

cassie
sarah-jane field

manifesto for the digitised self

The protagonist screamed. It was not in the script. She did it anyway. All the other characters carried on as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. The influencer, however, did react. She appeared on screen at quite the wrong time and glared at the protagonist -

- who continued unabated.

Neon pink and green was fashionable that season. Cassie didn't care; habitually she picked through clothes on sale rails not really looking - as she slid her hands over crinoline and nylon cloth, sandpapering her skin, Christmas serenaded the shoppers. A woman, a stranger, demanded that Cassie tell her which blouse would suit her best. This red one here? She held it up. Or that blue one over there? Cassie blinked. She'd no idea. It didn't matter anyway. The woman waited. And the Christmas song played. And

Scarlet O'Hara giggled coquettishly near the till, begging her beaux to tell her what she should do, and where she should go. And the notes asked us to be faithful. And the stranger grew impatient. And Cassie had to answer. So she told the truth. It makes no difference. You what? The stranger, wounded by the answer, disappointed by the real, boiled over and declared, no need to be a bitch about it and Cassie stared. Customers heard and quite suddenly a crowd formed, Cassie at its core.

tbc

For millennia, language was on the outside. We could, in retrospect, usually see it. On walls, in caves, then tablets, scrolls and eventually in books.

Today, many but not all are aware, it somehow exists more and more on the inside. In places it can't be seen.

This means we often have no idea what's being said. We are less able to read the signs. Vast dynamic archives of language exist - somewhere - affecting everything. They're invisible. We see the flimsy surface only.

It's true, in the past archives tended to be secreted, often sacred, and contained as well as emanated power.

Very few would have had access.

Today the whole world is one big archive. And we can barely imagine how anyone escapes.

★★

She dozed. But when she woke she picked up the conversation as if she'd never left.

"It's down to a paucity of the imaginations of writers, when they insist there will be some kind of prosthetic device. Nothing will be inserted beneath the skin. Technology will somehow simply seep inside. There will be no need for cutting or penetration."

Selfie, so what?

/who sees you?

Don't betray me. Connect me. I
love you/ I hate you/ I'm not you

You/selfie - digital homunculus
Self

Don't answer, don't speak, let me
say some/thing, you silent

Be quiet/

Selfie. Be

Quiet/



Shot notes: A diminutive figure, childlike, very thin, we see her from a distance. Working alone in a storage facility, a warehouse. She is the sole employee here in this repository of objects: letters, photos, books, rotting fruit, the remnants of things, of lives. On closer inspection we see she is not quite human, a digital actor. She occasionally glitches as she gets on with her tasks - identifies objects, names them, classifies them, then turns them to data. The information will be recycled. Everything must be returned to raw information so it can be used again.

While staring inertly at an array of indestructible coloured bottles wrapped in promises to remove all scum and offers of instant power too, someone I recognise passes the end of my aisle.

A Rolodex of possibilities spins inside my head but never stops. The school gate? A pub outing a decade ago? An old friend's husband who made an unwanted pass? Maybe he's an actor or a newsreader I've muddled up with life?

It's impossible to know. I shelve the moment of terror about loss of mind, then grab my usual Viakal, peer around the corner and watch as his body disappears into the nursery section where tired begonias, african violets and aspidistras appear to reach out of their pots and grope for the mystery man's bum.

He plays his lyre and hums a dreamy song which floats above the compost section - peat, loam, grit, or bark - and I decide I need seedlings or a discounted Christmas Herb-Cup, or else - to use in my overgrown and under-tended rented garden, home to an accidental mulch of outdoor furniture, broken toys and fox shit - a pair of William Morris secateurs.

Recognition fails but amongst the olive trees in a South London DIY superstore, I listen to his song and am transported and then madly in love. But there is no accidental Hollywood bump and subsequent comedic meeting. Instead, I take my unwanted, not-needed consumption and traipse silently to the till, smiling vaguely, so not to be rude when I say thanks to the woman scanning my shopping.

Then I head home to make the bathroom shine.

(Cabaret) At the Paucity:

In the darkness, Poverty sits at
the table with nothing to drink,
unable to make sound, while
shoppers on stage sing brash
arias concerned with new
kitchens, bulk loo roll and
multiple threats to mass
production. Their lament to
failed deliveries and broken
logistics is supposed to make an
audience cry. But Poverty only
notices the chorus line applaud
and kick itself blind. From her
seat, she sees overnight
workers stocking up shelves while
dancing and mopping
fluorescent-lit aisles.

Poverty would like to stand up
and share a mournful verse - but
she doesn't know any words or a
tune. And her dress is shit. So
instead, she watches
performers with thier dynamic
masques being lowered from the
lighting rig, dramatically
serenading Mental Health,
Physical Exercise, Immigration,
and expedited Climate-Change -
sitting inside and all around,
holding hands, growing from and
within - her family. But the
actors are singing to themselves
and blinded by their spotlights,
so they never notice.

Pick, pick, pick, too scared to
eliminate anything, waste
products and babies, time only to
pick. Pick. Pick. Ursula Le Guinn
wrote a story in which one person
suffered so everyone else could
live happily ever after. But the
pickers don't make anyone
happy. Just send stuff. Go faster
or lose a non-existent wage. On
the telly, on the phone, on the
tablet, on the stick, the
Archangel Gabriel made me laugh
when he announced 'I want to buy
one of your material objects'.
You too can watch it anywhere,
even in The Jungle. Talk about
Icarus flying too close to the
sun. The what? The SUN. It's the
whole bloody lot of us. We'll
frazzle and fry in heaven and
hell and still won't fathom it's
all around us, of us, in us.
Just keep picking.

My boyfriend is a fat capitalist.
He's rude to waiting staff and
thinks his bad breath is sexy.

He's got too much money. He stows
it off-shore and moans about the
poor, tax-dogers, scroungers,
single-mothers, drug-addict scum.

He lies on top of me and fucks
like no-one is there. Bless.

What part of you
insists on your importance?
You're not, you know,

important;

nor him, nor her,
nor they,

No one. It doesn't

matter

who you point to.

It's not important

just like you.

Cassie - part ii

