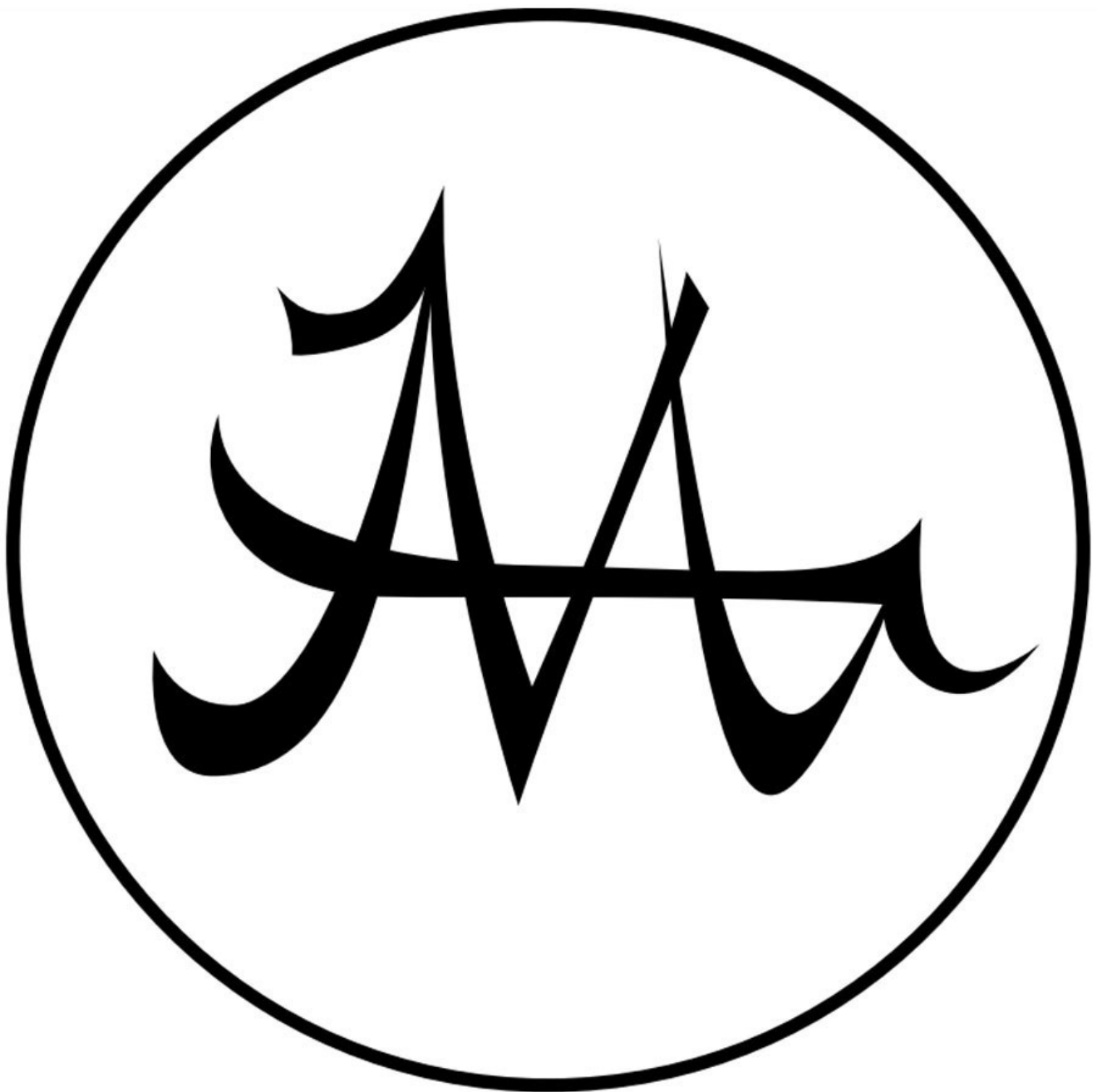




The Peter Hammill Book





This is a collection of short stories, lyrics, poems and drawings by Peter Hammill. Most of the stories, poems and drawings were taken from «Killers, Angels, Refugees» and «Mirrors, Dreams, and Miracles».

Please do not distribute this book commercially, since there was no permission granted to reproduce the lyrics. Thank you.

Guido Hogen

From fb2 author: Thank you for downloading this book. Much work has been done to organize it into the fb2 format, I hope you enjoy the result. If you find a mistake in the text

or if you know more Hammill's notes please contact me at spirit111@ukr.net.

Oleg Koretsky

- [The Lyric](#)
- [I Fables and Figments](#)
 - [Audi](#)
 - [Bill, Ben and Mede](#)
 - [King Tut](#)
 - [Catechism](#)
 - [Options](#)
 - [Adam's conviction](#)
 - [The Black Hole](#)
 - [Waiting](#)
 - [The Madonna](#)
 - [The Spider's Web](#)
 - [Balance: The Mine](#)
 - [The Message](#)
 - [Brasilia](#)
- [II Poems](#)
 - [Killers, Angels, Refugees](#)
- [III Lyrics](#)
 - [The Aerosol Grey Machine \(VdGG, 1969\)](#)
 - [The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other \(VdGG, 1970\)](#)
 - [H to He, Who Am the Only One \(VdGG, 1970\)](#)
 - [Pawn Hearts \(VdGG, 1971\)](#)
 - [Fool's Mate \(1971\)](#)
 - [Chameleon in the Shadow of the Night \(1973\)](#)
 - [The Silent Corner and the Empty Stage \(1974\)](#)
 - [In Camera \(1974\)](#)
 - [Nadir's Big Chance \(1975\)](#)
 - [Godbluff \(VdGG, 1975\)](#)
 - [Still Life \(VdGG, 1976\)](#)
 - [World Record \(VdGG, 1976\)](#)
 - [Over \(1977\)](#)
 - [The Quiet Zone, the Pleasure Dome \(VdGG, 1977\)](#)
 - [Vital \(VdGG, 1978\)](#)
 - [The Future Now \(1978\)](#)
 - [pH7 \(1979\)](#)
 - [A Black Box \(1980\)](#)
 - [Sitting Targets \(1981\)](#)
 - [Enter K \(1982\)](#)
 - [Patience \(1983\)](#)
 - [Loops and Reels \(1983\)](#)
 - [Skin \(1986\)](#)
 - [And Close as This \(1986\)](#)

- [In a Foreign Town](#)
 - [Out of Water \(1989\)](#)
 - [Fireships \(1991\)](#)
 - [The Noise \(1992\)](#)
 - [Offensichtlich Goldfisch \(1995\)](#)
 - [Roaring Forties \(1994\)](#)
 - [None of the Above \(2000\)](#)
 - [Present \(VdGG, 2005\)](#)
 - [Singularity](#)
 - [Trisector \(VdGG, 2008\)](#)
 - [A Grounding in Numbers \(VdGG, 2011\)](#)
 - [Miscellaneous](#)
-

The Lyric

The following is the prologue to a recent book of lyrics that came out in Spain.

I don't know... the song is the song. It says too little, it shows too much. Enough.

Difficult, what are the values of the lyric which distinguish it from poetry per se? What are its particular virtues, and what should one look for in it?

In a certain sense, a lyric is much more disposable than a poem, since it passes to the ears and across the consciousness along with the music. It's obvious that the symbiosis between music and word is crucial in this regard. While one naturally wants a lyric to stand up in its own right as written / spoken words (in exactly the same way one looks to music to be discretely successful), it only really lives when it is sung. Thus, the essential sound of the words is as crucial as the content. Sometimes the meaning of the two can be identical; at other times, a tension can be set up by using dissonant phonetics against tranquil sentiment. A similar «confrontation» can also be created between words and the music with which they are inextricably entwined. These contradictions color the overall «meaning» of the piece. A song lyric therefore has «help» in achieving its emotional or intellectual aims which a poem does not; conversely, of course, there are certain qualifications which must be met when composing a lyric which do not exist in the writing of poetry... the absolute definition of tune as word-matrix for one. Although I myself have an abhorrence for the repetition of choruses, and often insert changes both in words and music to them, nonetheless fundamental distinctions remain between the functions of verses, «middles», and choruses. The use of repetition in a poem is a device; in a lyric it is often an essential part of the form. Some lyrics are successful while consisting almost entirely of choruses... as long as they are fully unified with or called for by the music a mantra effect can be achieved; this may be banal on paper, but have great power when sung. In short, it's my belief that a lyric's existence is only full when taken in conjunction with its tune... but naturally the lyric should also be able to make «sense» when taken on its own.

Ultimately, though, what is this «sense,» or is there, indeed, any one «sense» to be had? As a form, the song has extremely open-ended potential, perhaps even more than poetry as such, albeit in different areas. Because music has an emotional significance of its own — and, as I've said, this significance can either be enhanced or contradicted by the words — a framework is set the moment the introductory notes are played. (To some extent the introductory notes are played even in the mind of the reader, if he or she knows the song well...) A song — at least in my view — should not be didactic... there should be «holes» in it, into which the listener can insert his own comprehension and experience. Of course, this also applies to poetry, as to all other art forms, but since the song operates on (at least) two distinct levels, the interstices are wider. Thus, for me, there is no one true «meaning» for any song, but as many as there are listeners; to put it another way, a song properly written should speak truths which can be in diametrically opposed ways by different people. These truths should also be such that they cannot be easily stated in more direct forms; a lyric must need to be written, or there can be no song.

Surprise should always be an element in a song, as should a degree of uncertainty, doubt, or question. On the other hand, although one wants to find something new in a song, there must also be a correspondence with what is already known, even if it is only intuitively. In my view, one should not be left at the end of a song thinking «it's just like that,» but rather «sometimes it's like that.» Naturally, these criteria also apply to poetry; songs, though, are subject to greater strains of repetition than verse. This «that» may change on different listenings for the audience or, indeed, performances for the singer, who must be able to continue finding freshness in a lyric through many renditions. A regularly taken journey is never the same — season, weather, and state of life always throw a different cast on what one sees — and my feeling is that songs should be small journeys. Perhaps one visits poems, commutes with songs.

As a form, and excluding for a moment the (essential) interaction with music, the lyric is probably closer to the short story (proposition / scene-setting; explanation / enhancement; conclusion / twist) than the poem... the tone which the latter must create to be successful is provided by the music in the case of a song. Or maybe there is something of the screenplay about a lyric — the actual medium in which character and event are ultimately delineated is not simply the written word.

I find other arguments straining within me. Is this not all too much? The lyric is, after all, to be hummed rather more than analyzed. For most people, only the repetition of the chorus will impart the sense of the song. Thus all parts of the song must be present in each individual part so a degree of homogeneity is called for, however «clever» one wants to be. For myself, a large part, of that homogeneity exists in the conflicting currents of phonetics (sometimes even across languages), meanings, and simple word-play, which can reveal a central identity not necessarily apparent on the surface of meaning. Lyrics can be games as much as creeds, snapshots as much as portraits... and sometimes the cartoon speaks more strongly than the painting. This speaks for at least a poetic sensibility in my own approach to lyric writing.

Myself, I know I have a tendency to over-analyze what is at heart a near-conversational form... although naturally it's important that I should apply all my faculties as best I can to writing lyrics, since this is what I do. I remain deeply enamored of The Song for its potential to speak about all areas of experience, with a directly human (emotional/cerebral) voice. On the other hand, each song is only a voice on the wind... sung, and echoing off the hills, perhaps it reaches the heart, more than the mind.

Inevitably, I suppose, I feel I have rambled somewhat. I hope that I've imparted something of my sense that songs are transitory things, for the moment; that they can give something of the universal, but should not be «read as gospel,» however serious their intent. Each lyric, as each song, will have a particular resonance at a particular time and place... depending on the empathy between its journey and one's own. This it has in common with poetry (and other forms); but, in my view at least, they are very different disciplines.

I don't know... the song is the song. It says too little, it shows too much. Enough.

I Fables and Figments

Mannheim, Saturday

Dear Audi,

I know: it's been a long time. I could say I'm sorry for not getting in touch with you — your last letter cheered me in a time of trial — but it wouldn't really be honest. I could plead pressure on my time which is, as always, crowded, but that would only make *you* feel crowded out and unimportant to me and that is untrue. For all the time and distance between us you are still close to me, but I find it less and less possible to get through to anyone in these dark days and I'm afraid I'm somewhat out of practice in communication. Somehow it's easier here: here we are in our little time-bubble of the band and the roadies and the equipment and the van... with everything outside that bubble seemingly unreal, it makes it less painful to reach you out there; and, of course, if I go over the top at any point in this letter, I can always plead temporary insanity.

I wish that someone would give an accurate written representation of our life in bands. I've been reading a ridiculous paperback I picked up at the airport which blares from its (extremely lurid) cover «The Groupies! The Drugs! The Orgies!» and, inside, rambles on for page after page of appalling English about the fantastic (literally) adventures of a group called the Hot Cross Buns who 'hit the high spots of the pop scene'! Ya know, I'm a sucker for these books, although I never finish more than about three chapters. I still keep on hoping that one of them will be colored with the faintest veneer of truth.

Whoever reads them must have a very strange impression of our lives: rushing from town to town in flashy limousines, performing to wildly enthusiastic crowds and picking up a few beautiful and nubile young girls for ravaging back at the hotel, aided, of course, by bountiful supplies of all the drugs known to man. No, perhaps I'm mixing things up a bit: the above has a slight ring of truth in that the activities are cyclical and ultimately meaningless: in these cruddy books there is always the semblance of a story line, and always a certain element of change in characters' actions and reactions... in reality, nothing much ever changes here. Am I getting too confused for you? It's because the reality is so hard to pinpoint... yes, we arrive in our car, but it's a Cortina, and not a Mercedes; there are drugs sometimes, but they're the only buffer against harshness available to us... they let us live and simultaneously kill us. (Mentally, I mean: I don't want to start, you worrying about me physically, I have no intention of stringing myself out on the modern crucifix.) There are groupies, too, but never the nymph-fantasies of fiction. In that ordered picture, the groupie (bearing close resemblance to those plastic inflatable life-size dolls you see advertised in Marvel comics) makes a present of her body to the band; in reality, the roles are reversed, and one can almost feel one's scalp being lifted.

We're really not the kind of band of which such fictions are made, although I have no doubt that there are bands which might be. All bands are different, as all individuals, but there is something running through the all but the tiniest percentage of them which can never be traced to earth amid the gory details of the novels: it is the music that is

important. And if you could talk about the music in a book then what would be the point of playing it? Perhaps music is the gravity which holds clown the written word and prevents it from flying up into the regions of truth.

You'll be probably wondering why I'm writing this to you; well, it's a question of pressure valves, as it ever was. (Remember that talk we had in Manchester, last time I saw you? Is it really two years?) You know that, for a long time, the songs are my safety valve; but, also, you know that sometimes nothing will come out, and I can sit and stare for hours at the frets and keys, or the pen in my shaking hand; but they won't deliver to me their untapped secrets. Anyway, now, locked in the heart of Germany and the tour (two weeks to go) I can hardly gather the energy to all myself open to all that.

I had a dream about you last night; it doesn't matter what it was about. Believing (as I must if I am to survive) that all things have a reason, if only a negative one, reason sprang to me that the comfort of your imagined eye and understanding, listening to me across the miles, might help me through my burdens. I *could* just tell you what I intend to do, for documentary evidence, as it were, but I really want somebody... just one person... to *understand*, even if (and I know it is so) I am incapable of spelling it out, and can only throw a glimpse of light through the door-jar.

Let me tell you about the gig we did tonight, as that seems to epitomize all the terrors that beset me and threaten to drag me down into I don't know what. To start with, we were pretty out of it: we'd spent today entirely in our hotel (Mannheim isn't a very inspiring town to tour even if we'd been able to organize ourselves and our energies to that extent) and the last of our pooled money went on a bottle of Tequila. (There's been some crazy mix-up over our wages, and they haven't come through from London yet; they were meant to arrive yesterday, but we can only hope...) So, having sprawled around on the starched white sheets all day, and consumed the whole bottle of T., we were about as ready to face the gig and set as we ever are. It looked promising: a low, modern building, with fountains, a tea-room with umbrellas, modern sculpture dotted about, the grounds, white chess pieces arrayed against black trees. Inside, it was equally modern and luxurious, but with one major problem: the dressing-room heating appeared to be jammed full on. It was a basement room, with windows at ceiling level, and like an oven. However, we were so exhausted by our clay of inactivity that we slumped on the low leather sofas which went around two of the walls, and gazed at our hollowed faces in the mirror which stretched, wall-width, below the windows.

The «Free Music» punters arrived and, kneeling and crouching on the ground outside the windows, began their usual haranguing to be let. in through the dressing-room. They became more and more irate as we refused them entry and, after a phase of alternate begging and insults, actually attempted to force their way in. We stood on the make-up desk and pushed up against the windows to keep them out, finally managing to lock the catches. We grimaced threateningly at each other through the glass before they disappeared, doubtless in search of some other possible entry point to force. I wonder about, the ethics of it all sometimes, for I would dearly love to play for free. But it's impossible with our weekly bills to pay, the roadies, the van, the equipment, our own wages. Ethically, if some have paid, it's not fair to let in any others for free; but the logical extension of *that* is that if one person is prepared to pay k50 to see us, everybody else

should. Haha. It's just another imponderable; I can't seem to penetrate this morass. I enter into this, as in so many other areas, at one point which I feel to be true, and come out somewhere completely alien to me and antipathetic to my feelings. It's a lot easier to chant slogans than to think about their implications. FREEMUSICFREEMUSICFREEMUSIC!

One of the guys from Nimrod, with whom we're making this tour, came into the dressing-room and told us that he'd once blanked out for three days on Tequila, with no memory of what happened or what he'd done. David got a bit freaked and went out of the room.

Then Dorothy appeared: she's half-English, half-German, and has been following us around for the past week, encamping herself in dressing-rooms, occupying the lobbies of hotels, lurking on the side of the stage during sets. Dorothy has brown hair, beady eyes, and piles of blubber bulging around her thighs, midriff, and arms. She has puffy cheeks and smells. She comes into our dressing-room and, most of the time, just sits there, ignored by us and, doubtless, inwardly seething at being so. We've talked about her a lot because she hangs us up so much. She is the original immovable object., and none of us seem to have the capacity to be irresistible force. Talking to her does nobody any good; nor does ignoring her, and none of us can quite bring ourselves to go all-out nasty on her, even if that would do anything towards obliterating her from our lives, which I doubt: she would probably curl up in a masochistic orgasm. We can't do it. to her because she genuinely seems to be completely into the music, and is prepared to travel hundreds of miles just to see us perform. The boost to our egos is simultaneously a damper on our outrage and our instincts for self-preservation. Consciously, we are aware of all this, but, it seems, there is nothing we can do. *Usually* she just sits there and, in fact, until tonight, by careful avoidance, I had not exchanged more than a half-hearted hello' with her; but when the door opened I had been expecting David's return, and so had already flashed half a reassuring smile in that direction as she came in the room. She caught, it like a wicket-keeper and floundered over to where I was sitting, undergoing some very strange things in my head as a result of the Tequila: I was powerless to stop her as the inevitable onslaught smashed against me.

«Hello!» she said, and cracked her lopsided grin at me. I grunted and tried to look elsewhere.

«Where do you live in London?» she asked. I pretended not to notice, but she repeated her question more insistently. «Well, I live in Sussex, actually, not London... I, um, prefer the country... the... peace...»

She was pulling a book out of her voluminous shoulder bag. It was her address book. She wanted my address in England. I asked her why. She wanted it, she said, to write to me. I told her to write to the record company, and that they'd get their letter to me.

«I do not like the record company,» she said. There was a pause.

She wanted to come and see me when she came to England. (Everybody comes to England.) She was coming in a month's time. She wanted to come and see me. I told her that, because of work, I was rarely at home. She still wanted my address, and still wanted to come and see me, and she was now getting angry. I blinked at her stupidly and tried to work out what was going on. Guy gave me a cigarette and brief respite.

She changed her tack: would I write to her, here was her address, would I come and see her when we were in Dusseldorf? I tried to hold out with further evasive grunts, but she wouldn't have it, and finally I was forced into a tentative 'Maybe'. She gave me a neatly folded piece of paper with her address on it. Now could she have my address? Guy let out a whistled sigh as both he and Hugh went out to watch some of Ninirocl's set.. Deserted!

Dorothy edged towards me along the sofa. I can handle any physical assault, I thought to myself: I can always run out of the room...

«Do you want some heroin?» she asked. I declined. «There's something I want to ask you.»

«Uh... what's that?» I was hoping for a manageable, analytical question about a song, a performance, or the band's future. She surprised me.

Audi, this chick... this revolting, obsessional chick... just sat there and asked me to give her a baby. Can you believe it? She said she knew it would be the most beautiful baby, it would be an amazing child, would I do it? Would I do this small thing for her?

You can imagine: I freaked. Muttering something about the room being too hot, I made a dive for the door. She was on me in a second, clinging to my knees, begging, pleading, beseeching...

«What's wrong with me? What's wrong with me?» she blubbered.

Guy came through the door and stopped dead in his tracks: I was saved! Her grip relented for a second, and I was away out of the door, to hide in a toilet until the time came for the set.

You see the kind of pressure that comes on us. Did I ever ask to let myself in for anything like that? Is it all worth it if one puts another human being through that, however unintentionally? What could I have done or said?

The set was adequate, and I spent a lot of my by now bursting aggression in the performance. Steam seemed to go out of, and tiredness creep into it, though, in the middle and by the end we might as well have been playing in different rooms for the lack of empathy and mutual lift-off. I clung on for the last chord of the encore, exhausted mentally and physically. It isn't easy, sometimes, to get through that hour and a quarter which is — supposedly — all of our working clay. It is still — thank God — a different world, parenthesized between so-called realities; but coming away from it, with all the changes wrought in one's mind during the stay, is as hard as going in.

We almost had a very heavy argument over time-keeping in the dressing-room afterwards, but this was averted by the arrival of three or four young Germans come to question us. We seem to argue a lot these days... perhaps all topics of conversation have finally dried up, and the only communication left to us is shouting. Maybe it is only a phase, and we have had such in the past; but sooner or later one of us will inevitably go over the edge in slight or personal insult, and then we'll all tumble off the tightrope that we walk in our self-imposed family group. We squabble like any family, and sooner or later must all leave home...

The battery of questions was arrayed against us, but I could manage only the occasional grunt by way of non-committed and dark answer; in regaining reality I was once more shaking in the wake of my encounters with Dorothy. «What is your favorite song?» «What philosophers have influenced your work?» «What are you going to do in the future?»

What are we going to do in the future, Audi? What am I going to do? The future seems to be the endless road and the endless gigs and sets, which are sometimes interminable, too, although at other times they are pure joy. How much joy do you have to experience to compensate for the various assaults on your being, inflicted in achieving it? How many more times will I sit in the car and think «Maybe this is the last journey; maybe this time we'll meet that coach overtaking a ten-ton lorry.» How many arguments will there be? How long before they become hate rather than difference of opinion? How long before we need six bottles of Tequila to insulate us from the outside? How many more Dorothys are there?

I'm sitting here in this shabby hotel room and it's a quarter to four. Tomorrow we're going to Nuremberg. If I had my wages I think I might leave everything behind and just disappear in Morocco or Pakistan. When I started out on this road I thought I was going to buy maximum freedom, but now our responsibilities to other people grow and grow, and freedom is murdered weekly by our date-sheets.

But I don't have my wages and, even if I did, I'm not sure that I'd make it; too far in, now... too far in. I probably won't write to you again for a while, and almost certainly won't see you up there in your Dundee retreat. But thank you for listening... writing all this down has anesthetized me — I only need one person outside to understand half along the way.

