

At The Tomb Of The Not Unknown Warrior

If there is a theme here at all then it is mortality and the futility of engaging in that rush to oblivion which seems to prevail. A number of these pieces were composed for inclusion in an illustrated artwork I have called Blue in Green where they will reappear later. My father, as is so often the case nowadays, pops up unbidden, a warm, genuine and welcome presence every time. My mother too is here where she belongs always loving unconditionally, always the solidity at home. I confess though, I discourage her visits at night. They scare me.

Crossing The Styx

Back then
 Satchel days
 Biro's decadent
 Banned
 Scratchy nibs reigned
 On blue-black futures
 And one dipful
 Hardly held a name.

Crossing the Styx
 (Instructions under fire safety
 Behind security PIN
 Facing top-floor panorama)
 An entirety of length and breadth
 Behind a similar handle
 Could be engraved
 Upon the cloud of hyperspace
 Or having been so writ
 Could be undone
 Revised at choice
 Become what it used not to be.

Here all editing is editable
 All updates updateable
 All peccadilloes barely more
 Than a disingenuous finger
 From the back button.

* * *

Do not anticipate a simple saint
 A two-way no-grey rule book
 Or be miffed at how low the qualifying bar is set
 How unmanned the border post
 How oiled and regular the wired and metalled way
 That throbs and hums inanities.

The cheating hosts go thronging
 To deposit memorials
 Like faeces
 In person.

* * *

Curiously
Even comfortably
At peace
Calm also
Suck ravenously at the feast
At the atmosphere
Oxygen of the after-Styx.

Draw freely from that earlier draft
Scribbled en-route
Without compunction

Void of censorial doubt
Which your audience invalidated
As irrelevant by its own rules.

Let the super villain sally forth
The mouse roar back
Across the counter flow
And there from the after-Styx
From the last and only
Safe and holy
Anchorage of embers
Tell it as it was
Being only what it is.

15th January 2017

About this time I began to formulate what was to become Opvscvla.

Be Not Sorrowful

Be not sorrowful this life
I am but one to fall
From the teeming earthful.

Facing shadows one way
Brilliance the other
Fiddling in the melody
On a lover's chord
I scrawled my mark
Over virgin sheets
And had my day abroad.

Stand up! All stand up now!

Your shoes have distances to stride
Work to grip and feel
Superstitions left to destroy
And questions
Momentous questions
Still to posit for your worlds.

Find me there
And when you do
Be sure
To claim your share
Of my immortal joy
My joy of living
My hope in striving
My ecstasy of loving every minute of it.

18th May 2017

A message to the living to be read at my funeral.

Working Back

Ponderously as an eloquence of partridge
 Churr crepuscular strutting stuff
 Out of quiescent landscape
 Punctuated by the scrunch of cud
 And waders wavering late
 On the terminal wings of a Yorkshire day
 Timelessness wakes subversively
 Amongst the green extended shadows
 Where incomplete or indifferent arrivals fade
 Like those last airy thoughts of the dear departed dissolve
 At the lip of their still open grave.

Behinds are all of them behind
 Only aheads are possible
 But none are planned
 And any idea of salvation at the clockface
 Grows obscene in its futility.
 Here in this fortress of non-transcience
 We can wax supreme
 Potent
 Immutable
 Free
 Keeping appointments with self
 And confirming our summation's finality.

June 14th 2017 revised October 19th 2017

A reflection on the thinking behind OPVSCVLA. Planned and sketched at No. 3 The Nook, a holiday cottage in Bank Newton near Gargrave Yorkshire.

At The Tomb of The Not Unknown Warrior

After the pyrotechnics
Illegible labels in damp ashes poked
With the charred ends of pointless wood
Are profoundly inarticulate.

Apart from the damned squibs of it all
The stuttered starts
The pffftts and fizzles of their makers mistakes
And the portentous drizzle of inevitable worsenings
It was all such a glorious affair
Danced to the beat of days
To the griddled lies of would-be meat
And the round and round and round and round
Of a whirligig.

