

Deakin Research Online

This is the published version:

Takolander, Maria 2011, Hide, *Mascara literary review*, no. 9, pp. 1-4.

Available from Deakin Research Online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30035343>

Reproduced with the kind permissions of the copyright owner.

Copyright : 2011, Mascara Poetry Inc

ISSUE 9 MAY 2011

Maria Takolander

Maria Takolander's poetry, fiction and essays have been widely published. She is the author of a book of poems, *Ghostly Subjects* (Salt, 2009), which was shortlisted for a Queensland Premier's Literary Award in 2010. She is also the winner of the 2010 Australian Book Review Short Story Competition. She is a Senior Lecturer in Literary Studies and Creative Writing at Deakin University in Geelong.



Hide

Night has settled through the house like silt. My bedroom is as dark as my nursery memory of it, as dark as my child brain, which is only beginning to build an image of the world inside my skull cave. The plaster walls are what I remember the most, although I think of them not in terms of paint colour or wall paper but only in terms of their hidden chalkiness and how they persist in the shadows. I remember, too, the framed cavity where the door hangs open to the darkness of the hallway, and the draped space where the window is allowed to exist untroubled by day. I remember nothing about the furnishings, although I assume—or is this a memory?—that in the room there is a foam mattress and bedclothes colourless as the walls. And I assume that I am on that bed, too, although I cannot see myself or feel myself on it. It is as if I do not exist in the world. It is as if I am like the shadows. But I know that I exist because I know that, out there, beyond my bedroom door, something terrible is happening.

My sister, barefoot in her synthetic, pale-pink nighty, appears in my room, body-real and dangerous, urging me to leave with her, to come and help, even though I am not really there, even though I will never want anything less. Are there words for this child-whispering, for the flesh-and-blood crumbs she holds out to me, compelling me to come out of hiding, to cross the threshold into witnessing and remembering?

Sometimes I think that the memory belongs to her and that she gave it to me, like a birthday cake, at a later time. But I must own this memory in some original way because I remember the warmth of her hand. I feel how her nylon nighty hides electricity as she leads me down the hallway, dense with night. And I see how the floorboards and wall in the hallway ahead, outside the entranceway to the lounge room, are striped by the streetlight entering through the Venetian blinds. I find myself remembering that, on some other night, strange men with shaved heads and tight jeans had gathered on the street outside the lounge room in packs and that a brown bottle had crashed through the window, tangling in the still-broken blinds. Another evening in the lounge room, abruptly littered with gifts, I had unwrapped a tin of colouring pencils next to the white figure of a tree fit for a storm.

appears
voices :
who ha



[HOME](#) [EDITORIAL](#) [ABOUT US](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#) [SUBMIT](#) [AF](#)

h there
he loud
'oppins,
ay into

the spangled night.

My sister, in her synthetic, pale-pink nighty, moves down the hallway towards the bedroom, pulling me behind her. When she reaches the bedroom door, with the vertical stripe of yellow light beaming along the door jamb and the movie playing inside turned suddenly quiet, she lets go of my hand. I watch as she touches the painted surface of the door with her fingertips. Then, from my position behind her night-gowned body and her outstretched arm, as the electric light, like radiation, floods her face, I look at what she is looking at. And I see what is on.

There is a naked light bulb and a mirror, gilded and tricky, on the wall above a double bed that has a threadbare, purple coverlet. And there is a man kneeling on the rumpled, purple coverlet with his back to me. The blonde hair on the back of his head, which I can see directly in the bright room, is matted, and his face, which I can see in the shining space of the mirror, is flattened. His fists, which I look at in the glinting mirror and then in the luminous room, are clenched by his sides.

My sister, standing in the frame of the door in front of me, lit up like a shard of glass by the sun, says something. She opens her lips and makes a sound. She says his name. She says it in a voice so small that it could be me who is saying it.

The man turns, the yellow light bulb setting his face aglow. He is in the room, and he is in the mirror. He looks strange: empty or full. I wonder if there is a man behind his eyes. I am afraid, but he does not see me among the shadows. He looks at my sister in her pink nighty and in her skin, and she glimmers and burns while he flares and blazes like a fire lapped by the wind. When his mouth opens, he roars and leaps from the bed. The light is shattering.

