



Volume 12
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the poem / fever /
axial section through putamen
with vessel territories

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the poem:

earmarked for the shredder, the poem
had a flashback of its short life.
ballpoint on paper napkin,
it started in the sluice room.
it started with the word 'bowel'.
somebody was rinsing a commode.
the countertop stunk of dettol and
incontinence. it was born during
a nightshift and grew its baby fat
under the halogen lights that
threw honey against the walls.
it caused a kerfuffle in the
nurses station. jabberwockies
hid in the medicine cabinet
and chowed down all the pills.
the poem grew legs. it kicked in
the laminate doors. it hijacked
the tea trolley and zoomed it
down the corridor. when patients
moved to pet it, the poem spat
and hissed through the gaps

in its teeth. when the charge nurse
held it down, it grew wings and
thrashed against the windows.
when they captured the poem
in a butterfly net and calmed it
down, they found they had only
syntax, the mothdust on
their fingers.

fever:

moving away from the orchard plots,
laundry lines that sag under macrocarpa.
moving away from the crystalline skies,
the salt-struck grasses, the train carts
and the underpasses. i astral travel
with a flannel on my head, drink litres
of holy water, chicken broth. i vomit
words into the plastic bucket, brush
the acid from my teeth. i move away,
over tussock country, along the desert
road. i chew the pillowcase. i cling
my body to the bunk. the streets
unfurl, slick with gum and cigarettes.
somebody is yelling my name. i quiver
like a sparrow. hello hello, says the
paramedic. but i am moving away from
the city lights, the steel towers.
and i shed my skin on a motorway
and i float up into the sky.

axial section through putamen with vessel territories:

i saw mickey mouse ears. i saw a cathedral
in the corpus callosum, and a waterhole
where antelope might loiter. there was
a little man hanging on to dear life below
the wingspan of a giant silk moth.
i saw an octopus in a balaclava and
cirrus clouds spreading their fat fingers
and sulci and sulci and a blackening
which curbed the frenzied hands.
and then i spotted it – the alien, a head
the size of a quail egg. it was so beautiful,
i wanted to cradle it, to wrap it in my shirt.
i wanted to make it lunch, take it to the zoo.
i wanted to teach it to samba. i wanted to
show it B-grade porn, play it dvorak.
by hook or by crook,
i wanted to take it out.

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