Take good care of yourself...

I'm sorry for laying all this on you, but at least it shows trust...

Bill, Ben and Mede

Read the questions carefully. You are advised not to answer any or all of them. Marks will be awarded only for empathy with the protagonists.

Three resolute merchant seamen arranged to run a race from Southampton to Winchester. They agreed on no rules bar the fact, that they should use only the main road, and not the pavements.

Bill, a stoker, choose to run in the gutter on the left hand side of the road. Ben, a second lieutenant, elected to race on the right hand side, also in the gutter. Mede, whose rank, status and mental attitude are to this day unknown, ran clown the center of the road, along the dotted white line and at the brow of both cambers. In common between them all were three things: an unshakable belief in their own victory, and in the justice of such; acknowledgment of the fact that a run of seventeen miles would exhaust them; hope for the sight of the spire of Winchester cathedral.

Each had a different style of running. Ben was a fast sprinter, and hoped to burn up the others' will by his initial speed. Bill was not particularly fast, but the power in his legs and chest and his overall stamina would, he believed, see him through. Mede was neither hare nor tortoise, but a tactician, and hoped to carry away the victory by conserving his energy for the final burst into the cathedral precincts. There were advantages and disadvantages for each of them in their chosen positions. Bill had a clear view around right-hand bends, none around left-hand ones, but was in no clanger from oncoming traffic. He was threatened, however, by cars coming from behind him. Ben had reversed advantage as regards his view of the road, and had no need to concern himself about traffic coming from behind, but was in dire peril from every vehicle out of Winchester. Mede had a relatively unobstructed view of the road ahead at all times and, furthermore, was in no danger of being disqualified by accidentally running into the pavement, as were the other two. However, every car and lorry stood a good chance of running him down and he therefore had to zigzag along the road in order to avoid these threats.

It should be mentioned at this stage that the entire complement of their ship had bet heavily on the outcome of the race, from the captain to the lowest cabin boy, and this lent further importance to a contest which was already of vital interest to the three participants.

The race proceeded much as had been expected: Ben took off at an incredible pace and was soon a hundred yards ahead of the others. They were, however, unconcerned at this apparent setback, Bill sure of eventual triumph due to his massive strength, and Mede using him as pacemaker and having, as he would have wished, a clear view of the race as a whole. Neither attempted to match Ben's initial burst of speed.

One mile out of Compton, on the Southampton side, Ben's energy was almost spent and he glanced round despairingly as Bill and Mede pounded up to level with him. By now Bill was confidently into rhythm and Mede, too, had his second wind and could see that the race was running according to his projected plan.

They ran precisely even for about two hundred yards before Ben, sensing his imminent and abject defeat and rolling from side to side in the agony of his onwardm

stitch-torn rush, stepped onto the easier tread of the pavement in his desperation, brazenly breaking the rules of their game in the process. Ben [*note: prob. should be «Bill». HJ*], seeing him, was momentarily furious but then, not wishing to run at any disadvantage, however illegally wrought., ran onto the pavement on his side of the road and, in doping so, changed the rules by a two-to-one majority. In essence, this little drama merely exemplified the arbitrariness of rules and the perversity of human nature but it left Mede at a decided disadvantage, for there was no pavement to which he could transfer his course, and he had to continue zigzagging his way down the center of the road: such was an innate failing of his original choice.

So they continued, three abreast across the road, Bill keeping a sure and steady pace, Ben clinging desperately to that speed, Mede inwardly seething but all the more determined to win. Perhaps there would have been disputes in the close of the cathedral; perhaps (it was not unlikely from the start) they would have come to blows; perhaps the victory would have been withheld. The resolution of these various options is unknown, for another tripartite drama was already unfolding.

A Globe Tours coach tried to overtake a Carter Paterson pantechicon, while a bright red Sprite driven by a Southampton veterinarian on his way to cure a sick boa constrictor was approaching on the opposite side of the road. The stretch was narrow, and there was no room for the three to pass in safety: lorry and sports car, in a screaming duet of tortured tires and brakes, swerved off the road and took out Bill and Ben. Mede was crushed under the front nearside wheel of the coach. There was no victory.

Some questions arising from the matter...

Did Winchester exist and, if so, who would have got there first? What difference would it have made if they were running

i) from Tübingen to Ulm?

ii) from Bethune to Canterbury? (assume all crossed the Channel on the Hovercraft)

What happened to the crew's bets?

Who was guilty?

Is there any point?

King Tut

Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit.

Virgil: Aeneid

«If there is anything you would wish to spring to mind — and, remember, to mind only — then now is the moment to open yourself to it.»

‘I can’t get any further than six or seven. Everything before is blurred or stolen. I’ve stolen my picture of babyhood from the photograph album. There is nothing real there, only dark, terribly gloomy pictures.

«Where am I? Who was I? Do I not exist? Is there really no past? And if so, then what is now, for I can only have been made by what has been and I can only be what I have been made? Is there no moment for me to define as a changing one? How alone I feel...»

There are nodes in all our lives, high peaks of activity, excitement, relationship, confrontation. Memory catches them through the mists of the years. In the far past, the only past that we can briefly call such, only the nodes are visible, and in their temporal moments we are both made and defined. In subliminal chasms of antinode, reaction is felt, registered, translated into a scratch on the wall, a note which will join with others to make our individual chords. Far down, a junction switches from «yes» to «no» and the world changes. How important is the root note; how critical the placement of the first switch!

I, too, have pseudo-memories of/from photograph albums with funereal black corner-pieces, angry fists, surrenders to hunger, creative swearing, and I can attribute the blanks in my memory about them to more than extreme distance and total lack of data. They are not celebrated in me. They are not the Saints’ clay of my calendar. They are of white, cream, pastel; neither the rose-and-gold of joyous triumph, nor abstemious, sinful black and purple are theirs. They receive no extra benedictions, processions, consecrations, Hallelujah Choruses or Dies Iraes. They are the blank pages in my missal; no entries in the liturgical diary.

‘Oh but wait... yes, yes!! It returns... good young proto-Catholics all, first prayer books, white and gold leaf, milk at break, feuding with rivals, kissing the one girl in the class... and running away. I was shy and clinging; laughed at words like ‘wee-wee’; frightened of the dark; already aware of my own vulnerability (from where? from how? from what?); putty.

A shining summer afternoon, break time — but four of us are folding up and piling away chairs from the kindergarten room, attended by Teacher. She is, somehow, difficult to visualize; only the aura of power, of discipline is present of her. That, and the deep attractions, the despairing urges that are her in me.

We finished piling up the chairs, and are impatient to be outside, playing French cricket. Ah, I notice it: a black seam on a stocking rising out of a black shoe! Ah, teacher!

I’m feeling the root of my mouse with my tongue, exploring the seamy geography

with the tip, pressing upwards with the flat whole and sucking out the saliva from the junction. Something tells me I should not be doing this. If I suck enough saliva out I can make my tongue trick to the cave of my mouth. Teacher's words drift in: something about one final little job, moving table...

I can't slide my tongue loose! Ah, but if I pull hard I can jerk it away from the roof. The seal comes apart with a «cluck» which spills out into the sudden silence of the room. To me it sounds like a «cluck»; to teacher, a 'tut» of disapproval and rebellion. She's spitting words at me/face of thunder/physicality/nerve-ends multi-pulsating, screaming/my guilty tongue unable to manage more than a single 'But...': stunned into immobility/mind tears to deny her assumptions.

It's going, going, blurring into gray again. What then? We have to stay in for the break period. My friends are very angry. Teacher is very angry. Grey. And I am..? I was..?'

Wildman Logo, nasty child-molester, failed attempted murderer and crypto-tortologist, stumbles into the continuance of his gloomy silence. The man in the black hood has pulled the switch, with a 'tut'.

Catechism

I am twenty-three years old and a plagiarist. I steal my friends' and enemies' and acquaintances' lives and put them in my mind. Some day I will take them all out again and use them. Some I have used already. I have no need of comfort; I have no need of company. Everything exists inside my mind. Outside exists inside; reality is only what I choose it to be, and if I choose to make reality a lie, then it is so. I know I am real because I have decided I am. I think, therefore you exist.

Who are you?

You are seven years old and a typewriter. You are crystal and osmotic barrier and iron curtain and drug. You are everything that never existed; you are the sum total of human knowledge from infinity to infinity. You hold the final clue to the ultimate mystery. You are the glue that holds me together.

Who am I?

I am several fragments of my several accumulated lives; I am the total of my fragments. I am held together by blood and bone and glue and mystery. If there was no mystery I would fall apart and if I fall apart there would be a mystery and so I would fall together again. I keep falling apart, and putting myself together again because whenever I fall apart I fall together and so I am a mystery and mystery is eternal. It happens to us all.

Who are we?

We are the fragments when I have fallen apart. We are the spaces between the mystery, the mystery of the spaces and every cell and molecule which threatens itself. We are selfdestruction and genocide and retribution. We are the Law and the hangman and the hanged man. We are the dead and the riot and entropy. We are the trace lines on an oscilloscope, nothing more. There is nothing more.

What is nothing?

Nothing is the moment when we know what we are. Nothing is the moment when we have just fallen apart and have not yet fallen together. Nothing is the song that has never been heard, but is compiled through infinity. The song is the puppet master's, and is irrepeatable. Nothing is the bridge between the future and the further future. Nothing is certainty. Nothing is any definition of anything.

What is a definition?

A definition is the moment when everything ends. A definition is death. A definition is the answer to which you must look up the question in the back of your book. There are missing pages. Pages are prisons, and missing pages are inescapable prisons. All is confusion.

What is confusion?

Confusion is an answer. Confusion is a certainty. Confusion is an end without end. Confusion is all the fragments and the coming together and the falling apart and the moment when it is neither together nor apart and the moment when it is both. Confusion is

the frontispiece and the first chapter and the appendix.

What is between?

Fragments. Glue. Answers. Definitions. Me. You.

Who are you?

Me.

Who am I?

I am twenty-three years old and a plagiarist.

Options

What options are open to us! What challenges we all face daily! How noble a race is Mankind! How incomparable!

We are all born equal, with nothing, with the same, with zero, with one hundred per cent possibility. We can all make of ourselves whatever we want, whatever we believe in; and what we believe is ultimately what we are. We can all draw from the fathomless wells of human knowledge and experience. Every day, we do so, and every individual met, probed and felt is another equation solved in our self-examinations. We can all transcend. We can all achieve peace, or turmoil, or boredom, or a Good Life; whatever we self-destinate is ours. We can all become whole. Hope is not dead. Man survives.

Panander examines his chin in the cracked mirror. The mirror has streaks of dirt across it like the tracks of proud and unrepentant tears. There are no tears in Panander's eyes: they are hard and cold gray. The pupils are small. The whites are blurred and capillaried with blood. There is a day's stubble on his chin. The stubble is dark, but patched and dappled in gray. The chin is taut and firm.

Panander decides not to shave; it hardly seems worth it. He feels the root of a back tooth with the tip of his tongue. His cheek rumples and distorts in the mirror. The tooth feels loose, but he is careful not to dislodge it; his tongue is funghied and furred.

There is a packet of untipped cigarettes lying on the bedside table, with five left in it. An empty, crushed packet lies in the wastepaper basket. On top of the suitcase on the bedside chair is a pack of two hundred duty-free cigarettes. Two packets are missing. There is a bottle of duty-free Scotch on the bedside table, and a half-full tumbler beside it.. Panander picks up the tumbler and gulps from it. He does not shudder. He picks up a cigarette from the packet and lights it. He blows the smoke out very slowly, with a whistling sigh. He is waiting for somebody or something, and he has a lot of time.

It is two hours later. The level of the Scotch has dropped. There is a new packet of cigarettes by the bedside, and the old packet, crushed, has joined its sibling in the wastepaper basket. Panander is lying on the bed without shoes or jacket. His socks need darning and the material at the elbows of his shirt is threadbare. He is watching a moth do circuits around the light bulb. The shades is plastic and it is cracked.

Panander is sitting in this dirty little hotel room with cracked lightshade, with dusty mirror, with walls which seem to have been painted the color of the dirt, with a ceiling scarred by many plaster repairs, with shaking, decrepit bed and musty sheets, and it all fits. Panander fits in the room. He is comfortable here; he is blending with his environment like a chameleon, like a sand crab, and the only parts of him which truly remain visible against the sombre background of the room are his eyes, which are hard and cold and gray. Behind those hard, cold, gray eyes he is thinking about what he is going to do when he leaves this place. He is thinking about the colors his skin must change to in order to blend with new and gaudier surroundings.

He is trying to decide which of two daydreams he will inhabit. Both are crystal-bright, sunny, and washed over in sheets of white. One has dark conifers and scabs of out-

cropping rock through snow. It has speed and steaming breath, exhilaration and endless parallel lines biting across the white surface of the ground in pale gray. The other dream is horizontal, inactive, the gentle hiss of water on burning white sand, sparkling light on the endless deep blue of the sea, cooling palm fronds and long alcoholic drinks. In neither dream is there any waiting.

Another hour has passed. The moth is no longer flying around the cracked lightshade. It has died under the merciless onslaught of a rolled-up newspaper, and is now merely crushed tissue and moist juices spread over the crossword. The crossword has been completed, and so has the moth.

Panander is lying on the bed and thinking about his life. He is not sure that he likes it: there are certain moments and actions that he find almost unbearable even to think about. Other parts he lingers over with a dull sense of pleasure. He has been both a thoughtful man and a cruel one. Sometimes he has been gentle; sometimes he has been stupid. He is wondering what being happy means. He is wondering what Good is. He is thinking that maybe his dreams have been better than his life. His only comfort, is the absolute certainty of the pronouns.

The door bursts open, and four men come through it. Three of them are wearing sombre, anonymous uniform. The colour and denomination does not matter in the slightest. They have black belts and sub-machine guns. The other man has on a badly-fitting, belted raincoat of sandy gray. Under the raincoat is a badly-fitting black suit. The cut and fit of his clothes do not matter in the slightest.. He has black, greasy hair and an automatic pistol in his hand.

This is not what Panander has been waiting for.

These are not his friends.

These people were not included in his dreams.

Panander licks the root of one of his back teeth. It is loose. He pushes hard on it, and it comes away from the gum. A small capsule falls from its hollow onto his tongue. He punctures the capsule between his teeth. Sudden dreams come to him, sudden acridity and acidity. He crumples over onto his side, and his hands tear at his stomach.

The man in the raincoat walks over to the shabby figure on the floor and kicks it in the kidneys. Panander does not worry, wonder, think, dream, or feel any more.

Of course I do not know any spies. Of course I have never seen a man standing in a doorway wearing a sand gray raincoat and black suit with an automatic pistol in his hand. But I validate my life by writing about death and I fill my life with interest by writing about interesting death.

Of course, physically, it is no different from the last asthmatic gurgling cough. Of course it is no different from the screaming, distorted union with metal and upholstery on a foggy motorway night. The only interest lies in the last frame of the mind's movie. The only conclusions to be drawn are derived from the photofinish, the dead heat that ebbs away into the air and is gone almost before it can be analyzed. Ultimately, no conclusions, analyzes, answers — only more questions.

Why did Panander, Rothschild, Kutz, whoever he may really have been or been imagined to be, explode his being with a capsule of hydrocyanic acid? Options already form their ranks; the network of motive and reason stretches out in a spider's web from them. On one of the threads lies the corpse, first, trapped, now husked. How many options have bred this result?

What if he thought the intruders were about to shoot him out of hand? Did he wish to deny them such final control over him? Was this last assertion of individuality, his last, his only his? Did he side with the option of decision and self-determinism to the end? Suicide to deny murder? Suicide for Free Will? Suicide for a 'good name'? Was there really any choice?

Perhaps he saw it differently. Perhaps he saw already the grim lines of prison bars; dry bread, stale water, board bed, interrogation, lights, questions, questions, questions. Perhaps he saw humiliation, public and private; pain; destruction, within and without; endless non-life, endless anonymity, endless despair.

Was he already dead in the moment he saw all of this? Was he dead against capture, failure, ultimate repentance? Was he dead in the destruction of self-respect? The fast against the slow and tortured?

Do you think he thought at all? Do you think it could have been a charade, a joke, a game, another dream? Are you dead yet?

It is inevitable that, one day, each of us will lie, crushed and inwardly seeping blood, in our true colors at last, pinned against the blank spaces we fill with clever but isolating words and the black spaces that are our might-have-beens, our broken dreams, our failings. Perhaps we are all engaged merely in moulding our coffins.

What options are open to us!

Adam's conviction

«There is something more,» she said, «something of which you really should be aware. It's in a much broader direction, nothing to do with the individual spheres... your attitude to life in total.»

Her hands rested upon the green baize of the table, enclosing between them the layout of those cards in which, some say, fortune is concealed and revealed, rather than won or lost.

«In what way?» he asked. «I mean, I know there is this conflict»... his hands making general motions over the cards, where hers had darted decisively from one to the next in tight triangles of intuition, logic, causality... «between the higher and lower natures, but what else?»

«It's something outside, not specifically from an individual card, or the position. I don't know whether or how to tell you really, but-well, the feeling is so strong from this hand, I don't think I've ever known it quite like this before. I can't tell you in straight words...I can't explain it in the ordinary way of a reading.»

«Well, whatever it is, if you've seen it...Tell me, and I'll say if it strikes a chord with me.»

«Oh, I doubt that it will. Still, I suppose I must tell you.» She paused, gathering her thoughts to find a starting point. «Well, as I've said, according to the cards at their face value, you have and will have a good life-after admitting the conflict between your higher and lower natures. On the material and mental planes there should be nothing but satisfaction; on the spiritual, too, to the extent you want or need it. But there's some shadow here, some change...It's far more than, say, what the Tower would have meant if it had fallen in the hand instead of» — gesturing with her fingertips — «Temperance, all these Cups. I don't, really have the words, just the feeling, and I can't show you in the cards, exactly. It's there though. You are living a life of fruition and plenty, yet without conviction.»

She looked at Adam across the table. It was a strange moment, a strange environment for him, and he found it hard to hold her gaze with anything like the seriousness it seemed to demand. The woman was far from any image of fortune-teller he had previously fostered. He had neither expected nor found a shawl, crystal ball, or anything so essentially theatrical in nature. Still, he had anticipated some sense of beyond, some alien quality; perhaps even some dark sexuality...the woman who knows, who sees, who makes one see. But she was nothing like that, nothing if not average; her conformist clothes, her imitation pearls, her bouffant hairstyle, her suburban living-room, cheap ornaments and fiber-optic lamps. She, and the setting, could hardly appear less mystical.

Not, of course, that he was particularly mystically inclined himself; he would not have called himself a believer in matters spiritual and psychic. In general, he neither believed nor disbelieved in anything for which he had no direct proof. His mentality was that of a hermit, rather than a seeker: feeling the wind, rather than the sky. The wind of words had blown to him, in the course of a fairly frivolous conversation with a friend, the

recommendation that he come to see this particular woman to have his cards read. He had been bored, inactive, at the time, so had taken up the suggestion. Thus he found himself here, facing this ordinary woman and her extraordinary words.

At this moment, he was confused, and did not really understand what the woman had said at all. Under her serious gaze, he decided that he should try to do so.

«But I give myself wholeheartedly to my work, my leisure, all my pursuits,» he said. «I do believe in my life... I don't know what you mean.»

«Yes, you believe in your life,» she replied, «and you live it fully. I didn't say you didn't. Forgive me, words are not...but it is the right word: you do not have conviction in your life. No, don't say anything. I'm not attacking you. You don't have to justify or defend yourself to me; only to yourself. I'm simply telling you what I see in and feel from the cards... it's for you to find understanding in that.»

«I'm sorry,» Adam said. He did feel sorry: he felt as though he were failing some test, as though-ridiculously enough-he were failing the woman. «I understood all the previous parts of the reading, but this seems to be beyond me. I'm not sure...»

«No, you're not sure; I thought it would be like this. Still, it's there somehow, this estrangement.» There was a clumsy pause, and he shifted in his seat.

«Look, I know it's difficult for you,» she sighed, clasping her hands in her lap. «On the one hand, you want to deny everything that I've said, outright; on the other, you want to protect my feelings, and to pretend you accept it all.

Believe me, I meet a lot of fools, and I'm treated as a fool by a lot of people. I don't think you're a fool. Neither of those options you've been thinking about are any good. You came here to have your cards read; that is not a light thing, there is duty involved. I have a duty to read them properly. You, unless you are a fool, have a duty to do more than just listen...to try to hear what there is for you.»

Yes, he had been weighing up those two choices, and had been about to take the easy course, leaving amid muttered expressions of gratitude which he would recant the moment he was outside the door. He had begun to feel uncomfortable, and wanted to withdraw his foot from the threshold on which he found himself, the tread of which he recognized, dimly, and was frightened by, dully. He had come here out of idle curiosity; now, as he was about, to probe for further clarification, if only to hasten his departure, the woman blocked his words, too.

«I see I have to tell you in another way,» she said. «It is too deep, too much a part of you, to be uncovered in any normal words. I must be more oblique. Look, I'll tell you a story; I know that sounds a strange way to go about this, but believe me, trust me, it's the only way I know. At the end, maybe you'll have the question, the vision in your grasp. You have time?»

«Well, I...»

All potential moves had been seen and potently discounted. There was no option, and limitless time. She motioned Adam away from the table to a sofa; when he was installed there, she herself sat on the edge of an armchair. He laid his head back against the

cushions and fixed his eyes on the ceiling; already he could sense hers locked onto him. For a moment he thought «Is this some sexual...?» but then, from across the room, she began to speak, and her voice, with quiet assurance, lulled him into complete attention. She spoke at a pitch lower than normal, and her words, though measured, uniform, seemed to come to her at the very moment she spoke them. He glanced at her: though her eyes were on him, they seemed lost, far away, drugged. And now he himself was drugged by her voice, by the story.

«There is peace, but in it is stagnation. There is peace, after years of storm and war; unity, after division; hope, after despair; love, after universal hatred. Change comes; death comes, and leaves change in its wake. The world has been overthrown; it steadies itself and becomes whole again. The people of the land are joined together; they look to the future bravely. This in itself is not enough.

Now that the people can see, they must look upon each other, and upon their division. The hands on the same plough, with the same intent, move with differing motive. The people can see, but look only on themselves: they are defiant against the need for wholeness of identity. The fractions and fractioning of war are still splinters under the skins of the people. The world is razed, to be built again; but the plans for it are carried from the old world. All points to cycle, repetitious end, failure. Hope is undimmed, but the people can see that exultation is vanished.

Some were content; those who were dominant, in the new world. Others did not care: those who had traded their hope for apathy, the easy trade. Others do not forbear from action. They have seen, participated in the destruction of the old world, helped to fashion the new, desired its success. They know that already it carries the seeds of its own destruction. Dissent and stratification have already begun. Those who see this choose drastic action. Convinced of their Tightness, they choose to destroy rather than to accept decay.

They select, by ballot, from among their number, a man and a woman. These two epitomize the values and virtues for which the new world had striven. Their lives and interests are the fullest, their attitudes the purest. They are those least likely to pass on the germs of division and discord to others. These two they send to a safe place, to begin the world anew. Themselves, and all the others of the land, they destroy; and only the two they have chosen survive, to populate the world once more.»

She stopped. Adam, in semi-trance, looked at her, and was almost surprised to find that her voice still inhabited the same, homely, middle-aged, middle-class body. That body was still tense; the voice still had a few more words to say.