Morning rises unabashed on an aftermath
Of vaporous recall adrift in lingering currents
And gently persistent odours of him
Drafts in ponderously vacant corridors of thought
Boot marks in borders
Fingerprints on doorknobs.

5th October 2017

Remembering my dear father on the anniversary of his death in 2015

Pebble Power

Stone of the universe
Cobbled and dashed
Lying here palmed
Fleshed in my pulse
Affectingly inert
Intricately inanimate
Silent of false hope
And empty like eternity.

We engage intimately in sense data
Yielding mutual revelations
And evaluating our worth
The severity of each other
Our insignificance
Relishing our nakedness
And lack of point.

A monstrous and ancient thing
Hides here in near permanence
Rigid with substance
Energised with potency
Existing at large with the rest of us
In this space/time conundrum
Where we both are just sorts of stuff
Made massive by thought alone
Suspended in being
Simultaneously as permanent and imaginary
As beasts in stones.

22nd December 2017

With diligence and luck you might discover amongst my possessions a 1930's bakelite razor box containing the original pebble which inspired this observation.

Momentum

I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Walt Whitman

*The highest point of music for me is to become in a place where
there is no desire, no craving, wanting to do anything else.
It is the best place you have ever been, and yet there is nothing there.*

Terry Riley

Prologue

Over the barricade of dreams
Over the sum of unconquerables
So far that deceptions of colour and number
Dissimulating from all worlds
Coalesce into just one translation
One gentle but insistent ambient hum of being.

Major shades in light or darks in minors
With their subtle and insinuating lies
Devoid of all but common sense
Can never uncircle their tautology
But will always leave us in suspension
With the traces of our being
Ever present here as drone and throb.

Welcome to the paradise of no Paradise
To the torment of choice
To the agony of only this
To a torture of fact
And the sensuously sweet dire
Revelation of reality.

* * *

Philosophers snow the manna of their fictions
With their ends and beginnings like foam
Faked over the fruits of thought.

Brush it from your cap with contempt
Pursue a counter mythology from the warm odours lining it
The free sweat of your love
Your quiet awe still gaping out from under.

Entropics

'E's a pain in the arse your ex's boy
 Just like 'is dad and as useless as
 "leave off Jim! - 'is doctor said
 'E's got a syndrome in 'is 'ed
 And cannot 'elp 'isself so shoutin's wrong
 Leave off I said, Oh shit!"
 As riotous Rita from the end of our street
 Violently pukes down the back of her seat
 And chocolate long eaten
 Some way before Savernake
 Surfed up the floor amongst crisp crumbs and bottle tops
 Snack wrappers dog ends and fag packs
 And in one great tide of detritus licked at the heels
 Of Mrs Starling's new beach sandals.

Nanna
 Arriving at her last sip of gin
 Curses a recalcitrant hip flask and roars
 "Oh I do likes ta be"
 As precocious young sea-ready Pammy shows off
 In full flight down the length of the aisle
 Amid wild acclamations from uncles and aunts
 And screaming into her only-just-learned-this-last-week splits manoeuvre
 Injudiciously deposits herself and the new swimwear
 Onto the still warm stinking surf
 Lapping round Mrs Starling's moat.

On the charabanc to Weymouth
 It was dog eat bitch from one end to the other
 With not one of them first to have seen the sea
 As fumes of smoke on their ale soaked breath
 Streamed futures numb down yellow tracks
 Like rancid rain on a frosted pane
 And arriving they fall out in wild disarray
 Adjacent the lavatory facing all ways
 All pointing in different directions at once
 For the pub or the beach
 For the nearest arcades
 For the chips and the fish inland.

* * *

Derek the driver's cap is inclined
 His ruminative grace of hand unsurprised
 Dismissively swipes the fluff from its peak
 As with consecrated dustbin bag floorcloth and mop
 He sets about the purging of his temple.

