

*Torrid Nature Scene* is at its core a squelchy, lusty romp. The poetry, heavy with lewd and crude allusion, gallops through a series of pastoral scenes inhabiting some misty realm between the representational and the allegorical. Natural imagery is drawn from every which way, piled on top of each other, forced- happily- to cohabit or copulate in a whirlwind of cultural and carnal objet trouvés. Through all this glorious, verdant excess, a narrative flow can still be divined, and I made every effort during the compositional process to embrace its frothy rambunctiousness.

But in setting such a text, so thick with archaic and arcane terms it is all but impenetrable on first contact, what can be the point of focusing on ‘meaning’? If the words deny us the satisfaction of comprehension, how can poor, obfuscating music hope to make up for that? Fortunately, the poetry’s intrinsic qualities glisten through in the sodden, salacious sound of the language itself, and it is onto this visceral immediacy the musical protagonists most readily grasp. The colour of individual words, the weight of recurring rhyme, the flavour of shifting tone are all mimicked, but much as a wild, cavorting playmate might, co-conspiratorially and with abundant riffing.

Thus we find vocalists and instrumentalists alike joining with their literary counterparts in the leering, self-sating voyeurism of the text. As much concerned with individual expression as participation, each of these musical characters reacts with their own palate of squeaks, squawks, burps and blips. This is best illustrated- not surprisingly- by the singers, whose copious lyricisms, distortions, animal noises and speech (song?) impediments show an attitude forever in flux between irreverence and arousal. Real emphasis is given therefore to the tangible, tactile moment, quite apart from ideas or concepts words might seek to invoke. Rather than “the pleasure of discovery” or “the pleasure of understanding” (to borrow the words of the poet), it is the pleasure of experiencing, of savouring, of being which is celebrated most profoundly in this musical incarnation.

Can *Torrid Nature Scene* then be about anything beyond hedonism? The work had a remarkably long gestation period, having been conceived by Andrew and I well over a decade ago and only realised in October of 2008. Over this time, we witnessed together and in relative horror the decline of a way of thinking, first on our home turf (Sydney, Australia), and then here on the opposite side of the world. *Torrid Nature Scene* is thus at some level the reëmbicing of a faded, fading aesthetic. The piece eschews many of the fashionable preëccupations of today- the perfect mechanising of our bodies, the even technologising of our values- and instead rejoices in hair, fat, fluids, warts; disproportion and dysfunction; wrongness as rightness; all the quirks and tics which make us so thoroughly unfit for magazines and television. A squelchy, lusty romp, for sure, but one with serious social, if not moral intent.

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