The door slams shut.

I see a gush of air puff my sister's hair and nightgown, and then suddenly there is my face and body cast like the living into the ashes of the night. I am aware of my skin and the way it covers my flesh and bones and of something else—strange, jagged and quiet—embedded within. But only after I glimpse, in all that razing light, a woman's body—adult words: torso, arms, legs—on the purple coverlet, and a white, cotton nightgown—private word, child word: nighty, nighty—ripped on the floor.

*

Afternoon has settled through the house like a ghost of the day. I am older—just a little—and this is a room that I remember. I have hidden under the bed with the threadbare, purple coverlet, lying on my stomach on the dust-covered floorboards, feet to the headboard and the wall. The mirror, I know, is hanging above there, its depths swallowing light, but it helps that I cannot see it and that it cannot see me.

What I can see, straight ahead of me, are the tapered, timber legs at the end of the bed, and the dangling, ragged fringes of the purple coverlet. I can also see the fourth and last drawer of a timber-laminated dressing table that occupies the wall at the foot of the bed. One of the handles on the bottom drawer is missing, and although I do not like the bronze shapeliness of the one that is there, I dislike even more the two, dark screw-holes in the timber where the handle was once attached. Between the bed and the dressing table is a stretch of clean floor, but beneath the dressing table is dust, so still, like a held breath, that the mirror cannot see it. There are maroon curtains:

cupboa:
to the k



[HOME](#) [EDITORIAL](#) [ABOUT US](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#) [SUBMIT](#) [AF](#)

d a tall
/ is also

big as me and so floppy in its limbs and neck that it might be broken. The fabric is felt-like and yellow-coloured where there is skin. It has yellow wool for hair, and its eyebrows and mouth are made from white sausage-shaped pieces of material. It has crosses in the place of eyes, sewn in inch-long, blue, woolen stitches, and it is clothed in a jumpsuit, which is fastened to its body at the ankles, wrists and neck and made from flannel patterned with images of children's blocks, each with letters of the alphabet.

The clown feels misshapen and fragile tangled beneath my body and in my crossed arms, but I am trying not to move, and I believe, in any case, that I will not be waiting here long. I breathe lightly through my nose so as not to disturb the yellow wool of the clown's hair, which sticks out through my arms, or the dust on the floor in front of my face. I watch the vacant hallway through the frame of the open door.

I have since been told—perhaps after looking at a photograph album, in which I remember seeing a badly lit image of myself on a vinyl kitchen chair with the clown in my arms—that I carried the clown everywhere with me as a child, until the day its head broke away from its torso and clots of wadding started to fall out. I know that the toy was pressed, as I slept one night, into one of the plastic bins crowded with shapeless rubbish bags in the dark, narrow yard at the side of the house. But I can remember having the toy clown with me only one other time.

I was squatting with my sister in the backyard in the shadow of the grey paling fence. The grass there was lush and long. There were crickets, black and sleek, clinging to the blades of grass, and cobwebs packed in the crevices of the old fence like stuffing. I had my clown with me, bunched under one of my arms. My sister had her clown with her, too. We were listening to three children, older than both of us, playing on a trampoline on the other side of the fence. I remember that I wanted to look at them and that I wanted them to look at me, with a desire I felt in my crouched body as if it had been invaded by a stranger, reckless and ready to be unmasked. But climbing the fence was my sister's idea.

Standing next to her, with my toes on the middle rail of the fence and my fingers curled over the splintered wood of the top rail, I held my silence. My clown hung beside me, one of its yellow, fabric hands trapped between my hand and the rough timber of the fence. My sister had her clown with her, too, folded under her left arm. She peered over the ragged edges of the palings. I raised myself on my toes and peered over, too.

I saw three dark-haired and bare-footed children on a trampoline in an otherwise empty backyard that looked much like ours. There was a fat girl, curled into a ball in the centre of the trampoline mat, and two boys, who were older than her. They were trying to make her bounce. The girl saw me and sat up. Her brothers then stopped and looked. They said things in a language I did not understand, but I recognised the slow smile on the girl's face and the boys' too-loud laughter, and I was glad that the worn fence was there, marking the edges of the known world. I climbed back down, and my sister climbed down after me. As I stood on the cool grass, holding the hand of my clown, there was nothing to be said. I remember the feeling of loneliness that comes with shame, that I looked to the dark windows of my house, but there my memory fails.

