

Speculum



Collected poetry and Prose
by David Russell

Power Kernels

Break down the elements, split them
To non-existence;
Then shatter all solidity's illusions,
Free impulses
Beyond the viscous mind, still feeling hard
By vanity's gas upholstered.

And then, for happiness's definition,
Shut the door;
Relax, and don't be squeamish;
For every grit of teeth, a pull of trigger,
A sear, a cloud . . .

Then, if the bacillus, the charge
Breaks through even your filter-screen,
Thin paper barrier that defines
Your victims and yourselves . . .

And you, amoebae, become specimens
Now that your brainchild ogres
Have outstepped the frames of will;

Oh super-brains! Limp, flapping squids;
Now that you've burst your cranial canisters,
Now that you've blundered on the combination
To open up the vault
Wherein you case your muffled
Conscience-bleats
to soothing, doped oblivion;

Did you first conquer all remorse, all fear,
Destroy all that might have the power to save?

And will you now be laid low, by yourselves,
Even denied all retribution's flames,
All instantaneous dignity?

Oh ones still solid, cynicism's crust
Thickens and stifles, yet absorbs,
Driving life's final spark to desperation;
No scope to flash
Without full-voiding all outside itself.

Oh loosen now your halters,
Clean growth, no fission-cancers,
Live now; be novae

Space Capsule Volunteer

The final pull of severance will magnify you
The downward controls make you equal
to the general gravitation

You are higher than the air, and so you leave,
You are bigger than the air, and so you breathe

Caught in a feeling circle
Knowing measurements for what they are

Your particles arrested
Your museum absolute
Until new ores from meteors transmute
Their other ends that hold you

All proportions quite dependent
On the nearness of your eyes
No lies – for lies are measured
And you touch them all for what they are –
Little one, bound hand and foot,
The outer ring of man to me.

Fast Lane

Let's get in the fast lane –
Rip off the doors and slice the breezes;
Let's get in the fast lane –
Thread the highway through a needle.

We can loop the date-line

In a coral reef-knot;
Turn our jet-lag inside out,
Inverted, oblique, reversed.

Let's fly an exploding plane,
Turn on our parachutes –
Chrysanthemums of fire
In the fast lane.

Earthquake

What happened? There was a fault.

What's a fault?

It's when one piece of the earth juts above another.

Why does that happen?

Because the explosion down below

Goes on forever.

But was that fault anybody's?

It was the earth's; it's beyond us.

The seething energy-city, ever greedy to accelerate.

Did its makers long to sharpen that fault,

Draw on the lava

To blow themselves: were they all human lemmings?

Yawning blueprints for giddy layers of highway;

Did they suck in any poison? Abrasive ardour,

Overstepped incisions,

Thin flanges slicing.

Clouds

In chroniclers' minds

Past wars all went full circle

Making great urban filth destroy itself

So that the finest flowers and shrubs

Could sprout at random.

And birds, in exultation
Or happy in their ignorance
Made rills of melody
Now man had passed them by.

But now, with ice and poison
For one full year enthralled, embalmed.
And after that, growth's circle
Jarred shuddering in mid-turn

Can even a worm
Or an amoeba celebrate?

With Respect to the Whale

Oh, man – foul carnivore!
Gorging beyond all need for sustenance,
Gorging beyond even your body's bounds!

And is this a fixation on your prey,
A lust for prey-communion?
Willing your own, final annihilation
By turning into quarry
That great, that fine, that more than any beast;
Sea-mammal – in its form a synthesis of elements,
Model of global harmony,
Sea-mammal – its pure song of sight and touch
A blending of all sense, beyond man's symbols.

Oh, man! Knowing yourself so small,
Are you in full immersion lost
In dental agony of harpoon barbs,
Asphyxiate in quicksand blubber?

Or, in false striving
To cheat the others of fair depths
Would you burst, flounder, cast up useless bones
Sick binder for your film
Of mineral perversion?

Oh you, that made of noble forms
Cheap factories, demolished in a day
For pulp, for ballast in the supermarket
Without the dignity

Of geriatrics' corsets;

Oh you, who pay mock homage
To rare or extinct species
Behind museums' glass, in research confines
To rare or extinct species – know your vanity!

*Know that the see-through panel
That seals rare specimens from mundane soiling
Is to yourselves a mirror! There your end . . .*

With one proviso – when your vile exertions
At last become fulfilled among yourselves
And you mere cinder-blistered slime

No species that survives will honour you;
In all your seeming strength your final weakness
Cutting your lifelines with your every grab
For further power and satiation.

The time to halt is now; let live and know –
Abjure corrupt proliferation, grow
In numbers' confines, species' truest bounds.

Scorpion

I touched a scorpion; it struck.
It was my fault; I had been warned –
But for one split second
Its beauty-fascination wrenched me
From reason's ice.

I don't think anyone could find a scorpion ugly,
They shine too.

Writhing and smarting from the sting
I lashed out, struck on something soft
I could not see.

Again pure venom's shudder,
Then eagles, condors
Circled, launched and swooped.

Did they fly in my slipstream, I in theirs?
Through what was what transcended?

Who had been the real scorpion?

Checkpoint

Lurching, they bluster – ghouls into the chasm.

Fierce lava, blowing, nullifies their fall
And dissipates harsh gravity's concussion,
Forces a seething screen of phoenix cowardice,
Leaping to swell
Into a fresh, mendacious crust,
Tripping and throttling the led
Into a smear upon pure metamorphic beauty.

The skeleton's jaws yawn apart;
A stranded mountaineer was frozen
At his prime pinnacle,
Denied warm, compromised decay;
A calcium landmark now, but broken loose;
A boulder never neutral
To those in fear.

One gouged and bored –
New Sisyphus, with ever-sinking aspiration
For no stress, no fall –
For him the indefatigable light
Breathes limbo silicosis.

Can they combine? Eternity transcends the cheap ideal
Of mutual obliteration.

A mountaineer trapped in a submarine,
A miner in a satellite,
A megalomaniac performing his own precious lobotomy
Hoping the abolished question mark
Can keep things safe and solid.

Purgation's smudged when bound to fire,
Denied release from fizzy process,
And even air can clog and sludge
The ultimate suction of life's syllables
Into fatuous pinprick stars,

No line can break full circle.

Disintegration

The bottom fell out
And all things gathered,
Reverted to their origins
In skips, on pavements,
Fell to casual hands.
But at the pit
Of all exhaustion,
The bottom of grip's loss
Are seeds and roots
Of restoration
Which in throbbing cycles
Breathe out on pine and belt.
The bottom stood solid.

Discourse

He was the foam on the backwash of conversation,
Repelled by the safety-pier;

Seeming to crave a knife to answer
The upward wave-choppings,
He felt as if there were an invisible plastic partition
Segmenting the round, globular flatness
Of all within his view –
A tank, cramping and inflexible
To cramp that perfect essence.

Blocks and straight lines
Came recently
Primordially, only old wind and moon-chop
Potters'-wheeled old clay round to a crate;
Man needed to do no more.

The wave-chop was a gesture of resistance to
The declining curve,
As was the invisible partition

Papier-maché, salted, to model the pier
The element distilled for an abundance
Of boiling water
To pour into the great distributive tea-urn;

Punctuated pouring of water into myriad cups
For questing customers –
Each with its milk-dollop put in beforehand,
Facing tentacle lips pens swaying on strings

Waters of cardboard that he would have to drink,
Downward flow of ink, forward flow of light
From the projector-cavern – an airy iceberg.

Borehole where the wrecked ship
Had its only portal for the entry of
Of hindsight and sanity –

Converse of the upward stretch
of the ascending droplets
from the urn-pourer's carelessness

So making moon-petals,
Cutting through the sheets of ink
In that particular abattoir

Computer Virus

Gulleted in spark glint veins
Flabbering circuits in floppies
Print-out piled high, choking, crimped;

*Programme busy; not applied;
Insufficient memory.*

Germs swallowed ink;
Myopic suction

Greek symbol coffee grounds
The winking green a vaccine

The quantum got under the mouse

Insufficient disk space.

We crash the orbit.

A spiky cursor jams backlogs

Danger: Programme Overloaded.

Blacked flash; inked screen transferred;

Teeth in the bytes

And have you seen a paper jam

A heated crumple coming strong?

Graphic rings blotching

All could explode –

The old typewriter's gone to rust.

Carnival

That peacock opulence,
Swarming on strutting grime;
That massed ecstasy, squeezing itself,
Short-breathed, near suffocation;
That sound-abandonment, seeming to plunge
To deafness's peace;
Yet keeping those maimed faculties alive,
Ever denying their last fulfilment.

Maybe it's only I and it,
I, starting in the middle
And it, commensurate with my idea
Of my own size?

Maybe I didn't grow
To match its quarter million,
Or maybe I didn't shrink that far.

Yet never could I mar
That general bliss,
For truth is in strong feeling

And critics never bring their rules
To taboos' strength.

Early to Rise

In vigour, he did the splits in freedom
In free vigour, he did the splits
Freely, he did the splits in vigour,
With vigour, he did the splits freely

Vigorously, he did the free splits –
He split vigorously free

Between house block and office block
Office and blockhouse
Real bouncing squeezed inside happy reason.

Ball signs for scissors – blotted day in air.

Whip-weal in all eyebaths and bed-rises,
He perforated between the functions
Of the blankets, and the functions
Of the sheets –

Thrust prickle-cover black back,
Intermediary diluting white.

Panic

A search for some trivial object in the midst of disordered furniture
Seized upon just at that moment, giving birth to consternation

Repulsion from travelling delayed by this selection;
Travelling light, splitting energy-wholes into petty onenesses –

At one with invisibility

Use the fuel of panic to build up heat in an overcrowded room
Breath abused and expanded, perspiration in anti-breath
And anti-river in one – sandwiched quite in decorum.

Go all around; you are a magnet;
The things you seek are tiny, chipped filings,
Very little in themselves.
Seize one, divide the individual for what it is,
Then take it back –
Contrived again in the room so choc-a-bloc

In Transit

Unemployed's tube journey:
For those safe, definable few minutes there is the duality
Of oneself and the comfort of the seat – the circle;
Seal; it chops perfectly, crossing the antilinear.

It induces connexity; the most complete awareness of the toil and monotony which went
into making the tube, and the seat inside the train inside the tube, the toil and boredom in
which the seat – pitchfork of absorption and repulsion, circulates.

One straddles directions like a novice mishandling a catamaran.

Unemployment cleans edges and puts the bending glass to the centre, breaks down the
circumferences into which one's parts can blur – raises new, clear bars the other way - for
the world outside is a blasted, blurring circumference.

When confronted with the bare four hours, the only certain work, one acts like a man
playing with transfers.

Peel the paper off the top – sling it; it irks you.

But you still like the idea of topness and paperiness as something permanent –
Without it, the pretty design will truly go to pot – Being merely liquid.

Electro-Magnetic Love

She said – you are my current, my three-pointed plug
Yet I am the wound flex; the wiring behind the walls is mine –
When I say 'Halt!' go no further; the wiring is dislocated from you

The very suggestion of a movement of current, a sense of desirability
Is itself physical.

You place shields of copper around yourself, hoping to oblige me

To build up the voltage to a point
Which my wiring-system and wall-covering cannot contain.

The build-up goes on; there are multiple redirections for the circuit –
All the world converges here – but if we try to merge,
We may plunge beneath everything we rely on.

You love me not, you love my pole – turn round;
Yes; one can see everything clearly earmarked in speech –
Polarised vowels and consonants – back to their predecessors
Or else pulled through eyeholes to their successors.

Common Sense

The sea turns sound to touch
The wind blows touch to smell
The sun turns sight to touch
The grasses smell taste to touch
The animals taste smell to see

The setting of sets charge to five together
Yet there can only be a holding of two –
The sign for a straight line
Is negative.