Ostrich Phenotypes

That interval of unrest when the Dyson goes flat
 And disconsolate furniture spreads out in suspense
 When the trickle and drip of noiseless charge
 On solitary minds suspicious of silence
 It is then that your fearful and tentative birds
 Kyle or Facebook themselves into toileting asides
 Retreat before the threat of enforced contemplation
 Their calloused rumps astride questioning tranquillity
 Buried in denial behind gull pestered moorings
 Where hovels not hominids meet at the gutters
 Over pavements of sea stones up from the beach
 And siren fishwives bemoaning their lot
 On the salt laden sting of inflammatory calm
 Bid dear muscles unclam in their fear of the peace.

Thus sand denied landings
 Buries heads as good as lives
 Cuts threads as well as rights
 For soul makers alone with themselves
 Eye upon eye
 Unadorned
 Unshorn
 Gritty
 Present.

* * *

Sailors realised through an eyeglass trained
 On their ship's caps tilted at humanity's shore
 Swab the decks named for us lying at anchor.

Alien Encounter

Blairily as in a morning brain fog
 Stairs downward for hide-bound English
 Waxed and polished in the woodwork of ages

And all reassuringly afloat on forever fumes
 Contemplatively paused
 Taking stock at the landing
 Where down going trends
 Meet upwardly seductive powerful friends
 An alien peers as aliens do
 At a violet scene with an orangy tinge
 Through scarlets and blues

Over purple and green
 To align with its life and its hues
 Each motion, substance and form in view
 Against catalogues of probables
 Invented to suit.

Passing this or that bright morning
 Glance back and slightly up questioning it
 Ask that which invariably roils.

This alien
 Does it look desperate enough for a smile
 Or hint at intentions to exchange?
 Does it?
 Will there be stumbling in tongues?
 Can it think of, feel or own a purpose?
 Does it know its place?
 Will it remain quarantined within its place
 Or descend for a meeting?
 Where is its place exactly?
 Where your's in relation?
 Extend your thought to grasp *his* measurement
 Hook *his* minute and bear them over
 Undrawn lines still fuzzed
 Still swept by the brush of disavowal
 Sanitised in convenient dogma
 And go ahead! Ask it!

Back and slightly up once more you stand alone
 Profoundly alone in its absence
 Knowing that if you *had* asked
 You could have viewed through its eyes
 The colours of its skies
 The odour it calls home
 Its wonder at the what-is-not-it

Its purpose for the what-is
 Its possibilities and impossibilities
 Its limitless love
 And coalescing in an anonymity of oneness
 The point of it
 Your alien.

* * *

You doff
 It doffs
 Mutual nods to entangled unknowns
 Possible futures joyously acknowledged
 In one singular imperfect vision of self
 Hovering adventurously under its cap
 And so thrilled to have made your acquaintance.

The Law According to Charles-Augustin de Coulomb

Freddie took the fly at fifty three years and two months
 Shortly ahead by just a couple of hours
 Of an ill-favoured dawn over his East End bed
 As their various good sirs and exquisite my lords
 Came right on behind in their broughams and barouches
 Either quickened with gout or by hunting excuses
 As always quite nervously under devout
 Though certain of favours bought handsomely upfront
 In kind not in kindness.

Out of the west rattling prematurely perhaps
 Come castings of overnight colourful types
 By stages of consumption up from the country
 Still trusting their betters and as ever still hopeful.

Meanwhile up north
 At the confluence of aspiration
 Steam powered in new money
 The great unwashed in second or third
 And likewise the great unworked rode relaxed
 In their biblically sanctioned first class seats
 All funnelled with precision and efficient beliefs
 To the same end from the same start
 Never mind the gap!

As ships of the south berth
 So planes land to unload
 Diesel delivers and petrol propels
 Compels the unwilling
 Impels the never ready
 Traffics everyone from wherever to the terminus of now
 Holding tightly on for the ride of their lives
 Not knowing the law according to Coulomb
 Or its practical application.

* * *

Augustin at the edge
 Resigned in his loss
 Phlegmatic
 Endures the whole process respectfully
 Cap in hand.

