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Edited by
Matthew Asprey Gear & Theodore Ell

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Poetry by MARY MACPHERSON

Threads

1. R sees things sprouting in the plain bus stop world and wants to trace the threads that lead all over the planet.
2. His list includes the brittle sunburnt grass surrounding the coloured-by-crayons shelter.
3. How many times have the seeds been down to the earth and back up again?
4. R doesn't care if the big yellow buses slow down and drivers look at him to see if he's going to get on.
5. He's listening to tiny shrieks from the Playcentre.
6. His job is to remember its former life as a Closed Brethren Church with walls up past its ears.
7. He suspects, further back, there've been other uses – a contested rectangle with leftover bush?
8. S finds him – “C'mon man it's freezing” – but R is considering black wires stretching from shafts of concrete to every home.
9. Inside the lighted houses are people with enormous lives.
10. S says he's moved by weatherboards and fences – generations of hands caring for families.
11. He sits beside R in the shelter and starts to cry.
12. Y thinks it's peculiar and dangerous to live at the bus stop.

13. Perhaps R could take photographs and think about what everything means, at home.
14. X tells her that R is a foolish artist but the bus stop world is his vision.
15. Y feels confused and anxious.
16. She tells her friends that she knows this artist who lives at the bus stop - rather cool, actually.
17. R talks to reporters who demand to know what he's doing in the shelter.
18. He's towing the world towards the no. 4261.
19. S talks to passers-by. He believes he's kind and good with people.
20. "You have to make them come home", Y says to X.
21. She wrings her hands as if she's squeezing out her anxious heart.
22. "Bugger off", says X who's searching for his wandering dog.
23. He stands at the back door, calling and calling.

Subtraction

1.

How can a person be imagined? Y wonders. She's inside a story about two people write to each other, for years.

When they meet, the peeking blinds and thick lace tablecloth fly up and cover their heads. Descriptions slip like unstable earth.

2.

What would she say about S? Kindness shot through with envy? No – more like extravagantly open.¹ Something about reeling the world backwards until an order that matters to S, is revealed.²

1. Y has learned this technique from the many interviews she's been to. 'What would () say about you'? She plunges into the milky lake of words. Quick clear beats to the nearest raft. 'Get there, get there', is what she thinks.
2. Would it be more accurate if she described herself and compared S with that description? Can she only say who a person is, by subtracting them from another?

3.

- a) You think I'm just a figment of your brain, X says to Y. (Y isn't sure that figment is the right word.)
- b) You think you can just make up things about me.
- c) If you turn off that part of your brain, I'll disappear.
- d) Y reaches for X's soft leather jacket which smells (intoxicatingly) of wounded pride.
- e) She wants to see herself entwined – a word that belongs in one of those old songs her parents used to sing in the car.

- f) How would X look without her?
- g) How would he live without her disapproval?
- h) Would she be a duller person without his clever little dog?