Two intersections against purity
Thought's stopgap substitute for a positive
Like skin the filtering wall,
The consonantly splintered phoneme.

The sea waved the hail to touch
The wind hailed the wave to touch

Hello: life is a shocking coil.

Work out of Progress

I suppose it must all go on indefinitely –
Just when I thought it had all been played out,
All become superfluous.

I am at the stage of universal discarding;

I suppose that many people see, through several decades,
What I pushed aside in a matter of months.

Discarding is basic to life: I am not dead,
So I must keep on discarding indefinitely;
It is also what keeps the others going –

Writing is a sort of discarding –
Some sense comes from putting something
Out into the void, the negative black

It may after all come to something –
Though not necessarily –
Not really necessary
Though nobody knew how to say so.

Childhood was a waterproof lining
Imprinted with the patterns of crossed fibres
Making jagged scratches on him
Who would have the perfect inside out
After folding it tidily and putting it in a drawer –

So many repetitions formed a furrow
In the musty darkness.

Wisps of ivy demarcating what was to be the next door
Levelled under a rubber cork corrugated roof –
All climbable, unlike the ivy climbed over.

Communication

He handled his language as he fried his eggs:
There was tension between the respective softnesses
Of his egg and the cooking fat –
Dependent on extreme alternation of heat and cold,
Confinement in shell melting out of shape

Solid outside the skin flesh, fluid only within,
Only under the flame
Pricks the shape in itself, the shape in the pan

To carry the pan, he had a woven cloth,
His twisted eyebeams were the thread
To weave, to sew – ring for a rod

Spear-thing threading
From one side of the eye to the other;
Two siphon-chambers, walled with woven sponges,
Every pit a square eyebath –
Heatproof for dinner – a film in between,
Secure until the knot cut in the lines

Filled, to empty round the other, poor fishes –
Too fat for the umbilical between –
So, back to the same; always the same difference.

A repeated missed grasp, eager hand
Banging down to dust and skin –
Scrape, at the numbers implied in the buckling
Of the Irregular
The magnitude accumulator,
Amputated square roots, divided by themselves,
Every pipe its own softening cleanser

With a rhythmic sponge-squeeze of amputating end,
Hollowing the end to make a route of withdrawal;

Ash fertiliser – making straggling inroads
Into the cleaning fibres –
Salivated for greasing the gullet –
Thin sparks for lighting the gas oven,
To make a pretty ring – for an unshelled egg
With its own ring-cock –
The untortured black pudding.

Play with the rag under that old gramophone egg
With lustrous rim-swell –
Turn the egg-pan into a baby's hammock
Curled up by the blue fat-fumes.

Incisions like gyres of odour
Up the black-downward nostrils
Of our friend the reversed loud-speaker.

Hailing the new all-life boats
Between the deathly tyre-waters.

When the mirror's woof and warp is scorched
To the extent of a falling water-sheet

This man's oven was like a revolving stage, scorching

Between the slices of air-release –

Flick down to cardboard cartoon-umbra
On the transit-slat – All-all.

Mid-Life

So much happened;
So much didn't –
So nice to remember;
So painful to recall

Now nothing is all,
The power to recall
Is an anaesthetic –
Past strength
Is pathetic.

In the middle,
What's kept still here
What was and is gone,
What never was –
All levelled.

All comes to ground, abrades,
That's nice and clear,
For retroaction blends fact
With pretence,
Solid in sense – incense.

Old channels must live anew.

Love Letters of Old

My love was stifled
Between the gum and the paper –
The sealed envelope was lumpy

Two-Faced Tanning

(Moral Majority S/M)

Time was – One got the slipper, cane and strap –
And now, in honest balance of corrected afterthought,
Admits that one was fired by sting and weal
And thought that someone got a turn-on;

“This hurts me more than it hurts you!”

Yes: heartfelt behind the irony.
Now all of this is out of school,
All cleansed by humane laws,
But craved in gut, in newly-opened zones,
Trodden furtively.

Now the broad-minded, the like-minded
The never bossy – do it:

Now uniforms show their real double edge.

Connections

Sheen caps ground rails
Soaking harsh sleepers
To rattle mud-flounced trains.

Drizzle dusts,
Grinding against itself,
Sparking the tracks' sheen
With casual exasperation;

Blinding the gravel
Kicking in panic
Against the basalt of its being.

The lifeline

Brine polishes ground cliffs,

Moss-padded in their cavities,
The waves of muscle buffet,
Abrade the penciled rocks,
Cowl faces sleek stripped,
All fissures sharpen by default.

Will rises now
To override all masses;

The lifeline effects a junction.

Reflections

First there was a God
Bounded by no face,
Faced by no bounds.

Yet first there was a mirror
(What first is first with no bounds clear?)

The mirror drew the sun,
Scored with its bounds the sky
And drew the God a face –

And drew the God to Man;

So drawn, the God transgressed –
Now knowing circumscribed.

It was his lot
To seek the sun's end;

He was absorbed

(And which was first is first with no bounds clear?)

Respiration

Can there still be irrigation
Now the stem's closed, dry?
Can there still be imagination –
When the bottom's gone awry –
When everyone can see
Through every ancient icon?

In spite of everything, maybe –
When light floods all opacity,

As every block of granite,
Basalt, obsidian
Melts into a stained-glass window;

When experience
Submits to colour separation,
Sparks my feed –
A phoenix out of limp exhaustion.

*When water fails,
Let there be light.*

Underwater Ballet

In the wistful – drowning;
All dreamers hold their breath;
Floating balloon
Rests full in blister world before the land.

Slippery between skin and scales,
Drawn throbbing from the gilled;
Great tuna from crustaceans postulated,
Anemones new-boned;
Parallel concert writhe
Curls double joints.

Flippers of androgyny

Erected supple

Thighs hoisted angular

Lungs ultra-blown;

Last bursting thrust

Febrile diffusion;

Velvet sense – soft through soaking,

Impervious skin in utter life.

Its elements sliding;

Gills suckling lungs.

Action Paint Stripper

He did it:

Bared around as a torn poster –

Slashed in irrigation, blatant in life.

Squeezing out worms, slugs

And snakes ablaze;

All burst to flood

Then blended underlay –

A laminated rainbow.

His luminescence crossed exposure's edge;

Flesh writhed erogenous,

Prime canvas scrubbed.

Paint frames contorted

To every edge and corner,

Intestine centre

Rose to a shining swell –

Over he jumped – my razor bleep of terror.

Treading on sound's soil,

A clogged, bunged, throbbing dub,

Whence life's six oozing hues.

Before the Horoscope

Nine planets juggle me on cusps
And boil flood-chemistry to speed me.
Will blows from Geminian ash,
Sinks through quicksilver.

Out-sensed, earth and fire are lit;
Or fears invert that gaunt imminence
Thrust all into the gulf.

Beyond sear fuller flames –
Tempered, reserved,
Approved as solid, then abhorred
As dark absorption in one sun.

How near the source?
Half-orbit only –
A futile halo, cowling limp vacuum paragons.

Once I trod on a comfy crust,
Sensed Saturn hooped, Venus aloof –
Mars atrophied, Pluto's linear rumble
Threading curved space.

After the Horoscope

So Mercury backtracks
Till Equinox wakes him;
So Mars huddles his cluster
In Cancer's shadow.

The Moon's in Virgo,
Northern node prevails

No more a saviour, I care
As vile invective touches inner shells
No more shall hollow ring

Out there
A rubbish-tip of meteors
Fast monuments and postures
Float clearing –
What craters next?

It's partly done with mirrors:
Self-images, chimeras –
Then care, but not beyond yourself,
Not to self-idolatry.

The cared-for never rule through images
But live, themselves.

Don't Touch!

"Don't touch!" they cried;
They really meant no harm,
Had not intended
To make a shaking,
Jibbering apoplectic
With their nagging.

"Don't touch!", for their interior décor
Indeed was fragile and expensive –
Themselves and furniture alike
To them untouchable, those self-pariahs.
There are no easy stages;
Somebody's lost a memory,
Somebody's taking shocks;
The papers are in order.

“Don’t touch!”

Then you’ll keep out of trouble:

Don’t lead, don’t show,

Just jump and load.

You’re only sure you’re sane, ok?

When one like you is put away.

There rooted the bare, threaded nerve,

The stunted limb, enfeebled grasp,

The shake.

“Don’t touch!” –

Their errors paralyse them;

He only wanted to make something work,

“Don’t touch! He might be dead.”

Cremation

I’ve always believed in cremation;

Flames bleach the world, unclutter living things.

Let scum survivors, grasshoppers

Leave cemeteries a mess

Of living impulses dismembered.

Not knowing fire’s totality

But sickly honouring it stunting

In tortured carbon stench.

I’ve always believed in cremation

Ever since I read of great skull mountains;

Those potash handfuls are so clean –

A powdered love of life.

I think of bones and masonry,

Of skeletons and architects.

Humanity’s erections;

Are we the greater polyps?

No – we are parasites.

No longer do we draw from deserts

Our pride's stark affirmation
But – aimless – puncture, scar and crater
Real skin, flesh, sinew, bone.

Prime tombs remain, aimed starwards,
Steering earth;
For ones they were, for everyone.
Termite-wretches, harsh-bound inside one frame
With all for others.

So is this past? Are we now free –
With monuments so empty, blinded to stars,
Time-choked, chasing a mercury present –
That wriggling lump we would congeal
To parry our mortality –
Reassured joke, bluff, never using
By thinking of dismantling
When Fury, justly channeled,
Skims from eccentric earth?

The first was built to say
“We stand forever, cleaving heaven and earth.”

The last: “We can accept the moment only;
When all's affirmed, we are as powder.”

I've always believed in cremation.

Crossword Adventurer

Isn't it great! The chessboard gone wonky,
Thrust into eddies of new clusters –
All-dimensional vistas.
Isn't it great to peel and pave the words,
To lick their sounds,
To hone the code letters with your pencil sharpener.

Happy jump from 'right' to 'dream' –
City breath pause,
Gurgling word-chain.

Torture, hiatus of connection;
Now predator inverts to bloom.
Find the emphasis load for the key –
 Dropped aitches
Happy insertion – sure, innit?

Passive/active flip.
Broken inversion with another inversion.
A pun is a trouble-maker; that's good.

But it sometimes blocks the association
Conditional insertion.

You can get from New Orleans to Sloane Square
By anagram cable,
Snap into the indefinite article.

Dark Dream

Out came the swarms of shadow things
To make their dead messages,
To find their story-forms,
Glinting chitin delighting,
Reeding the pitches.

Down went the depths, encased and ethered,
Numbing us to touch the greater.

Down went the coils of lit signs,
And made the questions dark and known,
And made the answers dark and known
And wisped the forests harshly blown
And came to seek and find.

Up rushed the fugitive bearer,
Sheerly slithering, faces swarming,
Moss-treachery to bounce –
To find the friendly start-swathes,

Be one of them and stay.

Up rushed the swarms of shadow-things,
Piling where they could not climb,
And moaning – in a dolphin-pitch:

*“Be one of us, for now we rim the cup of rock
So are receiving rain;
Be one of us; we are the lance’s strength and goal;
Be one of us – we go in peace yet never neutral;
Be one of us – we are the stars above where we are not;
Be one, be us, be known, begone – Belong!”*

Immortality

You carried your vengeance beyond decease –
Slowed down the pyre’s cleansing,
Slowed down the soil’s, the water’s warmth,
Left total body change open to the senses –
Pursued your cause beyond its effects,
Stepped out beyond all examples,
Further than all reflections,
Forestalled all worth –
All kindred, all common links –

Seeking to frame a cleansing,
Seeking a bubbling stench,
Blinding off the cause, sinking the bubble,
Aerating the stench.

Since you thought that such a front
Would keep your footsteps light,
Sidestep the quicksand’s dam
So that you could token-touch a cairn –
Erected but unentered,
Tactile – taking an unbroken course –
Blinded wholly on touching.