My memory of the day that I lay under the bed with the purple coverlet, with my clown tucked in my arms, is clearer. I am waiting for my sister to come home from her first day at school.

The hallway remains empty. The dust beneath the dressing table in front of me does not move. I look at the two, dark screw-holes in the veneered timber of the bottom drawer, where the bronze handle is missing. I think about the mirror on the wall above the bed, and I find that I am suddenly unsure.

Should my sister be home by now? I no longer understand why I came to hide under the bed. Do I want my sister to come looking for me, or am I afraid that she will?

I hold the clown tightly and keep still, but I feel that I have been robbed of something, as if the mirror had been lo



[HOME](#) [EDITORIAL](#) [ABOUT US](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#) [SUBMIT](#) [AF](#)

The morning arrives with a dusky silence. With my sister, I walk down the hallway, past the empty lounge room with the damaged Venetian blinds, to the bedroom at the end. The maroon curtains are still drawn, the mirror, in the dimness, is closed onto itself, and the bed with the purple coverlet is unmade. The knotted fringes of the coverlet trail on the naked floorboards, and in the murkiness of the room they look like the legs of so many large spiders, all dead.

I do not know what time it is, but I have been going to school for some months now—my sister for more than a year—and I understand what I have to do. I begin to get dressed. There is enough light coming through the curtain parting to enable me to see what I am doing. In the tall cupboard with the doors that cannot close, I find the short slip-dress with the blue swirling pattern, like marble, which I especially like, and a pair of white shoes. My sister chooses an orange dress with buttons. On the dressing table, there is a tube of lipstick, a bottle of mascara, a compact with three colours of eye-shadow—green, blue-green and blue—and a small round mirror with a retractable silver stand. I do not look at the dark mirror on the wall behind.

Before I leave for school, my sister makes us both lunch in the kitchen, buttering four slices of black bread, which she pulls out of the plastic bag left on the table. I put my sandwich in my handbag. We leave the house, my sister making sure to close the front door behind us, and walk down the driveway. We pass the line of khaki-coloured succulents, which seep pus when the leaves snap, and turn onto the cement footpath. As we walk past our neighbour's house, a squat woman in a smock, with curlers in her netted hair, rushes out from behind a screen door and across her front lawn. She grabs me by my wrist and my sister by her forearm. She looks at me as if I have forgotten something.

And it is true that I have, for while I remember what happened that morning, I remember little of the preceding night. I assume, for instance, that there was a drive home from the hospital along streets fire-lit by headlights. I should be able to remember the private feeling of being in the backseat of the car in my dressing gown and, when I got home, the glow of the porch light and the sound of scoria under the tyres. Did I click on the bear-shaped night light on the floor next to my mattress when I got back into bed? Did I ask my sister to sleep with me then?

But I remember nothing of the events that occurred after—or before—I saw the woman on a trolley, its wheels dark as ash and uneasy on the vinyl floor, disappear down the yawing hallway under the fluorescent lights of the hospital corridor, and the man with the blonde hair re-enter the waiting room, looking at the wall.



[HOME](#) [EDITORIAL](#) [ABOUT US](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#) [SUBMIT](#) [AF](#)

hide was a brilliant musician, full of talent, who shocked all of the world with his tragic suicide on May the second, 1998, at 8:30 PM. He came home drunk and had hung himself on his bathroom door with a towel.Â hide. Guitarist for band X-Japan , but when they disbanded, was able to work more on other music career. Had a couple solo albums then an album with Zilch and another with Spread Beaver , both his bands. Hide definition is - to put out of sight : secrete. How to use hide in a sentence. Synonym Discussion of hide.Â 1 : to remain out of sight she hid under the bed â€”often used with outhiding out from the cops. 2 : to seek protection or evade responsibility hides behind his dark glasses, hoping to avoid being recognized. hide. noun (1). Definition of hide (Entry 2 of 5). 1 : the skin of an animal whether raw or prepared for use â€”used especially of large heavy skinsbuffalo killed for their hidesboots made of cow hide.