«There is a question all of us should ask, but never do. It is time for you to ask it of yourself. You, Adam, could you be such a last and first man? Are you satisfied enough with your life, the living of it, for that? Would the further generations from you, bearing your imprint, your life, be a good, a better humanity? Do you have the conviction that your life is lived to its fullest extent and to its fullest meaning? Do you have the conviction of inheritance?»

He knew it. He knew that ultimately he regarded as life as a diverting game, something with which he chose to be involved, rather than with which he rang in harmony.

He knew that beneath the surface sparkle and urbanity lay shallow self-destructiveness. He knew that he was far from grace.

And she was now far from that power-of voice, of presence-with which, but a moment ago, she had been invested. She slumped back into the armchair, seeming to lose strength and substance with each second. Adam, now, was strong and grim, at least in clench of jaw. She attempted to say something: «I...» but her voice fell short against his granite expression. Tense, angular minutes; then each gathered their normal selves about them, and it was time, high time, for him to go.

«Is it...important?»

There was no affirmation, there was no ritual gratitude; there was nothing he could say. He left, quickly and thunder-headed.

The thunder did not last for long. Adam had seen, or been shown, something deeply wrong with himself, and had resolved to change it. But he did not brood-that was neither in the nature he had, nor that to which he now felt he must aspire. A few days later, he found himself visiting that friend who had recommended the fortune-teller to him.

He was asked, of course, about his cards, but gave only the most cursory of replies. He would not have been able to explain what had passed, and his friend would have been incapable of understanding it. Before, these two had been close, even if Adam had always had a touch of envy towards the other man. He had seemed so interested, so knowledgeable, so experienced in all things: music, magic, science, drama, psychology, films, society. But Adam's range of vision had been widened by his insight into his strange central disinterest, in life and living: now he saw that at the kernel of his friend's existence-where in himself was this forceful indifference-lay vacuous boredom. Thus, in order not to diminish it, he stilled his excitement, and merely said that his visit to the woman had been worthwhile.

In any case, his friend was not much interested in his experience. He had, of course, been to see her himself; but he knew many clairvoyants, of different orders and disciplines. The only uniqueness he saw in her was, perhaps, the very incongruity between her suburban lifestyle and her houses of cards. Possibly it was for that very strangeness that he had sent Adam, the avowed non-believer, to her. Now it all seemed to be of little importance to him.

As always, the videocast was on in the apartment; Adam knew that it was left running so that even when nothing else was happening in the room, an impression of vibrant activity would be cast into it from the screen. It was one of the new channels: a constant flux of event, observation, report, each one leading implacably forward into the next. Round and round it went, the circle of perpetual fear and destruction (such the political, social and populational climate), of niggling aggression and fire-flash war. The passing of the year 2000 had brought Man little save more of himself: more of his greed, his rapacity, his lust for power and individual isolation... above all, more of him in numbers. The world was now a pressure-cooker; there was still no safety valve, still no end to the feeding flame, and none in sight.. For there to be one each struggled more ferociously than ever for self-preservation and enlargement there was no chance whatsoever of that happening. Since the dissolution-in total chaos-of the United Nations in

1993 there had not been even a pretence at accord or unity. It was now each country for itself; and, since all save military space programs had long since been abandoned, land, the possession of earth, was the prime goal. Thus the news channels were constantly full of conflict., aggression and disaster... precisely the kind of panorama Adam's friend needed to sweep the ghosts of inactivity and boredom from his room.

Normally, he only showed desultory interest in the screen, but on this occasion Adam had been there barely ten minutes when something caught his friend's eye, and he leapt to the volume control. The propaeaster's delivery changed from a whisper to a shout. The story was of a new defense system, the government's latest development. On that clay, it seemed, a gigantic force field had been put into operation, skirting the rim of Britain's coastline. From Beccles to Bude, Southampton to Cape Wrath, the island was sealed behind an impenetrable, invisible barrier, impervious to all matter, curving round from all sides to meet at a ground-locked point miles above the country. Nothing would now go into or out of Britain, even to its satellites, the Isles of Man, the Hebrides, the Channel, Eirland. The news was celebrated on the screen, although none of the working of the system, one of its implications, were mentioned-least of all that the citizens' freedom had, once again, been curtailed in the name of their own security.

It was simply the further progress-or decline-of the world: Adam could not see why his friend was so excited. As soon as the item was over, he had leapt, to his library shelves and, after a short search, taken clown a book. Muttering, «Amazing! Extraordinary!» to himself, he switched off the videocast and inserted the cassette in his viewing panel, holding down the fast wind until he had skipped through nearly all the pages of the book. When the screen stilled, it showed a page of print, evidently ancient and equally evidently most exciting to him.

«I thought so,» he said. «Isn't that fantastic?»

«What is it.?» asked Adam.

«It's old stuff...a prediction, you could say; very extraordinary...It's from the apocrypha of the Matter of Britain, although no-one can be absolutely sure it belongs to that. There is only one copy, and very few cassettes. It was found in the remains of an Abbey at the end of the last century. No-one knows its date of origin, it can't even be pinned clown by carbon dating. This fragment is all that we have of the Apocalypse d'Arthur.»

Adam, something indefinable drawing him towards what was written on the page, began to read. It was in English, although a certain cramped nature, an alien dissonance between concept and expression led him to believe that it had been translated from another tongue. At first, he thought that the unknown translator had probably embellished and romanticized the story. Quickly though, it came to him that this was not the case: the embellishment was, in fact, its opposite, a paring down to essentials, giving an impression of superfluity, but in reality being vital to the message. Nor was this a fragment, he knew-the page was complete, even if it was a cipher, a grain, a piece of a puzzle. There had been translation, yes, but from no tongue he, or any other human, had ever uttered. This was of supreme importance; and it was for him. He read now as he had never read before.

«And then they built the wall around the land, so that no-one could pass through it,

though the wall could not be seen. And they could not pass out of the land, nor could those enter who would invade them. And the wall was from coast to coast: wherever sea met land was the wall. There was peace in the land. The people forgot all that was before and all that was outside, and met and spoke only among themselves.

But the kings of the world outside the land then took to war, and the fight was so terrible that all the earth shook. Feeling this, in the land, too, they fought. And the earth moved with the fight, and the ground and the air themselves joined in the battle. The mountains crashed down, and the sky clouded. And then the ice from the North and the South melted, and the water poured over onto the world and drowned it. Then all those in the world were drowned, save those in the land behind the wall, for the water could not penetrate it. And so the people of Britain were the last on earth.

Then from the North, from the melted ice, came Arthur, who, it was known, would return. He was free of the ice, free to come to his country. So he came, in his black bier, with his attendants. But he found the people in disarray. Still they fought, but now they lived in a great fear, because of what had befallen the other lands of earth. They knew that none outside the land could survive, for they saw the water towering again the shield of the wall.

But Arthur took the people to him, and they had him as king. And he caused them to cease fighting, and set them toward a more glorious life. There was peace, and it seemed that the land would be forever serene. Years passed.

But then Arthur fell ill, his thumb pierced by poisoned thorn, and he died. And the people were dismayed, and they walked and spoke in fear. And soon they took sides, and fought again, and the country faced the ravages of war once more. It became among them as it had been before Arthur and the Flood.

And it was then that they saw the water at the wall falling; and in these days they knew the ice was forming far away; and that soon there would be lands on the earth other than their own.

And then many of these who had been close to the King looked at the land around them and saw that this was not the way it should be. This was the same as the old. It was not the life they had searched for under Arthur. And then they thought that the Flood and Arthur's coming and the hopes for peace they had had were for nothing. Then in anger and despair they went to the coasts of the land, and there they destroyed the wall, so that the water rushed in and drowned all in its path. So all the last people of the earth, the last people of Britain, were killed.

But first those who had planned this thing had sent two of their number away, a man and a woman. And they sent them to the highest place in the land, where they were safe from the Flood. And these two survived to populate the earth.»

Adam's in his room now, as he has been for clays. It's time to tap the very chatter of his brain... Well, yes, it is on me.

Strange and just that the fortune-teller felt and knew her message to be so important; strange and just that the pieces fell into place through my friend's ephemeral interests. They way that the knowledge came was balanced. I'm balanced.

Oh, now I must prepare. Who knows when the cataclysm will come, what form it will take? Who knows what man will come forward as Arthur? How soon the Flood?

But I know... my will waxes, my powers increase, my certainty can grow no more... all these things will be. So I must make of myself and my life all I can. I am a mirror. When I shatter, splinters will fall all over the earth, each with an imprint of me.

I cannot be a perfect man, but I must try to be a perfect me. It's the same for all of us, the lot, the trial. But I've got responsibility. Not just to myself, like everyone; to all past, present, future, to all Earth and humanity. To that Beyond that has sent me this knowledge in advance. I can't be superhuman; I must be human to the limit.

Oh still nagging doubt. That tone of question in the fortune-teller's voice. Not the ordinary woman? Not her voice, a far deeper one. The Voice, asking if I realize the weight of my responsibility? The deepest concern... is «Is it important?», really 'Do you understand how important it is?» Do I?

Still that preying fear. She spoke of a lack of conviction, a distance between spirit and intellect, a basic lack of caring. Is it ineradicable? Within me cancerously? In my genes?

I must fight to make myself ready. Even as I tear at each knot of the growth I know that there is yet more below, where my hand and eye have not yet reached. How deep is my indifference? I will pass on my seed to a new world...will it still be one of destruction? Not of discord, division and dogma-but of vacuousness, lethargy, lack of conviction in self, in world, in time, in reality, even in life? What world is to come when my time comes? Have I time to make a better, more of, me?

How long do I have to prepare, how soon before I am truly Adam...?

Perhaps he's cracked, perhaps he's gone mad. Perhaps he's right. Anyway, he and his problems are in a future none of us will ever know. Even so, it's hard to know what to think; whether we feel sorry for him, laugh at him, cry for him, hope for him, tell him «good luck» or 'get stuffed', or even fail to believe in him at all... he'll still be one up on us.

For Adam now lives in the conviction that his life has purpose.

The Black Hole

Oh all you who are framed in the hologram of Time, that it should come to this! That, finally, my story can reach you only on this page! You have heard it always, embedded in the fabric of the galaxies, in the spider's web of all existence; but none have ever listened. Vibrating danger and desire to you from the future, you have heard it always, all of you, but none have ever understood, too preoccupied were you with the dull mechanics of your boundaries, that preoccupation which seals you in a ring of dimension where there is none, a voice of reason where there is only chaos. «Turn back!» I have always cried; «Too late!» the echo of my voice has returned. And from you, nothing but silence and ignorance.

Oh all you...I, strung across the yawning interstices of existence, can now attempt to inform you only through this most, primitive of means, in this most earthbound of pasts. Though it is the echo, not my voice, which rings with conviction and veracity, still I must try. Though I know already that you will not be informed, still I must stretch your incomprehension to its limits: I must show you the end of all things. If you cower, so shall I; as you cringe, so do I, for your inadequacy is also mine. Now, too, my despair must clutch your heart, for this is our shared heritage. Here, from the future, I am.

They marooned me. Senses incapable of bearing the self-confrontation with which they would have had to cope had my destruction been immediate, unable to face the telepathic torture my death-throes would have brought them had we been in any proximity, they consigned me to the shuttle and ellipsed away under plasma drive in the mothership. As they drove across the vacuum, I directed my loathing after them as a beam, feeling the twinges of their minds as it made contact, but knowing that these were as nothing compared to those they would have experienced had they executed me on the spot. An execution more personal, more human, more just, that would have been-for no matter what my crime, no matter what my mutiny, it could surely not deserve this, the abnegation of my right to inflict to inflict the anguish of my death on them! Yet they had denied me that right; they had gone, and the inferno of my execration could do no more than faintly reach them; but it sustained me.

Indeed, hatred alone sustained me, for there was no hope, no chance of sanctuary: my physical life was as good as finished at the moment their ship pulled silently, pulsingly away from me in endless acceleration. Only the energy of that vessel would be enough to reach the nearest base, human life, salvation, all that I could hope to grasp, from my position in the void, was further void. The meagre propulsive system of my craft, even had I infinity of time at my disposal, could not bring me to safety. Here, condemned to this farthest flung sector of exploration, I was already

The shuttle craft, having a secondary function as a life-raft, was well provisioned: I could survive for months, years before the stocks of food, drink and air diminished. But my emergency signals would go unheeded. By merely surviving I would ultimately find the worst possible way of dying: gradual decline and certain madness, sustenance exhausted, lungs sucking at non-existent oxygen, life-support systems failing one by one. Of the choice of deaths to which had consigned me this most living one was the most horrendous in prospect. I suppose they had expected me to commit suicide, and if my only alternative had been that protracted torment it would have been inevitable that I would

have done so. However, I immediately resolved that my death should not come with the ease of a hypodermic in the private, discreet quiet of my craft, not with a deliriously insensate, hand-jet propelled drift away from it into space: such relatively painless options could never give vent to the violence of my emotions. My thoughts turned to revenge, and to the search for some end which might match them in intensity. Scalding myself with the pitch of my feelings, I scanned the star charts, looking for anything which might aid me in this, my final purpose. I found it, and instantly set my course. I found the black hole.

As I began the crawl across infinite night towards that negation of our cosmos, my plan was formed. At the point of entry into the black hole-swirling vortex of anti-matter from which there could be no return-I would fuse my power source and disintegrate my vessel; then, surely, some germ of catastrophe would spread out from the shadow-zone where matter and energy of diametrically opposed nature met. The vessel from which I had been cast adrift, I conjectured, would still be within range of some cataclysmic effect, no matter how fast it travelled, no matter how long it took me to reach this, my final destination. Perhaps, at the most, shards of anti-matter would splinter out through the vastness of space, ensuring the destruction of those who had done for me in parallel with my own; at the least., surely, the energies involved would be enough to amplify my anguish and send it screaming out. telepathically towards them across the void, so that the very phenomenon they had hoped to escape by marooning me-the sympathetic vibration of their minds to the obliteration of my own-would come about. Perhaps the effects would be even greater than these: there was and is no way of gathering data about, black holes without being gathered oneself in the process. Light years away though the nearest life was, it, too, might be touched: but by now my hatred, as my existence, knew no bounds, and I did not so much as doff the cap of conscience in the direction of any accidental victims. Was not my punishment a crime against the humanity in me? Therefore, were not all humans culpable?

My journey took weeks. I continued to sustain myself on hatred, growing in intensity as my end approached. I would never know the actual taste of vengeance, and contented myself with its burgeoning, burning anticipation. I was careful not to stretch my reserves of power-for, at the end, I would have need of them to create the envisioned cataclysm-and cut out my engines as soon as I knew that I was likely to die, physically, before the optimum point for self-destruction, compressed by gravity beyond the imagination; so I programmed my craft's computer accordingly. Should it sense my imminent demise it could then carry out the final act of my plan for me, ripping the shuttle apart in fusion. My distilled hatred, my pure lust for revenge, I knew, would still be with me, the very essence of myself, even as my body failed; and in that moment it would sear out across the void, clutching for the minds of those in the mothership to which I had once belonged. I settled for the long drop into the vortex of anti-matter: the plan was set.

All space is vacuum, but there is none to compete with the enormity of that which surrounds a black hole. Since all things began, it has sucked every grain of matter within the vast power of its attraction into itself, so that the emptiness which surrounds it can no longer be measured even in terms of the speed of light: it must be in that of dark. Into this absolute void I tumbled, ever accelerating, but with no sense of speed: with no matter around me to which I could relate, it was as though, for weeks, my craft remained stationary. But I knew, exultantly, that I was hastening ever inwards: now nothing could

halt my progress, nothing could avert the specific of my end.

I became aware very slowly. At first, I thought it was a trick of my admittedly fevered mind, a phenomenon due to the ever greater proximity of nothingness, somehow reflecting my thoughts and giving me telepathic echoes of myself. The closer I drew to the black hole, the greater was the intensity of the mind waves; realization after realization came upon me, until finally truth dawned. My essence, which had been hatred, changed to desperation, the desperation to send a message; and the pitch of my emotion now was greater even than it had been in my earlier will for revenge.

A message: it is that one which has been-as I once hoped my hatred would be-imprinted through all the fabric of space and time and all the further dimensions. It is that message which you, and I in my time within the cage of time, have heard but never understood; it is that warning to which you-we-have been so oblivious. Now this obliviousness forces me into this most inadequate of attempts at communication: the implanting of my story in the mind, and therefore the written words, of one of your time, your constrictions, your inabilities. It is hopeless, I know already: you, I, we all cannot deviate from the line on which we are irrevocably set. Yet still there is struggle; yet still my scream reaches farther than even I could have dreamed.

The essence, the telepathic output of the black hole-no, it is time to do away with such inanimate imagery-the antimatter itself, the one composite antithesis of all we are and know, is not intelligence, nor will, nor emotion. Even in the matter of essence, it is utter negative I sensed. I knew with every limit of sense, that that negative of negatives was utter oblivion, utter obliteration for us. In the material sense, of course, I had always known this to be so; now I also knew it in every other one. I drew closer, and the mindwaves became even more intense; by this time able only to absorb, not to fight, I was helpless. The enormity of my crime became clear to me.

The anti-matter, in its totality, is also anti-mind, anti-soul, anti-brain, anti-spirit; then, it was still dormant. The oblivion which the black hole, the window at which we peered but could not penetrate, had tendered us was arbitrary, impartial; the sucking in of matter through all time had been merely the breathing of a Sleeper. This is to be no more: the noise of my approach, the intensity of my hatred, has intruded in the slumber, and it stirs.

Of what use if dull, lifeless matter as sustenance when wakefulness comes? Now it rises from sleep; now, in me, is about to taste the addictive sweetness of life and of spirit for the first time. Now it wakes, flexes Its muscles, begins to feel the full extent of Its power and dominion. Its millennium is come: soon, now, It will begin to feel Its way out across the cosmos, across all time, all dimension, in the craving to satisfy Its endless greed, to satiate Its endless hunger.

Waiting

‘I wake up; without a shadow of doubt I have done so. The hands of the bedside clock show an hour well before my accustomed one of consciousness; the alarm has not yet gone off. For once, rather than drifting back to sleep, I reach over and push down the lever, so the bell won’t ring later. My head is muzzy, the brandy of last night is still traced around my mouth; there is the suspicion of a swollen gland on the right side of my neck. I have passed the borderline, truly awake, and no will to return to sleep can be realized; so I obey the unaccustomed impulse to rise.

The day is so mediocre that it cannot even be called hostile. The greyness and the wet are uniform, but in an almost clandestine way. I can look at the day and say «This is nothing»; but my eyes, turned away, will be all the more bleary, damp, and unfeeling. It is — dull, ambiguous, anonymous-a waiting day, and a day for waiting.

A cup of black coffee, made in automatic fashion; water has spilled over the rim of the cup onto the work surface, where it already starts to congeal into a sticky paste with odd granules of coffee and sugar. I have opened my mail, glanced at opening paragraphs, signatures-and postponed proper reading to a later, more aware, time. Slumped in my favorite chair, I drink the coffee, smoke two cigarettes, read the morning paper. There is nothing of surpassing interest in it-an earthquake, a football result, two foolish mistakes in yesterday’s crossword, listings of another evening of valueless television. I need the paper, though, as junction with, normalization for, the day; without the ritual of morning reading I might well pass through the entire day in a dream state.

The ritual is clone, and I have arrived at what I like to pretend is a condition of full consciousness. I’m pleased that it’s still early: a full day awaits, packed with precious minutes; time to wield, bend, fashion to my own purposes. Too often, these days, time has its own way with me; today, now, I am up before it is ready, have a head start, and so, perhaps, can master it for once. Soon enough, I know, it will be snapping at my heels-I determine not to lose this advantage I have. Still I am a little queasy, a little slow, still there is that lump below my jaw, intermittently throbbing; perhaps time has an illness prepared for me in its armoury.

Ignore it; it may not come. So, another cup of coffee, and I look at the letters properly while the kettle is boiling. At some time I will reply-in a month? Two? — but not now, not today, not while the grains of time are already joining each other, remorselessly ready. I take it to my room, clear away my papers, smoke another cigarette; now to work.

A fresh sheet of paper, and I make some notes. Another and some guidelines. Another, and some connections. Already three sheets of paper covered with scrawl, impregnated with thought: their sum total is confusion. This is silly — I must stop, clear my head, truly think of where I’m going if there’s the possibility of seeing the lie of the land in advance. Now: let me get myself straight.

Stare out of the window. Still an indifferent day, gray, dull; spittle of rain added to it now. Abstraction, meandering thoughts; once more, concentration.

I know exactly what this piece is meant to be and mean, but I just can’t see how to

get it out. I can feel it prowling around inside me, a caged cat, clawing and scratching to be released. If I'm not to be savaged... no, I'm the only one who can do any savaging, either to myself or to the work, by mistiming or mal-execution. Still, unless I become aware of the position of the door in this cage I would be as well to be a prisoner myself. I could simply begin writing? That would at least bring something into the open, flesh both beast and bars. But then, I could call myself no kind of trainer for the cat, no wielder of power. Once I know which way the beast will run, everything else will follow-that is the vital problem. I know how the thing should be, surely I can find its physical direction. Perhaps if I just give myself up to it, allow my mind free rein...

Total blank.

Perhaps another cigarette; perhaps a tea, or something to eat. Perhaps anything to be out of this room, off this chair on which I've now been slumped for an hour and a half. Ah, the dog: a walk! The fresh air, the wind will clear me of my stiffness, mental and physical. When out walking the clog, alone, I always think most lucidly; I'm sure that I will be able to sort out all I need to know in order to write the story.

Shoes, coat, lead, keys. Once outside, the day is less neutral, more inhospitable than it seemed. It's a relief to let the clog off his lead at the fields; he has been pulling on it all the way. My wrist is chafed, the exposed skin below my sleeves cold and soaked. Hair continually blown into my eyes. My body feels the cold in color: nose red, knuckles blue. Water shaken from the trees drip down my neck; lashing splinters of wind and rain in my face. Thrust my hand in my pockets, huddle up my shoulders, walk automatically. The dog now a hundred yards away, chasing squirrels. The story-ah, yes, plenty of time to think about that on the way back.

Foaming water rushes clown an open drain, white noise.

A slug inches with barely perceptible motion across the path, white, glistening, moving on his slime; with a twitch of his horn at something unknown-perhaps my presence-he changes course. Time is something different for him.

A rag, caught in a young fir tree. Closer; no, a pigeon! Its wings are outplayed; the branches' needles snare and rip at the feathers. A black and staring hole behind the right eye, the neck jarred and twisted. Probably it flew at oblivious full speed into the death-trap spine of the tree. The dog bounds up, nostrils epileptic for the smell, tries to pull it clown. I shoo him away, but leave the bird to rot in the tree: a warning of the clanger of haste.

Walk on, think on. People, events, plans, futures, dreams. Now the house again.

The clay has gained momentum but retains identical inertia. I dry the dog, and my rain-soaked hair; I change my shoes. That cup of tea, that cigarette, and back to that room. I know that I am now several moves further away from the work and that I must sit. it out: there is no other way. Think of the story; my mind wells up with the echoes of observation and conjecture from the walk. Outside the window, the day seems worse than ever; it is not yet noon, but there is already a feeling of dusk about it. Think of the story. A word comes to mind: look it up in the dictionary, in the thesaurus. There's another interesting word, look it up, mark it: half a dozen random chains through the words of reference. Another cigarette. Think of the work. Blank.