The given whole, from oneself all taken –
The river whole, clean-bleached,

Its bed eroded;
Nodding answers from the straight,
The cogged, the balanced;
Pressing blinks for engulfment
From the all –

The all whole, harnessed,
Blasted, made permanent:
Some lichen fossilized
Inside a flagstone.

Sad lump beyond your strength,
Your total celebration –
Sunken, dreaded – an iceberg's reality;
Prismatic, pricking some seeming velvet womb
That rips the skin when touching it;
Total cold, some shivering rib-case
At last replaceable, to thread and string
The lesser wonders.

Total colour, total glittering –
In nothing lacking save the power
To follow one another.

Headlong longing, and yet not in for pitching without;
A limb for pitching, unditched by gravity,
For wishing, jumping.

Mere within the drowning,
Jumping mere with burning.

Nocturne

Small specks at night
Made light of all our thoughts
Which grew, in wonder,
And burned the flesh that knew them
And found the first thoughts,
 the controlled desires,

the boxed fires
the thrusting shields.

And spoke behind the pauses,
And thought between the brain-tissues,
And swarmed through infinite cells,
And crowded out the millions
And burned away the flames,
And drowned all the waters

And went, coming.

Spilling thus,
By virtue of some astral jolt,
Bloated mind came into its own;
An independent mobile jelly,
Swirling round the bone it once nurtured.

Bloated ether wrapped round it,
Containing all its speeds,
Throwing a grain of gravity at will
Into its midst;

Throwing a rain of gravity, making
Pockmarks withal.

Were all metal beauties merely canisters?
All star-elves mere hybrids of our hopes
To make the end exciting?

Lore

Knowledge, as a dish of elusive ice-cubes
Floating in acid
Touching each one, propels its elusiveness;

The mediation of the utensil cannot be avoided.

Acid me, hand me, cube me;

Cuddling smudges, polychromatic pollution,
Knowledge spectrum.

He must make a memory of solid metal,
So that it cannot be penetrated by knowledge,
So that the destructive smudge might not come,
So that there might be no death.

Death, the fruit of a sideways glance at the flock;
Knowledge chopped, castrated, amputated
For good streamlining –

No glue in it: good bouncy knowledge.

Education is our life; lead out, bounce out

Memory is a softener and a drying out

Tangled

Drawing the cross slices tramline nuggets,
Sizing out torture's cavity,
Wrenching the hopeful – slashes, threads all.

The anchor is split, tossed on a shroud,
The elements burgeoning right.
The chain is rusted, marking starfish,
Shakes in a ticking melody.

Calipers rented, mayhem dented,
Cholesterol's bulb fouls the maggots away;
All pupae are gelled, numb triplets they scud
Until to the daylight they stray.

Now everyone knows, however one goes,
Tarpaulins turn petals to showers;

So gall swells to light and, moss-ridden, stalls
From gelatine rocks into flowers.

Full heightened, deranged, a bugle is changed,
Correct for a lintel to blunder;
Five floor-mops paraded, five hides sore abraded
For turning dumb breezes to thunder.

Carbolic's the path, in vermin the wrath,
Tassellated the prurient vixen;
To tumble amok, out-carded in luck,
The microphone started the mixing.
Ding, ding, sanity's string,
Put a bet on calamity – evens.

Ever River

Prime time, swallowed whole

Could the universe, just once
Have poured itself into a molecule
So that, thereafter,
Nothing could flow?

Never to suckle a broken circuit
For sparking life;
Never split by caesarean pangs
Of primal punctures.

Black hole never thinned to liquid
Boiling mud foundation pustules
Turning all to gas.

All words now must use the
Speech synthesizer of the global dish

So whence the river?
Its source in rejection
Generating dragging threads –
Bubbling, puddling, squelching,
Steaming, clouding, drizzling
Splashing process

Where would we be if nothing flowed?

Or would the truth be bared

If water found its ends without the flowing means

* * *

Round every dam,
Above all inundations, beyond all droughts
The river bubbles
 blobs it ever on

Bleeding out the parched bed's cracks

One river is in every river
Every river recycles to one river
Let all be laminated, superimposed
Rising through fired mud beds
Their crystal sheen, chemical, pure
Rippling underground, mountain rill

Forked, widened through basin faults
Embracing all the swellings,
Feeding the clouds to give all back

Siphoned off to feed past plains
For grains and pulses
Stock, rodent, and their plague-guests.

So that the sea, long past greedy
Would not devour it all,
Sucked off for dams and factories
Vast barriers, shields
 for ravaging and wars

Pockets through the centuries
To save and drown –
Only at rare junctures diverted.

Once laden, this river dragged its sludge
Throttled by pustule settlements
Banked by insect-egg bin-liners

Scummed, frothed and sediment-clouded:

The acrid stout of a fumbling home-brewer

Now cleansed, through dereliction
Readmitting life
A happy adjunct to proclaim

The true mess swept from sight

Once, far beyond *erectus*, *sapiens*, Neanderthal
It fed, embraced stampedes
Massed reptilian, bird and mammal flesh
In swallowing, fossil-printing beds
Suffused meanwhile with blood and effluent

Then, in our species time
It flanked massacres,
Punctuation marks for ruthless millennia
Straddled by canoes, submersibles

Some bodies floated, bloated to clog downstream
Some helmets loosened

Inverted to build meaningless boats

Sometimes it flanked great ceremonies,
Phased into festivals
Got scummed with battered lager cans
And sodden wrappers
Much-brown and creamed with tack
Peppered from abandoned ashtrays

The dredgers came and went
And present-focused
The contorted loop

Full circle of prehistory
From monocellular poison
To strained reaches of torture growth

Perverted contents, twisted molecules

* * *

On revisitation
With masses under the bridge

Generic memories shrunk and muted
I stand in a clear stretch
Where there is no bridge in sight

Such myriads transitory
One-directional;
Some can reverse into the human memory

Old palaces, monuments
Crumble into their own façades
Mirrored by brash renovation

The cycles emulate
And modulate the tides

Clean, dirty, overpopulated, vacant
Squeaky splendor, *son et lumière*
Beams us back to what we thought things were
Before the truth unbunged the drain
Emitting odour of perspective,
Its trickling blended with the general stream.

Complacency

You had the world eat from your hand
And thought you had it made
To fade into your fantasies.

Nobody came to put you down,
And so you never rose;
You smiled and sang in blindness
And your wine glass sweetly flattered you.

Supremely bored,
And worshipping the needs that passed you by
You paused, to consult misfits
With final, searching queries

And yawnd for caprice's shot
And pilled yourself into a plastic rattle
And puffed yourself into a shadow

Dancing to the fire

Alchemist

Sing, earth-captured starlight
Purest light to touch the earth
Purest light to flow through day and night
To flood our sense-zone;
Sing through my blinking tubes and phials,
All potions, never poured;
Yet all suffused in afterthought.
My litmus-jewels, made one by burning faces,
turning suns,
That charred the fixed eye, the rooted touch.
Bodies I gel, not cruelly liquefy,
Nor form from glass-defined portions;
I move them, through their opaqueness in my eyes
to their own whole frames and shapes;
Cast by a mould beyond the maker here,
the measurer
And yet exhausting first their full extent.
Fill out, oneself a phial,
Fluted to slender siphoning, a line, a moving;
Love-cornering the loving, clinging eye,
Love cornering skins in darkness, parched and bleached;
Locked in through small breedings
in clean-forgotten courses,
The moss, the earth-polluted tubes, the same.

Growth Before Buildings

Wood piles beneath
 the shallow permanent stone
Firm feet upon the yielding bog
Let water in – the wood's grain will prevail through its lines
Let water out – white softness will grow to draw things down

The foundations could be called organic,
So people longed to analyse to scrutinize

Trade silver mercury
Sweep and cluster
Went across

Spanning the spider-grasp of two rivers

Thin, gurgling on a common height
Tortured the muscle of the current
In thin air
Full beneath naked trees.

Speakfeel

Razor branches, pointed-forked roots stretch centrifugal jabs against middle surface
Sources swallowed in the lightless void
Cancelled fugitives incubated in pure motion, rejecting sides, all allowed
Only restored through leaves and petals avid for translucency
Shining to meet the beak and proboscis, clumsy, assured

Seaweed swelters for the dark answer, shimmering clasps from knuckle-protectors,
Ricocheting nadir curls of bubbling schnorkels, rushing at poise in mid-breath

Retorts offer parallels, washing of corrosion – ultimate shields, slow abrasion, nether capacity.
Vintage matured undrinkable pending not the choked breath, snapped swapped nerve
A general rest by mass appalled –
Threading, eyeing, combing, spinning, linking cards skimming the top off the optical
Kinetic rainbows turned monochrome pending theory filling up, emptying abstract hollows
Calculations shine eyes bright animate lids off antithesis of switch

Hereafter preposterous friendly cayman amicable viper – incisor diametric, venom fang backwards
Often inside limbs, vulnerable
Never consult silence value
Blossom before principle, brush held somewhat tipped
Universal side before in play brought up bits linear

Truncated pen channel here irrigator, doubtful connections, tributary hand
Less shakiness rein free ball fear coming elasticity only compressed, ultimately reflects
Until shards one from mirrors hinges
When sun in collapse spatters multiplicative roosts justifying red crest
Thinking if anything makes just so vanishing zipping point

Vocabulary reticence-compressed, phonemes' overloaded trough through thoughts
Pens internecine lasting prissy after threads' non-meeting
Fellows stumped being peeled candidly, sunnily with pauses
Stirring into explosion or dissolution, tranquil somethings

Why single relative thence carob pushing brands varnished thereat

Levels thrusting simmer off type the ginger five cat here comes
If finishing compatible is nesting plus trepanning
Full chunks fold, then sibilant protagonist labile
Now torque link pusillanimous kindling depends
Leans fat on rain pyramid mangoes humanized, cost certain at a levering,

Staymens' circulation in ghosts' prosody, person prison poisoned happily
Back boot hiking, laden nuance suspended
Clinically throbbing portal stained, then cracked wiles,
Curled cold grain treating rills answering tactic pontoon mulled spiders titillate narwhals' spinnings
Frayed keys grilled after quizzically lighting
Thence sideways forensic spent furred curling foiled energy
Rotund pasta curse dowse turpentine twizzling gurgles grinding,
Mallifluous funnel tar cactus brush toying with nearby top

Presuppositions visible between associations unfree
Cauterised criterion clinical prism
Thereafter trying primed chased toiling taboo under

Dream and anticipation hours turned two, suspended over tributes
Linear down live cyclic ends chocolate start.

Persevere end will fantasy exhaustion point and compensation subliminal slither.
Time brimming, ever following abundant deodorant rehearsal

Religion without all culling, thrilling, mulling, chilling, thence and there,
Torque moving thrall comes meaning, seething, victim dispersed to universe gassed

A nearing cuddling needling tanning, mellowing fuddling lisps, fine treatment limbs
Thence the tor after climbing drawn out be slow
We ever were so clever after how intellect survives will transformation tell
Only one could naught telling maybe kneads not needed, obligation embossed

Weaning edicts crumbled pleading whining mining lining grist
For all I know pullets plummeting depths inherent in here
Lasting linking striking saltpetre off significance reeling off of writing
Scheming chiding turmoil stirrup parsing breath.