The Everythingness of Nothing

How the creaking clank of the last iron gate
 Speaks ponderously out to the multitude sighing
 Creaks out of its weight in reassuring signs
 Speaks of oblivion and the long long nothing else.

Leaves in abscission descend in their myriads
 Kissing with butterflies on their first day of flight
 Float down to profusions of lovers in drifts
 Moulding their caresses in lichens.

Here is the everythingness of nothing revealed
 In an equilibrium of lines between starts and stops
 In beauty made manifest by suspension of purpose
 And the sensual arousal of terminal implosion.

Looking forward from here with no ends
 And passages travelled mere conduits of blindness
 Is winding backwards to the state of no self
 Is a plenipotential pact with infinitudes.

And so you find yourself stationary
 Minimal
 One of eighteen playing
 Stationary
 Sitting on the only one-man bench alone

Stationary

Separated from the shibboleth of conformity
 Sniffing ratlike its arguments row upon row beyond the hedge
 Ruling and regulatory but shaded now
 Lost outside in the cold corruption of its suppositions.

You are going nowhere
 Coming as you must have come
 From somewhere is irrelevant
 Since your only care
 Is for the not going anywhere
 For the bells tolling out their drone
 For the universe filling with old dead leaves
 For the heart now naked enough to survive
 Yet another dance with your unspent breaths
 For the not missed dissonances of absent corners
 For autumnal warmth on the newest of worms
 And the sunset sung from the oldest blackbird's throat
 For the faintest of breezes washing history fresh
 For arrival at the pristine void
 And awakenings to be had there
 With your bare and pointless significance.

Epilogue

Revelation is in the lifting of caps
 Not as acts of deference but defiantly purposeful
 An exclusivity reserved for the scratching of heads
 The reaching of conclusions
 For the salvation of sentient mortal souls
 Acknowledging the unknowable
 And moving on.

For what is real?
 The leaf that falls, its constituents recycling
 The maggots that morph for the sake of their kind
 Or imaginations in sense and mind
 When standing deliciously, sensuously alive
 In an empty distillation of quietude
 Out of dumb memorials to the flux of all things
 In the garden of no time.

14th March 2018

Poem In Buxton

What a wonderful time of year to go
And take the air in Buxton in October
When local folks walk out with their familiars
Filling the gaps that tourists left
By depositing animal shit
In the park's cold skeleton shades
Or as panacea taking it home
In plastic parcelled souvenirs
Of a community warmth revived
When most of the tourists had left their town
And we were the last two wandering around.

Started in Buxton 11/10/16 and completed later

1st May 2018

Dear Meat Flies

No need to tiptoe on this page
Here your footsteps fade
Like secret truths without a trace
So be my guest and stalk about this face
Which lives its life unhidden
Not lying with fake gods upon their midden
Dissembling with appearance and false hopes
Or shrivelled into anonymity by tropes
But here solely for your delectation
Revealed, exposed, fallible
Eight legged.

May 31st 2018

A commentary on social media and people who come to spy without acknowledging their presence, people who have free access to my life whilst denying me access to theirs. Scavengers and low life feasting freely on the meat of my days.

Another Sleepless Night

I

I rise, so I think, to kill off a death that will not die
A death that thrives with its pitiful mockery
Of torn and tortured threads frayed and weaved
Into every bleak reiteration of those old dreams
Those same endless beginnings of former dreads
Resolving into thunder under the ribcage
The death that drives my trembling grip at the dark edge
Of interminable desperate gasps for breath
The missing heartbeat of cosmic emptiness
Before the slow, slow unfathomable plummet.

September 20th 2018

II

Swindon gets another mention in a Trollope novel
Which it is now your challenge to name.

Loneliness exceeds nowhere higher than this art
The loneliness of the sullen mind at its works
Without which
In the absence of alternatives
There would be none.

So I take the "Greatest Grandad" mug this time
And suffer a peppermint and camomile tea
To be sipped at surreptitiously
In counterpoint to futility
As my mind essays to steer this dream
Down its bleakest blackest whitest waters.

