

Kinetic

Also by Michael Ayres:

Poems 1987–1992

1976 Streets

The Sky That was Your Guide

a.m.

K i n e t i c

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Shearsman Books
Exeter

First published in the United Kingdom in 2007 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD

www.shearsman.com

ISBN-13 978-1-905700-43-1

ISBN-10 1-905700-43-1

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many thanks to Tom Wilson for cover artwork and design.
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The publisher gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from
Arts Council England.

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Kinetic

Stratosphere

Like a plane in the stratosphere
seems to be moving slowly, but it isn't really

it's moving very fast you said
Hey, it's a really good view from here

Zero-G

So the plane began to carry me away from you
That's immaterial someone had just said
and the word fluttered in my mind like a single petal
come loose from a blossom twists in the air
I felt as if I might never see you again
I couldn't hold you in my arms in the sky
We climbed and banked out over the ocean
then went into the clouds
Now I have to deal with the sky
One of your kisses
is the silence up here
after the vapour trail has faded

You were in an old moss green silk dress
I stroked your arm
You knelt on top of me
Did you know that silk is stronger than steel I said
Then why don't they build skyscrapers out of it? you asked
You kissed me
so we wove what we had from a moment
I wondered what the thread of that kiss could bear
Later, I found out

I was dreaming
The deer in the woods, one of them, a stag
with the face of an old friend
Even when I woke
I felt light-headed
and the day passed with the Zen seamlessness of dreams
There was a deer in the garden
nibbling at pine shoots
You phoned me
and suddenly I was filled with sky

At high altitude over China
I heard your voice
when you were in tears
We've passed through oceans together
and been rolled for years among the waves
I didn't understand
why there was no salt left on our skin
no taste of it
not a single grain

In thought's zero-G
above the clouds
the skyscrapers float empires drift deer graze
among the constellations
of stars and stars
which have no names
The cities left behind the cities to come
caught in the night flight
look the same
lit webs of memory
I missed you so much
I couldn't get back to you
There seemed no end
to a love that was homeless
to a love that had once been home

Jet-lag

What is that bird?

Where does the bridge lead
which leads into nothing?

I hear you moving in another bed.

I want to melt like ice,
beginning at the edges,
ending at the clear centre
which is everywhere, softly.

What is this shadow?

How did the light get in?

Whose is that voice, calling?

And that sound...

Is that my voice? Is it rain?

Nothing

You need to wake up
and I need to sleep.

Then we change round:
I need to wake up,
and you need to sleep.

I lay my head down on its side
to dream of you,
fly an airliner into the pillow,
depressurise over the desert,
slumped senseless at the controls,
passengers unconscious in their seats
glide on for hundreds of miles
and when I wake
you are lying beside me...

I need to love you
and I need to stop loving you,
I want to be near you

and far away,
arboreal regions
something cool in my blood
the hot dawn of Singapore
meltdown of the native

check my watch,
check the date, check my pulse,
bullet train in the evening,
empires and client states
a phantom of airports
words on a tannoy
we never heard

remember
some seashells
don't sound like the ocean at all

Without love you were saying

All the time
something is breaking,
something only whole
while it is breaking,
we have become
voices and echoes
disembodied or cropped
the video-con.
the link-up with Chicago
the damage which builds
sampans and buddhas

ties the dawn tight
to the sound of streetcleaners
vans with orange lights
hosing out the gutters,
the thing which is breaking
binds the streets to the evening
the cooks outside the back
of the neon-lit restaurant
open the bins
throw the garbage of my heart away

It's noon where I am
I think
almost midnight for you

you sound tired,
later I'll be tired

we're working shifts
they're different shifts

I begin to age quickly
in order to be real.
And when I'm real,
I'll thread myself on my fingers,
take off my bones, one by one,
they're heavy like memories,
leave them like pebbles
the children collected,
put them back on the shore,
pick up my passport,
take a high-speed train
anywhere you are,
everywhere you left,
I need to be with you,
I need to let you go.

Without love

How did something so hopeless
become filled with hope,
bomb craters and water,
craters on the moon,
how did something so desolate
become a vow,
a truth to be honoured
with all the lies we could tell?

You need to be sure, you say
you need to be certain
when you leave
all the lights are off

You need promises, security
you need to stay young
I need to kiss you
Some shells
are full of the sea

I need to write to you.
I'm turning into sand,
a desert of pale blue,
maybe it's more peaceful out there,
maybe there's no peace at all,
when I read your handwriting
I stroke the lines of the letters
trying to trace my way
back into your fingers

A storm here
but quiet where you are
the wind funnels and searches
a Goliath without Davids
Mermaid in the fish tank
a string of bubbles rising
past the pirate wreck,
I need to give up,
I need to be realistic,
I want to kiss you
and undo every day I have ever
been alive...

Don't be stupid you're saying
and *Without love* you're saying
above my head
satellites went gliding
with your voice in space

This room
is still years ago

There's dust on the sills
no bulbs in the sockets
Don't be stupid, you're saying
Without love, we are nothing

Shimmer

I was in love with you, it made everything shimmer.
And it seemed as if my life grew real — by which I mean, insubstantial.

Skyscrapers like cobwebs; suspension bridges, gossamer...

When things give up their right to stay, the enduring pose,
and take off their cocoon shells, and flash and fade,

pulsing dust and fire, it's your love, executioner...

Everything grows provisional like footsteps. Rome and thistledown:
your fate is huge and fallacious and innocent, without you,

a child with a shell to their ear, hearing the ocean.

There were endless showers that summer. *Please stop, please stop, please stop*
the wipers asked the rain as we idled at the crossing.

The lights were on red, but there was no one around...

Later, in America, we broke down in the desert,
and needed to change a wheel in the simmer of the heat-haze.

I rested for a moment. The mountains turned to your voice.

You were singing to Aretha on the radio: *I say a little prayer...*
Things had already begun to take off their masks:

chrome was melting into little iridescent green crabs with scarlet eyes...

Desiccation and erosion: memory is a badlands.
I hardly noticed, I kept trying to grow things

though Mao had gone and dust coats the hoardings.

There were scraggy palm trees outside the Dunes Motel.
I think of it even now, those asphyxiated palms, your perfume,

the way the jade teardrops in your lobes shimmered in the breeze.

Again, it ripples across the years, and my present stalls.
Somewhere, the rain is about to fall,

and your voice turns back into mountains.