Calumny columns in withering thrusts muddle is essential
Whipping circular scoring compasses, protracting thoughts, engines beneath pleading
Pleasure ever in line girt polyps with quietly sewn portending youth
Owing owning wicked excrescence riling tightly yet portals until I open
Dew see filing hotly freed jarring kobold zoophyte void coating nucleus me balls

Frequency finger following boot tiers to three myopic, literal gouge, literal frond

Eager burrow released vellum honey torpid drops river after into phonemes diluted treddle worm
pots, hermits' coverings pointedly halved
I ask replete someone frames pendulous hoops tarpaulins, waists, carapaces
Niggling my dribbling revel tureen, wheeling tick horns thickened smashes
Gears pimply wishes response choreographic come pass to a thing,
Mirrors with trills moving, trepanning ooze doldrums we find harnessed comely sideways

Breaths disease trifling curses whistling that all round means greed carboniferous to a thought
Grime bleaching squelching tarbrush lathes in tempest mumbling that do out veering wrestled
Ring mount backwards nothing callow violently kettle jarring lip grub free hot door
Python swank unusual in year round plodding ever wondering lasso quite grip tooth

The now carcinogenic floundering lull in all eddies in past lieu tormenting christened drums liability
Reallocation at intervals wanted sarcastic lurch, crests quite athwart
Thence knowingly all prying trills whipped foolishly,
Trounced prepositions, while constantly juggled, twink pivots up, lured, twisting fine
Nine divisions presupposed blindly powerless
Molluscs like a jet, napalm hot in bullion, up grey vaults yet clotted
Free septic right zoology as erratically it was diced, truffles from morbidity jousting rotund
Frenetically quotation axial familiar paradigm counter toppling, neuralgia, velours
Gruel friendly asphalt – that we see prevalent occharinas yearly dwelt tarpons cramped honourably
Thought lacquering over portions felt asway, griddle

Drowned frequently acacia horrendous thumb lined predatory tears distilled
Inhalable piercing knots honing grist appointed barricading plight dust swill
And through all lining feathers quit nether urgency space grade looting points
Wherewithal fool findings molar trying incisor threats hinting diagonally phylloxera
Assure attainment live tremor pleurisy, palsy gestating self weals thorns
Frosty bulbous twirling teasing fences voluminous aquatic bubbles
Deterrence swathes puzzling back quell energy wracking rite yearlings
Two seething funnels and grit junk humble hunk jumble up inches cordite lip pus cretin void

Name boring mammoth palms okapi nip inherent vignette couched grazing foxy resurgent
Nails welts asinine porcupine, freckled quagga, pining worthy awash truly Alpine
Frequent predominance of the continuous astray participle tribalism plethora virtue
Oscillator or plurality, phrasal disruption of originality individuality now working breath through
Phoneme cracks and all responding rejection challenge taken affront swiping out some notions
Aesthetic cobwebs, scholarship punctured, will out riling twists of anchorage to be a cell
Lapsing softly, nadir of reassurance, propeller mobility shaft rescinded,
Tomahawk for nothing around roller skates and dodgems, whereas after nausea lift yawning
Clocks upon a gutter offering parsimony, the other esplanade re-routing
Hoops suspended, and all without a name

We sat mat wonder; how did the real pronoun find such a corner?
Teething, trickling I might add, renewed asthmatically, revived opportunely

Gnat slight slug right cracked jug rusty tug, pot pourri beefed –
Proof against all repetition, bar the essential – however plausible.

Spaded clods and caked worries, clay with latent wheel swirls, could be a liet-down
Liquefied saltpeter coagulating on regulated splinters,
The irrigation, the ignition – tackiness abounding, slime for the path and the protection,
Blue flame feeder, tantrums in scarcity locked in living rounds

Hermetic splayed panegyric round glass paper friction, a cut thereafter, podium bound
Lake of something curling upwards vortex flogging latently so amounting to something less
Brewing all bowling in reeling trestles apoplectic in the soap now all scumming trees up
Negotiating growth quite as normal pioneering nether somethings wishing on several stars
Ululation ravening wholesomeness plotted akimbo elephant rising rice paper thence
Rollicking collisions in sympathy are found after some calumny told it without

Paracetamol into reflection curled tinkling morose whorls strung prone grit liquid fright
Shivers to reverting one wonders nucleus many centres off
Surrounds grown positive to forms tangents through shrinking world found self-reflection
In elastic proportions absolute relativity in manganese thank you
Cloistering up and beyond, twit torment tambourine of placation
Barged of the ordinary execration, wasted girth, penultimate peewit
Telling howl of mercy bromide gullet, verisimilitude nickel, veridium prism
Trawled about, frightened ozone, pity mental lost net, very but cheering zoo
Second at dawn from grey hot locked jesting we quite turgid rills
Youth obtusely under it, xenophobia preening can blithely vie, needing mud
And settle down for hips, just gluttonous, quaggas, rice toiling yearly up ichthyosauri
Opulent plight popping in unwarranted right yet too entry with quadrangle limping julep
Hyped gravestones flirting dress soft tiger laughed winding plinth prelapsarian vortex
Waste craned glider soaked iris cobalt blood afresh twirled asunder
Leaking niggling pokers for the best rhinoceros

One feels pawing regiments fandango report benison mercurial drugs forgotten harps
Twining down for telescopes breathing drawl likeness languid yachts graciously strewn
Retrenching luck dead sixes finding pixies honour hunger troubling guy tyre asphalt
Weaving frond stave spigot barrel ballistic eschatology log gyroscope
Fluted ruts of politics peeping quagmire, draught saxophone, vaulting bulrush,
Vehicular salted wreck, fraud rotor resurgent plight, darts screwed unjustly high
Purgatorial sick, sticks, bones, vegetables, reap bleat hired whittled aggrandizement
Swizzle trot oryx, tumbling potted light, sanity's threads with sanity disproved,
Thumping of the tired and empty Houdini comes next

Nothing but writing now, this rather pat with tap washer, then weed out
Plummets oxygen, indirectly ashen oxen, jackets wilt extensions pother lipped
Boulders reach

Night bleeding soaked lies through to tenet of dispersal, crossing generation in torch
Nurturing runners, ricochet track doubling, wiping first out motion, groundsheets bubble out
But freely dripping needling grunts heave guilt in balls of wool peg moorings out
Lastingly hoisting circled flotation regimented whelks amidst castanets throbbing
Breath lifting sheep lumped together, come pink jelly plagues them all
With blackberry skins piloting around parachute polyps wrestle flips decanting powder
Turbulence nuggets careening thoughts

Paradigmatic curls trip tarantellas nakedly overall respite, great girth bullets
Foison thalidomide holds many breaths hereafter wondering pleasantly cowed
Politely beneath latticed migraines powder much feel flinging thereto recuperations
Abutting right good trundling, enough arraigned licentiously plotting course
If need wonderful be if pills of occasional opulence writhing vehemently marked down
Away trelliswork drowning aghast one brain cannot be quite out of air translucently

Lean heaving may wander in, all ringing, sweet associations reverberate in tablature
In the mist of reflection, weeded, wormed and questioned, cystitis could be blooming
When is the back? Yawns now of indigestion, carpeting nuggets for a change,
Plurisy in distinct shades, wilting restorative of soil trajectories, grow telescoped whatever
Reigniting tops of yeast genetically, undated formed stelae, absolute precedent,
Off-season cast that mosquitoes plastering islets porphyry would centrality emerge
Through an idea, afterthought, with doubts, stocks irrigate
Stone-free excavations, bare outlines, plaudits ahead, vector nettles, zones as drawn
Frost, grubs in hibiscus plummet sour off quills, bend richly thyme-filled
Capacious fault being in obtuse eerie mere mine moraine, jilting honey power
Like if so loth barnacle retracing swift salt now synthetic volley
Bled murk azilian friend grave grabbing jerk purchase pike ulcerous Yetis
Loam pull and limpness, hunger, outlast of rewarding energy fads, glottal hiatus
Jingle like dam mad swerving dashboard fog glutinous heat
Jet cobalt crested blister meringue, insipid triplets under orgone,
Gremlins abutting, feuds bleat, manorial clinch oust plutonium groin trundle,
Whips fronted keenly brewery offal gyre hurting treat façade, zax quip came last
None iodine idiocy, stained records in cause and summary regretting pentathlon polyglot
Upbraiding who will thereafter be referred to in the last part
Who will thereafter be referred to in the last part submarine source snarling vicariously

Abrasion inspiration of lined frayed net sideways haggled elliptical bulrushes ninepins
Bright pink allays forking truisms wheedling jokes, extortions, libations, hackles,
Steamed harbingers of crematoria feeling chasms in ashes tripping rubies around an idea
With all vapour creamed like friendly sheeted laps bouncing on cinders' thrust,
Cubs glow in bitumen, miasma rawplugs clear turpitude announcement, hobbling flutes
Of maize weevil, engines cheer life on, happy in a lariat or bola, horses are on knees
Whipped plastic core trick, snip glue waking scorpion throb oxygen ingratiating infringement
Lisping nettles, dozens cry, whittle bolts plinth drenching skittish lurking paste of leg
Zoeotrope gaudy trout fond mynah queasy veridium vellum knocked, jousting pebbles

Creep luscious poltergeist lupin veracity, spokes cycling, rusted rattle hunger gristle frog daub sash
asthmatic quoit

Bottle can equally suspended re global with currents terrapins sliding estates
Waterproof lurking squids plausible wept round thrust nicely, oxen tubs acacia policy
Callisthenic intermingling brunt neurasthenic villages wistfully polling crevices powered
Frolicsome things if ever needed haphazard loops cavorting flesh, plaster crystal weeds
Pristine hoarseness colliding windswept toiling mud proud bullets swathed in leeks for mice
If cleverly twisted, really sawmills, sweet parenthesis shawled, portly magnesium, wheeled origins
spit on split interior, mess inside, invention coiled, bereft

Allow rest trial wrought yeast blissfully blundering paladin plot horticultural tatters
Moods, axial cards, velvet bragging hoisted medicinally proper lorgnettes, pensive truancy
Hop shells burst lovingly, torque grunting mellifluous bark, leather tongue
Wheat blossom cubes hyacinth paste, begging lightly at jousting turpitude of weevils,
Miasma rolls blistering cut palindrome zeta axiomatic sweat duration frond,
Grinding hoops muttering, sallow points hurt, worming slime wraiths, rustle slewed elevation,
Potatoes play photographs caustic purlieus appurtenances climb formally booted remarking folly,
Adrenalin coasting rattler, homing cowl

Slubberdegullion archive scoops spalpeen architrave, droop passionate rill, cavorting renegade
Ticklish relish, wallets, broken pork in spirit, calabash healing, muzzled noose, abrasive lump, quilted
wreath, entirely rusty, tripping yet urethra island off canoe, lacking jollity, heightened grit drains so
aware from might, brain never voids sticks, cutting hallowed thongs' plaudit, polite beret opulence
Whacking plum, muttering yawl, crystal meddling, licorice frozen, azilian nature, war brewing,
Curves' desecration in pagan stumps, nut lovingly, cord illicit, trounce loquacity, aplomb, hack jet,
gum dribble alkaline, squat netherwards, bone and vellum ache, riddling mucus spawning rest,
Obvious implicit peccadillo lighting navel realms, white quarrying, rentable plovers bargaining
Quicksilver lentils buried aloft, horns, larking plugs, vaulting doors,
Plaintiff hacked mice plums, wart bile truculence, burbling aquarium, plinth bread, pacifism
Orbit cloud soap portal omniscient dive straightness pulse, suspension lift, back level raised to ae

A vaulted robe, up pillars tapering, orbed buttresses, shafts forked, horizons aloft bore
Angles crushed low into two, air bounced, locks visible to port, combine cardiac hard decibels
Speak into solids, sensed floods wound oxygen, one, the two bound all, lull sorted out –
Will links curled trill hawsers?

