

I am gruesome
and soft as velvet

Third-Millennium Heart.
Ursula Andkjær Olsen. Danish poet.
&
Katrine Øgaard Jensen. Translator.
Bending English to open the
structural/emotional wordspace
Olsen sculpts.

I am writing against this space.
I am writing into this space.
I write in self-defense.

I want to read around and in reaction to these poems.

To respond.

Offer my own faint fragmented exegesis.

This is a failing against the written word.

This is a flailing against the empty page.

Heart: (n) *The hollow muscular organ of vertebrate animals
that by its rhythmic contraction maintains the
circulation of blood through the body.*

Not a center: a waiting room.

The heart is a trivial place that things stream through. (16)

Third-Millennium Heart is a coalescence of poems.

A *coagulation* of words and images.

An embodiment.

A naming. A proclaiming.

A systemic dismantling and re-ordering of the self in relation to
consciousness,
community,
culture.

Angry and operatic.

*My name is Waiting Room
my eyes, my lungs are named Waiting Room
my heart*

*with atrium, ventricle, cubicle
complex being*

is named Waiting Room

it all comes and goes, everything flows.

I handle my pain
like an adult human being, I do nothing
I sit here, I have a view, I do nothing.

All vessels are connected. (8)

Olsen's narrator is nameless,
defiantly naming and unnamings. *Namedrunk*.

The tone of the initial series of poems is formative, seeking
to define/undermine the stability of character.

She names herself Everything and Nothing. Others are named.
She names herself Harmless and in the same breath
admits to her destructions.

And creations.

THE WORLD IS BABEL AND IVORY

I rub a desert of correlation against a desert of change:
thus fire was created. Then I rub a desert of necessity against
a desert of coincidence, until

correlation = coincidence
change = necessity
closeness = closeness (19)

The quality is vital.
The quality is primal.
The quality is clinical.

The Waiting Room is gestational.

It sounded like my heart was beating outside of me; if someone was walking
up the stairs, dragging their feet on the steps. Thought someone was there,
walking up the stairs, dragging their feet on the steps: it was my
exoheart, turning everyone into siblings, beating into me
from the outside. You always belong
to more than one place.

All vessels are connected. (24)

This is a genesis
of a new way of (in)human. Being.
In the world.

Post-compassion.
Post-corporeal constraints.

The goal is to be the violator rather than be the victim.

The goal is mental, physical and existential numbness.
The cost is mute jubilation.

No one can make me say.
I am afraid.
Nobody
No one. (44)

A collection or an epic poem in fragments?
Read end to end, it rises and falls, conflicting and unifying,
contradicting and reconciling, mourning and celebrating.

The speaker the hero of her own heroic odyssey
a transitional creation myth.

The goal is for my pain to be a phantom, for nothing real to have caused it:
that's the only realistic painkiller available.

I believe in lukewarm human nature. No. I believe in cold
human nature. (58)

Heart: (n) *One's innermost character, inclination.*

The *Third-Millennium Heart* voice can be
fearsome, terrible, defiant.

And vulnerable.
Proud and paranoid.

The will to have no openings, to have no areas where humiliation and
assault can take place.

Same for the bloodstream: no infrastructure
sun and moon chariots wheel at the slightest external touch
transporting bright shining humiliations within the corpus and
abracadabra out into every screaming corner.

(Fortify the defences.)

I use expensive drops: anger's sweat, tablet, pastille, ointment. Balm. Brew
three bags for a pot of coma.

(Mediate and medicate.)

With a rock I block the cave's mouth; nobody coming out, nobody coming
in, nothing will resurrect, that name, that knife in the back will

never again slip through my paranoia-carcass.

I *will* remain unwritten. (62)

I will remain *unwritten*.

I *will* remain unwritten.

I will *remain*.

To conquer pain, to secure victory: that is the goal. To turn my
body into stone and metal, cleave into two and place both bodies
in their true positions, pointing east and pointing west; bind them
with strings of gold and steel to the arc of life. That is the goal. (72)

The speaker speaks of otherness
a body beyond blood and flesh.

And yet she speaks of motherness,
the will to procreate,
to birth, to suckle.

A last gasp/grasp at humanness in the life giving process
hers is an amorphous un-mother-hood
disrupting the norms:
speaking of nurture and violence
as two sides of one.

Powerful in pregnantness.

Pregnant with power.

Powerless in pregnancy.

Life-giving as a selfish act.
Life-giving as a selfless act.

You are inside me like

I am the entire world, the fruit
in the garden: I am warmth, shelter, food
and transportation.

Then we are separated before we can meet
we are connected, then we separate.
In order to meet.

I am everything you are: I am warmth, shelter, food. (89)

The speaker celebrates
200 pages of poems that function like a body,
can be read as anatomy.

