

Sleepside

**SOPHIE
MAYER**

Cloned from a crumb of sleep
I speak as dream-self
for the union of dream selves;
you have made us
metal and flesh, erratic sculptures
tilting in another wind.
Come in.
This is our last resort
and yours – tissue of lost
hope. The sheets. Shed skin
of which we are composed
and recomposed – such waste
recycled into haunted things.
Come in
and make yourselves
unhomely. That room you will
remember, whose furniture
rearranged (mahogany to
melancholy) is shadow
pocketed. Where you begin,
come in,
for if we don't invite you,
you will invade. Colonize
our shadows as your shadow
selves. We are your night, and its
associations. Dirty insomnias,
your emptiness projecting:
come in.
And so we fill the crevices
you evacuate. We are subdermal,
febrile, viral
with our eloquence. Articulations
itching, you scratch red to
find us, grinning –
Come in.

The Day. Antonioni Died

**SOPHIE
MAYER**

Breakfast of salmon and Bergman obituaries. And after,
checking email to the sound of a new CD –
Jocelyn Pook, angelic as if angels were messengers of not air
but fire, volcanic – over which, your cry, eclipsing.

Another one gone. I walk out into the sun (what a gift after
weeks of rain, unseasonal, snails on the doorstep each damp
evening), phone Maxie about *Carmen* while the W5
doesn't come. It's too warm for this blazer, autumn

grey shading into the silver-black of my dress. I'm the moon
to your red-golden Sun-Ra T-shirt, but when night falls I'll shiver
deliciously in the enveloping cool, passing from light into darkness
as we leave the Turkish store with a new kind of hummus

136 **BRAND**

that is that rarest of things: as good as it sounds on the label.
Cumulative, we joke, its taste as precise as the shadows limned by
the street's moon illusion. Golden, just off the true: soft
as the blood orange jelly we ate for dessert, in the uncomfortable

company of your cousin. *There's hardly any white people downtown,
do you know what I mean?* Oh, but we understand something different
by it: us. Rush of tongues through markets, radios alive with drums
from another world. Which is also this one. Always. We meet

in the centre, settle in plush seats at 7.27. London – east – I walked
it crabwise, past Shoreditch Halal Grocery on streets where
my great-grandparents sold schmattes. Passengers poured from taxis
into a molten afternoon. Sun drops west to where you walked

before our love. Streets of *Blow Up's* swing, now hung with clothes
that cost a bomb. But the city gathers us here: where African sun flares
behind Rokia Traore's voice, which has room for us all, room even for the ghost
of Billie Holiday, who died alone at 44. And what if she were a griotte

six hundred years ago, grown old praising kings? Men grow old
and die. Maybe Godard will be next, or Miyazaki. Don't worry:
there'll be a season. Maybe even for Sembene, griot rioting
in the colonial heart. Maybe Billie will walk before his ghost, praising the night.