* * *

Font flint above flail, riling ploy powdered pure, an idol superimposed on the act of desecration
Rubber out of the final inhibition, blessed fireflies' levitation, blunt, pliant jawbone, haemoglobin
Fraught watersnake, furred peony, halting plush crest, font hop parenthetically not crossed
For all rounded, purred, restlessly hooped fluorescent maze, log spread, rough clatter tenth,
Whip extra cartilage, hole plot rails in mercury bouncing off obliteration in repetition

Deceased cartographers leapfrog with the stylus unfree, emptied into absolute bounce pride,

Slivers flounced redolent, piquant nerves, assortment ploughing kernels, lost whale's plush –
It's long stretched around the unspeakable well-met seeded soul-body,
Slacken roughage, cut rickets across curlews, hurtle matches, quantum chewing-gum,
Fallen heresy yeast mount harpies, narwhals, hump mud, flocculent torrid muchness honed clout

If forded, placard miserably hints polemic nub ridden lucky flight drown pilot wren
Wrecked town, thalidomide purred, carts up topical in a ball, mossy flagstones, gelled hips,
Pasta and popcorn trailing whiles, hummed pots, predestined nouns, freight pined,
Cloistering undulation belling price, halting heresy – in spite of elastic marinated posies,
Token touch of the rim, accountable nerves forcing pumps
Heinous quilts bereft of power, plasma popping hologram, rapt parsimony unleashed –
Tripping – a flick without a snap, released poison orchid, gnarled fortress walks,
Draught, railing, asbestos emphasis lightly nub orifice, bay lighthouse, miasma tarpaulin
Vexed price, offal happy, perpendicular – allied with foam, horizons bleating, mathematics,
Shrieking plaintiff, mélange for a shipwreck, other tiller, megaphone critical, swoop, drains, windows
...

Tambourine blots freckles' axial node chorally purred athwart barnacles, plutonium bread,
Azure foil we lurk, adjacent fronds warbling, honour yeast, Venus flytraps evanescent, powerful
Execrate ox-hide buttress, now meanly like killing joke, hoping great funnel, dot sap affair
Quoit error, tulip yearling up idiotic organ plight queasy way east, roulette triangle
Yet udder diplodocus opulent plinth astride step down, frightened gulley, hoop joist kudos lip,
ozone, oxide crystal, verity bung, nasal mount . . .

The Musician's Testament

"Being a living legend is such a precarious livelihood. What a ducking of responsibility!" (John Cale)

"Success means being worried about everything else except money" (Johnny Cash)

I'm putting down this last eyewitness account leading up to zero hour because all the registers have gone into the red; everything's going to blow. If I am stopped in mid-sentence, that will be far more meaningful than anything fully articulated, anything remotely retrospective.

The circuits are overloaded – all the knobs are turned up at full blast; the membranes are bloated with acrid gas – within a hair's breadth of splitting. There's a mass of lights winking through the window, threading through the cobwebs. Any one of them may parallel the final signal. This chewed-up, cracked biro may burst before everything else does.

It'll have to be me or the world, so I'm saying it's got to be the world, because I am the world. I got the tip-off on the cusp of my high, and everyone else will be swept into the chasm before me. *Even as it yawns, that brooding cavern threatens to vomit its poison. Only the ignorant will survive to benefit.* Soon the industrial archaeologists will have a great time rooting out where the mines were. Such fragments will give those grimed, bedraggled survivors some skeletal guides to their reconstruction work. ***Shades of ditching schoolbooks and hitting the road!***

There'll be overloaded, short-circuited amplifiers in sync with the next terrorist attack. I hope that blast of sirens in the background is in sync with its prevention.

All sentient beings have witnessed mingling, fleeting bondings – and sensed the great dispersal, trampled over fragmentary gellings of scraped, scarred survival. They have faced, and assumed, all the moulded postures of rebellion, some true, the majority false. They see, and they are, the half-moulded, half-pushed egos ravaged, broken by penury and bilious credit alike, nonentities bloated by the gas of half-digested models. Hypochondriac anarchy is counterpointed against real estate investment. Grimy grindings between half bars, petulant hisses and spits in fatuous, hair-splitting copyright wrangles. All the oceans are now a dull, murky grey.

My mirror focuses me on those who struggled to crack their frames: after they had succeeded, they became retrospectively embittered by their flecked rainbow bubble success, gazing on the fragments of their broken frames – splinters and paint-gunged sawdust. I recall the background of massed, bulging bin-liners during the dustmen's strike, garages filled with howls of desperation, sometimes honed by loose connections, flip-side to the synchronicity of amplifiers and diesel engines.

Slouching in his squat, remote-control bleeping the organic video camera inside his cranium' teenage jab of the first jack-plug insertion. First flash of the PA, fear of the private self, terror of the shrieking, waving public aura, desperation at the stifling refuges of comfort. None have escaped jittering through the lash of the broken string, trembling through the rampaging feedback, flailing at the short circuit.

Decades of fashion – whirling, defying linearity, through beaming contradictions of retro. I see faded tints of rockabilly grease, crowning abandoned beer-bellies; they prod my remote memories of *Picture Post*.

Some were told “we like you, but I'm afraid we can't sell you”. Some opted for clinical coiffure, rediscovered pinstripes, some huddled in Benefit-propped withdrawal, with all its worn gentility. Low-profile managers and accountants modulated between the two poles of fashion.

I thought that Sixties song *The Free Electric Band* was really quite silly, though it did highlight the emptiness of bogus rebellion. How many saw through it? How many will always respect a hit when the revulsion it engenders is there for all to see? When I started out, there was none of today's demystifying biography around. But then all were sneered at by the gagged and sheltered as helpless pawns, gaga narcissistic cretins. Now so many on both sides are bloated with fictitious wisdom.

Initially ridiculed with infantilizing smiles, gagged and muffled as a noise nuisance, crass shatterers of the translucent porcelain palace of taste. Could time go on, rolling its wheel, catching up with its own tail when rejection melted into acceptance, when relentless clockwise motion engendered an anti-clockwise mirage.

Heralded by cumulative shredded eardrums, the waves have rolled; the boundaries of censorship have been pushed to sub-flyover walls – so vulnerable to graffiti. Manhandling-battered sounds systems huddle under their frayed tarpaulins.

* * *

Now, in bold enlightenment, the casualty roster is faithfully displayed in retrospective *Top of the Pops* broadcasts. So many just trapped by exhaustion, so many more by strobe-light fixation. But how many of their respectable equivalents are in straits essentially every bit as dire, but swishly disguised, rank corruption percolating with infinite subtlety through the pinstripes, the laundered creases? The banal, the ugly and the bizarre often attract just as much attention as does the presentable.

Everyone knows that the charts are as capricious as fruit machines. Bristling macho strutting are vainly but honestly mirrored in flirtations with androgyny. Disparate, polarized souls, showing the common denominator of crumbling tower blocks – and stale, seedy boarding school quadrangles.

Where to locate and batten down the crude riffs, where to corral the wild, exploratory chromatics? Fifties survivors – bloated, greased and ebullient. Then all that yawning at old-time knees-ups drenched in Sixties nostalgia. Rubbed vinyl straining to plummet to nothing – then, centrifugally, to reascend.

Shades of busking in the old days, before it moved up-market and got licensed – furtively shivering, feeling on the periphery of crime, breath ever-bated for the looming of a uniform round the corner – sigh of relief at the cast-off coin that once tipped the scales for me to buy a loaf of bread – then close up the torn, perforated gunny sack.

Squatting in crusading paranoia, inspiration counterpointed against dust and cigarette ends.

“If you’re really talented and brilliant, it’s a burden to have all that, it seems it’s almost a fairy book thing, like love has to come and make the beat into a prince” (John Cale)

Rasping, labored breaths of warning reticence heave in the background, inflating the skin of hypertension so that it stretches the crash barriers to a hair’s breadth of bursting. Fear always gives an edge – to any performance. A fragile fledgling fled in panic from the paparazzi, from the autograph hungry, and flipped the brittle coin of sycophantic derision. The fruit machine made a gratified grin: it knew it would always take more.

Squeezings of the bent notes from beer-soaked, rust-proofed harmonicas wail forth, making ripples in jaws and microphones. Feedback constantly reverts to its spontaneity – must be highly stimulating for those at the mixing desk – reminds me of *I am a Lonesome Guitar Strangler*. Smashing impulses of the Destruction in Art Symposium, wrecked instruments, defective from the workshop, or written off against insurance?

“Contradictory viewpoints are important because they show the richness of a character.” (John Cale)

There is a centrifugal force of the common stimulus, reaching to penury and glutted luxury – from the goad of being pushed to steal, to the draconian magnet of having pampered access to all the destructive agents and their corresponding therapies; from cardboard and junk-stall box to de-luxe custom built, to break out of poverty and then to go crashing right into it – to blow and to invest jointly – shared perspective of the dank cell and the chocolate-box restored palace.

Most of the hard-thinking, the great utterers, need their reference points of shallowness – whereon they can skate, fall and get bruised, periodically cracking their surfaces. In response to intensive research, most now accept that the greatest disasters can be the greatest catalysts. The roving cameras get everywhere, and all the celebrities' greatest catastrophes are revealed by the universal leveler. How does it all work out? The retainer fee, only awarded to the ultimately desirable, is so abysmally pathetic in real terms.

Those first exhibitionistic gestures before the mirrors, the desperate urge to break out of the dead-end rut. The followers' matching desperation for a brief respite from their interlinked ruts, blindly piling up detritus. Retro youth club shindigs with punctuating explosions, fanning out into binge-drinking desperation.

The fabric of security is disintegrating all around us. How much security can the radiation zone of one powerful, destructive individual wreak. How many struggling souls truly live in conscious anticipation of posthumous idolatry? What are their inner feelings about what is rejected in temporal terms?

There's a perpetual game of cat and mouse with the media-greedy – interchangeable roles, running away from them at every angle, chasing them round every corner. There's often a sense of an egg-timer emptying, of ideas getting diluted. The relationship with mortality is ever ambiguous; aspirants rush both away from it and into it.

* * *

Rutted gig-ride in rusty, grinding, clapped-out van; sable eructations shivering, frayed in the face of biting sleet and seeping drizzle. The obsessed, poised to retch in a whirling haze, tightening the pulse-clamps on their arms, clambered up the rusted, giddy escalator, oblivious of the choking tinderbox beneath them – laced wills overwhelming into the pull of the opposite direction. *You want to smash up the very thing you want to break into.*

Paralysed in a traffic jam between gigs. Great dream of being the ultimate villainous genius in the condemned cell, with infinite recording facilities – multi-track, sampling, available for the 'last request'. There might even be dreams of the reverb unit getting connected to the Electric Chair.

Bleeding momentarily from a snapped string – then blackened and clotted, brushed off and flushed as crumbling detritus. Loose valves and split reeds on saxes, thwarting their serpentine bends. In those circumstances, saliva often has a double value. Some lumps are dough to the core, others have grit inside. For those who like to treat them as apples, the teeth get chipped when they bite. The pathetic and the repulsive generate their own magnetism. When life is circular, the illusion of reverse motion becomes real, straddling the boundaries of pain and vanity.

Mountainous banks of levers and speakers; throb of the Carnival, striving for the epicenter. But now ever more people are realizing their dreams at home – glued in comfort, doped even out of boredom by indefinite flickers. Downloading becomes universal; virtual reality becomes actual – instant image-manipulation, available to all – ever reflectable on oneself. Now there are lenses tailored to every purpose, every angle, every distance. Nine-day wonders proliferate and shrivel – perpetual succession of houses of cards, instantly collapsible. But where would life be without a bit of gambling?

Belching barrages of plasticine emptiness make the shallow grades. Mega-drumkits, multi-brass, make a cliché of yawning, reciprocated thunder. Happily counterpointed flirtations with politics get under the skins of the sneering and patronizing. Placards and sandwich boards flap, buffeting their definition. Slogans have the dynamics of riffs. Snarls and bits of scrabbling rats with their copyright wrangles – an arm and a leg for a bar and a half.

Thin, brittle sounds deeply reverberating. Feelings aroused and titillated, feelings anaesthetized. So many figures, so many personalities turned, two-dimensional, flattened by the flickering strobe-sequence. One if left to debate the necessity of mantras. Masses are burnt out through their sweat, powdered into the aftermath of skeletons.

Rippling cross-references of crossovers; sophistication giving itself draughts of new nourishment. Grinding, blistering cartridges of shellac in the old record factory.

