

NIKKI-LEE BIRDSEY

Foreign & Domestic

The rapt me warns, a world
without X is a world dissolved;
who am I watching the big, dumb
fly on the sill in New Zealand,
amongst the winter-themed Xmas
decorations in the hard-edged hot
light of January; in the knife-edged
bright sun. Bright experience of sun,
thinking of the fly and the story
of the fly and its dragging leg.
I was surprised that the lamp
turned on, as Nova, first name,
questioned me on Socratic Method.
They don't give you a certificate,
you know.

 You know what it is Liz?
I notice nothing, truly nothing.
The fragrant air is truly too much
for me, it is my child's self-remnant
and bucking under still-pale, still-
strange skin and I can barely keep a lid
on it. I live around churches, always,
and here's one right now in the musky
muted dark as I walk in bliss with its
edge of lavender and edge of growing,
of a past mind unformed. How can
you convey that, that you cannot,
Hydrangea. I see the sum of me
in—delicately streaming soil
acidity levels that pull in gradient
colours of the things that grow up.
I derange ya. I look up. Come visit
ya ninnia.

Watch the wine-bloated
stanzas, Rawiri said, and I asked
the worst thing, I asked where
did you get that. And he said,
'go fuck yourself' and the room
narrowed with the collision.
The green trim on the cottage and
what the property shows in
a man on Te Pahu Road.
5 little clocks on top of the
fridge tell different times,
I fix them sometimes that's
all you can ask for, the
mechanical metal calm
of the mended thing.
What hues? Stop attaching
yourself to the mystery,
yours truly, you haven't found
it yet. The rose-tinged jasmine
bushes are mixed with their
proximity, and hue, and where does
a scent end and another begin,
and what is a spoor, a trace,
of what once was and now
I know in a city of ships what
it means to be unmoored,
and how it contains, how
it planes, those 2-for-1 sides:
pursuit and escape.

The Cook Strait is a
funny colour, it is too easy
to see both the blue and green
in some marine form of
undoing, the wind pushing
around its layers it's just
too well mixed for my taste.
I'd never wear it on my body
but I wear the wharf

on my feet, boozed and bruised.
Another calls out and I just
can't take it anymore, I have
10 mins left of sanity and
you took it; I no longer,
neither virginal, nor slutty,
nor motherly, nor manly
I'm not gonna ask you again,
are you a white male poet
with a soul? Because I'm
tired of it, I'm just so fired
up that I lost an entire layer
of skin to you, I'm tired
of giving it all and taking
no thing away from you.
You have nothing I can have
and you have everything.

I took the bend too sharply,
woke up to ragged lace curtains,
outside, the neat rows of dog daisies
and queen anne's in spite of or
because of their self-seeding.
That resilience I no longer
feel. It's what you don't take
a photo of, that's what you're
searching for, and I'll find it
and cut it up so you won't
recognize it and I'll kill it
with sticks. Walking around
the house in long lace dresses
and a Keith Haring sweater
in the light of the day subsiding,
the costumed glass makes real
the mask made, thinning.

Cry was the snow from the north.
I heed nothing from them, too
wrapped in my selfsame, my

burdens. What is the expression
that approximates the distance?
'The yesterday within tomorrow,'
the parallel life I lead to them &
their familiar rhythms and how
they cannot possibly know my
day, their night. A world without
X is a world unseen. I have a
student who knows how to look
at a person as if she is seeing
she or he for the first time, and
I told the class this, and they
agreed that it was a version
of an increment of time. The bur-
den'd boughs, laden and
sick with it, the winter I
cannot feel or know.

Let us go now to watch
the century demolish,
the worded elevation gives
a perspective: up is home,
down is town; outside is hell,
inside is hell. I went to find
Marty still in jet lag lug and I
found him with his beautiful
stained-glass ceiling and I said
here's an IPA and I'm sorry
for your loss. And as the Sydney
Hostage Crisis unfolded on the
flat-screen TV, with movable
shelves, floor to ceiling,
ceiling to floor, of vinyl records;
and while we listened, he shook,
to The Chills, the news on mute,
he said 'this is weird, this is the
third I've known in the past year.'
And I said I'm sorry, I'm sorry,
ignore the texts. The different

crises unfold in my time, for
once, I'm here and not there
where it had already happened
there and not here.

Further away but pretty
close, amongst ivy and
Agapanthas, nonnative illegals,
they were everywhere, they kill
everything, and I was everywhere
in that scene, too, the futured mess
and the milky sky, the animal
moonlight mauled just so for
birds' breasts rising slight in
the sleep of it, that night.
My severely glowing skin in
that light was like several
selves unleashed at different angles,
broadening hues that cling to
opposite sides of my features,
separated shades of white
until I'm not it, until I'm
not anything to be seen.
I'm interested in suicide contagion
among the young men here. I say.
And it happened, just like that
the version of colourless I can
remember since I was a child,
the scene's semblance drained
and faded, and faded, until a 0.
And Ra said nothing, he said,
it's not your demographic, baby.
But I'm from here too, I'm
from here too, I'm from
here too, I'm from here
too. I am from here,
that is
the world
without X.