

EXTRACT #5 (ALICE McCREADIE)

A man or a woman?

A woman. Everything is dark so all we experience is sound; the voice speaks but it is not as might be expected. It is distant, at several removes above and behind the images, slightly nasal, every word well pronounced, relished. In darkness, it says:

“They were thinking about a space that would be somehow woven into the sequence of life, or slightly raised up, embossed or proud of the reality underpinning it. Images would identify themselves by being rehearsed beforehand. A monologue of different parts, calling on obscure texts they had uncovered in their adventures. A narrative would be revealed, quilted together from these texts and their own words, to be delivered in a fervent but conversational way, with only one person as their audience, though they debated at length whom that person would be and whether that even mattered, failing in the end to agree. It would not be long: a passing event, a brief meeting, whispered even with the urgency of something secret. The location would be a tiny table and bench under the slide in the playground at the end of a normal street. They preferred cramped spaces, chairs too small, ceilings too low, secret spaces beneath or between things, miniature meeting places relatively hidden, which formed a link in each of their minds to hermit’s caves, though they always enjoyed the idea of smallness, of having to crouch one’s shoulders to get in and huddle up, a posture fulfilling a sense of urgency; the contrast between the imminent danger in a priest hole and the role play in a children’s den, and in the way that participants have to physically change themselves to adapt to the space. The performance would

repeat itself weekly and they would record the monologue and harmonise it musically in the tones of the speech and through the narrative, the constellations of syllables, sounds and punctuation etc. From week to week both the story and its physical and audible density and complexity would become incrementally layered, more sophisticated. The locations in the narratives would change but they would always use the seats beneath the slides in the playground. Could it happen? Would it work? It didn't matter. At that moment, it was enough for it to serve as a way of generating tiny plans and building on them to find something larger, as well as finding what it was they were trying to do, collectively trying to say, or not to say."

Then what? Darkness follows?

When the voice stops, there is just the right amount of continuing darkness, then a light, a candle can be seen, then the back of a man's head, a young man. In my mind there is something about him, something that makes even the back view of his head seem significant. I imagine watching him stare at a long series of images; paintings, sculptures, drawings, watching the slight tilt of his head. There should be something lovely about the curve of his neck and his ear. How is it possible to suggest that? There would be something exquisite about his hair, his clothes. It is as though everything would unfold in front of him, that he would not have to move...

So, what is happening? Where is he? Where are we? You've lost me again.

It looks like the ruined interior of what once was a cathedral. He runs the candle along the middle of a wall that is already smoke-blackened

and revealed by its light is what appear to be ancient wall paintings, as though we are back in the Minotaur's cave. A medieval doom; a Day of Judgement; a hell mouth gobbling up souls, fantastical creatures, demons pursuing all the sinners. We move back slowly from looking at the paintings to examine the man's face for the first time, his reactions; we walk around him as he considers the images, ending up behind the curve of his neck again, the view from his perspective, watching from behind his ear, the focus shifting from the paintings onto his ear, his hair, the nape of his neck where the hair begins to taper up, something about its perfection that is more troubling the longer one looks.

And then we exit?