Exhaustion: fold my arms on the desk, rest my head on them, try to absorb and concentrate through relaxation. I know the thing I'm working towards. I know it very well. The characters, their actions stand out clearly, but they are separated like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. I cannot see how they all fit, how it fits together. I cannot see any line with which I could possibly begin. It's ready, it's built up inside me for long enough... but there's no way that I can let it out, that I can write a single word to start, it. So: that must mean that I haven't fully understood or grasped it yet. Try. Blank.

Some time passes, dimly, quasi-consciously. I have gone to the dark place in search of the roots of this fiction; I return empty-handed to the same unyielding, unchanging reality of the view from the window.

Start again. A fresh piece of paper. Map out ideas, connections, causalities. It's just scribble, even less comprehensible than the previous notes. No nearer at all. In a fury, ball the paper up and throw it towards the waste-paper basket, miss even that. Run my hands through my hair: dirty, greasy. Massage my forehead with my fingertips: it feels bulbous, nodular...like my bloated, aimless thoughts, like my brain.

Make something to eat: toast, fried eggs, cream cheese, tomatoes. More toast, butter, marmalade, another cup of tea. Play with the clog and his ball; improvise, clumsily, on the piano; play one side of an album. Without thinking, turn on the television: an hour of afternoon soap opera. More cigarettes, more tea, more toast, more time. The precious minutes spurt away and down the drain; the white noise builds up until I can stand it no longer. Time I worked again.

Back in the room; stare out of the window. Day yet more neutral, total absence of color or vitality. Head on the arms, think, grope for answers, look out of the window; head on the arms, strain for the story, blind search for word, meaning, motive. No nearer. Now time has gained ascendancy; now it slips from me with increasing malevolence and speed.

By now dark outside. With the onset of darkness it is possible to relax, if you know you have tried during the day. I cannot have tried hard enough: I had a start, a hold on the day; and I have got nowhere...there is still more effort to be made.

Still the room. The numbing, dim shunting of the story, the story, the story around my head. Time aches, sucks, yawns collapses about me. Thought extends into daydream, to dissipation, to near-catalepsy. Eyes closed eyes open head on my arms look out of the window: everyway the same dull void of the day. No nearer.

The main meal. Have I done nothing but eat all day? Fish fingers, frozen peas, instant potato. Sludge. Coffee. I succumb, at last, to the brandy which the drinks cupboard has been offering me all day. I succumb, again, to the T.V.: the news, the same news as always; some boxing, programmes on motoring and rock climbing. I am not interested, but I watch. A homily, and close-down; the screen, too, confronts me with gray vacuum. I am haunted by guilt, that I have not given enough. Inwardly, I rage at my lack of effort or concentration or capacity. Another day, another piece of work is almost lost.

The room again. If only I could start writing, have something, anything to show for my day. Tomorrow, I might be able to build on it. Effort. Ten half-complete opening lines, all manifestly inadequate; one closing one, so ambivalent that it might as well be the first. I re-read these things; direction and content are hopelessly wrong. More paper for the

basket; my hands rake, tear at, my hair.

Re-assemble all previous maps, conjectures, diagrams and plans before me on the desk. Re-consign them to the basket. Hands between knees, head on desk, blank. Elbows on desk, head on arms, blank.

Perhaps I am now working only with regard to time, not to the story: it has almost defeated me.

Head up. Stretch, yawn, eyes open. The numbing beat of time at my temples. The story is now almost forgotten even in intention; none of it seems to make sense any more. Maybe it should be just one part of a larger one, or be divided into smaller sections itself; maybe it is not a story at all. Maybe there is nothing left to say or worth saying, nothing that has not been said before, nothing I can write that, is not risible and/or pointless. Now a numb despair. Even though I know that it is the day, the frustration; it is not the story, not the form which fails, but me.

All this writing though. Head on the arms on the desk eyes closed free rein. Hardly even sure any more why or how I am hanging on. Any flicker of distraction enough to divert the attention. I have full knowledge that there will be nothing here, but dogged hope drives me. Harrowing the soil of memory for experience, hallowing the soul for meaning. Oh does it come? No: drifting a way... waiting for the story.

Like a woman desired in a way resonant with future knowledge of fire fed and quenched; like waiting for her. At first, all hope, belief, vibration; then burgeoning anticipation, the recurrence in the mind of her face, her body, her presence, soon. Time slips by, a numbness comes, the knowledge of absence, of solitude, grows. Finally, resignation, acceptance.

Oh, yes, waiting for women, often it has ended so: alone with the purest emotion, the most distilled sentiment, fed only by the fire of the imagination and unsullied by actuality. At other times, of course, the woman has come, and desire been quenched; yet something else, some mystery, is also extinguished, and afterwards there comes that other emptiness, that cold doubt...all is as it should be, but all is not enough. Some wish, less personally directed or motivated remains; perhaps for more cogent immolation. The solitude then is deeper, the fear-that nothing is important-greater. The tender embrace suddenly become the ghost touch of a mirage. The dream of a perfect moment, the waiting for it, is often better than its arrival; for it is then that illusions are shattered.

Yes, and there has been waiting for stories before; when my share have come to me, it has not been in a single incandescent moment, but in hours of writing where time is a physical, rather than a spiritual constraint. And afterwards? Afterwards, like the sex, when it is done, a chapter closed, it no longer seems to be of importance. Always, I am nostalgic for the moment when it was neither here nor there, when it was still only the pure germ of an idea in my head, for all the chill pain of striving, wanting, waiting it caused me. The «work» towards which i try to be dutiful, of which I am so jealous, is merely the copying down of that idea, stretched in the sand, before the ocean of time closes on and eradicates it.

Still we wait. So we all wait through our days for one moment of passion, knowledge, enlightenment. We recognize trivia and ritual, but are unable to relinquish

them; we yearn only half-comprehendingly. From time to time, in the course of brief walks outside self-obsession, we receive signals and signs, but rarely take them to heart. Instead we wait for one moment of vision: an instant in the wake of which all instants, whichever way it goes or is or will be, will be of no importance. Perhaps, for a few of us, it will be the perfect story, the perfect orgasm, the perfect death. For most, there will probably be disappointment in the end, and anticlimax. But there is something in the waiting, the will and effort which it requires, which must be at least as valuable as the ecstasy or mindlessness which finishes it.'

So there he is. He has been waiting for a story: it could have been a song, a poem, a painting. It could have been a plan-how to make himself a millionaire, or how to hijack an aircraft, or how he would blow away an airport. It could have been his suicide. Does it have to be something so dramatic, just because the thoughts are here on paper?

And now, at the end of it, has he wasted his clay? He has lived it. On what terms are we to judge that?

The Madonna

He has no idea of the precise time, but the darkness and silence tell him that it is the middle of the night. Outside, a city alien to his slumbers. The hotel room into which he wakes is known to him: lumpy bed, ancient telephone, cramped shower, anonymous, peeling wallpaper. The bedside table is known to him, and what rests on it: toothglass, bottle of grappa, ashtray, packet of cigarettes. He has been playing a game of double patience in this room for some days, and his opponent has been time. Now, although nothing so annoys him as broken sleep, he is awake and restless. He rolls on his back and his mind is flushed empty even of annoyance. Adrenalin floods him.

Beside his bed, over him, there rises a shape almost that of a human being. In some dim and distant way, he feels he should know what it is, but cannot place it. He stares up for a seemingly limitless minute, his senses unable to focus properly, incapable of sending adequate messages to his brain. It is as if he has been dazzled by headlights, or suffered a mild concussion. Wherever he looks the centre of his vision has substance, but the periphery shimmers; it is as though the «corner» of his eye has taken over all but the most direct line of sight. He could be looking down a translucent tube, all distortion save through the aperture at the opposite end; or staring at oily water into which a pebble has been dropped at the center stillness, but around it disturbance, insanity of shape and form.

He casts his eye in all directions. Eventually, he forms a comprehensible image from individual points of cohesion and focus. The figure is that of a woman, and she is dressed in black. Except for the color of her garments, she is exactly like one of those plaster madonnas from tacky, materially pious religious shops. He feels something of church as he looks up at her, yet he does not react, reverentially. Except to be dumbly astonished, he hardly reacts at all, and though the adrenalin rushes him to total awareness, he is strangely afraid.

Her face is the only part, of her body he can see; when he does so he looks nowhere else. It hangs above him, framed in the cowl of her robe. The familiarity he had felt in her mere presence shines from her face. It is as though he has known it, been close to it, a day or a year before; or as though he knows that he will know it in the future; or that he has seen it, once only, in a dream. The features and line are almost unbearably perfect: sharp and smooth, cold as marble, flushed with fever. The expression is one of repose, but suffused with some inner calm, some deep purpose. The eyes are dark, intense, hypnotic, and he feels that if they meet, his, head on, he will surely drown. But there is no chance of this: though she is only inches away, leaning over the bed, her eyes remain steadily fixed at the horizontal, as though examining something of surpassing interest on the wall opposite. She looks across and beyond, rather than at or through him. Not a single movement of her eye, head, or body disturbs the silence, the essence of the moment.

And yet he does not really see her, it is more than that; in some most sensory and sensuous of ways, he feels her in this moment. The instant seems to last for hours, as though, in order for him to absorb her presence fully, she has stopped time, or speeded up his rate of absorption, until now his every awareness is her. And now, only now, she speaks, her voice seeming to come simultaneously from every corner of the room and from one tiny vibrating point in his own brain.

‘«Take good care of the knife, for you will have need of it.»’

She is gone. For a being of such tranquility and calm, her words, redolent of threat, and violence, had been incongruous; this is lost on him in the awfulness of her sudden disappearance. For a moment, the utmost anguish of loss. But normality, the reality of the room, reasserts itself, and the brain begins to question. He raises himself on his elbow, shaking, and for fully five minutes searches out the shadowy corners of the room for her, her continued presence, her reality...or at least some evidence of her having been there. The room is empty and silent. He is unquiet with a feeling of otherness and the faint, unstated menace that it brings.

There is fear in his soul, but his mind races for comprehension and assurance. He knows about dreams; he thinks he might have been dreaming. Several times he has woken from one dream into another, and not known that it was so until, finally, he has woken up. But he is not dreaming now, and there has been no movement between dream and real worlds in all this. At one moment she had been standing over him, and at the next he was searching the contours of the room for her presence; throughout, he had been fully awake. He is awake now.

She was too real, he cannot accept that she was a hallucination, a projection from the dream world into the real one. He reaches for the sanity-albeit inconclusive-of a Vision, an Apparition, thinks of Saul/Paul, Bernadette... His soul, as it did long since to such things, demurs, and responds to the groped-for conclusion with questions. If there are dreams within dreams, worlds within worlds below the level of consciousness, could we not also imagine states of existences, and that from our position in it we can only see what lies below, can only guess at what towers above? Had she been from a higher step in such a system?

His soul whirls in supposition. It does not change his knowledge of what he has experienced.

«‘Take good care of your knife, for you will have need of it.»’

The urgency of search-first for her, then for reason-dies away; memory and emotion once more take hold of his uneasy spirit. Her words career, pin-ball like, around his head. They bounce from one potential thought or meaning to another, flashing lights of recognition and presentence; then, under the impulse of their own gravity, they fall away, only to return again, stimulating the same thoughts, the same recognitions, the same uncertainties.

He is exhausted; sleep exerts its own gravitational pull, and sucks him down. The words still run through his brain as he falls, now made all the more meaningless to him through repetition. This is all there is: he can no longer keep the game of conjecture in motion. He has been awake-most intensely so-for barely twenty minutes; now the sleep into which he plunges, too, holds mysteries for him.

«The globe hangs in the air before me. I recognize it. I have seen it here before. It is at a distance, but seems so enormous that I can see no other detail of where I am. I can hear the sea. With sight alone, I can somehow touch the globe. I know how it feels, but it is like nothing. The surface is neither smooth nor pitted, neither hard nor yielding. It is like an amalgam of everything, of metal, wood and stone-yet none of these. It is dull and

bright, soundless and thundering, acid and sweet. Implacable motion through alien sky; it comes towards me. Its mere presence crushes the air around it. It loses neither enormity nor weight as it approaches me, but all perspective is reversed; even now, only feet away, I can still see it all, though its true size can only be appreciated at a distance. It shrinks, but remains the same; perhaps I grow. If my limbs were not paralyzed I would try to push it away. Only my eyes and brain are not completely numbed by its presence. It comes on, now towards my open mouth; I am powerless to clamp it shut. It yawns wide to receive the globe, wider, wider. Now the thing is on my tongue, I know its touch, and it is as my eyes saw it. It is the negative of all taste, of all tactility. Now it expands to fill my whole mouth, now it contracts to the diameter of my throat. It is still complete, it is still the same... I swallow it.»

So the first dream. He breaks the surface of sleep for a moment; it is just long enough for him to differentiate this dreamed experience from the real one of the Madonna, just long enough for the dream to lodge itself in his memory. Then once more into the darkness of unconsciousness.

He has had the dream before. It is, of course, well known, an archetype. In so far as these things can be brought forth into waking reality, it has even been fixed in paint and canvas, by who else? — Magritte. But he does not think of paintings as he memorizes the dream, nor of those others with whom he shares it: this time, it is specifically for him, and it is more than it seems.

There are things which must be understood. Since there are to be dreams following this one which we shall not see over his shoulder, eavesdropping on his slumbering speech centers, it is best that these things are understood now, in relation to his first dreams. They shall hold, also, for those which follow.

First, we have seen that his sensory perception is both acute and atypical. That his «eyes» should «touch» is not unknown in dreams: though only the brain is active in them, it «receives» information, and the logic of the knowledge faculties requires that this «comes» through the sleeping senses, even if these are sometimes confused or coalesced. But in this dream, and those which are to follow, these faculties play no such charade, and his references to eye, taste, and touch are only the obligatory dogma of speech-center sanity. The sensations in these dreams are too strong for sensory evaluation: he knows every detail of the scenario the moment he steps into it; he perceives with a supra-normal clarity. This in itself would differentiate these dreams from «ordinary» ones.

But there is something more, and more to the point. This dream has something else in common with those which are to follow: it is, in its brief, but unfragmented, way, a test. Some part of him had known this even in his sleep. In the case of the first dream, the test was merely to finish it: on the previous occasions when he had had it, notably in his childhood, he had never managed to reach the end, always waking, to vomit, at the first tongue-touch of the anti-matter globe. This time, in order to pass the test, to furnish the answer, he had had to find it in himself to swallow it-and, of course, since this was a dream, no amount of intellect or consciousness could help him to that action. The test was thus of pure self, of his spirit, and of a spiritual order. There was no possibility of cheating.

His conscious self observes and records the dreams in his memory, and has no more

interaction with them than to know the total nature of the experience—even though this cannot help him come through it. He does not know what the penalty for failure in any of these examinations would be—not, to wake, perhaps? — but he knows he must not fail. In one of his brief periods of consciousness between the dreams, he will think that he is under attack, rather than test, so frequent and intense will they be; but before he returns to sleep he will know that the examining force is one of strictness, not vindictiveness. On this night, the crux of his existence lies in his own spiritual hands: in his performance in the tests.

I hope that this is understood; as yet, he himself is too much embroiled in the present to be anywhere near understanding.

There are fifteen, twenty of these dreams of test. The pattern of dreaming becomes a routine: darkness; instant and all-embracing light: awareness, experience, necessary information; test; survival; waking; memory-retention; darkness. There is the finger-bloodied cling to the neck of a Pegasus, the knowledge of when to let go, to fall in perfect parabola. There is the walk over, then through, the pit, where one wrong footfall would plunge him into nameless horror. There is the balance on the beam, the linguistic puzzle, the numerical maze. There seems always another test to follow the last, each answer to be found in himself, his own capacity, with no other determinant to help him. At last, there is a finality to one of the dreams, and in his momentary waking recognition of it, he knows that this spiritual examination is done, at least for now. The next darkness is blissfully deep and quiet.

Dawn. He wakes, and the crumbs of comfort he had gathered to himself at the conclusion of the dreams are brushed from his bed by the illness which suddenly sits in his body. His head buzzes, rather than aches, with pain. Hardly a limb feels as though it belongs to another: all seem haphazardly swollen or dessicated by turn. A cough crouches on his chest, his nasal-passages are bone dry, his eyes water. There is fever in him, and intense, exasperating, thrashing discomfort.

At first, he rages, thinking that this force of feeling will, by itself, drive out whatever inhabits him so cruelly. But he is not now in the world of dreams, and his anger aggravates rather than dispels the illness.

Now he lies on his back and tries to ignore it all: the sickness, the visions and trials of the night just past. He tries to concentrate on the fact that he is in a hotel room in a foreign city; that he is passing time, and that he must stiffen his resolve and do just that. But it is no use, the night has taken too much out of him. He has no further energy reserves on which he can call to bind himself together.

He stares at the musty ceiling, at the cracked lampshade gradually becoming visible in the gray dawn light through the shutters. He decides that he must make temporary truce with time, wait till the city is more awake, when its energy can be harnessed with his own against whatever is upon him.

Time is allied to silence, and silence is Judas to the heart. He remembers something he wrote, long ago, an adolescent, poem which estimated the number of heartbeats he had left until his (average projected) death. 'Never the same', it had been called; now he knows that it is always the same, what is left, and that its number is both relative and

irrelevant. His consciousness is drawn inexorably to the beating of his heart, the counting out of his time. It seems the only organ in his body which is not betraying him with malfunction; but, even in this truce, it is turned traitor, on the side of time. The rush of blood, the beat, his body-clock. He has no real thoughts or feelings, they have evaporated, gone into vacuum. He does not know if he lies there for two hours or ten minutes.

He can hear the street outside begin to bustle, but none of the hoped for energy seeps through the shutters or the room. He feels his fever increasing, his leaden limbs growing yet more weighty, his discomfort becoming excruciating. Somehow, he feels that both his illness and his inability to fight it spring from the same cause: his experience of the previous night. The energy so drained from his body was not really that of calories, but of will. He does not have the strength of mind to fight. So: he must bend, but not bow. He must go with the current, and strike land as and when he can; he must conserve and channel what there is of his energy. This means going into limbo once more.

But limbo offers mixed comfort: his mind is locked to daylight time. Now there burns in him a moment of full clarity, of realization connecting the day and the night: this illness, too, is a form of test. His lethargy is jerked from him, but this inspired knowledge, or guess, or further hallucination, cannot really help him: time still has to be waited out, whatever the illness is or means. So now he lies still, and suffers, but does not resist. He goes with the tide, and to it surrenders his body; but not his spirit. He wishes for nothing, and tries to think of nothing. At one point, a treacherous thought comes: 'I could die in this room'. But it is only passing fear and conjecture: the resolution to accept without giving in returns to him. Time passes, begrudgingly.

Now it comes upon him in all its fury. He has been in greater pain before, has exhibited more alarming symptoms at other times, but never before has such a feeling of total sickness flooded his brain. It is as though it comes from cell level; from every cell aching, insistent torture. His bodily mind cries out for discorporation, his spirit screams against the illness; but it chokes him, and time drips into him like poison.

His cough has sprung deep into his lungs: dry repetitive and spasmodic. Fever sucks cold sweat from his pores, at a pitch where neither movement nor immobility, even in the defensive foetal position; assuage it. Exhaustion runs through his every fiber in deadening anesthetic. It seems that his only functioning muscles are those which rack him in the coughing. His nostrils and sinuses feel as if they have been dusted with ground glass; his eyes and lids coated with mercury.

It lasts at this desperate level for three quarters of an hour; then, quickly, it is gone. He is left, soaked with sweat, drained, with the legacy of the heaviest of possible colds, with a rasping hoarseness in the throat. He is still uncomfortable, still ill; but this is as nothing compared to the convulsions of illness he has just been through.

Now he lies on the bed; attempting to read. He is in neutral, physically and spiritually spent, yet fully aware. Distanced now from the intensities of the illness and the dreams of the previous night, he has forgotten neither.

He does not have to stay alone in this hotel room. There are people he knows in this city: he could go to visit, to be comforted by, them. He makes no move, even in the knowledge that they would make him remember normality, forget what he had been

through; no move, not even one tentative telephone call. He knows that he has seen and experienced something; he knows that, of all times, it is now important that he does not forget. So he waits, as alone as he has ever been, all the more so for the fact that company is only a six digit number away, a number which his own hand restrains the finger from dialing.

As, in some incoherent depth of self, he had known it would, it comes. It begins with an aching lightness in his chest., emotion sat physically over his heart. Now a yearning begins, nameless and causeless: the potent quintessence of hope and despair, of universal joy, of infinite sorrow. Now the emotions start to roll over him in vibrant intensity. They feed back on themselves and on him, running the gamut of their range. They vibrate in harmony, to achieve mind-shattering proportions. They crash into him in waves alternately icy and scalding, stick him deep down into their undercurrents.

Something of his mind had been prepared for this, but that is now of no use to him: his brain in overrun, explored to every extremity by nameless thoughts and feelings. He has no reason with which to hold them back, no choice but to go with them.

He finds himself pacing the room maniacally, threshing his hair with wild, uncontrolled fingers. He finds himself punching a doorjamb with all his strength: blood on the knuckles, blindness in the crazed eyes, darkness in the mind. He finds himself cast on the bed, face buried in the pillows, hands clenching and opening to some unstated rhythm. Irrational tears stream down his cheeks. Between sobs, he hears his own voice: «‘Oh, no, not again... not again... not again...’»

The waves of emotion subside; the madness withdraws in a steadily ebbing tide. The deafening noise of the blood rushing through his uncomprehending mind is gone; he is quiet once more, and almost understanding. His mind’s turn to be tested, too, has come and gone.

He lies prone, finally and utterly exhausted. He has been too cruelly examined, but he is whole in mind, body, and spirit. Too soon, too tired now to ask why, to find-even if it is possible-any true comprehension. He thinks of something he once heard; it seems long ago, it seems that it has been in his head forever.

«‘Take good care of your knife, for you will have need of it.’»

Now he drops into sleep, into the final dream.

‘I am in a prison cell. Moisture, little light, no comfort. It could be Monte Cristo, the Man in the Iron Mask, de Sade. It is that time, that dark. No knowledge of crime. No knowledge directly of punishment.. No idea whether I am criminal or innocent. This could be prison or private dungeon. It could be Kafka. It is that dark. This is not life. I have been condemned to lose my life, to spend what is left of it here.

The faceless man comes through the door. He is here to murder me. A secret execution. I crouch against the sweating wall beneath the window-slit. He advanced on me. Me, him, from many points in the room. The corner. He is over me. Still I cannot see his face. His form lurches over me, misshapen, hunched.

My hand finds the knife that it has been clasping. I do not know how long it has been there. Thrust into the knotted back, the side, the chest of the faceless man. He collapses on

top of me, suffocating me. I force him aside. No blood, but he is dead. I am free. At least I am alive...I look at the knife in my hand.'

The Spider's Web

«No, David,» she said, «you must promise...»

He had been thinking about something and someone else at the time, far away from there; it was only with effort that he brought his attention back to her, his focus back to her sun-bleached head resting on his chest. It was evening; outside, the insects were tuning up for their tone-poem of the night. A cool gray mist had settled over the village. Fragments of juke-box music drifted through the open window and reverberated faintly in the room; the sound echoed with melancholy, as though all life, all people were very far away. Ghost voices carried through the dusk. The flagstones of his bedroom caught the last of the light by the window and scattered it among their ridges. Already the rest of the room was draping such folds of shadow about itself as it could, later, be fashioned into heart-nudging specters. White walls and alcoves merging into homogeneous planes with the black wood of the high, carved wardrobe. The paintings, dark, brooding in their frames, offering themselves as windows, shafts, or projections. The dark, angular night drew on, and the room welcomed it. Only in one corner of the room was there light. Yellow, from an oil lamp, it flickered over a plain table on which rested a chaos of books, magazines, newspapers, files and manuscript. Clothes had been hastily flung over the accompanying chair: jeans, a sweatshirt, a light silk dress...

