7

spasie/space

Engela Duvenage

spasie

’n grot so groot soos ’n lughawegebou
begin met ’n enkele kraak
waarin water vergader en uitswel
korrel vir korrel wegvreet
aan rots wat was
om spasie te skep

tufa geologist

modern man
switches off his drill rig
carefully, nervously
swaddles an armlength of core
burrowed mechanically, cylindrically
from the innards of still forming rock
in what was once hominin land

rock as a life form
rock as a live form

he knows the sample is merely
a representation of what once was mud
decomposed leaves
mulched twigs
mosses and bacteria
bits of bone and scales even
solidified through time

yet he cradles it
as if a babe wrapped in an heirloom blanket
containing his hopes that its chemistry
millimetre by millimetre
will become an ancient report
of the weather and water that *Homo naledi* once knew
when it, too, some 294,000 years ago
called the Cradle of Mankind home
without even thinking so.

rock as a life form
rock as a live form

so much for the accent of man

hoe manlik pryk
grafika van die menslike stamboom
van liggame in fases van harigheid en fier en regop staan
al asof die teenwoordigheid van vrou doerietyd nooit nodig was
vir voortgaan, voortuitgang nie
– g'n wonder dat elke vorige hominien
intussen man-man uitgesterf het nie
net gefossileerde beendere
teken nog van hom/haar/dit 'n spoor

tyd staan nie stil nie

tyd staan nie stil nie
    nie vir klip nie
    nie vir taal nie
    nie vir tyding nie
teen genoeg druk, invloed, impak, vloed
vervorm alles ewe vrylik
tot nuwe gedaantes of vernude woorde
smee nog elemente op die periodieke tabel
of in ’n ander tongval
stil-stil

die somtotaal van vorige belewenisse

elke sekonde tans belewe
het ’n oerbestaan van voriges
wat agtermekaar aanstap
soos rye kwetterende kinders op ’n skooluitstappie
wat nie oplet dat die verkeerslig rooi slaan nie
en dan een-een in mekaar vasloop
as die voorste een skielik briek

skryfskool, dag 3: na middernag

wanneer die blindings klaar afgerol is
ek inlê op die warmkombers
om af te sluit in slaap
van ’n dag se absorpsie
        nuwe gesigte
        stemme
        grafieke
        praatjies oor mense se aardsheid
        die periodieke tabel se elemente
        en die resep van ons geologiese bestel

juis dan
begin paddatjies buite my venster
klik-klikker-klikste
soos losgemaalde klippertjies wat deur 'n staalpyp spoel
al asof hulle weet
    my kop sal in elk geval nie nou al uitknik nie
    dis woord vir woord vir woord te volgeprop

writer's retreat

the reckoning will come at 11:00
right after tossed pancakes with cinnamon and lemon for morning tea
and well before you dare tuck into Annie's lasagna as a last meal

the reckoning will come at 11:00
on what you did in the hours between date loaf and orange loaf
about your precise word count
your character bible
plots and subplots
and your metaphoric reinterpretation of geological terms
about hominid species and subspecies
lives and half-lives
and how you played out your story line
while processing last night's four versions of curry

it will come
in a voice sounding remarkably like that of a lemon meringue
topped with a showy shuddering of egg white
it haunted you throughout the four days
you were being fed decidedly adult meals and conversations
that you did not organise or conceptualise
through three nights of being nursed on tastes, words and dreams
you never knew you subterraneously craved
because you never had time to carbon date such thoughts

the reckoning will come
seeping through the lengths of reed roof of your bedroom ceiling
sounding like the angsty neighbour in Room 7
whose desperate phone calls extend into a quiet night
while she vainly holds a finger up to keep the fastfood chains of real life
from avalanching into a retreat of sugar and spice and all things nice

the reckoning might be wearing mustard, it might be wearing black
it might don spectacles or sandals
or hide in plain sight
as the overalled gardener-cum-pyromaniac
with a life's calling to keep the log fires burning

on second thought
the reckoning will probably not come at 11:00
but only back home
once you climb on the bathroom scale
all alone
with a craving for more deep conversations
about caves and mountainscapes
and comradely walks down the secluded valley of blue
to binge on.