

Vona Groarke

LINK

Poet and World



Gallery Books

Link (Poet and World)
is first published
simultaneously in paperback
and in a clothbound edition
on 7 October 2021.

The Gallery Press
Loughcrew
Oldcastle
County Meath
Ireland

www.gallerypress.com

*All rights reserved. For permission
to reprint or broadcast these poems,
write to The Gallery Press:
books@gallerypress.com*

© Vona Groarke 2021

The right of Vona Groarke to be identified as Author of
this Work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77
of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

ISBN 978 1 91133 822 2 *paperback*
978 1 91133 823 9 *clothbound*

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

Link (Poet and World) receives financial assistance
from the Arts Council.



Contents

Prologue

To Be Here *page* 11

A to Z 12

'As I dampen the page . . . ' 13

Before 14

'Before he bestirs himself . . . ' 15

Class No. 1: Phrasebook for the Subjunctive 16

'Could you give me some idea . . . ' 17

Daily News Round-up 18

'Detachment . . . ' 19

Evensong 20

'Even on a bus? . . . ' 21

For the Time Being 22

'For a change . . . ' 23

Glissando 24

'Good advice . . . ' 25

Here and Now 26

'Help me out here . . . ' 28

Imagery 29

'I'm aware of your pretty pictures . . . ' 30

Jar 31

'Just say it out straight . . . ' 32

Kist 33

'Kist . . . ' 34

Link 35

'Lounging in the deckchair . . . ' 37

Mystery Set 38

'Music, two kinds . . . ' 39

New York, Hell's Kitchen: Snow 40

'Now listen up . . . ' 43

On Getting Through the Working Day Without Poetry 44

'On the subject of loneliness . . . ' 45

Poetry Manual 46

'Pretend you're me . . . ' 48

Quarantine 49
'Quickly, Irish . . . ' 50
Returning from illness 51
'Right . . . ' 52
Study 53
'Still on the flit . . . ' 55
Trivia 56
'Two glasses of water . . . ' 57
Under a Tree, Parked 58
'Under normal circumstances . . . ' 59
Vona Groarke is writing a poem 60
'Very quickly . . . ' 62
Wall 63
'World sits with his head in his hands . . . ' 64
X = Language 65
'Exactly . . . ' 66
You 67
'You and your . . . ' 68
Z to A 69
'Zenith/doldrum . . . ' 71

Epilogue

Split Infinitive 73

Acknowledgements 75

*Yet everything that touches us, me and you,
takes us together like a violin's bow,
which draws one voice out of two separate strings.*
— Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Love Song'
(Translated by Stephen Mitchell)

P R O L O G U E

To Be Here

Two bodies to be seen from behind,
arm in arm, stepping into the show.

A face turns, a mouth says one thing
then another is looped through

to fill it out, to glance against,
to miss the point, to nail the nub

and, letter for letter, strut by strut,
to couple. Obviously.

All this to happen here, where you are,
to flex and flinch like so many words

returned as news from out in the world
to where our two fictional bodies link:

my hand in yours; my line, your voice;
what's known to me to be known to you;

one angled sleeve of blue made out
inside one angled black.

A to Z

Almost as if it were real
I make a book of rain
on not the house exactly
but a field across

like news from elsewhere
from over the water,
its seethe and blaze
flocked and bass-lined

until you think enough is enough
and now we will be creatures of water,
our land-lubbing a matter of research
or wheezing anecdote;

us, made over, gilled and silvered
so sleep, when we sleep,
is comparative stillness
while still moving, ruthlessly, on.

As I dampen the page with origin, I see in the shape that water makes the character of World. I will introduce you in due course but, first, some scene-setting.

We find ourselves on a park bench overlooking a steep cliff. The bench has a little name plaque affixed which you can't see because World and I are sitting in the way. World is wearing a claret velvet smoking jacket, in line with your expectations of how he would present himself. Suave. Holding back almost every piece of knowledge he has acquired, but ready to spill it, of course he is, just as long as you know how to ask. He has his I-really-don't-care-one-way-or-the-other look perfected by this time. It's not a look to which you would offer either passion or faith.

World is frightfully good looking in this blue-steeped, liminal light. But, for the sake of honesty, I should say I can't see all of him (who can?): there's a whole other side to his face, for example, I'm unable to make out, sitting alongside him, as I am.

'Honesty?' World says, looking away. 'Really. I'm bored already. I need a drink.'

It's dark, without me noticing the sky having proceeded there.

He gets up. I see how tall he is. How perfectly creased his pants.

'Coming?' he says. (Well, he has to really, or this would be one short book.)

I get up. Now you can see the name.

Except you can't. Of course you can't. It's too dark already.

Before

the moon, like a courtesan at a wedding, slips away before
sunlight colours in its black lines before the first word
gets passed between two people who wake within touch
before the first inkling of rain on slate before the news pips
the hour to significance before today's quota of statistics
shakes out its rude truth before the suck of the door before
the name called before the next drip from the dripping tap
before the chiffchaff drops a berry of song before the day
lowers the rope of itself before the soft whirr of a right
beginning overcomes an evening like the evening before.

Before he bestirs himself, having slept till late, World takes
an hour to survey today's news.

He sits up in bed in a house in the country rescued,
whitened and simplified (though not, of course, by him).
There he decides, as he always does, to live a home-school
sort of life with a radio instead of feelings; one stool by a
stove.

That lasts until his first coffee. Then it's Go, Go, Go.

The radio says, Come. Bring all your hours in a glass
jar with a silver lid and set it down where voices will buff
its surfaces with their newest news.

Then remove the lid so an open mouth is a world seen
from a window (let's make it a porthole, do) of the Inter-
national Space Station in today's headline, and a face inside,
two eyes and a mouth round as a porthole, round as a world,
gawping expensively, fiercely, back at us.

'And?' asks World, dripping coffee on the antique cover-
let. 'Your call: what would you have me do now?'