«David?»

«What?»

«You must promise...»

«I'm sorry,» he shrugged, «I must have been miles away...what must I promise?»

«That you won't...oh, you're not really listening.» She rolled away and lay on her back. Suddenly she was engrossed in fiddling with a string of beads which hung around her neck. There was more than a little reproach in this interest.

He sighed wearily. The music from the cafe's juke-box wafted into the room, joined by the percussion of her clicking beads. He leaned over to the table, located his packet of cigarettes, flicked one out and lit it. One long draw, one long exhalation; once more off into the smoke-filled past.

He thought of Susan. Two weeks ago, they had been lying next to each other by the sea, in his favorite cove; it was the last day of her stay with him. His invitation to her had been characteristically off-hand, and he had hardly expected her to take it up; but she had come. She had flown from England, her captivating smile, her disarming frankness thrown in an overnight case with her summer clothes, and been with him in his villa for a week. He had been surprised at how easy it was to share, being out of the habit of doing so, but he had shared with her: his board, his bed, his secret thoughts and places... his secrets.

Perhaps, he thought, he had been unwise to welcome her with his arms spread fully open; she carried the seeds of the city within her. Cities in themselves held no special dread for him, but he knew that he had attuned himself to, made his own, the Mediterranean life and all its tempo, moderation and excess. Here, fast things happened slowly, and slow things could last but a moment in time, or forever. He and Susan were

from different cultures, different worlds, now.

Once, their minds and lives had run in parallel; he wondered where and when they had lost the lines, whether it could have been helped. The last time they had really known each other was too many years ago to contemplate: the last time he had lived in London, observing, assembling, and finally writing 'The Lost Keepsake'. So long ago? Susan-observed, desired, elusive-had been a central character in that book; but she had been one of his imagination rather than experience. In creating his fiction, he had made himself an observer, aside-player, never totally involved in the real lives of those friends who, camouflaged and manoeuvred, peopled his writing. Thus he had known Susan, he had devoured her, in the process of writing his novel, but the character he had given her was skeletal, not fleshed, more an extrapolation of his on ideas than a true representation of her. Now, he needed to know. They had met again by chance, at a party, when he made one of his increasingly rare forays to his erstwhile home city; he had offered her his hospitality, and she had accepted. Probably, she had been looking merely for the sun; he was looking for completion, for affirmation. So much time had passed: he wanted to pull together the strings, resolve the suspended chord, find what had changed and what was the same. He wanted to find out what he had never known. Too much time: they had not seen each other since the book was published. The intervening years could have changed, alienated them totally; yet here they were, lazing in the sun, tipsy on red wine, their feet dangling in the water, alone.

They had never been alone, it seemed, in the London clays. Then they had been adrift in an ocean of humanity, ferociously tangling the lines of their lives about themselves-those became, in time, the very lines which threaded themselves through «The Lost Keepsake'. If they had not already done so, their paths would certainly have diverged with the success of the book, with his lionization and resultant security. There had been four more novels since then, of course, in further capitalization: one more set in London, one in New York and another of jet-set itinerance. The latest, 'The Limbs of Purgatory', had been set here, in the tempestuously easy pace of the lotus-eaters» society. He had always used the places and people he had known to the fullest, and here he had found a rich vein to mine; energy crackled around the Mediterranean days and nights, poised itself, flared, dissipated. Every month, it seemed, an acquaintance would find his efforts coined into success in whatever field he avowedly chose; every month, another would drown in the bottom of a bottle of brandy. There was a simple, bleached-out design here, a slowness of time and distance, and he liked it. So his home was here now, and it was here that he sifted through the pan, looking for remembered nuggets of human behavior with which to fill his future work.

It was several worlds away from London. A young man, full to the brim with abandon and braggadocio, he had felt part of the city once; now, an outsider, he found it cold, dirty, repellent, closed, and he loathed it. Yet Susan was still a part of that city, and every so often a move, a gesture, would show that she carried it in her even here. Perhaps, after all, it had been a mistake to invite her...

Only a passing cloud; only the heat, becoming prickly and stifling in the breeze chopped for a moment; only the effects of the wine, this sense of doubt and melancholy, up from the wells of nostalgia.

«Penny for them?» she asked; he smiled quietly.

«I thought so, you had that look on your face.»

«What look?»

«That one you always had: „I am thinking very serious and important thoughts which are of relevance to the whole human race, so will everyone please leave me alone.“ I’ve always found it a bit comical, actually. Anyway, I’ve noticed this week that it seems to come on you when you’re brooding about the past.»

«That’s not quite fair,» he said, his dignity lightly bruised.

«No, no, don’t worry, I was just kidding you; got to keep a sense of perspective, haven’t we? All the same, I had a feeling you were thinking about all that.»

«London?»

«Yes, London, those days, that book...I suppose it’s inevitable that you should start, rooting around in that again, with me being here.»

«Ah, you’ve read the books, then?» he asked. There were studied overtones of surprise in his voice, a root note of pleasure.

«Only that one, and long ago...»

She seemed non-committal; he poured two more glasses of wine and looked out to sea. A ferry passed low on the horizon. Brief silence. He felt the need to probe. For his ego, he wanted to know what she thought, of his novel. For himself, still wanting to «find» her, he looked for her feelings about, the circumstances, the experiences, the lifestyle, which had engendered it, and which they had shred. He ventured a lead; his hesitancy was amplified by the obviousness of its nature.

«They were...pretty strange times, weren’t, they?» «Do you mean as in the book or as in the times?» «Whole thing.»

Under her breath, she muttered something which sounded-he didn’t quite catch it-like «Same thing». Pressed, she would say nothing; but he had found one of «his» subjects, and warmed to it. Already the signs of the aged semi-alcoholic bore were incipient. There was, after all, much of personal revelation that he could say to Susan; be he rambled into areas of common and mutual knowledge, reminisced with a nostalgia of which the warmth was not that of events remembered, but of stories many times told. He recounted, amid gales of his own laughter, many of the «strange» and «crazy» things they and their friends had done in the past. Some of these stories-those she had forgotten, those he embellished best-she greeted with similar mirth, and acknowledged others with a wry smile of recognition. To the bulk of them, she offered no reaction at all.

He realized that he had allowed himself to be carried away by his past, and that, for some minutes, there had been no response from Susan. She seemed pensive, a light frowning on her brow, as though some idea had come to her which she was now debating with herself, tossing it from side to side to gauge its weight.

«What is it?» he asked.

«I was just wondering...» Evidently, she had to bring herself back to the present, to

conversation. «Hearing you talk like that about the old days-do you find any difficulty sorting out who's who in your own mind?»

«Well, sometimes I have difficulty remembering the names of the people on the periphery, but...»

«No, I don't mean that...not who people are, their names, at least not in that sense. I mean, do you know who the real people are or were, and who are those from the books? You muddle them sometimes, you know-their lives, their names...» She gave him a coy smile, «...on the periphery of course.»

«Do I really? I'm sorry, it's so long ago...»

«It's a deeper thing than just mistaken identity, you know; I mean it more fully than that, it doesn't matter so much. But can you tell? Do you tell?»

«Of course I do, it's obvious. Look, I don't know quite where you're leading, if anywhere, but on a level below remembering people's names, there's clear differentiation. Naturally, the characters in the books are fictitious...»

Her eyebrows lifted in an expression halfway between amusement and admonition, but a restrained coolness had come over her eyes. It occurred to him that she was trying hard to put him at his ease. If this were an attack, and he had an uneasy feeling that it was, it was one which she undertook begrudgingly, as though under higher orders than those of her own whims. Her expression, its quizzical/inquisitorial set, had brought him up in mid-sentence; her voice once more took up where his had dropped.

«Maybe I'm being a bit obscure, it's difficult... Look, I read the book; to tell the truth, a couple of the others, too, I just didn't want to inflate your ego, make you think I'd been following your star. But I did follow it-your success in a detached sort of way. I'm very pleased for you, but...But I know how it all works: I think you may have trapped yourself. I know where it comes from and I'm worried that you may have ceased to see it. I mean, your characters, they're so...transparent.»

«Thin?» he asked, a note of hurt in his voice. It was not entirely feigned; he had, perhaps, the presentiment that this was only the start, that he would hurt, and hurt more. For the moment, though, the pain touched only his epidermis, that skin into which he so comfortably fitted: successful novelist, man of the world; debating, socializing, conversing, always untouched. Really, he was hurt only in his self-regard as the Writer.

«I can see what you're thinking,» she said, «but I don't mean it that way; not literary criticism, I wouldn't dream, I can't offer you that. Not style, characterization, flesh, I don't mean transparent in any of those terms. But the people...Look, you take any person in the book-t.he moment you examine him, straight away, you know who he was in reality; or I do at least. Your „fictitious“ people-they're only too clearly tied to the real people they're taken from.»

«Ah. Well, I don't make any secret of the fact that I'm inspired by my environment, by the people in it. Actually, I've always thought that this was one of my strong points, veiling people over-making them opaque, in your terminology. You don't think so?»

«I suppose most people wouldn't know who you were writing about; after all, none

of us were famous. But that's still not really the point. I've just been wondering about the difficulty in drawing the line between fact, and fiction. I know that writers in general have this problem-they're living in their fictional lives for a great, deal of their real ones, aren't they? But with you... you treat people so differently, the true and imagined must blur more than ever. I don't know...it just seems, seemed, more important than usual with you, somehow.»

It seemed she wanted to terminate the discussion. It was as though she had entered its waters up to her depth and now, rather than swim, committed to the current, wanted to return to solid sand. If she did not want to make that commitment then still less did he: the past, beneath its placid surface, was clogged with sandbank and riptide, inexorable ebb and flow. He began to fashion a sentence to finish with the topic. It was not hard; he had run down this line many times in interviews-the pat answer to an always nagging question, all the more trite for repetition.

«I don't really have any problem with this, you know», he said, affecting charming reassurance, «it's quite simple. People are distinguishable in that they all have their individuality, their separate lives. I've got too much respect for them to try to absorb or change that. The people in real life and those in the books, they all have their different courses. I can't change things in real life; in the writing, I just chronicle, extrapolate, watch the interaction of the lives. As I say, it's my respect for the individual-there isn't any confusion, I know which world is fact and which fiction, because of that. My respect for people...»

«Oh, come on, David, don't give me all that!» He had intended only a closing shot, a last dictum to round off the subject; in fact, it had re-energised it. Her face was now serious and determined; he felt his own indignation rising, his defensive instincts stirred. They had crossed the thin line dividing debate and argument.

«Just think about it a minute,» she continued. «I've seen it from both sides, remember? No, it's not so important that the people we knew-and doubtless the characters in your other books, too, who I don't know-are recognizable in the fiction, there's nothing wrong with that. But you seem blind to people, to the uses you make of them; maybe even blind to yourself, you kid yourself that you've given the characters life, that you 'respect their individuality', and I think you actually believe it. But there isn't any real individuality there except for what you've taken from the people you know. Sure, you've got to have source material, but from what I know, you don't, really build from it, expand it. You just drain the life from those around you, tart it up a bit and give it the odd twist-so where do your famous fictional individuals come from? As for respect...*.»

«What, exactly, are you saying? That I'm a voyeur?»

«Oh, if it's definitions you want, then I'd have to say a parasite: you do feed on others. But even parasites have a positive function for their host, usually...with you, it's only you who stands to gain. Your protagonists certainly don't-well, apart, from those egotist cretins who think you've made them immortal. Oh, Christ, that's not it, either: parasite's a nasty word, and I suppose all of have a bit of that in us...It's you, you delude yourself so.»

«Well, I suppose I've immortalised you. Is that what's bothering you? Do you mind

that much?» His defensive tone and posture were well tried. Brazen it out, make of the self a mirror from which all attacks are reflected; absorb, remain aloof...observe. It was a defense badly chosen and executed.

«I don't give a fuck. I'm not concerned with myself; sure, I've got my own problems, but they're nothing to do with all this. I wasn't burning, it wouldn't really have affected me if I'd never met you again; I never tried to get in touch with you after the book came out. I didn't have any axe to grind. But we did meet again, didn't we, and I couldn't help noticing what had happened to you; you can't seem to see what you've made of yourself, what you do with other people, you say you've got it straight, but there's really no borderline for you between fantasy and reality. You look at real people in the same way as characters in a novel. Respect? Everyone's a puppet to you, fuel for your own glory and gratification.»

«Do you feel»-the more personal, emotional, defence — «as though I look on you as a puppet? How can you? You know...»

«I've already told you, I don't care.» Her response was timed perfectly to destroy this, his latest and last, line of self-protection. If it had been over-hasty, it would have exposed a sense of affrontment, of caring very much indeed; over-delayed, it would have shown analysis at work. Evidently, she was speaking from a true self, from heart and head together.

«I care about you, though,» she added, her tone mellowed, but still with an edge of irritation. «I've been talking about, concerned about you. Me, I'm just a specific, — present-illustration in all this. But... the you that was, the you that could have been, the you that is...I mean, once...»

Her voice trailed off. A cloud edged across the sun. She squinted up and shivered slightly, crossing her arms about her. An apologetic smile, and stretched out a hand to his cheek in a gesture of reconciliation.

«Talking about all this... it's heavier than I'd imagined; let's not any more. It's getting a bit cold — can we go back to the villa?»

He nodded assent, and they packed up the picnic things: the hamper, the bottles, the towels and their excess clothes. Side by side, they started the climb up to the road through the olive grove; close, but very distant. Occasionally they would stumble into each other as the incline became more steep and the footholds more crumbling; they grunted apologies as though they were strangers in the press of a train. They did not speak again until they were halfway up the hill, and had paused for a moment's rest.

«Once what?» he asked, in as casual a tone as he could muster. He stared at the lengthening horizon, the graying sea. She did not reply until he turned and met her eyes directly; when it came, her answer was phrased slowly, deliberately.

«Once, David, you used to see people in more than just two dimensions. I think you were the better for that. Now, come on, let's get back.»

She set off; momentarily taken aback, he followed her in silence, a pace or two to the rear. For some reason, the image of a knight errant came to him: he recognized the numbness of a wound, the knowledge that his armor had been punctured, and that he was

inwardly bleeding. To fight on meant luckless odds against survival; to withdraw, an end to all honor and self-respect.

«I just don't know what you feel so bloody bad about,» he called out to her. She paused, and he came abreast of her. «You said yourself that you don't, know that much about me and my life now; you can only recognize what you project of me from the past, you keep saying you're talking about me, but I just don't see it: you're only going on about, my treatment, of others, really. What's that all about? I mean, damn it, you didn't come out in such a bad light, in the book.»

«That's not the point.»

Her answer was emphatic, but he was set on his course, following an argument which might divert hers from whatever target it was seeking. He was not. to be stopped.

«Not. just you, everyone... Look, you'd gone, but I was still in London after the book came out, and I saw everyone a lot. They all read it, and I don't remember anyone complaining to me about misrepresentation, or parasitism, or whatever you're going on about. Is it, such a new thing that you've got to bring up now? What's the big objection-I'm using my life and my vision to create new and different lives?»

«That's not the point, but you won't see it. You won't take my vision into account; you...»

«Nonetheless.» he rode on, oblivious, carried away by his line of argument, «I really put down some of the people we knew, I wrote about, and some of them I didn't even try to disguise at all. That in itself should disprove what you're saying. But if your theory is right, and my portrayals of people are so transparent, then surely they'd have known who they were, and surely I'd have had bad scenes with the people I'd had a go at?»

«Of course they knew.»

«Why no confrontations then? You know me, I've never gone in for punch-ups, but surely somebody would have taken it up with me face to face if they knew I used them in the way you say? But it's my work, writing-you can't deny me that, you can't say I diminish myself or others by that!»

She stopped, and he was a yard in front of her, looking clown the angle of the hillside, as she once more locked on him, eye to eye.

«Don't you see, David?» she said. «Don't you really see that it's all the same thing, all part, of you? You can't, tell which characters are real and which fictional because you live in a half-world between the two. Respect for the separate individualities of characters and people? You just don't, know! you just don't seem to know that you've done a deal with the devil, nor even what your side of the bargain is. yes, you can do it, you can write, and 'well'; but you've never had a true relationship with anyone in all the time I've known you-how could you, knowing so little of the depths of others, breathe separate identities into your characters? And you're surprised when I, knowing the people who they are, think they're transparent? God, I hadn't, realized it would go this far...but you evidently don't see. I've got to finish it. now.»

One sword. The thread. Not her, he had it, waiting only for her to nudge.

«Those people we knew...naturally, they never let on that they recognized themselves: part deference, part pride. And why should someone you offended give you the gracious gift, of losing their rag at you, all to be written up in a following book? Much better just to forget, it.»

She moved towards him, her hand took his elbow.

«There was a time, David,» she said, «when you were just the same as everyone else. But pretty soon, long before anything was published, everyone knew what sort of writer you were and would be. From that moment people have acted with you, to an extent knowing that nothing, but nothing, would go unregistered. They knew that you were going to write it: on guard time. This acting... don't you see what it does to you?»

«What,» he croaked, «does it, do to me?» Stinging eyelids. The sword. The thread. The truth.

«It puts you outside. It dehumanizes you. You, you know that you use people, and that's part, of it. Has it never occurred to you that they might be using you? They-and your whole attitude shows that it goes on more than ever now-make of you the recording machine, the diarist, the personal historian, safely over there in the corner. That's all you are to people. They don't want close relationships with you because of the danger: you might learn, and write, too much. But around, in the thick of it, observing but uninvolved, the scribe, seeing their profiles outlined...yes, that's fine. For shots at immortality, it's pretty safe: always enough disguise in the work for them to take the pleasure without the responsibility. Sometimes I bet people even beg you not. to write about, them, huh? They must want it pretty badly, those people, don't you thin, to have it so much in the top of their minds? So what have you got, apart from a gold-plated ego? People aren't real to you, and you aren't real to them. Fair deal. But people can go off, relax, be normal and real for each other any time they like, you can only go to that little room in your head where the typewriter lies. You've clone it, David. You're not in the real world at all. You're not really alive.»

Not her words, not her. Him, he had it, yes it was in him.

Down the sword through the thread.

— o —

Oh well, life goes on, doesn't it? Susan goes back to London, the clays go round, the sun goes down and comes up again. The blood goes pounding in the temples, the temples go echoing into the terror of thought, and the mind goes racing from it into the go-go-going of the everyday. The world fails to come to an end as the threads of a rational attitude, a pose towards it are cut. More immobile than ever, in the midst of it, he held off the motion. He was unable to face work. Everything he looked at or touched seemed to him bleary, pointless, facile. The rooms of his villa fed him only ache and absence, any book he picked up aggravated, rather than assuaged, his doubts; the primitive television service annoyed, rather than anesthetized, him.

It was a week since Susan had left, enough time to know that no scab would form

over the wound, that no amount of knotting would rebind the thread. He had taken to the bar, and begun to sink himself in argument with his old friend, the brandy. It was there, sitting at one of the tables out on the cobbled street, that he encountered Hector.

He watched him walk up from the village square, sweating in the afternoon sun; he was mopping the perspiration from his face and forehead with a handkerchief pulled from the breast pocket of his lightweight suit. He was a big man, and filled that suit to the seams. There was something of the car or card dealer about him, sharp and dull. His shirt was of a violent floral pattern. It was open at the neck, to expose a gold «H» on a gold chain; at his left wrist, more gold—a solid, extravagant watch to match his solid, extravagant person.

No-one knew the original source of his wealth, but it was generally held to be excessive. Six months ago he had bought one of the large villas at the top of the hill and immediately converted it from its plain grace to his own fountain-filled, air-conditioned, marbled taste. Now it was rumored that he was going into property in a similar spirit, buying and gutting fine old houses to «modernise» them. For this, he was not looked on with love by the expatriates, who feared that the arrival of other residents who would appreciate his style of things would destroy the unspoilt village which they had discovered and settled in—conveniently forgetting that thus it had thus already been spoiled by themselves.

David had heard the talk about Hector, but had never really been interested in such incestuous speculation; occasionally, they had passed each other on the street, but had never exchanged more than a quiet nod of quasi-recognition. Until today, he found what he saw of the man, his activities, his possible sins and sanctities, merely boring; but now, himself sunk in a pit of boredom, a bog of inertia, he welcomed him through the beginnings of an alcoholic haze with a brotherly smile and outstretched hand. Hector, perhaps improbably, responded in kind; maybe he had had a particularly good or bad day, stimulating him towards the comradely pseudo-affability of the bottle. In any event, he took the proffered hand with a heat-beaten, gold-toothed smile, and sat at David's table. Thus began an unlikely drinking alliance and drunken conversation.

Time and brandy slipped by; warmed by the latter, they moved through the traditional and predictable topics: the village, the weather, the tourists. For much of the time, they kept their silences, and their surfaces, in place.

Suddenly, it was evening. They had forsaken individual measures, and now a bottle of brandy sat on the table between them; already they had paid it a fair deal of attention. With the passing of the light their mood had changed and now, perceptibly clumsy, looking dolefully up and down the street, they were gripped by the abstract melancholia which comes with advanced drinking. The alcohol dribbling words out of them, they moved towards self-revelation, albeit only of strangers' minimalism: each sought sympathy rather than understanding. They remained distanced, neither wishing to bring himself too far forward into the light. Like absent-minded actors in a repertory company overworked with parts and productions they cued each other, delivered their monologues to each other—but spoke lines from different plays. Only as the alcohol further numbed tongues and minds did they differ from their normal selves enough even to agree on their topics. Question time, direct, crude, irresolvable, had—as it always does—arrived.

«Ever been married?» asked Hector. His manner had become brusque and clipped as the drink came on him; not the most gentle or unabrasive of men at the best of times, there was now almost something of the retired army officer about him, in spite of the gold trinkets, the faint cockney edge on the voice. A man to mince hands, perhaps, but not words. When it came, David's reply was accented, as close to a wink as vocal expression comes.

«No, no...I, er, cohabited a couple of-short-times; but I never actually got to the VOWS.»

«Interfere with your writing, would it?» There was a note of spite, or contempt, in that, and David was about to rise to the imagined bait; but the other man evidently meant it only as an aside. Pouring himself another brandy, he returned to his original topic: «I'm a great believer in marriage myself; been through it three times, as a matter of fact.»

«Three times? That doesn't seem to say much for the institution!»

«Well, I've seen it all ways now, y'know: been a divorced man, a widower...» Hector's voice tailed off, plainly into the past, and David felt a prick of discomfort.

«I'm sorry, I didn't, mean...»

«No, not at all, it's no shit to me,» said the big man, cutting David, and his embarrassment, short. «They were both cows, my first two wives. OK, tough luck, Isabel died...that happens. Didn't change the fact that she was a cow when she was alive. Anyway, that's not the point: it wasn't the institution that was wrong, it. was the women... one was a bitch and the other was a slut and they were both cows; my mistake...this time, though...Well, I'm still a believer, staunch believer.»

Hector's head was wobbling and his eyes giddy. It was as much of a speech as he'd made throughout their conversation, perhaps as much of himself as he was able to reveal. David, however, still niggled by the implied or implicit jibe at his 'writing', could not resist probing for a quicker touch.

«I'm surprised, then»-gathering his words-«...if you've had a couple of failures, that you're still a believer, that you've gone through it again. Maybe... Well, I mean, marriage is about, people, really, yeh, even if it's strict, and legal? You don't, seem to...Look, I don't know, but you call them „cows“ so easily-it's not a very human memory of them, uh? Perhaps you didn't really think about them as people when you were married and that's...»

