

Paul Scully

Karoly and Konstantia

In the kitchenette Karoly sits at a formica table,
a chunky soup before him, his standard post-Konstantia fare.
Nightly musings have replaced the disassembly of the day
past, the origami of the one ahead, that had been their ritual:
tonight, how true song had always voiced female
until Pavarotti, how easily milk soured, how the ellipse, circle
and parabola are shapes made by the sectioning of a cone
at different angles – lately, schoolboy mathematics had been
retrespassing – how in age gravity has less work to do
and almost leaves you weightless, whether he preferred ‘courgette’
to ‘zucchini’, how the finest scribes had seemingly prized
a cursive beauty over meaning which, when he pondered further,
should have italicised itself. With Konstantia confoundingly
predeceasing him, he had relied on guardian angels to patrol
such meanderings but they have lapsed into little more than pin-head
idlers in a ‘right-sized’ Heaven.

In the second bedroom,
its door sealed cloister-tight, totems of past lives in past tribes:
a school blazer, sheathed in plastic, is hung on a hook, framed
jerseys for each football code parade as art, subscription-built
magazine pylons totter in corners and badges from coach trips
and clubs form a galaxy in daylight in venetians-slanted light,
an astronomy that shines for itself. And the quickening flux
of the neatly labelled photo albums, the fey glamour of the covers,
their progress from the national dress of their parents to gamin
streetwear, their ill-fitting adolescence, their first meetings,
marriage, childless foraging for purpose, the armistice
they had forged, their travels and travails, the friends who
thinned into acquaintances after Konstantia's photoless death.
When he passes by the doorway he shuns thoughts
of entry. Instead, he contemplates a nomenclature:
synchronicity, known cause, sliding doors, an adaptation,
period twins, sibling rivalry, entanglement, time
as distance, fate's accordion ... he is a figment of both history
and the immediate, both are assured, except in memory perhaps,
and he ciphers between them – the future is forever untrustworthy
and he has no time for it, no sense of it, no right to it.