

Stefania Cox

## Indicted, Right Angles, Cutting Out

Performance Poetry

### Indicted

Her chair shrieked  
    as it swivelled  
Her heart shrivelled  
    as they quibbled.

Who would drive it home?  
Reach the dome of       mechanic-lit glory.  
Who would deliver the story?  
Her eyes were averted  
they concurred she was perverted.  
she sensed it drawing nearer...  
a finger  
    ...slowly...  
    extending...       from

The Norm

It penetrated in  
looming laughter,  
fear, disgust and scorn.

Her head swivelled  
    Her heart shrivelled.

They breathed together  
leaned in  
    leaned in  
A cruel smile: "we were just admiring...  
Your shoulders are so thin!"  
Flickering eyelashes  
    stifled sniggering  
Her broad shoulders       quivered  
in the floodlight.  
"the line was well delivered"  
she admitted bitterly, in hindsight.  
She swayed  
    the weight  
of a white feather  
caressing her resurrected tether.

A soundless shriek at her  
    self so ssshhhhhhh.

The fact stood mute.

she yearned to resuscitate  
    pride  
in her shoulder-padless suit.  
She was born, They said,  
with a power trip  
    on her shoulders.

If only she could  
rise from the ash she  
    quietly smoulders  
she would spread her feathers  
wear a name tag  
for what her peers  
indicted her as:

Ms  
    Greer!

## Right Angles

Progress  
progress measured by  
numbers  
numbers surely  
I am more  
much more than a  
number  
These numbers scream and  
seem to encumber  
these thoughts surround me  
this sea of numbers

IQ tests  
are out of date  
The pride and joy of the bour-geo-isie  
The latest version, though  
is as much to hate  
a list of numbers  
the HSC  
player in the game  
of stable inequality  
blatantly implicit  
in our society.  
But whatever  
I just want to get to the top  
And then I can stop, right?

(I mean), then I can stop

then I can stop

then I can stop

then I can stop

then I can stop

As I climb

I find

There's no scaffold

no structure

no rungs here, no

awesome ladder

so that when I slip

Not one clatter

just me, looking round,

squishing numbers

between my toes.

To a reverberation of lacking,

I listen.

Into this absence,

I can't quite recall

where I put it, or how far I've fallen,

bum sore.  
grumbling around me, similar poems  
unspoken  
unsure

acerbic eyes slanting  
unsure

but  
to know that  
    that  
        that  
            that  
                that

between each gap

the bellbellbellbellbellbellbell

well, to know that  
    that  
        that  
            that  
                that

between each gap

the bellbellbellbellbellbellbell

well, to know that

the bell will  
            break its bladder  
sprayed with the stench of monotony  
unsure

because what happened last time we really  
opened our mouths wide?

yeah.  
the pissing of  
disapproval down our throats.  
So, from each other confined,  
feeling our bruises and  
grinding between our teeth the grime  
that grows where airing  
never goes...

It's just fine, just fine.  
Grumbling, grumbling  
tight-lipped  
talent gold-dipped.

and  
in the frenzy to avoid capsize,  
my arms are sore  
and my thighs.  
worked and worked,  
respiration  
sought through  
sighs.  
I find my legs stuck at  
right angles harder,  
notice my mind has wandered  
to the larder;  
– that it is hard to define  
exactly which brain is mine  
amongst the stink of  
strong smart selves  
squandered.

climbing?

no.

Just miming.

## Cutting Out

You've got to be kidding.

Bite marks on my pen  
silent bidding  
for some semblance of reason  
some understanding of this betrayal  
this  
muted and  
obstinate  
treason.

I was never told you know.  
Your mother avoids the word  
with Dread.  
“problems with food”  
she said.

Fold  
and fold and fold.  
This rigid body, cutting out.

I watch you  
Wa a a a ading through  
Your LitebarsPlasticCheeseyour  
fat free  
butter.  
“I'm just not hungry right now”  
downwards, another mutter.

What  
raging well of  
pitiful confusion  
protests  
in that moment?  
What flame-filled void  
inhabits your stomach,  
inhibits  
growth?

Thriving on air  
you dive  
Down There  
Dive  
into the  
undergrowth.  
Take a deep breath  
and prepare  
for the stings and stutters,

stumbling in  
blindfolding  
shutters  
Into square cut browning edges  
curtailed by  
suburban hedges.

Beyond the face of  
“Good and how are you?” success  
keeping a squalid  
murky  
mess  
pulling in

like a manikin

adjusting  
a little here a  
little there...  
youreyesyourtanyourthighsyour  
hair  
you

dare not show  
reflections snatched obsessively  
from every shiny corporate window  
where  
hand-in-hand,  
cut out,  
women stand.

You could never let it  
no  
because  
it's hard to see through the glare  
every other woman  
playing with the tear  
that's been so long there  
they just don't know  
if their strength and their love  
always needed  
repair.

I know

this is not your fault.  
You'd not have it this way,  
muscles muddled and taut,  
If you thought you knew  
how to sway.

Still

I stand back  
hands thumping, burning, raw  
raised above my head  
the serenity  
heavy  
and sore, fallen  
lap  
to floor  
as the scream of sirens echo,  
a flash of red across my cheeks  
and (folding in three)  
– just me.  
A little here, a little there  
fist to my chest  
grating at my heart  
because I care.  
My brows, my pits, my  
freshly mown, statically defiant hair,  
  
punishment.

Deep gathers, crevices creasing,  
incisions upon my mind  
hand folding, face pleasing,  
as though I were  
fresh, and white, and bare.

Yet I stand;  
content,  
this moment  
copied  
and pasted  
peering into my reflection –

shrugged shoulders

cotton  
old  
in folds  
a landssslide down the middle of my chest.  
Yes  
as leaves,  
curving, curling, wrinkling, flow  
jump  
contemplate and instinctively  
cooperate  
I am.  
Yes. Yes, of that beauty, I am.

I am  
of the blood warm  
that glows  
yellow  
orange  
white  
creating generously rhythmic,  
spontaneous  
patterns of light,  
resting here.  
Oh dear, my dear,  
your mind  
feather of elegance

just ruffled

in a cold front,  
voice muffled  
in the  
perfection  
hunt.

fold  
and fold and fold  
always cutting out  
ten thousand rigid bodies  
silhouettes the same.  
Each one spies the other,  
hides hers in shame.  
Women dear to me –  
hold up our silhouettes  
you'll find these shadows  
cast more light  
– that it's a  
spectacular catastrophe of  
colour, shape, angle, tone  
kaleidoscopic beauty and  
none of us alone.