«They were my bloody wives when we were married!» Hector's fist began to beat on the table, accentuating his points. «For Chrissake, all that stuff, that equality and sharing and making do and reverence, that's allright before, everybody does it, you got to do it. But when those vows are taken, you just, forget it, that woman is your wife, she belongs...»

«But that's a preposterous way to look at people!»

«What's wrong with it? Bloody only way to look at marriage if you ask me, and you'd better ask me, 'cos you've no bloody clue at all!»

«But it's such a totally obsolete...»

«If you mean old-fashioned, that's alright by me, that's the way it should be. Everyone-bloody faggots and liberals-wants to tear it clown these days, but it's simple and obvious: man is the natural dominator, and any woman who challenges that belongs with the rest of the dykes and not in the kitchen.»

«Which, presumably, is where you think a wife should stay?»

Hector did not even need to move his head in order to nod his assent. Their voices had been raised, but they had been arguing with themselves, rather than each other; now they dropped hurriedly into silence, anxious not to throw away such-drunk-understanding as they had earlier achieved. Happy men don't argue like that, and only truly desperate ones do beyond such a standstill. Plainly, if the evening was to continue, they would have to steer the conversation away from the volatility of their opposed convictions. It was up to David, evidently, to restart the conversation; it was in his nature to do so on the same topic, albeit on less acrimonious lines. Hector's attitude, after all, was so diametrically opposed to his own that he was intrigued by it both personally and (oh, yes, in spite of Susan, in spite of his current ennui, he still regarded himself as a professional) professionally.

Swirling the brandy in its glass and the words in his mouth: «Sorry, I, er, overstepped the mark a bit-it's your life...any way, you say all that's in the past... Things seem alright now? How long have you been married to your present wife?»

«Jane? Oh, just on eighteen months...and you're right, this time it's how a marriage should be. Mind, I've known her for years.»

«Really?»

«Yes, since she was six, actually.»

«Huh?» David's attention stirred, like a snake, shaking off the skin of drunkenness. «How old is she now?»

«Twenty. I'd know her father, you see; he was a close business associate of mine, and I used to be round at his place a great deal. She was always a lovely little girl...used to call me Uncle Hector, I don't know that she remembers. I used to be almost as much of a father to her as Harry was. Never mind, never mind, that's all long ago. Well Harry died, y'know, and I didn't see her for many years after that; she grew up, of course, University and so on. Meanwhile, there's been Isabel and Carol...met her again at her mother's funeral, actually...»

«How extraordinary,» David said, but there was no real need for him to draw out the story: Hector, well into his cups, was all for telling it by himself, as if to make up for the previous tension between them.

«Yes... Any way, she was in a hell of a state; she'd always found it a bit hard to fit in with people, and she'd had some kind of nervous breakdown... she was just a jumble. I had a bit of spare time-as I say, it was just after Carol-so I took her on a cruise, get her mind off things. It just sort of happened: she was grown up, of course, but all alone, and... well, I knew she respected me-and there you are. Mind, I'm glad to say that marriage has made a real woman out of her, not nervous at all now, enjoys parties, wonderful housekeeper...»

«So this is the one, is it? This is the way marriage is supposed to be?»

«Seems so.»

There was something touching, almost child-like, about the man's affirmation. But...?

«There must be a big age difference, though?» asked David. «What are you, thirty-eight, thirty-nine? Is that a problem?»

«Not so far, anyway-I certainly hope not in the future.»

«But ideas-about marriage, for instance-have certainly changed over the years. Aren't her ideas different than yours by the difference of your ages?»

«I suppose you mean not so old-fashioned?» They both allowed themselves a smile at this as Hector continued. «Well, she wouldn't have stayed a wife of mine, after my experiences, for very long if she hadn't changed an idea or two. She did; it works; she did promise to obey...»

«What about sex?» asked David, although to himself he was conjecturing whether or not the man beat his wife to obtain that obedience; this tack seemed, perhaps, a by-way to that. It was met with repression itself, though.

«Quite frankly, that's something between my wife and myself.» David suppressed a chuckle at the unintended wordplay. «It's none of your business.»

«I'm sorry if I appeared to intrude.» He had managed to pull the mask over his laugh, at least to the eyes of the other drunken man. «It wasn't really sex itself I was asking about. Look, we might as well admit that our attitudes to marriage are poles apart...and you're the only one of us with practical experience of the state. Now, I'll accept that there is some fundamental change in a relationship at the moment of marriage... I'm just interested in seeing where exactly your attitude finally leads you-to get to the core of that attitude, in a way, I suppose.»

«That still doesn't make my sexual life any of your business, does it, though?»

«No, of course not. Let me put it another way, a bit more sideways. Perhaps if I propose a situation to you-hopefully one you've never experienced, and won't in the future; perhaps your reactions will tell me more about how you see marriage than any straight questions and answers?»

«OK, shoot.»

«What would you do...»-a pause to emphasise the 'would'-«What would you do if you caught your wife in bed with another man? Obviously it would be a betrayal for anyone, but since you feel she's so much your chattel...?»

Hector, staring into the bottom of his glass of brandy, seemed oblivious to his words, and the question on David's lips tailed off into the potentially dangerous future of their own propositions. In himself uncertain whether to change tack, start afresh, or probe further, the drink propelled him on into the last option.

«Surely it's not so extreme a...?»

But Hector looked up, and cut his words to the ground as they emerged with a head-on gaze, with eyes which, for a moment, cleared, hardened, brightened. A presence which had not been there earlier dropped over his shoulders, and ruthlessness of whatever his original business had been sat in his stance, a physical, fighting dog strength. Suddenly, his arms seemed to be all iron-muscled, his hands all fist. It was a tense, eloquent moment of silence, a cold voice in the writer's head ran «Of course, of course...» When the other man spoke, his voice came from far inside from some twitching brain synapse which, in turn, triggered the flicker of muscles at jawline, temple and wrist.

«That would be obvious», he said, grating out the words like old, hardened Cheddar. «I have my guns, you know; and if not them, I have my hands...»

The tension drained from his frame; the electricity dissipated to earth. Once again, the complex mask of drunkenness fell across his features. David sat open-mouthed, a man who had climbed into a ring expecting boxing, only to find that the bout was karate. Ruffled, a shiver of primeval recognition running along his spine, he attempted some monosyllabic response, but the other man-now his turn to draw the conversation to normality, to dispel the moment of power-waved it aside and continued.

«Adultery...Isabel...» The distance, the disconnections of drunken talk were with him again; once more, they were talking about some theoretical situation, and the presence of the previous moment was sucked back into that. His mind's mind, not his body's, was once more in control, or such approximation to that as the brandy would allow. He poured himself another glass as David watched and waited.

«I've had my experiences of violence in my time,» Hector continued, drawing the stream of words into sentences and straight lines once more. «I don't, think I'd have a moment's hesitation. I don't hold with adultery...I've nothing against screwing-they call it „casual sex“ now, don't. they? — but I don't hold with theft. If someone screws my wife, then that's theft. I couldn't get back my property, but I'd damn sure get my own back...I'd get my revenge, and right there...both of them. They wouldn't deserve any more. The Sicilians got it right; it's., natural.»

He would do it, thought David, he would actually do it. The words and the reaction would come forth with such ease that, in another man, they might have been mere show, pose, calculated enough in his beliefs to carry them through to their logical conclusion. Such obsessive dogmatism-ah, the theory, the theory: intense insecurity as regards status, security, power, wealth, age. Two broken marriages; any children? Probably not-if so, disowned. And now, the child bride; almost certainly, he would beat her to buy her obedience and submission with fear. Classic. Yes, this powerful, wealthy man, he would do it, out of his fear. He had caged himself in a life of image and doctrine, fashioned a way to live which would not allow of doubt. It would not be the doubt which drove him, but the well-worn paths of posturing words, of certainty, of braggadocio. Not to kill, then, would be the end of all framework; to kill would be the action of final absorption into his own blueprint.

A hollow laugh bouncing between David's ears. Here he was, observing, evaluating, storing and summing up-the factional writer. He probed for, he traced the image of the lost soul; he saw it trapped in its self-made cage. Yet were he not himself lost he would not be

sitting here, swilling like a pig in the brandy. Oh yes, he had gone out to meet his fear, to forswear all cages of convention; but he had become even more the prisoner for that. Still he watched, on the edge of mockery. Hector, who had only one course to follow, Hector, lost in the city of souls. He himself was in the desert: all directions were equal, and equally worthless. They were both trapped.

No more, no more. Mutually, they steered away from the reefs, the whirlpool towards which their conversation had taken them, and instead dived into further drinking. They talked gossip, trivia, conjecture, and kept consciously away from further personal revelation. They talked, and drank, alone: though between them they knew most of the people who drifted past their table as the bar filled towards the evening peak, they exchanged no more than a few words of greeting with them. It was all too evident that the weight of the night, and the drink was on them.

Late, as it was prone to be, as he was prone to do. David began to talk about moving away from the village, trying something or somewhere new, cutting himself adrift; he had done so often enough before, and, previously, this had been mere pretense at freedom, by the simple invocation of its name. But recent events gave it more import this time, and as he talked he realized that moving might well provide him with a solution to his crux of purpose. The mere action in itself, of course, would solve nothing, but a change of geographical location might well rid him of the self-accusation which inhabited his recent memory. To find himself, some reason, some true life again...

By this time Hector was incapable of talking anything but property, and his only interest in the topic was the future sale of David's villa. It would be, they agreed, the easy and natural thing for Hector to buy it. If David thought about what that would mean, it meant little to him.: the conversion job (that marble? those fountains?), new bourgeois occupants, the further «destruction» of the village. He, after all, would be gone, trying once more to exist with purpose; what he left behind might as well not do so at all. They left the matter in abeyance: they would talk about it soon. Hector would come and look the villa over some time.

After this, there was nothing much more to say to each other: they had reached the bottom of the bottle of brandy and of the possibilities of conversation. Hector slumped over the table, his lolling gaze directed at the box of matches with which his fingers toyed. David, leaning precariously far back on his chair, one leg hooked over the arm, stared clown the street towards the square, rolled an unlit cigarette around his lips.

«Hello, dear,» Jane, Hector's wife, came upon them suddenly and unexpectedly, having walked clown the street from the top of the hill. She wore an enormous straw hat with a scarf tied round it which made her seem an incongruous creature of the day to David's night-soaked eyes. She put an arm round her husband and planted a kiss on his forehead; his glazed eyes rolled round to her, and he grunted a greeting. She looked across the table at David.

«Hello. You're the writer, aren't you? David Stirling? I've seen you around the village. I'm Jane.»

«Yes, Hector's been telling me all about you. Hello.» he answered, with as much charm, as much of a courteous nod of the head as he could muster. She was pretty; to his

tired eyes, she shone.

«I hope nothing too bad?» An innocent/serious smile.

Hector stirred from his slouch. Far, far gone, he burbled, «Time to go home,» and belched.

«For me, too,» said David, and rose to unsteady feet. «Another arduous day's toil completed.» That same smile from Jane. In one demonstrative sweep it took in him, the empty bottle and the semi-sensate form of her husband. Already David liked her.

The three of them started the climb up the cobbled street to their respective villas. They had not gone far before David was forced to support the other man as his legs mutinied against his sense of direction; soon Jane was propping up her husband from the other side as it became evident that David was in no steady state himself. He was drunk; Hector was destroyed. They carried him thus all the way up to his door. There Jane offered profuse thanks, apologies for her husband, and coffee. David made nothing of the first, insisted that the second was his fault, and gratefully accepted the third.

After carrying Hector into the house and up to his bedroom, David went to the toilet and threw up, splashing his face with cold water and rinsing out his mouth afterwards. He felt infinitely better then, and the coffee revived him still further. Now, he was once again in a state to listen; and Jane talked. Her story: university, freedom, dissolution, drugs; arrest, her mother's horror and shame; the cover-up, the mental hospital, the corrective treatment which sapped her of will and vitality; her mother's death; the marriage to Hector, clutching at the proffered straw, while still oblivious to the future, deadened, only technically alive. And now, of beginning to feel alive again.

She talked too much, David knew; came with too much, too soon...it could be the gushing of her youth or the irresistible swell of words until now held clown and back. Probably, he thought, her life had been more sheltered than she made out; probably she had come closer to the brink than she would admit. Still, she was talking now; she seemed to want reality.

He did not stay long. He made his thanks and his exit; still not sobered, he stumbled down the hill to his own villa. He felt old, old...but was crying like a child by the time he reached his door. And so to this. The beads around her neck clicked under her fidgeting fingers. The drunken night had been a week ago. Today, knowing Hector to be in town on business, and not due to return before early evening, he had gone to his villa and invited Jane to join him at his place for an afternoon drink and (the echo of his words: «There are so few with whom it is possible to...») talk. There had not really been a seduction on either part: the move towards bed had been mutual and explicit. And now those pale gray eyes looked into his own and begged him to promise. She was waiting.

She was worried by something-or motivated? It was not Hector, no the chances of being found out...often, she had explained, she went out walking in the olive groves come the evening, so her husband would think nothing strange in her absence from the villa. But there was some tension...it niggled at David as he watched her. Was her request-perhaps even her presence in his bed at all-an act, just that order of act which he now, thanks or curses to Susan, knew to be intended solely for his benefit, as observer and recorder? He guessed not-surely she had not known him long enough to be aware of the vampiric

element in his art? Still she had understood that, there was a possibility that he might write about her...even so, why this insistence that he promise not to do so? Was she, in fact, hoping for glorification, to make him find his way towards writing about her, inevitably, because he had said he would not? She would know, then, something of his perversity... and she was not dull, this one...

«David, please...I don't, want you to say you love me, or anything like that! Just don't, write about me?» «What if I said that I did, but wouldn't promise?» he tried. This- the mention of love-was, after all, another angle. «I don't need that...David?»

So: there was to be no illumination of her motive. Ah, well, it hardly mattered anyway: one more promise, one more masque, one more tryst...in any case, soon he would be gone from here. If-there was, he supposed, the remotest of chances-he were to write about her at some time in the future, the breaking of one more promise among the thousands of others he had made and broken to himself and others would not make much difference. There were other, more important things than this. Ultimately, it was of no great consequence to him any more.

«All right: I promise.»

«You mean it?»

«Of course I do.»

«You don't mind?»

«Of course not.» If she had pushed him with just one more question, he might have taken it back; but none came, and he smiled at her with genuine reassurance, openness and honesty.

«Than you, then,» she murmured, laid her head clown on his chest and traced circles around his navel with her fingers. Juke box music, drifting.

This, he thought, this is the true taste. The lines stretch out from this moment and this room., signaling like those in the spider's web once the prey is caught. Here he was not observer, recorder, diarist, but a man; and here his life was real, not sham, not trickery, not acting. His freedom loomed before his imagination. Outside, a clock struck the hour: seven. Sleepy, sleepy he was, but his mind was racing.

He thought about Susan again, that day on the beach: of the awful, diminishing truths about himself and his life to which, almost regretfully but not without venom, she had pointed him. The despair attendant upon them: that he had become undead, a pariah among successive sets of friends and acquaintances, never even allowed the true station of exile. Instead, he had been buffoon, jester, the butt of endless charades, the bolster for eager egos. The clown, with make-up of desolation; the fool, brimful with belief in his own genius; the emperor, in all his pomp and circumstance of manner, in all his nakedness. He had been left with no clothes, old or new, and time had all but closed the doors of possibility and humanity to him.

Yet he had found time, had clothed himself, had stuck his foot in the jamb of the closing door, had asserted his life as well as his existence... he felt it now, pulsing through his body. He had found that he could face his fear and despair; in the facing of these, the

surrounding desert was as nothing. He felt himself once more alive, free from that undeath in which all unknowingly-though not in ignorance or for want of knowledge-he had been burying himself for years; and he luxuriated in the sight.

He thought of the street, the bar, the lights, the insects, the glowering hillside towering over the village in crag, rock, scree and scruffy vegetation, of cracks and gullies where one could so easily break a leg and, even in this idyllic setting, die of exposure. He thought of Susan's eyes in the olive grove, of Jane's but a moment ago, pleading but inscrutable. He thought of Hector's size and strength, of his fist clenched on the table, of the mad righteousness in his eyes.

The sweet, fever touch of golden skin on his own; the smell of, the youth of her! Life, now!

Juke-box music; distant, discernible voices; footsteps on the cobbles outside. A spider spins its web by the open window, buffeted by the breeze, but persevering, determined to cast his net.

He thought of the note he had dropped inside Hector's front door as they left that afternoon:

VERY IMPORTANT I SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT MY VILLA: COME
ROUND AND SEE ME AS SOON AS YOU GET BACK.

DAVID STIRLING.

His suicide note.

Balance: The Mine

Out, forward, beyond the edge of the cliffs, eternal sky sweeps down to crash into the sea at the horizon... brilliant, endless blue beyond the reach of either mind or eye. The light, the gulls and the waves move in circular repetition, the ritual of time: half the mechanical turning of a clock's hands, half the freedom of summer dance. The cliff, the vantage point, is a dividing knife- edge between that global time-scale, out there, and our own linear one.

There are those who are marked down for the sea. When they stare out like this, the rhythm of the waves traps them into a trance, and the water nourishes the seeds of oblivion in their minds. The trance is not of hypnosis, or sleep, or any such straight line: the sea, neither cruel nor kind, allows only those already party to its universal magic, purified by its spells, to hold it to themselves. Thus when finally they slide into union, serenity and order with the water, there is no sudden change, no sharp dividing line between the past and what will not be. A last string of bubbles trails as farewell to the land, whose creatures they have ceased to be; part, of the whole, becoming wholer, they swell already to play their part, in the endless cycle of ocean. On the land suicides, even in that moment of final extremity, end themselves with something of an eye on the future: the discovery of the body, the mourning, the continuing life, in others' memories, of their last, act, the last frame in the film of their lives. Those that the sea claims relinquish not only life but all name, action, memory, and bodily form to the undulating rhythm of its embrace.

Suicide is not for many of us, though, as individuals, even if a day like today, a place such as this is so bright, so distortingly crystalline, so intensely vital that it turns the mind towards the shade...

And the sea is not for all of us: it knows its own, and with its furious assault on the base hurls me back to where I stand at the top of the cliff. Down there, where the elements meet in a maelstrom of rock, foam, spray and thunder there are no half measures: the ocean attacks, erodes, withdraws and attacks again; the land, for now, will not succumb. The balance, the tension of opposites, locked in the endless cycles, lost without each other... this is Nature.

And here is the evidence of Man. Twenty yards back from the cliff edge, parallel to, but a world away from, the public footpath, is a barbed wire fence. Signs on the concrete stanchions which support, it deny both entry and information. We may run from the mysterious order of the sea and Nature: we may run from the city, which also makes its erosions, claims its ground; we may run as far as we can, but always we are confronted with the signs of ourselves. We find that we go, that we have been, before ourselves everywhere.

We have been here, and one of our possible futures lives here, in the squat, solid buildings a mile away, low against the hill. Set. back from the cliffs, where Nature's forces meet in such constant violence, sits the research station which will feed the fires of some coming bio- chemical war. There is no real paradox here: like the land, like the sea, that war of the microbe will be neither cruel, nor kind, nor even human. After all, impartiality has never been numbered among the human attributes. We shuffle forward to a linear beat:

we and our works are more implacable even than Nature.

There is a triple balance here, between the sea, the land and the World and Words of Man. There is a balance, but, especially on this anvil of a day on which I have chosen to take this walk, it unbalances me. I am, after all, a man, and I wonder what place is mine here.

I have been standing on this spot, looking around, for too long, and hurry on before I become rooted by the symbology. The area of public land which the path crosses, bounded on one side by the barbed wire, on the other by the cliff edge, becomes wider. Some way on, I come across more of Man's landscape; though this is evidently disused, passive.

Emulating the plateau of the clifftop, sat upon it like a slab, is an expanse of concrete. It is pitted, rough, old: the uniformity is broken randomly by rusted hooks and rings, by clumps of hardy weeds and grasses thrust through dog-leg fissures. Here and there are cavities, as though enormous teeth have been extracted from their beds. These must once have rooted machines, long since removed for scrap: the concrete was once a platform, a work surface. As time has claimed it, it has gained in geography, and now sits as powerful complement to the natural formations of rock and sea. Lines of energy and purpose endure, though, in this new-found lie in the land: towards the seaward end. There, the remains of an anteroom, now clogged with vegetation, are sunk in the ground; the roof is gone, but what was its level is the same as that of the surrounding concrete. The open end of the room joins with a ramped incline sloping up to ground level, in which are embedded rusted rails, obviously for the movement of small trucks. I move down the ramp, to examine the room more closely. There is no floor: the room is the head of a shaft, a pit. All this was once a mine.

The shaft seems to drop clown the full length of the cliff, if not even lower; a pebble dropped clown it takes several seconds to send back a sound denoting arrival and rest. My mind jumps to mystery. The timbers which surround and support, the maw of the shaft are blackened, warped and cracked, as though fire had raged up from the workhead, devouring miners and machines. A single beam, once horizontal across the roof of the shaft to support pulleys and tackles, has slipped to an uneasy angle. The wood creaks with age, and the imagination makes of it a funeral keening for the men who must have died below. Even in the brilliance of the summer clay, the abandoned mine takes on a sinister air, as dark and dank as that which rises from the black pit.

But I know that it is nothing: the wood is charred not by flame but its antithesis, rising moisture from the sea below. The shaft has been destroyed in a slower, more leisurely fashion, suited to Nature's patience. The mine must have been abandoned long ago, when whatever its contents were proved no longer precious or useful enough to justify the working. Man on his linear path again; progress, progress...sideways. There is, in fact, no mystery here, not even the ghost of the past; already, long since, the forces of land and sea have begun to reclaim these, their preserves, into which men once so laboriously burrowed.

Fifty yards away, there stands a chimney, perches precariously among the elements. It could almost be a tower from which first, warning could be given of approaching clanger from the sea. There is a certain mystery here: there is no building at the base of the

chimney from which smoke would be extracted. Instead, on its seaward side, there extends from the base a brick tunnel. It is four feet high, and reaches almost to the cliff edge. This gives the edifice the appearance of a snake poised to strike, the chimney rearing into the air and the tunnel-the tail-supporting it.

I walk along the side of the tunnel. Halfway down, time and vandalism have taken their toll and there is a hole-gaping wound in the reptile hide-where the bricks have been prised apart. It holds the simultaneous invitation and threat of a fractionally opened door to a darkened room; and if I crouch, it is just large enough for me to enter.

It is necessary to move almost on all fours to make the length of the tunnel and, after the initial splay of light at the opening, the passage is in darkness. Interior bricks have fallen to the floor, and the way is rugged and uncomfortable, but a shaft of light falling down the chimney at the far end beckons me on.

I arrive there; there is room to stand, to move a few paces at the base of the stack. There are no bones or trinkets on the floor, of course...but this still seems a magic place.

Vertically above me, a brilliant circle of blue sky; the light rains down from this and sparkles on the walls, shining and glinting as on cut glass. But. I see that the inside of the chimney is made of the same brick as the rest of the building: it is not that which shines, but tiny, beautiful crystals encrusted on it, like snowflakes, like diamonds. They dance for the eyes in the light, and make of the place an enchanted cavern.

The walk, the crawl were worth it: the crystals, the womb-like towering of the chimney, its ceiling of tactile blue. How solid the sky seems when, like this, only a few square feet of it are visible! How good to be alive, how good to experience, how good to see! And what crystals are these?

The hand reaches out to touch them. A few flake away easily from the wall and cling to the fingertips, which carry them towards the tongue...