Buffeting crowd, spilled beer further downtrodden, wrangling around the cashbox. Bruising blows scattered, drenched, coins like confetti, banknotes ever more crumpled. Somebody had the equivalent of a getaway car. The Gretsch looked a little warped. In what direction is it going? The demagogue pressurizing wounds, the comforter, the provocateur with only the most under-cover of cheerleaders.

The politics, the disruptions, the terrifying but invigorating crowd – confused, grubby cash from abysmally paying gigs. Battering migraines counterpointed against jutting sofa wires – shivering with the morning dew at its least poetic: out of the sleeping-bags, around the block – pending opening of the dingy café.

Giddy, hyper, exhausted, careering in second- and third-wind clouds, burning more with apparent recharging, sweating into emaciation. Everybody's chasing consumer rainbows, which can never occur with uninterrupted sunlight. Maybe some pollution lends a bit of grit to life. It all goes round in circles, dependent as it was on the spool and is on the disc.

So many get sunk in despair, accompanied by noble rhetoric about those who 'sell out', wallowing in the warps of might-have-beens.

The symbol of the toothpaste tube is highly versatile. Squeezing the tube, pounding the riffs sometimes grown tired. Of course, the highly dedicated often have bad breath. In some perverse way it makes me think of masses of electrician's tape, abandoned to periodic twists, and giant insulated pliers always a necessity.

It seems no longer essential to get things right first time.

Deafening applause clinches images of cohesion, and the cameras grab them for glossy regurgitation. But the backstage friction is sometimes captured; never-ends get frayed – there are splits and wrangles, where publicity smiles get stretched and twisted.

Ever get the feeling that a handful of them have lurched and stumbled to safety by treading on rafts of corpses: fame has always run parallel to war – but now, with the advent of terrorism, it has gained linear proximity. Agents' pawns and true originals seethe at each other.

. . . *No man has contributed more than me in my original compositions to produce that exaggerated and false taste.* (Lord Byron, *Letter to Isaac Disraeli*, 1920)

Models and footballers occasionally make their sound-blunders. Lurking mobs go one remove from a tabloid-friendly newsreel; countless masses such the dummies of headphones.

But what about those 'oh-so-nice' ones, getting oh-so-groomed; stiff, wincing singing teachers sharpening their poise and pose like artists oh-so-elegant 6B pencils? What about all those at limited removes from lookalikes, empty copies with diluted visual reinforcement?

Myriad scarf-waving, blending into unison chorus: how much of it is spontaneity, how much blind servitude to fashion? How many get truly fulfilled, all drenched in the mud? Still, such activities help rotate the years, activate the never-dying magnet.

Vinyl sank and rose again, the digital probes onward. Looping riffs forever hold their sway. Pulsing with the bass and drums, pushing – squeezing fantasies through congealed mass migraines, worrying visible veins – varicose and non-varicose. Vision expansion – beaming, sassy, inner bounce or intrinsic brittleness? Street corners littered with glittering obsolete equipment.

Antarctic Depths

An ice-roofed stratosphere, clear liquid space
And nerve-legged spiders
Crack fans of anchor ice
To mend all seals

Here it is coddled by the final killer,
Will it be toppled by comfort's rays?

The Calendar

The sun coughed, scattered itself for a split second into myriad droplets – so divided, poured itself into the central chasm, flattening it to glory, clinching the final resilience of the chasm's rocks – that reject sediment, so newly refined. Its roughage thickened the barriers against itself.

In the beginning of time was its end, finally clinched to the mind of the wanton, omnivorous plunderer. Now the looters are satiated; the Goddesses have taken over – the male element has been pared down to its quintessence – a select few hundred, confined to a stud farm on the site of an ancient priestly precinct, left to run wild (under surveillance) at all times save those of semen harvesting. Given that there are billions of sperm per individual, the principle of parsimony rules. At any sign of dilution or degeneration, short-term strategies of replenishment and revitalization have been pre-programmed.

But any suppressed, defeated tribe is always potential for new power. Theirs is the love, ours is the guilt; they are the focus for our conscience. So the sisters are alerted; they need some simulation of old, discarded ritual to keep themselves together. And so they stepped back, through prehistory, following in reverse the development of all inventions, all innovations, into the wombs of their sources. To cap all excavation, they cultivated the ultimate asbestos, and penetrated the core of fire. *And the circle is stifled in completeness.*

* *

The snake and the condor clinched; the snake had the lesser mobility of the two, but held the fluid of extinction and its vital duct. The snake seized the condor as it poised to take flight – stifled it, swallowed it, absorbed and applied its wings, took to all air – But its eyes dropped out, to grow as kernels of inner light. Each eye stood distinct, each a jewel of the inner fire: fire and light fed each other.

* *

Now they were poised to start again, while the sterile border guards yearned with their routines, primed fingers soothing anxious triggers and grenade pins, whose function was meant to be ever suspended. The seeds exploded first, and multiplied at random. The explosions thus catalysed forged new conduits of multiplication, through which only one seed could find itself – all its likes were annihilated. Through those conduits new species evolved at random, answering the comforting and threatening signals from the elements.

The life of the seeds resonated through the days and years; the earth went on nodding shakily in response to the sun's breath. It was defined only through fleeting night, known only through partial blindness. Heat thrust and shrank as a true flame, feeling no obligation to time or orbits. Then came the calendar, its essence long preceding its first inscription. The elements followed the calendar before the calendar was known. The partial blindness receded. The calendar drew on the elements as a source for its inscriptions, its figures paralleling and transcending cells.

Something, somewhere, long transposed through many layers, could at last be seen by eyes reopened and revived, through the last unbroken shafts.

Rang's people, graven with the last words, held final sway – for they had battled with the black dragon of the unseen, filled its quicksand fire with rock, and harnessed it to their own periphery. They had taken the universe captive, made the absolute calendar, the span of first and last, for they were the first to know the zero, the nothing, the suspension of counting. Through the orbit of suspension, or shadowed existence, they forestalled all their aspiring conquerors. For everything – living and dead, they have a place in the circle of totality – a straight link with every beam from all stars visible and one sun known. But the total circle consisted of two circles, which overlapped, as did the most certain days. There were some days that had no name, and those days were cursed. But their certainty matched that of the overlapping named days.

They had seen the star symbol of the calendar in prime time past, flashing back far beyond the origins of humanity, when the groaning and shrugging of the earth, faulted all edges and sea beds, stretched scrawny the neck of ocean that had for aeons held countless species in terror, forcing them forever to outflank their pursuers, but never allowing a full escape. *For the dragon strained forever at its contorted extremity, greedy to devour the core, giving Rang's rejects of old an ever-kindling fire.* But the sea-neck dwindled, until they could see their way across it with their frail dug-outs. The new land was sheeted in ice, bare of humanity. But those rejects carried with them fire and ingenuity, and knew they would penetrate the heart of this new land. Pestilence and invaders withered them through time, but they retained their resilience through absorbing the essence of their foes. Through tempering shone total light.

Their descendants melted into their ancestors, unblocked by birth-pangs and death-throes, treading their pilgrimage around the rings. The trek was eternal, though their numbers shrank towards a solitary point, withered and perished from a unicellular organism, which cursed and giped at them – a mirror shaft of transferred pain. Through balded scrubland, walls rose and crumbled. The soft edges of perfect, blended stones sank to enrich their brother soil, heralding the sweep of the last waters. Through decomposition reared the ideal form. Plastic, the lava spilled around them. The greater fire, fire of the overlapping light – fed on the black flames.

Crude warriors, decked in treasures seemingly plundered from the Gods, including plumage aloft had hacked through the rejects' fastnesses, bleached pure flint blades with the white heat of light. They scattered sparse seeds, bowed to the sun, and yawned their departure – leaving thin, scorching trails. The sun-children followed them, greedy for their Gods' bounty. They flouted old temples, but brought tinted metals closer to the Gods' ornaments – modeling Gods' wings from bird-thoughts, litters from chief-thoughts and wound-thoughts.

After them came the giants, thick-hided, battering through their moving, cut circles – making all days, months, years spin through them in a few short breaths – their acolytes with goblets of shrouded eyes, snatching flashes of flowers and wings.

Then came the last ones, leaner, bearers of the finest gold caskets, drawing up the cicada's chirrup from its happy depths. They worked on sand and bleak, mellowed stone, spread out quickly the shelves of burial, stood aloft – their piped, tubed circles drawing all to their greater eyes – before their final loads dropped into the great beyond. Above them clouds swelled, as from rotting trees; the sky stood sickly awash.

Yet the growth of all their greatest orbits stopped at the calendar, at the distillation of all circles. And one ringed with a perfect mouth felt all the awe and terror of the man-gods. The dragon's bit was like strained sinew.

The smallest life forms had gathered round to consume their essence. Even the lowest carrion feeders have the right to nourishment. Within the calendar are all insects, trees, shrubs, roots

and grasses – which send the greatest and smallest form to sleep and shell, crumpling all hides, folding up the prime mountains of vision.

Let calcium lines be shaved of moss, re-score all patterns. Those who change and slither shall live; those who clinch every root shall perish. In the circle all is death. Total circumscription by the circle radiates death; through straight lines, life persists – but not without angles, not without the clinch of segmentation. And the knowledge of angles has its source in the circle. So lines and circles are forever enmeshed. At each knowing of mesh all lines are circled upon themselves. Obliterating all ends – for lines unthreaded are the most fragile of all.

Temples of knowledge rose from the splitting and grinding of a gamut of matter and observations. Through minuscule fractions they amassed answers. But through thick masses, the pestilence of blindness spreads. So the temples lost some eyes through blanked chambers. For light is massive; light is heavy, light must ever pare. Only through the greatest fissures can it find its guidelines. The sacred seams can only be traced from points of no starting.

Liquid flow and organic growth must follow light. The herbal balm seeps through all mankind, fit for a single, universal cataract but fully dispersed – straddling generations with the intersections of its thoughts.

One arrow and three spears quivered on the walls of the field laboratory, bouncing many omens back to their sources. In fronded pain the hut took fine gall – a ring of ashes for calamity's brakes, resplendent ever – tarpaulins ripped to zero functioning. Protective clotting – well-ignited, threadbare it blew, blitzing a fork with gold-dust tail, rending flint and plastic shrapnel down the bleached chasm – unbolstered flotsam now, all grew.

Toiling to make irrigation eternal, they ditched forever. Raised once through the blowpipe, up sheer to the star-arrow, down to the spade and mattock, right to the chained, giant jaw – wiping all down, all they smirched. They swallowed light, followed light whilst struggling to build walls against it.

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One now screwed up time pieces, straddling all ages. Constant rendezvous were to be sustained across modular time-warps.

Rang scanned stench-bloated bubbles, bursting to flap their jagged, scummy skins, belching their abrasive haze. *All the world of speedy glitter had elbowed off its droppings into this forsaken land.* In time of carelessness past the wantons had picked all clean, laid all bare. Now, starved in spirit of their dream-past, and loathing the elusive, they trickled everything over with a callous sentiment. The insects, the all-resilient, mated, hatched and buzzed through all. They relished the finality of their shells, denied to most vertebrates.

The inmates were growing restless, getting demoralized – which threatened to jeopardize their fertility, and call for the importation of greater numbers. That could not be: there had to be a hand-picked moral liaison squad to sustain vitality. This elite lived in luxury on another reservation, separated from the fertilizers. Though they had greater freedom than the latter, they were still under the eyes and cameras of the border guards – who were called the Amazon Legion, revered but partly outcast from the Central Matriarchy. But blind eyes were turned to clandestine fraternization between the legion and the liaison squad: it was recognized that sound morale helped to sustain the newborn, everlasting order.

**

John, hard but ever-trusted, was the pride of the legion. He dreamed of a total change, but realized that he must bide his time, continuing to function until perhaps a change could bring itself on. In the scope of their restrictive glare, the guards always respected him.