January 8th 2019

These two pieces written in the early hours awake coping with PTSD and its consequences, agitation, palpitations and an end-to-end negative narrative of sleepless dreaming.

One Vast Similitude

Born out of womb warm pre-consciousness
 Chipping at the boundary to existence
 Brittle at term
 Armed only with egg teeth for levers
 Spurting promiscuously from sense grains
 Spat into the countenance of a vicious reality
 Universes spasm into being
 And reveal our emergent selves
 Urgent for being
 In all their glorious arisen natures.

Go mindfully with yours
 Down to the wild edge tender
 Paying all due respect to the gravitas of ignorance
 Down to oceans of knowing on their love lapped shores
 (Being wary of gloves holding four fingered facts)
 To interstices among and the force that contains them
 To the places beyond and the spaces before them
 (Being wary of palms under Antarctic skies
 And coinage dissembling under 9 carat plate)
 Go consciously imperfect and impure of thought
 Contentedly aware but deliciously empty.

Go to the becoming in the deep of the here and now
 For what happened happened
 Is happening still
 And all of this is all there is
 Every least and last particle of it
 Every shape and angle of it
 Every height and distance of it
 The movement and the pace of it
 The sequence and the blink of it
 The rate and the change of it
 The start and the death of it
 Happening forever without beginning or end.

Steal from the baseline away from the sun
 Like a lover softly from his forest of doubt
 And losing your path amongst smothering brilliants
 Of hand sown reveries and orgies of wastage
 Unblinded by knowing your one self naked
 Encompass the beloved

The soul of your creating
Contiguous and one with this vast similitude.

17th March 2019

Motivated by Walt Whitman's 'On the Beach At Night Alone'

Ordnance of The Mind

I deploy an ordnance of the mind to counter the adversaries of yours
(That is all of the several yours behind me and the yours to come)
They are hereby nullified and rendered insubstantial.

I take the one love and the one life that are mine and I glorify them
But in the near term I see there is potentiality
Which I extol likewise as I praise the as yet undiscovered year ahead
The fielded Natural History OMG with its water thingy
The bowls of oak with their Blues in Greens
The word fountain with its Savernakesies of quietude
The Liddingtons of MY heart forever wondered and sniffed
All woven into the unity of my painted fabric and this gravity
Pulling, pulling, ever pulling.

Dec. 31st 2018

New years eve and looking towards the year ahead. The usual battles, my inevitable serenity, my work, my plans (pond, bowl, website, writing) but above all accepting the challenge to walk alone to the top of Liddington Hill before age 72.

Vortextual

We only arrive for an existence at the end,

At the end which is not death
 But is the eye of a maelstrom and the beginning
 Which shuffles about in slippers of birdsong
 Or wraps about us in old-dog duvets
 Enfolding in it's plenitude of nothingness
 Still pregnant with the bated breaths
 Of Mahler's Second coming.

At this beginning
 Blades of grass cut the limits of time
 Into chemistries of cosmic clay
 As earth oozes it's intoxicating liquor
 From the forest of revelation and decay
 And a miniscule now is finally conceived
 Out of antiseptic cultures
 From an infinite but deconstructed past.

So in spite of all we loaf and we observe
 As the vehicles and apparatus of transposition
 Rush on and on by the pavements grey
 And the raging world turns
 It's rondure of white noise
 Spiralling into a quiet and an unseen calm
 Hidden for want of our searching there
 In the deep hearts core of our entanglement
 Here in England now
 At the timeless intersection of this becoming.

Our senses insinuate in vortextual fragments
 Blown like straws in hurricanes
 Racing pulverised into jagged shards
 So that even the cruelest of words
 Left tattooed on every atom of our being
 Lapse into the fractured archaeology of life
 Faded, stretched, no longer legible
 On their journey round the storm
 Towards serene quiescence
 In those empty vital silences saying not yet
 Not quite
 Not remembered

Not happening
And the ticking stops.

9th July 2019

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