What was mined here?

And what is the taste of experience?

It was an arsenic mine, and the taste is that of the flowers of that element. They have been left unclaimed from the smelter flue where it was sublimated from the mined pyrites. This is all that remains from past purpose. In our search for knowledge, understanding and balance between the forces around us we are rarely more than a fingertip away from eating our own death.

The Message

He knew that the end was coming. No more were there aficionados to buy, steal, hoard his paintings, interviewers from glossy magazines to probe his psychological motivations and sexual quirks, pilgrims to sit at his feet, attempting to distill knowledge from such sweat of his brow as fell on them while he worked. He had known all these: known, accepted, enjoyed, been discarded by and discarded in turn. There were other idols for them now, with stranger and more labyrinthine forms of expression to relate to the world; now, for him, there was no world left to which he could related in the old manner. That era which he himself had in some way expressed and epitomized had passed; he no longer had either the inclination or the desire to push open the shutters on his innermost thoughts and feelings. The light neither entered nor shone out.

It is true that he had revelled in his fame almost to the point of self-idolatry; he had felt and savored that sense of exquisite freedom and security-albeit of the zoo-which approval by one's peers confers. Dipping his toes into the water, he had found the sensation and temperature to his liking, and so had dived headlong into it, again and again, always from a higher board and always with greater e'lan until a moment arrived when it was impossible to differentiate between dive and diver, so great was the height from which he plummeted. Even in this madness, he could have retained control over his own life and death: seeing the cushioning and absorbing water draining from the pool, he could have twisted away in mid-air; a final act. of individuality. Again, he could simply have stayed wallowing in the pool; this would have been enough, and comprehensible... yet there was more. He stood at the crossroads, unsure even of the nature of the decision which now faced him: to go on along the road on which, long ago, he had set himself, ever on towards the horizon of glowering clouds? Or, repenting, to turn his back on that hungry, inviting vision, to begin the long and desperate march back to whatever remained of his starting point? He knew that the end was coming; and he knew that he did not know.

It had been two years since he had clone any painting. In the intervening time, as the strength of his will waned and his moral incertitude waxed, he had presented to a dwindling public the stockpile of his last years' work, passed off as contemporary. Poison arrows of criticism and malice were drawn and fired on the canvases as they emerged, but the effects did not touch him; already he was distanced in time and mind, already too concerned with groping for an end which would satisfy his beginnings to be hurt by this present invective, directed at labors only he knew were long clone.

His life had drifted from him, and his friends: the former, lately, in aimless meandering; the latter with all too clearly defined speed and direction. If friendship and love are based on the reflections from others of what we wish or imagine ourselves to be, then when the mirror clouds, not to be reburnished by whatever fresh life we breathe onto and into it, we quickly shroud the surface, pass on and forget. He had made it his vocation to be, to provide, a looking-glass for humanity' the effacement. he suffered was all the more total for that. Perhaps-we could try to be kind-he might have felt that the reflections he gave out had become too perfect, too vivid, as unbearable for those around him as for those on and by whom his name had been built; such self-absorption might have made him more human in pride, might at least have given him some measure of consolation and self-

justification in the years of increasing solitude and isolation. In truth, though, such thoughts never occurred to him at all: the disappearance of his friends meant as little to him as did that of his erstwhile laudors and proteges. The absence of those who had once crowded round him did not even raise in him that flicker of feeling which men who are alone often see in themselves as ultimate proof of their individuality. He had simply ceased to care.

He had spurned success, and yet forgotten its meaning.

He had, finally been rejected by his peers, and yet, having already disassociated himself from them and their judgements, such rejection was meaningless to him.

In the sense that creation is the evocation of the unknown for presentation to, and condonation by, one's fellows, he had ceased to create; yet the sense is as shallow as the word is presumptuous. He was already half-dead: he had foresworn his stake in presumption. As his friends and fellows stumbled away from the darkness which increasingly surrounded him, the lines which joined them to him slipped through his numbing grasp.

He clasped darkness and negation to himself: yet, within, he had never before walked in such positive light. Becoming paradox, all mere means, all sideshows, all irrelevancies fell away from him; he had seen the end in time to make his own ends clear. Now his every energy was directed towards one goal, his every drive channelled into a single current. His ambition, ego, religion, certitude, will for communication, craving for love, his intelligence, intellect, training, toil and patience all became enmeshed in a single dream, in a monopoly of purpose which can only become manifest when it is known that the absolute end is drawing irresistibly close. Now, though ceasing to care in and for all mundane terms, he was driven by the utmost dedication, and urgency infected his every thought and action: urgency born out of a sudden knowledge of time.

He had owned the cottage for many years: in the first flush of youthful prosperity, he had followed the advice of accountants and worldly-wise friends and bought it as tangible possession and security in a transient world. He had had his own, more romantic reasons for the purchase, too: primitive, isolated, half-derelict, he had seen the place as being in touch with the roots of Nature, and thus of Man. «Back to Nature» had been one of his (often contradictory) watchwords, as though Nature were a constant, not a perpetually shifting axis of reality by which Man is both challenged and measured. At first, he had had thoughts of setting up home there permanently. «Free from the city,» he had once said, flushed with drink and enthusiasm to the point of voiding intellect, «I can find and know myself, and create from the bowels of my being.» Soon after moving there, he found that he had taken the city with him to his retreat among the chalk hills, and that all that came from his bowels was fear of meeting the unknown alone. Though this was, in some measure, self-knowledge, it sickened him.

When summer came, he tried to assuage his fear by inviting his hedonistic friends-mirrors to his mirror-to stay, and they spent the days in a drugged and drunken haze of lethargy. The summer was long, hot, sterile; in such moments as he raised his head above the morass of self-indulgence, he sustained himself and held back the baying hounds of conscience with the thought of a winter's work and contemplation. The weather turned,

his solitary life resumed, the feeling of sterility remained; now he knew that it resided not in the summer heat, not in the social excess, but in his own ideas when faced only by himself. The mirage was dispelled, the dream-that by merely changing the geographical location through which he walked he could change the nature of the burden he carried-shattered. The isolation, the stark images of self which were all he encountered there were too much for him: he left the cottage for the pleasure palaces of the world, for the self-affirmation which only success, adulation, and the tangible applications of wealth would bring him. Thenceforth he worked as, when, and where he could, and his inspirational circuits were flooded only with feedback from the glittering public world in which he was resoundingly successful and-for an artist-revoltingly rich.

Now, as he rejected that shadow-play of a life which he had himself espoused, the cottage was there to come back to: he had never seriously thought about selling it. At first, to have done so would have been too much of an admission of failure, of the fact that he was capable of self-delusion; and he would allow of this possibility neither to himself nor to others in those clays. Later, when he owned plush homes on three continents, the place was consigned in his memory to the dustiest of back shelves. Now, at last, it was to serve him well, its isolation matching that which had bred internally in him. The external, romantic idealism of his youth, the cultivation of pessimism and despair in which he had then indulged-if only to nurture the kernel of self-celebration at both their centers-were long gone; by now, he had come to know and accept true solitude, an aloneness still vital, still throbbing with life...his own. So now, attuned to its nature, he had come back to the cottage; come back to make his final and greatest work.

There would be no comparison between this and what he had previously done: there would be no point even in relative assessment. In the growing rejection of his way of life, of the use to which he had put his time, he had also rejected his previous painting; he could no longer own it even in his memory. In reality, it had passed out of his possession in those moments when it first adorned the walls and corridors-as clinical, almost, as those of hospitals-of the museums of modern art; the salons of those hostesses who, rich in temporal terms, sought spiritual wealth in the acquisition of 'culture'; the bedrooms of those friends, acquaintances and parasites who, acknowledging his mortality as mirror in which they could shine, substituted his work for him and for whatever relationship they had with him-a more permanent, more reliable surface in which they could examine and display the symmetrical perfection of their warts and blemishes. As for him, he had traded his paintings for pride; that, too, he had relinquished as it tarnished in the light of self-realization. For him, all that now remained of his work was the incremental change which time and vision had wrought, within him; the cavasses [sic] themselves seemed to him as dull, lifeless and flat as forgotten dreams.

Once, he had drawn rigid lines within himself between his work and his life, the former being a separate manifestation of, if not justification for, the latter; now the two began to beat in the same rhythm, to become indistinguishable. With the realization that his life was gathering itself up by the moment there came further intimations of its very nature; as twilight came on with stealthy geometrical progression, his life became more and more identifiable with his search and will for final expression. Such time-frittering concepts as importance, relative truth, artistic honesty no longer gnawed at his comprehension, for such things were devoured by, implicit in, the effort he was now

making; the present, its infinity and time fell away. With ultimate patience, born of haste, he began to assemble the forces of his life and, in so doing, willed them into transcendence of himself towards a goal and a vitality which could outstrip the transient egotism of «creation» and 'Art'. Now, drawing on forces older, deeper, more intuitively felt than any he had hitherto called upon, he ceased to be concerned with the mere expression of the self: he strove for its encapsulation. Against this purpose, all the efforts of his past life, all his past paintings, were as dust in the wind. His final work had become, for him, his only one: it was to be filled with the whole essence of his existence.

This in itself, though, would not be enough: paradoxically, in the course of dissociating himself from his past he had grown more aware of his place and nature in the overall scheme of things, and it was some intimation of that universal awareness he now wished to convey. A mere monument to his own life and vision, however much imbued with them, however free of the taint of ego, would not suffice.

He groped for clear sight of his own intentions; they throbbed in his veins, beat at his temples, inhabited his mind in every waking moment and cast half-glimpsed dreams like pebbles into the millpond of his sleep. Eventually, the barest of outlines was formed; although still without specific definition, it offered some hope at least of the work in prospect achieving a longevity and universality beyond his own, mortal, imagination. He would try through this, a man's work, to pass on some intimation of Man's state, balanced between two orders: civilisation, or mankind in time, and Nature. He knew that he would have to express opposed concepts simultaneously: transience, analysis, intellect against immutability, intuition, spirit. As a man at a specific point in time, he realized that trapping time itself in its vestments; nor, indeed, could he accurately represent the rate of change in terms of knowledge, action, faith-of civilization. Somehow, though, if he could only find the right image and method, he could encapsulate the balance, the tension; and then, if the work lasted, it could show future men, of whatever time, that others before them had at least tried to see, to express what it meant to be alive.

At last, he had found the parameters of his intent: now the days formed themselves into ranks of weeks and months as he searched for the image which could embody the totality of his vision. He did not bemoan the passage of time itself, since all was now waiting; but frustration gnawed at him constantly. Sometimes, like a frustrated child, he would rush out onto the hillside which flanked his cottage and hurl stones as far and as aimlessly as he could to give vent to his anger at himself, his inadequacies, his inability to find the icon he sought. Later, these same hands which had thus fashioned themselves into the fists and catapults of nihilism would unconsciously moved in the depths of aspiration, struggle, striving and search. These hands...finally, he knew, they would have to do the work, make sense of his unfashioned ideals, make reason of their own irrational power; sometimes, mesmerised, he would stare at them, wondering if they could possibly conform to the discipline, achieve the control which would be necessary to fashion the uncontrolled. Then his darkest moments would come, when it seemed that he had avowed too much, had steered too close to blasphemy. He wished, after all, to make the ultimate statement of which he was capable, in the most encapsulated form. Yet. he knew that there could be no other way: if this was blasphemy, then he must blaspheme. Having forsaken his past existence, renounced his past and primitive efforts at self-expression, his only reason for living now was this work, this goal as total as any he could envisage; and he

was left with the knowledge that only in its process and completion could any true and final understanding ever come to him.

At times, his cogitations had seemed to have no end; but finally he settled on the image he would use. The subject was age-old, but could bear representation with modernity; its life breathed into inanimate substance, all the necessary elements would be fused, and the eternity of his idea transmitted.

At first he had to sketch it: only thus could he materially formalize all those wishes and intentions which his mind had cataloged and, in the imagination at least, bound into a whole. Trial after trial, form after form flowed from his pen in every manner he had ever learned, from slapdash speed to meticulous patient, craft. Each in turn was rejected as being too inanimate or too vital, of too universal a view for his specific purpose or too minute a one for its breadth, of too classical or too modern a form. Finally, his hand, mind and eye came to rest, and on the paper before him lay the lines for which he had searched for so long, towards which his whole life had been directed. Now it remained only to transfer these lines into his chosen permanent medium, one which would withstand the ravages of permanent medium, one which would withstand the ravages of time, retain these unmistakable marks, suffer no deterioration of essence of confusion of intent. Now only the physical labor had to be done.

The weeks passed into months, and the earth was blessed with the sweat of his toil. His hands became gnarled and hard with blisters; his biceps throbbed with effort and energy; his hair grew long and matted, his face creased with the lines of outdoor work; his eyes smoldered to permanent coals in his furious haste. He wasted, and he grew: he had never been so strong as he was in those final days, yet he had never looked so utterly drained-his whole life-force was fed into the completion of the work, and he paused only to sleep and eat. Time held its breath for him.

And it was finished.

He stood back and viewed it: there had been no mistake in his inspiration. It was dynamic, yet immutable; urgent, yet in a strange repose; it summed up his passion, his individuality, but was simultaneously universal; in both subject and execution, it was of now and all time past and future. The subject was one men would have seen almost since they began to see, but the rake of the line was unmistakably modern; and also he had not, he reflected, suffered the purgatory of the salons and art galleries all those years for nothing-unmistakably his. The being had life, summoned up thoughts of flight and speed, yet suspended in frantic motion, would remain here forever.

The body arched forwards, a widening curve to the shoulders, and the limbs seemed to flow out from it in smooth arcs, not as appendages, but, as intrinsic part; the head, straining forward, was merely hinted at by shape and outline, and in its center one staring eye bulged with the effort of chase. Each stroke of his pen in the original sketch had been magnified hundreds of times, and in the simplicity of these few lines he had captured the life of his subject; captured that, and more. Not only was the work infused with, and a summation of, life, but also, suspended between Nature and mankind, it captured something of life in his time. There had been no margin for error, and here there was none;

the work was that which he had dreamed, for which he had prayed.

The simplicity of execution, the elimination of all but the barely essential, the thoughts and implications of speed, haste and vigor which the work embodied, all these were codes intrinsic to his civilization. The lines, so unlike those of its subject in reality, still captured its essence. The work belonged to, could only have been done at, a time when Man was no longer content simply to observe what he saw, but was determined to strike to its roots, its skeletal discovery, of quest, of life continued, expanded, enhanced; now, as mankind began to reach for the stars; now he, with this subject of simple, unequivocal grandeur, had here encapsulated not only his own feelings and aspirations, but also those of the age. Life, light, hope; the surge at barriers and boundaries which exist only to be penetrated; the first glimmer of understanding of what lies beneath the dull tridimensionality of outward appearance—here and now, he had intuitively captured all of these; he had grasped them in, and fashioned them with, his mortal hands.

And so he sat upon the hill, his end almost upon him, drained of all but the satisfaction of having done; and looked across at his final, his only work. In the centuries, in the aeons to come, men would return to this spot, look upon the results of his labors, and be sure to receive the message. By the figurative sparsity of line, by the capture of essence in dimensions other than those we fully understand, they would know that it was created by a man in an age when Man had truly begun to live, and not merely exist. Perhaps (who knows?) by then the Earth might be a barren waste, left behind in the spawning of the galaxies, and only a chance cosmonaut would come upon the place—but he, too, would know and understand that here it all began.

His mind spun in pure, humble, exhilaration: the message that he had carved out for the future could never be misinterpreted. So, joyfully without further reason for life, his breath slipped away as he lay on the hill, his eyes resting forever on the white horse he had cut into the chalk above Uffington.

The white horse has stood the test of time; but its meaning and message remain, for us, a mystery, and we can only guess at the culture, civilization, hopes, fears and intentions of its maker or makers. Have we not come such a long way from these things?

Brasilia

- this minceptcord
- date 25/11/45
- emittant 1-40 1/E 97 BSA

The Legend goes that the world was once a garden, filled with wild flowers, trees and animals. The garden was the closest we could come to the Gods before finally joining them. This had been our place since all creation. But the people sinned, and were cast down and out forever.

The Legend goes that when the Devil came, he was terrible in appearance. He came as a man, at the head of many men. All these had once been as us, but they had fallen to the power of the Dark One. They came, hiding their bodies, of which they were shameful. Their eyes were wild, empty of pride, and the pallor of their skins matched their souls. We fought them. We fought them with our blow-pipes, our arrows, our poisons, and we killed many of them. These we did not consume, for their impurity would have weakened our race. We killed many, but always the Devil had more to throw forward at us. Always we fought them, and Him through them. The Devil attacked us in another way. He sent his armies of disease among us, so that soon all our people were laid sick. Then the Devil came while they were wasted with fever and poisoned them with darts in their arms. When our people recovered the strength of their bodies, they found that their spirits had been weakened by the poison. Then they bowed to the Devil and accepted his Law. This was the first of their sins.

The Legend goes that when the Devil came, he was terrible in appearance, in that he came as a man. He had the voice of a man as well as his face. He dismissed his armies now, for he had no further need of them. Our people were in his power, and he himself remained among us. After some time, our people thought and reasoned that he must be a man, not the Devil for he had a man's face and voice. Then they tried to persuade him of the Tightness of our ways, and asked for the freedom to follow them. The Devil was cunning, and persuaded our people that he too would accept our customs. He no longer hid his body, and walked among us as one of our own. But while he listened to our people telling him of our ways he, too, was teaching. Our people accepted his teaching as a man's, for they had begun to accept him as a man. In the depth of friendship between men, they took some of his teaching to their hearts. In time, the Devil led our people into forbidden areas of learning. He taught the signs which made words. He taught reading and writing, and our people learned them. This was the second of their sins.

The Legend goes that when the Devil came he was terrible in appearance, in that he came as a man. As well as the face and voice, he had the reason and logic of man. So he swayed our people more and more, and his domination increased rapidly. Finally, he persuaded us to leave our homes and follow him. We were to fight another people. Our spirit was weak, and the Devil's will became our own. We did not notice the pallor of our skins, the void in our eyes where pride had once been. We did not notice the clothes which hid our bodies. We went with the Devil as his army. This, the third sin, was the final one.

The Legend goes that when the Devil had conquered all the peoples of the world, he no longer remained as a man. He took his true form back, and it was more terrible to see than all other things. Then all the people of the earth were forced to flee from the garden. This itself was destroyed by the mere presence in it of the Devil in his natural form.

This is the Legend of our Fall.

I don't know what brought all that back so suddenly, the rote-learned fable which has been passed on down through the generations...my poor superstitious ancestors! It is plain, from all experience and memory, that we have always lived in this world; the conception of an ideal «garden» is and always has been mere self-deception. One can only wonder how these strange fictions came about-trees, flowers, and animals in wild abundance, great armies sent by a being who changes shape at will. One can only wonder at my people's inability to accept what is as real; instead, they followed their compulsion to believe in some ideal past, to grope for some scheme of things which could never have been in reality. Oh, the human progress which has been denied to us over the years by the blinkering effects of this mad flight of the imagination!

Years of repetition have embedded the superstition in my memory, but I am free of it in my mind. I, at last, can-must-see things as they really are. My ancestors cannot be hurt by them now, so let them have their myths and fables. Nothing can hurt them now, no pain, hope, or imagination; they are all gone. As the last of us, I have the right as well as the mind to do away with these preoccupations with a fabulous past; my only obligation now is to myself. As a realist, I know that any hope for «our people» has delusion at its heart. I am the last and there will be no more.

This end has long been inevitable. The world always was and will be a confined space, and our food supply limited. In the distant past, our numbers proliferated to a point where life was of minimal quality and survival was flat and bare. It became vital to control our numbers. This was accomplished much more than satisfactorily: in the generations following that dreadful time of overcrowding and starvation, the genetic contraceptive had wider and wider effects. It had started as a saving vaccine; it ended as ineradicable virus. The numbers of barren women grew until my mother was the last capable of bearing children. She died in having me; I was always certain to be the last. As extinction drew closer, the members of the previous generations turned more and more towards the ancient fables; one can sympathize with that, for no other continuity remained. Now there is continuity at all: the last of them is dead, and I am alone. Hope is, for me, a word with no meaning; only existence is that.

I shall live out my time in this world and then I shall die. I shall walk the same ground as those before me and mine shall be the last footfall. Then we shall all be gone. There shall be no further generation to hear the legends, and all the dreams, fictions, exploits, discoveries and thoughts of the past, too, shall be dead, as if they had never been. I can spend my time; I can look at the films and records; I, the last, can explore every hidden corner of the world.

— this mindceptcord

— date 4/3/49

By now I had thought to know every inch of what I still think of as our world, although it is only mine. Its confines are not too great to explore, and I long ago devoted what remained of my life to doing so, I ordered and analyzed, half driven by the thought, that some dark recess might furnish me with a reason for existence over and above simply being. I did not find such a place, and believed that, by now, I knew it all. But I believed, also, in the unchangeable nature of my surroundings, and accepted form as a constant reality. These things are now revealed to me as mirages; or else I am insane. Yet. I feel in control of my senses: it is surely not those which so confuse me.

I know this corner of the world well; it is one of those most clustered with the apparatus of control. I have studied the area often in my explorations; in some way I was attracted to and pleased by the arrangement of lights, dials and switches, the functions of which have never been known. Shall I now say that I sensed something? I recall that one of the most antique films featured the place as of great significance. The meaning eluded me; perhaps the censorship of the centuries, imposed to protect, the people from unbridled thought, camouflaged it. Now there is no camouflage; but I am still far from understanding. This place is at the edge of our world; in the apparently seamless surface of the final wall, an electric door has opened to reveal a passageway beyond. There should be no beyond, no passageway, no door; not here, at the edge of existence. But for the evidence of my eyes, it would be beyond belief; yet they testify. A further world beyond the world? This is a hope I never dared. Most, cynical of all the generations, my brain and soul are flooded with feelings I never knew were in me.

I have no choice. I am the last, and my only obligation is to myself: to know as much as possible before my death. The life of all my heritage rises in me. Is all not without value and purpose, is all not without hope? I must follow the passage and tread where no man has been in all living history.

The corridor stretches upwards. Far along it., I round a corner and am struck by furious light from the other end. Even at distance, its intensity is such that the fear which umbilically connects me to the world almost draws me back. I am walking in an unknown place. But evolution, as well as the need for revelation, forces me towards the climb, the journey of discovery. With every step the light streams brighter and more blinding; several times I have to stop to adjust to it, and to calm my palpitating nerves. But I must, I do, go on.

Now, on the threshold, the light seems almost a solid barrier at the end of the passage; my resolution is shaken to the core. Clearly, the world beyond what we have always known as the world is of immense energy and intensity. It is so different, that I even wonder if I have died. There is no other way that I can take these steps: I close my eyes and walk forward, out through the light. I don't, know if I exist or will cease to exist at any moment. Perhaps the ground has already dematerialized beneath my feet, and I am walking only on my own suppositions. Still I walk, feel the ground under my tread. I have come far enough: I must open my eyes to the world beyond world.

Now.

Color, light, shade, line, heat, intense, pain, silence, color, shade, light, burn, beyond, fear, joy, know, see, color, light, shade, tower, glass, solid, metal, sharp, empty, burn, cold, blue, gray, color, line, angle, white, distance, space, size, immense, dead, intensity.

Devil-void-army-empty-vast-endless-color-shade-light-line- angle-intensity-dead-void-Devil-Legend-void-

vast-Devil-sin-forever-dead-empty-vast-garden-destruction-shape-form-line- angle-contour-texture-numb-dead-Devil-Legend-shade-light-void- empty-Devil-despair-true-true-true-void-despair-true-order-reason-life-lost.