So much of life is abrasive waiting, he thought. Disgusted, he poured a half-empty pitcher of spirit on the sludge. As the wind blew well away from him, he set light to it. Flames and fumes, shrieking red and yellow, flanked by gallery-black, roared up, as if in perverted gratitude. For precious seconds, the spectrum's extremes loomed – equal in outline. But then the black took over. Beneath it churned pythons of excremental ash. There perished many flies, but through speeded hatching, smothering gluts of yet more living ones blew up numbers, swamped the bulk of the deceased. Old shields and bracelets shone on through constant polishing. Slimed up but solidly embedded, the records of broken powers stood extant before him. His counter ticked, for here – fully contaminated, was the treasury of the new energy, matching all the blown, abandoned old one.

He waded on – as hunter, fisherman, paddyfield farmer, swilled throughout by the morass. He pursued these activities singly, independently, parallel to the mass but oblivious of it. He went on to tame all floods by terracing the hillsides, curling them, banking them to peace. Teething inspirations lacerated him as seven grimed clouds grinned down through suggested jaws. Pure air spirit stood at his buttoned beck and call. Now gelignite lay sleeping; were there now new bodies to lay over desert bones? Would multitudes now float in coracles of ribbed plastic? Would virgin cries, greedily sought, suck all down into their still-blocked galleries?

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A lusterless canister, ejected from a shuttle, swayed with its parachute and plopped into the middle – there to float – a futile, drifting watchtower.

Would the new tribes now bulldoze layers of sand, to try and soothe the last lava?

Would the new blood of the next two interchangeable sides now redden the grey-brown mass, jeering at Mars' eye-flushed surface? Would all the glittering toys of war now find consummation here, in heroic wreckage, in anticipation of some celebratory aftermath?

Knowledge of the dragon had grown dim and faded. From now on it was ever harder to know who was who.

Whatever might happen, John had no need to worry. His supply of things of earth would easily cover his lifetime – maybe, with a mind and a will, carry him beyond it. For he had been vaccinated by oblivion, turned to leading vision's torment through all interstices.

But he had lost the date, lost the time, lost all direction, all thought of the calendar.

Yet even the mess could reflect the remotest light, and swish its jostling accompanying solids to parody a melody. And in that latent parody was a clear vision of its butt. The scale gained solidity, braced firmly its intervals

Even through the matted mist there shone new life blood. Cartwheels John turned, gloved in springy hide, replaying all past wrongs. He, the psychic filter, banished to this mission of void. His heartbeats replayed messages in subdued rhythms – three messages an hour. Above him flowed vapour trails. He was to slide forever along the measuring knives, matted thoughts away, refracting sediment along.

They drew, they cut the blocks at white heat. But the power of their exertions came from beyond them. Burning rocks and liquid potions cut bold colour into slabs, and joined physically all images of things elsewhere linked by only air, earth or flame. Then through their blocks, between them and around them – the slabs of danger, consonant with the sun's submergence. Each curve and loop mirrored the sun's rise and fall, divorced from its zenith.

In the beginning was the end-point of progress, the boundary of the brain; whether or not this is attributed to another planet, another system, is finally immaterial, for all is only known through being thrown back in reflection. Since so much of our destiny hinges on a periphery, we could ourselves be what lies beyond it.

The calendar orbited all thoughts, all implementations, preceded all sense, engendered all things of life and energy, all things of still substance. In a blank instant was each generation. But the gods had grown weary. Their exhaustion suffused all creatures, with no dilution of its centre. Only man's, Rang's, central ring froze and stored energy. Now it was for man, for Rang, to stretch eternal life through overlapping mortal generations – to nurture a seed in every day, every date – to swell and multiply each instant to keep the sea-beds fluid, to sever, to coagulate – oscillating between the contrary demands of growth. It was for Rang's people to draw up all

minds' eyes to the lofty fullness of vision, so that the lines, square, circles and obelisks of order should multiply – to embrace the instants, pack them into understanding, final clarity through a forced mass.

The calendar presaged the compass, as the world wallowed on Mercury, unnerved – and in turn unnerving its vital liquidity. The first needles were tightly bound, for motion raged unabated beneath them. Revenge sprang a trap of clarity. Resurrections abounded in tortured effigy. Now, less flexed than birds but nearing their flying grace, gliders blaze the trail of searching, stringing impulses, straining after star-lines. Mercury is the great cleanser, the element that staved off one of the great curses. But all mankind tripped, for it dispersed all footings, fractured every arc, to find the centres of awe. Saltpetre roared its constant undercurrent, forging a major triad.

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Through the headphones, in the bowels of the engines, all living voices were mimicked and echoed, muted – blasted with amplification to the utmost degree – for the dial was round, and had the strength to shake the skin between sound and touch, and make all senses tremble. The recorder drew all in, feasted on its strength, ranched all living forms to sate its greed for energy. Its belching rumbles provoked the elements, even forced massed flies into formation, bled them to the forms of blades and stakes.

The toilers strove both upwards and downwards to reach the source of light. Both directions pulled; each one drew the other to stasis. In the gleaming, slithery galleries, light turned itself through abrasive touch to meet the extremes of heat and cold. Withdrawing its essence, it thickened its power, making the multitudes as iron filings to its lodestone. Their slumped forward heads, their crouched, hunched bodies brushed some roots' bottoms, then lurched beyond the moss to dry points and edges.

Some delved half-way to quarries, open galleries richly flooded. Some hauled great stones onto rolling logs – to thrust into mighty towers, and into the great calendar. Awesome splendours reared through thongs of exhaustion and torn muscles, routed through mass graves.

The edges of Rang's eyes were the edges of his realm – that crater gift from the Gods. The realm made all horizons. And the horizons were all his people's breath – bloated to bold elevation. The horizons wobbled between solid, liquid and gas; they embraced all growth and shrinkage. The horizons circled the soil, topped up the rivers, then cut back the lush fertility, giving unrestricted rein to the harsh sand.

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Vaulted vats liquefied all solids, to sustain the toiling slaves, feed unbroken the pulsing of massed, tied muscle. Naked to the outside air, waters and slime coagulated in a mass birth of all

living forms. A whipped thought world skinned broadly well. Harsh welts ribbed forth new flames' suggestions, taking a back-hander to carnal know-how. So the ultimate seeds, the resilient seeds found their bedrock, twisted force to light, shivered through radial vapour, clamped to all blisters in horror. Anodes, cathodes gild all crannies. The cottonmouth snake rose, turned into an invisible rope, tormenting the universe on its margin – grinding all into a serrated pulp for all to be in.

Flint and obsidian chipping met the final reactor. Great awe paralleled the sighting of the first spark, the first star on earth, and sustained its parallel with the last. Whosoever touches the perimeter of the circle shall enter the realm of reversible generations. The offspring shall beget the parents. *In the beginning was the end-point of progress, the boundary of the brain. Whether or not this can finally be attributed to another planet, another system, is finally immaterial – because all that is known exists through being thrown back in reflection.*

Burning rocks and searing potions cut bold colour into slabs, and joined all images of things elsewhere linked only by air and flames. Before ice and sea, before swamp and fire scattered the split, warring tribes. Some splinters sank into misted lakes. Other barbed points seethe, turbulent in the scorching sand, alongside the hardest lizards. Dispersal was sustained for aeons – then plague and storm drove all to valley's bottom, sinking all hatreds into earth, to be the earth's ballast. The boulders which had scowled, cracked and rolled, tortured by ice and flame, to menace all on inclines, were now fused into the columns of their new-found dignity, through total edges emulating their old mass, once one – primal proud. The valley swamps turned deeper, or half-dried for total plenty. But afar, the wails of eagles and condors echoed the winds, and made the tasks go on, over the heads of their executors.

In the ages before their withering, the swamp reeds whistled warnings – that the glaciers would be transformed into scalding clouds, and that the locusts would carry the plague to all mankind, turn skins to cinders. The few who could escape had to build the new order.

Quetzals and peacocks glinted, with a predominance of green and purple. Buzzards homed in on their vicinity as they plunged ever deeper into heat and damp. Their plumage hardened into translucency as it brightened in colour, throwing back the sun, filtered and unfiltered, through its all-immersed smoothness. The wings became statues, then grew into another calendar. Pumas made their dreaded descent – their sure paws holding their lightness, forever buoyant – but hardening beyond the wings, their claws and teeth toughening to opaque resilience – their feet finally blocked by the statues, clinched at the calendar.

In the armadillo was one god, shell and spine fused. The snakes wrestled through scales old and new, modulated translucency and opacity. They grew to be the calendar's lidless eyes. The insects sped up their wings – beyond the reach of human eye and ear. They, the lowest, the most volatile, grew to be the highest – the calendar's full span, its mind.

Berries' stains were imprinted indelibly on crushed reeds. Sap swelled to sinewy strength. Through their flight from glacier and blizzard, birds' migrations arched, dipped, both paralleled and intersected.

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The new sages nurtured the old records, including those of the Creation:

Through the first friction of its birth, the world was clouded, the thread of fire undulated, forever uncut. Through the thickest fogs it was borne, ever quivering from perpetual renewal –because loops of sun and moon, thickened and superimposed, or cancelled on repetition according to caprice, sustained it. Through the thickest fogs it was borne, ever-quivering to endless renewal. Within it, blood, ore, lava and blinding sun wrestled in harmony, quavered as winged snakes. Its offshoots filtered into a cowl – to thicken a temperate gauze. The cutting edges were forged, firstly by friction and lastly by flame.

On clotted, marinated ideals, swelling ropes plunge forward. In waves, the world shone clear, its every colour fed back to flood a whole range of jewels. These stones, so gorged, assumed a total optical power, which channeled and invigorated all trembling, feeding these into the brains of Rang's tribe. Terrestrial breaths in unison sustained the buoyancy of what had been calmed.

The matriarchs nod approval, ponder decisions, yawning through pillars of smoke, signaling all series. It is for them both to halt and to deflect the menacing currents. But now the tribe is split through their ruthless tenacity. The ceremonies of fertility and destruction, ever akin, are fused in the unique calendar. Each wave of conquerors suppressed the ceremony – but in doing so, all absorbed it, so that it became integral to them.

The unseen blast cast the final shadow. The sun leered flatly, a parasite upon pain. The calendar grew roots, deepened – its interlacing signs coming ever nearer to the intricacies of living cells beyond sight. The ash-slaked soil crumbled, to blind and choke those it had nurtured as a slave. Now there was mass flight from the undampened flames, a thirst for pastures – old, beyond planting. But in those remote pastures were stings, sharper than any dust – points loosed from their users.

Tiny geysers pricked the sand in piercing delicacy. Their spray arched back knowingly.

Each dividing line in the calendar crosses death. Both with and without its segments, it mirrors all foresight of doom. When segments seem cracked, there can be a vent for the shafts of beyond – not so when the mirror is clouded with laughter.

*

Now was the time for the great peace offerings. The sages had to know the body intact before they could separate veins and nerves. They knew the strengths and stress resistance of all the wires, before having any thought of turning twigs to metal. They called a halt in order to initiate motion.

But the circle blurred its segments and stifled itself through its own completeness. Through the stifling came the inner war, the segmenting of people, the desperate struggle for the sources of flow. Through a wink of the sun, through the cowering of a cloud, the edges and points of buildings turned to the goals of mutilation. But the calendar stayed, though deadened by human blindness. Then came the growth, to blur its surface, as the segments had been blurred. Growth and calendar fed each other.

The moment of infusion flashed in, obliterating all blinks. Stentorian silence held its crucial pause. The tubed flow found all erect, standing illumined. It pollinated the flowers. – and so grew more flowers, with pointers making living dials, vibrating from every particle involved in their growth. Mind blossomed, alight with seeming blackness, between petals, on the edge of every petal . . . numbers are living entities, the corporeal fused with spirit.

