the one next, but i never found out what.

hotelito de los sueños

i.

the fact is there wasn't more time. what is this more
cats and dogs? i cannot grab them like a lapel
or shower them with wreaths
tissue flowers draped up the cross like creeps

the kodiak says don't ask why me ask why not me
and talks about spirit and how it is not contained
in legs. *irreversible* this word
looms up waiting for the verdict.
hotelito de los sueños thoughts, well

what kind of cat on the roof across largish
spotted and plenty of time
to consider perhaps when this *irreversibly* happened
or was it a non-thinking stretch lesson:

we never know what turns out to be as we put it good
what turns out to be as we put it bad. leg gods
i will give you gold and ocelot. i will trade one ear.
one eye, even. children of course but that's cheating.
these playground games and magical thinking marbles
across the floor and no one waiting other end
if it's a cat's eye or disco dome, mirrored

hotelito de los sueños

– not even under crystal and gilt of that great
chapel please take it back, all the things
i did not hand over freely

ii.

so what? *it's not about punishment* the kodiak says
and there's a *reason* for all this. i say i think the wolf came
and before he was wolf he was big cat.

i no longer care how crazy i sound. these legs that took me

places like loaded with groceries or day tripping
dirt track hills and cobblestone steps
up and up way up ! deep jagged (un)even no
problem to overlook bay and forked
tail slap of white water whales, in my life

hotelito de los sueños

iii.

i have flitted from this to that yet turns out there are
wrong ways to stay still too.
that bounce off the *paredón* turned flying blade

ringed by the tinder of dry season
will it be a person place thing something else or nothing
i will think of in my last moment, memories like
pear pizza and gorgonzola, the irish and laundry
in the woods, tree houses also raining buckets

hotelito de los sueños

– back then there was no yellow house in bucerías and you
had not yet come down the stairs first thing to stumble
ghost faced and evanesce

iv.

why would i make that up? you'd get pissed! i can't tell you
why we'd squabble but you'd reappear, keys
in your pockets cymbals singing or bouncing on the spot
on insurgentes on madero on Juárez. you

were certainly going to reappear again always.
i can be quite sure of this now you are dead.
gorgonzola? trust the doctors and what else. don't
trust the doctors and what else. to the day

in la cruz we sat in front of oxoxo in front of a barrel
in front of rebar in front of wreaths and you
could never see what i was taking a picture of. we
are seeing people only as our dirtier or cleaner mirrors

yet too gullible, no boundaries, your diagnosis.
nothing to do with dead legs or is it.
everything has to be considered when nothing is known

hotelito de los sueños

v.

what happened what happened what happened that day

or that day. if there were a road or a path from here how
would i venture to step on it. spirit not being *contained*
in legs. would you too have said this?
those things i never considered have come to pass
all those other fears lie here untouched.

Note

This book contains many place names (towns, Metro stations, street names, as well as bars, restaurants, and hotels) in Mexico. Some of these names of course also have other meanings, e.g. Bellas Artes. Where I mean the word/phrase on the first level as a (specific) place name, I haven't added italics.



Rose Hunter

When I read Rose Hunter’s poetry I am immersed in the flow of her music, as if the conscious world is an intensely coloured envelope of experience: wonder mixed with something dark and unpredictable. Anyone who can say “a cantaloupe is the fruit equivalent of a lobster” has my full attention.

Angela Gardner, Editor www.foame.org

Rose Hunter’s poems decentre the speaking subject, shifting position from the absurd to the oneiric, from the colourful streets of Mexico to Brisbane. Part-diary, part-confession, *glass* is a delicate and resilient collection, a hybrid language answering poetry’s questions of memory and desire.

Michelle Cahill, Editor *Mascara Literary Review*.

Cover image by Dorothee Lang