Language flows, like blood through arteries and veins,
pumped back to the heart and returned again,
coursing through the same passages.
Branching out.
Repeating. Echoing. Repeating. Echoing.

Verses and refrains circulate throughout this incantation.

This hymn.

Those who transgress culture are essentially
founding it. I am. This place is too
high-ceilinged, big cathedral.

Idyllic and solemn.
Lonely and intimate.

Culture's footing continues, continues
to run away from culture.

They rub against each other:
thus fire was created.

(Cultural (r)evolution as
active and passive/intentional and inevitable.)

Separation is required before we can meet, and we
have to meet. Mammals are based on this
transcendence-producing double movement.

Building and building
idyllic and solemn.
Building and building
lonely. And intimate. (94)

Expanded. Structural. Body as building.
Boundaries between buildings and bodies blur.

Lonely. And intimate.

Building and building. Birthing as expansion into the world.
Body multiplied/duplicated/recreated.

There's a sadness in the post-human Eve's song.
Trapped in the tumble of culture and society (she sings for us all).
Body and gender. Style and form.

Culture breeds society. Society feeds culture.
Constructing or being constructed?

*The towers are there already; you need to
build bridges, stairs. Remember, the towers are the cradle, cradle
of culture. Warm towers. Proud. You need to build a
complex being with bridges and passages
transporting bodies around*

increasingly fleeting and flexible patterns

*around the overflow of means, of social control
to be a society-sucking political mammal. (102)*

The speaker proclaims her perverse procreative hunger.
Flesh made material, organic
reconstructural/structural hybrid.

Desire to consume. Contain.

Insatiable.

I want more.

To collect semen from as many men as possible, when I am
RED and ready for reproduction. When you hit my sex, you are no one.

To have subversive lust components in my
distant interior. (116)

Her sex possesses all. Becomes a world made fleshy.
Birthed. And fabricated.

Welcome aboard.

You want to enter *my* paradise/spaceship where you
think you can survive for several thousand years.

I want more. (121)

Insatiable.

Heart: (n) *The most vital part of something.*

The third-millennium is a transactional equation
permeating nature/society.
The Third-Millennium speaker is our new-fangled Babylon's whore
proclaiming the fall of Capitalism.
Matriarchal revisionism
of an alternate world order.

With an economics extrapolated
in terms of cocks and penetration.

I am significant, I destroy the world.

If you've ever sold anything to anyone, i.e. art, i.e. on a stage, then you
are a whore/woman and a victim in the patriarchal order. Thus, everyone
in this society is a woman: that's what a feminized society means. All
individuals are still dicks in relation to Mother Market. In this society
everyone is a woman with a dick. (149)

Cocks and *Market penetration*.

(We all fuck and get fucked.)

I want my original cruelty back;
then I will take Mother Market's lead
and force flexible and dynamic individuals to
massage me right in the third-millennium heart. (152)

Announces the advent of a post-masculine/post-feminine
dynamic cross-over balance,

but tell me: Is this heart really *beating*?

In this spiral dance of economic dependence

salvation/rebirth is a cold promise.

The pregnant speaker carries all she is pregnant with into the
newborn city-state and unleashes it.

Right into the cradle.

Of the new-fashioned city.

Complex being.

*the entire city with falling towers exist
inside me,
and if that exists,
do all the castles and skies, tied to spires with strings of
gold and steel, exist to force the tissue to collaborate with the air in a
dome-shaped unit, hanging by long threads from the sky
inside me,
and if that exists,
does the entire spiderweb plant, sending winces from every point of the
surface to every other point of the surface and down, exist
no one escapes
inside me,
and if that exists*

do I exist
inside myself?

in there I move through the most common
of riddles. (178)

She asks: *Do I exist inside myself?*

The existential is unavoidable. Inevitable.

Flesh, steel, blood, water.

What flows? What does it mean to contain? To be contained?

I imagine a web-like structure of steel with a tracery of
blood vessels woven through the mesh.

We are not moving towards a future; it comes rushing to us like
terrible NEWS, towers, like

atrium, ventricle, cubicle
complex being with bridges and passages
transporting bodies around
increasingly fleeting and flexible patterns

crashing down at the speed determined by law
from the sky.

This is the future. (194)

This heart, her heart, our hearts, my heart
a natural/unnatural
material/immaterial vision.

An embodied call to a new unified being written within
a body expanded to create a space, a template for existence
in a mechanized, post-humanized

third-millennium urban heartscape...

I will let all sexes come to me, and I want to be all
sexes; I am gruesome
and soft as velvet. (192)

And so am I.

Note: Excerpts from Third-Millennium Heart identified by page number.

—Joseph Schreiber