

Heart... by Paulette Mae

Where I feel to begin. Heart as just a word. He-art. Nah...scrap that.

And a customer approaches as I do (I'm working in the bookshop at this point), taking some time to form his words. Lightly stuttering and clearing his throat – he has a cold. Do we have a DVD in called *3 Hearts*? Called what sorry? *3 Hearts*? *3 Hearts*? Yes. I still don't think I heard him correctly. I go into the back and lift up a pile of DVDs for him to look through. He's already bought one from the shop – can't believe they're £2. He would've bought more copies at the time if he'd realised. I'm a little confused by this, but intrigued by his enthusiasm for this DVD we no longer have. A documentary, he tells me, about 3 children from Mongolia chosen to have heart transplants in America. Very well done, except for the unnecessary subtitles. Most of the speakers, the choosers, helpers (I think I gather) were English. He couldn't get rid of the words at the bottom of the screen, but it was a good documentary. I take this latter part of our communication down as a point of interest – 'unnecessary subtitles'.

I feel like he's placed a thread in my hand, or made it longer, so I decide to continue. What DVD is that at the top of the pile? *Aida...a large open air stage. Set against the swirling sands of Egypt, Giuseppe Verdi's Aida is one of the most stirring and popular operas of all time...lovers separated by jealousy*¹. I imagine the stage being in the middle of a desert – something about the swirling and stirring. Returning to the front of the case I see it reads largest open air stage in Europe. A bit of a swizz I think. Anyway, as words, points in themselves, I take 'open air' and 'lovers separated by jealousy'.

There's a couple of books I need to put out to fill a gap in the Art section. I've been waiting for the space in front of the shelf to be free of bodies. Now this thread is lengthening I see this waiting as an opportunity, a stalling. I open one of the books I have. They're both the same. I like this guy. Le Corbusier. He seems really down to earth, or was. He was 19 in 1907. Then I remember I only have his words. I don't know what he was really like. Still, I jot down this quote that sticks out to me over the others in the book:

*Three reminders to architects: volume, surface, plan. Architecture is the skilful, judicious, magnificent play of volumes against light. The plan proceeds from the inside out: the exterior results from the plan of the interior. Architecture has nothing to do with styles.*²

As I'm writing the quote out now for this 'essay', it excites me, opens out many pathways. Spaces. I think of a dress, a map to the interior. I think of work I'm creating now, looking at the relationship between interior, exterior. Can't quite find the words for these leaps I'm making...what's inside...how I see/experience it all. Wish I could capture it like a scent. Or open some door... In the bookshop I don't choose, take note of anything popping out. I just like the whole sentiment. Now though, I'm drawn to 'play of volumes against light'.

¹ DVD cover of Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* produced by Pegasus Entertainment Group, 2011.

² Le Corbusier in *Le Corbusier in his own words* devised by Antoine Vigne (2009). Great Britain: Papdakis Publisher.

I return to the DVD. Don't quite put the book away. Still jot down things swirling in my imagination. Then to practicalities of details for referencing if I want to use any of this stuff later writing up the 'essay' (don't quite know how to label it), what I came across today.

My work colleague will be in soon. I'm not quite done with the DVD when he arrives. We get chatting. In a roundabout way (I only just take this literally and feel the motion of our conversation, its circling out in spirals) he asks if I've been to Modern Art Oxford recently. Yes I say. I'm in one of the exhibitions. He says he doesn't get that one, but tells me about a film³ downstairs in one of the rooms of Bob Dylan (a re-take on one of his videos) pulling away white cards with letters spelling out the sound of a techno track – umph umph is how he puts it – playing. And a guy in the background nodding. Oh I laugh. To imagine it. That sounds hilarious, I say. Then as I begin to jot this bit of conversation down on the bus ride out of town as another point of interest today, I think of heartbeat. 'Umph umph'. And I imagine 'cards placed in front of a heart, like subtitles. Unnecessary?'

So I have some starting points...interior...rooms. Chambers.

³ Features as part of the *After/Hours/Drop/Box* exhibition curated by John Lawrence.