

Simon Tedeschi

*Fugitive* (Extract)

Even though I don't get maths or physics, I have an intuitive understanding that's more sensation than sense, more impulse than understanding, the way a groove—both a feel and a furrow—is captured in the body rather than the brain (or, as the song goes, in the heart). The upturned air of a grace note, the *tacit* at the end of a score, a slow movement with all its little prickles of doubt and desire.



(Prokofiev referred to his *Mimolyotnosti* as *little doggies*—because they bite.)

Some of the *Mimolyotnosti* are ridiculous, others tender, all painful as an envelope that cuts your tongue.

*Be careful of these little ones*, Sergei seems to say.

*Ballgown to clown, but always behind frosted glass. Waiting for the dreaded knock—*



and when we answer the door (which we

must), we're found wanting. We're staring at screens, blunted by shock, less a momentary apperception than a totalising force. What Baudelaire and Benjamin saw is now a deafening music. I cannot write this paragraph without checking my feed. I need to scrape the scum off the stove before midnight. My right toenail hurts because I've picked at it. My cat lies on her back, shows me her belly. She must once have had kittens. Her teats make me uncomfortable, one in particular. Three Catholic worshippers have been beheaded in France. I crack my jaw so loudly my wife hears it through her Ear Pods. I'm attacked by regret for a bastard act twenty-five years ago. I was just doing what was done to me. No excuse. I've lost the filigree of sentence flow. My butt hurts, I wiped it too hard again. I'm getting emails from a lonely older woman. I stifle contempt. But one day I will be old.



Every child thinks the world was created when they first looked at it. When I was a kid, I thought that prior to my birth, the world was black and white. Consequently, I associated my birth with a spurt of colour. But we also don't recall that first, spasmodic journey through our mothers' bodies, the same way we often don't recall our dreams.



But when I woke up this morning, I remembered—



The work is everything. The work is nothing.  
Modern music is trash. I like it. I loathe it. I  
prefer music with a tune. That's not music, that's  
noise. I found it interesting. It bored me. I didn't  
understand it.



The *Mimolyotnosti* are not a mystery to be  
solved—they are entrails unearthed.



Not only do the *Mimolyotnosti* mash up our  
brains, they threaten our locus of control. They  
disabuse us of the notion that we are little Gods.



Art is the ultimate narcissistic wound.



When I play the *Mimolyotnosti*, I am met by a  
wall of faces, a gate of eyes.



I want these twenty pieces to send everyone to  
hell or heaven. I want there to be nothing left  
(to say), as if an atheist had seen the first spurt  
of an amputee's knee. Each *Mimolyotnosti* is  
shrapnel boring through the body. We stand in  
front of the *Mimolyotnosti* with our pudgy flesh  
and our rotten angles, and we are all blown up  
and distorted and we are no more.



I am less interested in what people say to me after  
a performance of the *Mimolyotnosti* than by the  
weave of their silences. After so many years,  
instinct has taught me how to read breathing (as  
poetry is a special kind of speaking, listening is  
heightened hearing).



I play the *Mimolyotnosti*. I slide my eye to the  
right. I read the room in a heartbeat. I tell from

the wind in a whisper whether someone I've  
never met before is tired, bored or frightened.



Bring me boredom. I want the boredom of  
Proust, the un(c)locking of time, the freedom of  
associative speech, the sleepy dance of shapes, a  
lyrical languor.



From a whisper one can sense the mood of a  
crowd, how it feels (in) its skin, how it takes on  
a certain shape, how it swells and snakes and  
shifts. Whispering is the only way a human can  
move through walls.



In Stalin's Russia, there were two kinds of  
whisperers—*shepchushchii*, who whispered  
so as not to be heard through the walls—and  
*sheptun*, who whispered so as to be heard by the  
authorities.



Petrograd. A house near the centre. Prokofiev

plays the *Mimolyotnosti* for the first time. I've heard a recording of him at the piano and it's completely different to what I expected. Disjointed. Wiry. Cakes of colours. A *Petrov* pressed against a wet window (I've only ever played a *Petrov* in Siberia, in old halls that smelt of wood shavings and fishbones). To the right of the piano is a Japanese garden, untended. The poet Konstantin Balmont is in the far corner, tall and debonair, damasked in shadow—listening. On a settee, Kira Nikolayevna, a friend of both men, one leg over the other, smiling, craning her neck towards the music. She is brilliant but will only ever be known for this moment. Balmont waits until the final chord unravels like strips of gauze. Then he pulls out his pen—



*I do not know wisdom — I leave that to others —*

*I only turn *Mimolyotnosti* into verse.*

*In each fugitive vision I see worlds . . .*



There is no colour in the world.

It is August 1917.