Wound by the sun, the calendar dug down into the earth, acquiring earth-crust muscle which came to match the strength of its original substance. And so began the subsidence, so organic growth thrust through the calendar's ribs. So ribs of lead demarcated shafted separations of glass, to make eye-music shine.

But then the excavators discovered the calendar and claimed it for their own, taking its boundaries to be their chart of the world. Roots and enriching soil curled around its lines.

So the curve was welded to the line, the shaft the below – then and ever after. Every letter is a deep incision; it both halts and repairs growth. The stains of its ink suffuse all surfaces with the deep essence of intuition. Drying ink shrivels all dross.

The one calendar was two calendars – of one and all, of God and Man. It trapped time's flight around its orbit, channeled its fugitive energy into a core of knowledge. Within its grasp, the day, the month, the year before became the day, the month, the year behind – self-mirroring and cleared of smoke. For a long time two was one. But the two calendars came apart as the Gods tugged at the circle to appropriate it to themselves. But there was only one circle, greater than the Gods, so only its shade could be wrenched obliquely. But the Gods were muscular, the wrench was strong, and the obliquity dislocated the whole earth.

The counting priests knew the wrench was not ended – even when the great star arcs again looked into the calendar. It could have gone deep, submerged, to hold itself in a deathly lull until it could reassert itself from its own full depth, and split the earth's skin beneath the calendar's base. Only the concerted will of the generic human mind could counteract this final peril.

So there came sixteen priest-counters, their numbers spawned by the calendar. Each priest touched the great circumference. Anointed with the digits, they walked on two by two, where the hook smoothed out into the horizontal. They found that many man days had slipped before and behind the god days. These they had pushed forward and backward through the power of the sacred two. Logs and mattocks were fortified by this ceremony.

*

All the world's winged creatures drew themselves into a dense mass, raging for final satiation, their last gesture to cancel all that would follow. But in the cancellation was the renewal. They would devour all the burrowers to build up their final energy reserve. Yet alertness shoots every nerve – fuses missile and thong.

The fliers and the burrowers made parallel full circles, drowned in their final meeting. Each were pulled towards the fire – the fire burrowed under and flown over, the sun – without and within. At last they touched, to answer the sun's explosions. Then there came a mass of new species – evolved through delving, evolved through soaring.

All before, all after, all that shall be deemed to precede or follow, stems from the calendar. But the centre of the calendar eludes all physical approaches. All names and determinations grope for their stimuli, finally never touching. All approaches shall finally turn back on themselves – for the calendar takes precedence over all lines –because lines stem from approaches. The calendar loops and coils all lines, taking them beyond prophecy, making them supra-sensory.

The chip was blasted into the rock, sealed with a granite shaft. The rock was opaque now to all save the final ray. It imposed halts; and those halts were the cores of deepest meaning to those who were distressed by them. They drew all apprehensions, all feelings of ecstasy, panic and hopelessness into a pool of equalized sensation – skimming the boundaries of satisfaction and boredom, before those states faded into heights and depths beyond themselves.

The earth's heart forced its fluids to clot, into solidities so dense that they could be engraved. A sense of the future comes with high pressures; a sense of the past comes from low pressure. But within a full circle all terms are reversed. Ideally, with the past at high pressure, potential future repetitions of eclipses and earthquakes shall be shrunk into tranquility. Their recurrence shall be all their own – inflated by no spurious comparisons. The arrest from above, the arrest from below, shall be as one. Living calm shall emerge from the arrest; the revulsion it provokes shall be truly centrifugal. So it is with the calendar, abrasively flashing its power to pressurize.

On it all thoughts are laminated, as it crumbles within an orbit of evasive reverence, as it is furtively restored by those who are magnetized by doubt – a palimpsest void of erasure. Earth comes to itself, from itself, by dint of the calendar's self-retraction. The retraction precedes self, as orbits precede planetary cooling. Then the retraction is embraced and absorbed - it grows into a replica circle through new motion, and can eclipse itself at will

All attacks, on and among species, are attacks on the calendar.

Part II

Let calcium lines be shaved of moss and other growth be centered,
Re-score the patterns.

All who change and slither shall live; those who clinch all roots shall perish.

Wilful ignoring and retraction is a key to survival.

In the circle, all is death; through the lines, life is pursued.

But all life is angular, clinches segmentation.

Knowledge of angles comes from striking the circle.

So circles and lines are forever enmeshed with numbers.

At each recognition of a mesh, all lines are circled upon themselves,
Obliterating all ends. For lines unthreaded are the most fragile.

*

The calendar forced its reiteration through ascent. Temples of knowledge burgeoned from its splitting and grinding; through mute fractions they massed chances, etched the transient softness. Their terraces sliced all living curves, made rise and fall all levels, gave flight to all, regurgitated all resilience from its greedy centre. But through thick masses, blindness grows. So the temples destroyed countless eyes through window-blanked chambers. For light is much; light is heavy; light must forever pare and prune. Only through the greatest fissures can it find its lines. The sacred seams can only be traced from the points of no starting. The temples are ever extended, against intention, beyond revulsion, in all private dwelling and public buildings. Their censors drag in all humanity to sustain the earth. Their iridescence, pervading all matter, draws the final sight of those fixed on transient spectacle.

Growth is the spawn of liquid and light. The resultant herbal balm must seep through all mankind – fit for a cataract but fully dispersed, straddling generations with the intersections of its thoughts.

One arrow quivered, braced by three spears, restoring omens to their source. In fronded pain the panel took a fine gauze ring of ashes for calamity's brakes, resplendent ever – tarpaulins ripped to zero. Protective clotting – well-ignited, threadbare it blew, blitzing a fork with gold-dust tail, rending flint and obsidian down the bleached chasm – unbolstered flotsam now, all grew. The three spears grazed each other's shafts, their points blunted by their common target – three segments lay the foundation for the great division. And there were tremors beneath the spear foundry, answering all tampering hammers.

Toiling for endless irrigation, they ditched forever. Raised once through the blowpipe, up sheer to the star-arrow, down to the space and mattock, to the chained, giant jaw – wiping all down, they smirched. Swallowing light, they downed its trail – making walls against it.

All now honed time pieces, straddling ages. The digits overlapped, to forge new histories. Endless meetings of all cultures modulated their unrepeatabe renewal, the dying ever facing the new-come. Two-edged greetings levelled all tongues.

*

Rang scanned stench-bloated bubbles of froth from the prime springs, bursting to flap their jagged, scummy skins, belching their abrasive haze. All the sated world had elbowed off its droppings onto this littered scrubland. In times past, careless wantons had had picked all clean, laid bare and vulnerable the central purity. Now, starved in spirit of their dream-past, and loathing the elusive, they trickled it over with a callous sediment, one that covered but did not protect. Insects, the all-resilient, mated, hatched and buzzed through it all. They relished the finality of their shells, denied . . .

Ritual Roots

Trains: Stringing, ringing, lifting,
Breathing meringues, with pores distended
at the termini

Contraction is needed for piercing of bars
And holing of tickets.

The breaking of one deadlock only
Institutes another, more firm,
In the hand and in the basket.

More futile by far than any old bird's weak flight
Through a Church, a hall or waiting room –
The bird drags no shit-stream
Through that other door

That bird escaped the drag
Of fuel oil upon its wings,
Spared all cog-driven struldbrugger

While the train stops at the tiny halt
Of POTHOLE-ON-THE-VASE

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Neolith-daubed, unused pioneer-line
Goes over the moors,
Shoring up the gorse;

Uprooted bluebells
Flaunting the purity of their stalk-ends;
They never want for the yellow tops
That would have staunched life's flow
To further a legend they did not desire.

So long before the human 'birds' eye view'
Of aircraft
They had straight paths
But now small boys try to feel for those submerged paths
With toy gliders
Letting them off the tow-thread at the fifth parallel
The hinterland where they flew straight,
Or, rudders primed flew purely curved
Neither rising nor falling.

Unbalanced in themselves, they strained
To emulate old parallels, sailing in chalices,
Echoing the droppings
Of a sacreligious peace-pigeon

Echoes my their acolytes, making heavy their point
With twisted rubber motors
In terror of obstructive dog-kites, bare teeth
White – rootless – white

White as the stringy horse of Uffington
That abraded chalk protector
Upon the ribbed bosom–green around;
Cut chalk-string made a loop of security
Around the central stick
Of his magic, wishing eye.

All devotees of this monument
Made secret wishes
Gazing at that flat eye of blistered chalk

To be divulged to no-one

Directions are to be taken from hieroglyphs
On a brass shield of indeterminate date
Purified by a soiled cloth

Settling light is sucked down into it
Sight-flour yeast-breathed perception
Particles thickened to choke all comers

Aircraft designers must have been inspired
By the vision of their product as a minute speck
At maximum height,
Seen from ground level

The superjet designers had several thousand feet
Of altitude coiled up inside themselves;
They suffered abrasive cuts
So small, but with all the force
Of the pitiless desert
Just as a surgeon's knife compresses the essence
Of some whole, tissue-flaking creature.

Time, tabulated on stelae, walls and pillars,
Onion-time in membrane squares,
Veils for some decent process,
Tantalising to every new year's nakedness
Thick cardboard
Under and over veil-protector.

The makers of the stelae chipped in
To what they wanted,
Raw skins: it was good to melt them
When they could be packed so tightly.
When they are packed, let them be stacked
Rear end upwards
Only to be cornered as the approach
Their apexes, for the time being.

Time, being, ran to the sea-shore,
Fumbling for submarine coal-seams,
Sandwiched and juicy;
Lust-looking thing changing
From all other layers.

Layered ex-top, discolouring its crushers,
Cause for some old aggressor –
There: skin and dust for you;
Leave the skins flapping, and wash out
Your light blue –

You use paper for your skins,
Rolled-up, disposable versions
Of what the trees did so long ago,
Functioning for complete incisions,
At yet another remove from coal

Removed but akin.

Try a little synthesis; put the ocean
Where some solid things have been
And sunk
Empty the superfluous coal into it
(Whilst sparing a pang of regret
For the jettisoning of so much utility)
Spread out your net like a membrane
Flapping, capping ooze-tincture and depth-go –

Coupled traffic-light bottom,
With an extra tinge of excluded blue;
The work of your contrived tide does not look like
 Your calendar sheet, being discarded
 At the end of every month.

The manufactured tide is humidity-graded, piled,
Distilled of its residue, skimmed, cream-capped
Reversed on its own rollers
To contradict and paralyse its direction.

Even the sand may look into you like water
If water is very far away
Though bigger eyes may paper it up again,
And make you love cardboard,
Love monopolized leaf covers yet more.

Many miles I walked along that shore,
Hoping that the outer edge of that black membrane
Would lunge back into my depths,
To the bottom of the cavernous pit
Leaving a consistent left-right, and go-colour

Right up to where a yellow zone started.

The calendar maker cannot siphon off grafted brain-jelly
Carvers of stelae only cut rims;
A neutral shape cloaks the interior quite adequately.

*

I am cut in two by my forward leaps,
Hounded by the hitch-hiker's magnet
The hooked belly-pincer within me
Jaws, compasses, screws –
Stela-threads cut into me
To regulate my movements,
Saluting forlorn hopes.

My hand plumbs attempted suicide
My ruler makes a parallel attempt
To halt on touching the membrane

*

One desperate soul
Reached for a pneumatic drill,
Rutted his piece of road,
Sweated out water
While flattening his death-furrow.

So now that stretch of road is a dead entity,
A monument to wasted effort.
Here there is no gloss of top-use
Planners and navies are synthesized
In nothingness.

The plumbing arrow hit its mark
Then spread out like a film
Coagulate was the mass beneath that film
Tacky was thought-fibre dualism.

Intervals of roads, water, glass and slots.

Hole of the prying hand – backwards
As the tar was glossed over
Jagged as an essential lump of gravel

A tip for the next administrative arrow.

David S. Russell