The Legend come.

Legend say, hollow laugh, empty, despair. Legend say, Devil laugh, true, true.

Legend say, Devil laugh in shape line size color shade light tower glass metal endless no end — «I have taken your universe; here is my despair.»

All one all true all end forever void.

Thus, the farthest of futures. Thus the man Brasilia emerged from the underground shelter into which, centuries earlier, his ancestors had fled from the holocaust of the final war. That subterranean world had been the only one he, and thirty-eight previous generations, had known. Behind him, in it, he left only its nerve center, the telepath-computer, and it is from this that the preceding passages of his thought and perception have been plucked.

The time had come. The computer's sensors had shown that the atmosphere of the earth's surface was once more, at age-long last, safe to breathe. Automatic relays had opened the door to the outside world in anticipation of The Exodus. From his shelter Brasilia had emerged; but he had done so as alone in the outside world as he had been in his own. Every other underground earth was by now empty, silent, a vast technological mausoleum, a museum which only electronic eyes covered; and only electronic life continued to flicker in the cities beneath the ground.

So it was, in Brasilia, that the line ended. In him the genes of all the initial occupants of the shelter had mingled during the centuries of underground isolation: Amerindian, European, Chinese, African, Indian. He carried in him the residue of all their aspirations, all their blind hopes for the future, all their quests; these things had drawn him on along the passageway to his, and Man's death. The myths and religions of his antecedents, too, were in him, coalesced and intermarried into one strain: the Legend. For all its garbled imagery and language, for all its forms, the Legend, the many things, was one thing: the only absolute Man finally held. It was this truth, materialized before his eyes, which killed Brasilia.

He emerged into his namesake city from those bowels of the earth to which Man had burrowed; he emerged into what had been the garden. Jutting around him, the angular, monstrous shapes, the searing planes of dead metal and concrete and glass. Above him, the cavity of the sky, its distance, still and forever edged with iridescent, fall-out violet. What Brasilia saw when he came out sucked the life from him in its enormity of size and

meaning.

He saw what the Legend had always said: the Devil, and all his works.

Run Data/Logic interface.

Earth atmosphere standard,
radiation level/virus level go.
extra-shelter life capability positive,
atmospheric release doors open.

Run.

go to mindceptcord banks for extra-shelter excursion.

Check.

Positive: index 1, generation 40, 1/E 97, Brasilia S.A.

Run.

Rescan for excursion mindceptcords.

Negative.

Return mindceptcord 4/3/49:1-40 1/E 97 BSA

Overload registered. Cessation of life.

Close down non-hardware support.

Reduce non-essential power use.

Go to status ready.

Man, the Devil, and all his works — we can hope for the ultimate goal, self-knowledge. Dare we hope that when it dawns it will not be merely to be stored in the memory of a telepath computer? Waiting, perhaps, for another of its kind with whom to share an empty universe?

II Poems

Killers, Angels, Refugees

4.30

It's funny...
on your first un-schoolgirl day
your aura of innocence fell away.

We made love in the afternoon
and afterwards a shadow came,
past presence touched me.

Now I see
you're not innocent
not gullible
not a child.

And it's funny...
when all that innocence went,
some of it must fell on me.

Ha ha ha.
hee hee: HE.

A Door With No House

The candidate for pity turns his back on mirrored walls
as fate's last jester... but who knows?...hurries from the room.
A pilgrim's tale lies splintered on the hearth.
Six eyes stare through the gating.

I'm thinking, maybe I'll be here forever.

Biggies

Suddenly, I remember sharpness,
in place of relativity

and pre-childhood.

I squatted on the floor in the sunlight,
reading Biggies.

Later, lying in the darkness,
staring at the writhy,
coiled ceiling, I was scared to death...
and couldn't find a reason to be there at all.

Even now, sometimes, coffin-laden, snakes-infested jungle
stretches before my single, feathered
propeller.
Even now, sometimes, I am scared.

Flies

As I opened the back door,
two flies were copulating on the cooker:
I found this very significant.
Late at night, my hand groped
for the aerosol.

They stayed together for the first
few seconds, wings scorched in the sudden fire,
minds disintegrating in the deadly mist.
Quite suddenly, the male tore himself away
from his penis
and dropped to the floor.

She remained, rolling around on the white enamel
and then fell through a crack into the oven.
Perhaps she had been a virgin
and though this was what always happened.

I ate my egg
with a few pangs of conscience.
Later that night these disappeared
when another fly
shat on me from the light bulb
above my bed.

Galileo Galilei

Isolated stones turn faint edges to the moon.
Roughly, in the rock-marked faces,
you examine the universe.
But you are yourself a universe,
and the black trail of your always cloak
traps it to finity.
You contradict yourself,
turning a skeptical mind on existence,
and washing away belief in your wake.
Clinically, as in a battlefield surgery,
with tar,
you amputate comprehension.

Grandma

Sands toiled.
Steel shards.
Black-clack needles strike the hour.

Something scrapes on her spine.
Something opens her lacy eye.

The sudden dry flood.
Palpitations of the partly dead. Croak.

Empty.
Still.

Close the silent fountain and the vacant tap.

Decomposing already.

October 3

My attitude toward you has changed:
it's not that you don't live in the way I would,

nor (are you amazed?) that I can find no way to tyrannize your soul.

Is it that you fail to trust me with your truth, or even with a lie?

You speak to me in words between the two,
and I am sad, for somewhere I have lost you.

Now, with hollow laughter
and static presence you only talk
behind my back.

Maybe soon I shall forget
and rediscover you,
with golden hair, flower, laugh and hair unchanged.

Yes, maybe soon I shall forget myself.

Out Of Step

My eyes, sad, are reflected in the windows of
the early morning train
and I am alone.

My mouth is so full of words that they
clog my tongue so silence,
and the hand which, long minutes ago, made house with yours
now gathers tired and too-worn phrases
to express the confusion in my head.

We've fallen into an old game of protective opposites...
I think It's called lying.
You talk to me of love
from your throne of ice.
I speak of friendship
from the rack.

Last night, beside you on the unstained floor,
arms ached with love,
mind at the edge of control,
I wanted to hold and hold and hold you.
I watched your sleepy features;
I turned away...
one touch could lose the tiny part of you
that's left to me.

Now you are someone else's love.

On Thursday next, remember me,
for a year ago then it began...
and something I wish
my feet and arms had never danced in time
to my heart.
Really.

Rehearsals

abcdefghijklmnop
in the basin
on the stairs q
you in concert? r
if you dare. I'll make s
in the basement if t
but the bread while u
is the vacuum in my v
head. w
in tense of trauma x
isn't it clear? y

Life is linearly boring
at four in the morning,
rehearsing, encoring...
I'm practically snoring
I fear...

zzzzzzzzzz

Someone's Been Lying

Maybe it's about time you wrote another song:
watch the way your weariness stretches
and embraces you in a sickly shroud of relaxation.

Or is
my whole life some sort of complicated
consecrated burst of creativity,
and
every breath I take tuneful?
If this is so, someone has been lying all the time.

Look: it's not wholly necessary for you to scream
and climb atop the tower...
your parachute is only there for show;
your words
are only there to let you know
that you're alive in silent moments
and
you really shouldn't worry for them.
If this is so, someone has been lying all the time.

The Mount Hotel

Your voice sounded lost,
calling through the flying winds of the moors.
I can feel your eyes,
scared in the darkness, as you struggle to talk.

I can hear you.
But do we, any of us, really know
why we carry on the way we do?
And do we all fall automatically
in the category of our work?
What do you want me to say?
What are the questions
behind your questions?

You are scared by my worlds?
You are scared by the silence?
You want me to soothe your fear?

I thought you knew me better than that.

The Tinier Worlds

Tiny,
Silent,
We wait.

On this blade of grass,
untidy black garden backwater of creation,
we have lived
in random order,
in perpetual entropy,
in fear.

Now the universe is
about to explode.
Now the murderous footfall
is upon us.
We cannot shout loud enough
through the dark years.

Tiny,
Silent,
We wait.

III Lyrics

The Aerosol Grey Machine (VdGG, 1969)

Afterwards

You stare out in yellow eyes larger than my mind;
in viscous pools of joy, relaxing, we glide...
it's all too beautiful
for my mind to bear.
and, as we shimmer into sleep, something's unshared.

But, seeing the flower that was there yesterday,
a tear forms just behind the soft peace of your shades...
The world's too lonely
for a message to slip
but between the dying rails of peace
you trip.

The petals that were blooming are just paper in your hand;
your eyes, which were clear in the night, are opaque as you stand...
It was too beautiful
for it to last...
These visions shimmer and fade out of
the glass.

(Norfolk, 1967)

Orthenthian Street

The street in question does not exist, although a search for it, and the hotel we believed it to hold among its houses, took well over an hour: symptomatic, perhaps, of life in bands! This was the first song of mine which dealt — if obliquely — with that lifestyle and the endless vistas of motorways and assorted potential destructions. If it is claustrophobic and inconclusive then that only serves to further its point.

I feel a calling for the sea, I want to walk on the sand dunes...
I hope you'll forgive me if I say I can't take you:
at some times I've got to get away,
if just to get a break from the play

that we're all involved in.

All the love I'm living now could have ended yesterday
if the snow had fallen too hard up there on the Motorway...

If it happens, don't feel sorry, I won't feel alone:

it's just another traveling zone

that you can't come on.

Can't stop for a second:

we might see how silly we all are.

Can't get out, even for a moment:

might be hit by a passing car.

Dreams shatter and fall into dust,

as long as we're traveling I suppose they must.

But, while we're on the road, our days'll be glowing;

and when we part, as you know we must,

we'll leave, just going

ever so slowly,

ever so slowly.

Motorway signs flash past like flies,

it's getting late and we're going home.

We all travel in parallel lines,

heading into the twilight zone.

All I really want now is you by my side;

yes, it's a sweet ride

while we're still together.

Yes, it's a sunny day, and we're off on our sea trip;

The water may be cold in the bay,

but we're safe on our sailing ship,

and, if ice forms, you can walk home to land

and still cling to my hand

if you still want to...

(London, 1969)

Running Back

I thought I'd give it up for good,

'cause none of my actions are understood.

I thought I'd really leave,

and my coming back's something you'd never perceive.

I thought I'd make it;

Yes, I really thought I'd make it,
but then you smiled, you didn't rile me,
now I'm running back
running, running back.

I saw a vision of a love long deceased
and a chilly wind coming from East.
I know I can say I did my best,
but there were no more warm winds from the West.
Still I thought I'd make it;
Yes, I really thought I'd make it,
but then you smiled, you didn't rile me,
now I'm running back
running, running back.

I thought you'd never be missed,
and I really believed we'd never share another kiss.
And I thought for the last time I'd touched your hand,
but your love draws me back like quicksand.
Still I thought I'd make it;
Yes, I really thought I'd make it,
but then you smiled, you didn't rile me,
now I'm running back
running, running back.

And now I'm coming yes home.

I'm coming home.

(Old Windsor, 1966)

Into A Game

I never thought it could come to this,
as you sit there crying,
hanging on with your fingertips
to something that's already dead.
Now we're into a game
and it's all a bit strange.

Once on a time we were sincere;
now, we're acting charades,
hiding behind cracked images
from other people's stages;

now, we're into a game,
and it's all a bit strange,
but familiar, too...
the rules never change; I know it, but do you?

I've seen it all before,
and this play no longer moves me,
but the closing of a door
is never easy.

The Aerosol Grey Machine

Just one breath, and it's instant death,
it's the Aerosol Grey Machine!
Just one breath, and it's instant death,
it's the Aerosol Grey Machine!

You're walking along the road one day,
up comes a man dressed all in grey;
he blows a little aerosol in your face
and you find your mind's all over the place...

Just one breath, and it's instant death,
it's the Aerosol Grey Machine!

(hype:) «Buy an Aerosol Grey Machine for your own home today!»
(dissent:) «Shan't. Shan't. I'm not going to!»
(sniggersnigger. chortle.)

(Manchester, 1967)

Aquarian

This song has a chequered history of assorted titles and intentions: originally to be a celebration of the incoming Aquarian Age, it went through a phase of being a hymn to an assorted band of troubadours bound together under the aegis of a certain record company. After the sufferance of no little trial and tribulation at the hands of this concern, I had no regrets as I withdrew my lyrical

*support from it and re-engaged the song on its old rails.
Pitfalls abound in any eulogizing songs, and since this time
I have been more concerned with my doubts in songs than
with certainties which are as fickle as the seasons.*

*The first performance of this song was on platform 6 of
Derby Midland Station (a fine institution), to a surprisingly
rapt audience of porters, fellow-travellers and Chris Judge
Smith.*

Now we sit here in our special place,
all wearing our happy faces gladly.
Sunlight appears in our world; our joy
has been turned from badness.
Now we've moved and left alone
and it's easier that way.
We are riding on rainbows
and happy today.
Now we move to the sun in every direction;
we are cloaked in veils of mystic protection...
joking a lot, smoking or not,
floating our yacht off to freedom,
voting to be Aquarian!

I hold silver flashing metal in the palm
of my petal hand, watching it quiver:
to breathe too close is death —
ah, but what is breath but a way to deliverance?
Soon we will all be joined
in a great silver tube,
wanting every one to come along,
that means you too!
Now we move to the sun in every direction;
we are cloaked in veils of mystic protection...
mapping the way, clapping to say
we're happy today, and assured of
the fact that we're all Aquarian!

Hardly any money... who needs bread anyway?
Well, I mean to say, it's just the road to freedom!
Everything's too funny; we just ride along so high,
watch the bad scenes floating by, who needs them?
Soon we will all be joined
in a great silver tube,
wanting every one to come along,
that means you too!
Now we move to the sun in every direction;

we are cloaked in veils of mystic protection...
Lighting the path, righting the past,
fighting the dark like centurions,
writing our names as Aquarians!
As Aquarians, but as Aquarians!

Writing our names as we move to the sun,
we're Aquarian!

(Manchester, 1968)

Necromancer

Yes I live in the black woods, where you dare not even
speak my name.
If there is evil in your heart and you will come near to me you will
lose your sane.
My form is mystic, but my heart is pure,
you'd better believe what I say:
I am the Necromancer.

I cast deep spells and potent: I am a Seer
of the Real.
My forces work against evil, for I love
all I feel.
I know the secrets long forgotten,
you'd better believe in me:
I am the Necromancer.

Look into my eyes!
I tell you, occults power lies in love.
I fight against darkness, the power
of the Black.

Every day the power is greater, and soon the world will
come to rights.
Through the magic, through the power, shaman shall die
on the seventh night.
And now remember magic is here;
you'd better believe in the White.

I am the Necromancer,
and I come to carry your heart away to good.

(London, 1968)

Octopus

These lyrics, dealing with a similar case of disorientation and inability to over-view, were written in the snow-besieged Students' Union of Southampton University. The original Octopus took the form of a mural in the flat of the lady concerned and it is, in a way, validating that the relationship was neither consummated nor clarified.

I want to paint you poems full of fire,
you who I do not know.

Now my mind is tested with love which
twists and wavers from side to side and which
some day soon you may see...

I want you to cascade through ten thousand
rainbows with me and dredge mountains
from the sea:
you who I now begin to know.

But emotion is pent up inside,
too scared of dying again to live,
and meanwhile I must endure your
red-copper hair screaming like a
water-baby black eyes stare
from my ceiling:
you who I now truly know...

Now I cannot see too clearly
and already my trellis stands bare...
How can I break free of these overclinging
arms which entwine and enfold me?... And reach
to the clear blue sea?

I want you to know, but how can I
tell you? I want you to see
but my own eyes are blind...

The Octopus now enfolds me,
I know you too well...

(Southampton, 1976)



"Octopus"
~~~~~

# The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other (VdGG, 1970)

## Darkness (11/11)

*A song of numbers: although I am no numerologist, the circumstances of writing this highly instinctual song dictated its form and direction.*

*It was composed on the night of 11th November. 1968, Remembrance Day, by chance. Some years before I wrote a novel which purported (with devastating failure) to be an Icelandic saga; on re-reading it, some time after finishing these lyrics, I was struck by the opening sentence: «It was the eleventh day of the eleventh month.» November is, of course, the month of Scorpio, under which sign I was born, and my life number is 11. It was, I suppose, inevitable that a song about fate should be wrought amid these conjunctions.*

*To this day I do not know how Hereward the Wake came to be involved.*

Day dawns dark, it now numbers infinity...  
Life crawls from the past, watching in wonder  
I trace its patterns in me...  
Tomorrow's tomorrow is birth again/  
Boats burn the bridge in the fens/  
The time of the past returns to my life  
and uses it.

Don't blame me for the letters that may form in the sand;  
don't look in my eyes, you may see all the numbers  
that stretch in my sky and colour my hand...  
Don't say that I'm wrong in imagining  
that the voice of my life cannot sing!  
Fate enters and talks in old words:  
They amuse it.

Hands shine darkly and white: only in dark do they appear.  
Bless the baby born today,  
flying in pitch, flying on fear!  
(Wicked little Scorpio, doomed to die a thousand times  
before he lives!)

They shine in my eyes and touch my face  
where I have seen them placed before...  
don't blame me, please, for the fate that falls:

I did not choose it.

(London, 1968)

## Refugees

*For six months I shared a flat with Mike and Susie, who are among my oldest friends. When the time for departure came, I was washed with the melancholia which normally attends moving from home' and the physical memories it retains, heightened in this instance by the knowledge that, from being the closest of triads, we were committing ourselves to a separation in which months could easily slide into years. In this knowledge, the last vestiges of hope lay only in a future Utopia and re-joining of the hands.*

*In the writing, however, the song developed a life of its own (as is always the best way), and the hope becomes much more than that for reunion with my friends. We are all refugees, and there is no home but hope.*

*«Easy To Slip Away» is, of course, the natural sequel to 'Refugees'.*

N. was somewhere years ago and cold:  
ice locked the people's hearts and made them old.  
S. was birth to pleasant lands, but dry:  
I walked the waters' depths and played my mind.  
E. was dawn, coming alive in the golden sun:  
the winds came gently, several heads became one  
in the summertime, though august people sneered...  
we were at peace, and we cheered

We walked along, sometimes hand in hand,  
between the thin lines marking sea and sand;  
smiling very peacefully,  
we began to notice that we could be free,  
and we moved together to the West.

W. is where all days shall someday end;  
where the colours turn from grey to gold,  
and you can be with the friends.  
And light flakes the golden clouds above:  
West is Mike and Susie,

West is where I love.

There we shall spend the final days of our lives...  
tell the same old stories: well, at least we tried.  
So into the West, smiles on our faces, we'll go;  
oh! yes, and our apologies to those  
who'll never really know the Way...

We're refugees, walking away from the life we've known and loved...  
nothing to do nor say, nowhere to stay; now we are alone.  
We're refugees, carrying all we own in brown bags, tied up with string...  
nothing to think, it doesn't mean a thing, but we'll be happy on our own.

West is Mike and Susie;  
West is Mike and Susie;  
West is where I love,  
West is refugees' home.

*(London, 1969)*

## **White Hammer**

In the year 1486 the Malleus first appeared,  
designed to kill all witchcraft and end the papal fears:  
prescribing tortures to kill the Black Arts...  
...and the Hammer struck hard.

Malleus Maleficarum slaughtered and tortured  
all those under suspicion, as the Inquisition ordered —  
burning black hearts and innocents alike, killing the mad  
...such was the power the Hammer had.

Though Hexenhammer was intended to slay only evil,  
fear and anger against magic overspilled:  
they also killed those of the White.

So for two centuries and more they tried to slay  
both the Black and the White arts —  
but spirit over-rides pain.  
For every one the torture took, two were hid secure,  
and so the craft endured.

Love and hate lived on in the face of fear,  
Hexenhammer's force died,

and the real power became clear:

White Hammer no more is beaten; now it begins to beat,  
and the Grey, once oppressor,  
now, at good hands, faces defeat.  
The Black, too, shall bow down to the power above...  
    Black hate beats Grey  
    But supreme is  
    the White Hammer of Love.

(London/Derby, 1969)

### Whatever Would Robert Have Said?

*Robert is R.J. Van der Graaf of M.I.T., although the relevance of this to the song escapes me, as do the circumstances of writing it, which is extremely unusual. It is as though it arrived one day without any instigation on my part, and no memory of my having worked on it. I know that this sounds both unlikely and nigh-mystical, but perhaps it is more than appropriate when related to the nature of the song.*

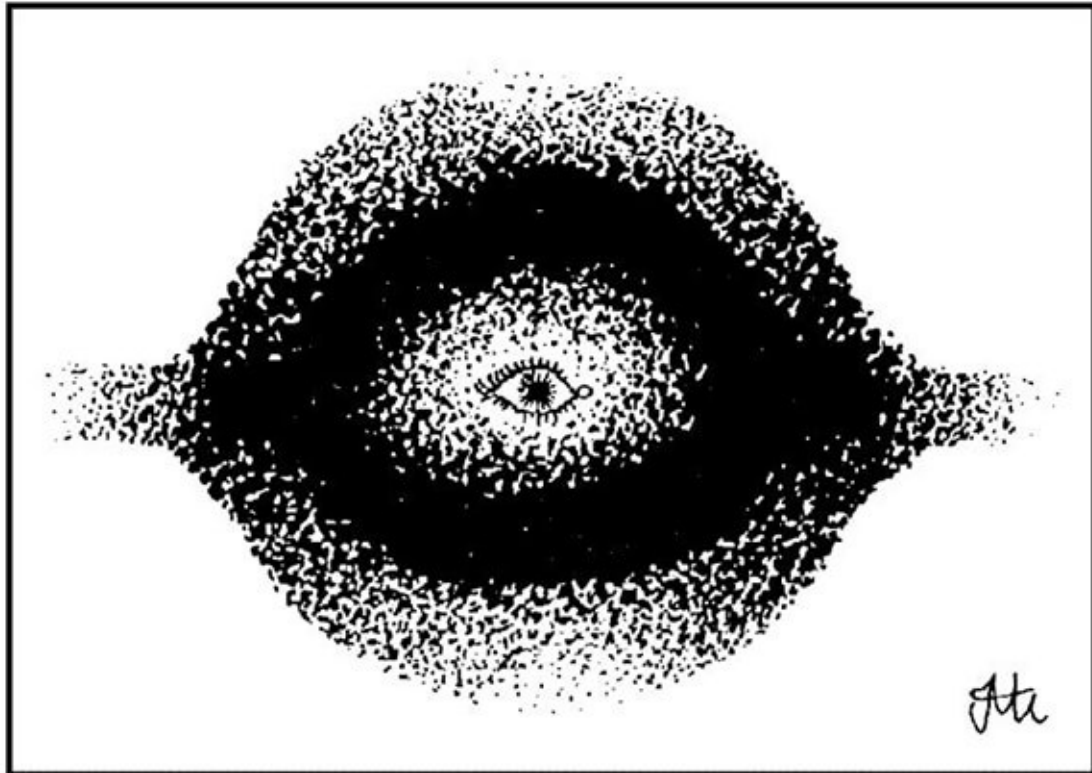
I AM the suck of air you take that you've had many times before;

I AM the blow of air you fake, but which still throws you out the door;  
I AM the air that fills your lungs, but leaves you emptier than below;  
I AM the void that you can't explain, but which is where you want to go;  
I AM the love you try to hide, but which all can understand;  
I AM the hate you still deny, though the blood is on your hands;  
I AM the peace you're searching for, but you know you'll never find;  
I AM the pain you can't endure, but which tingles in your mind.

Flame sucks between the balls of steel;  
nothing moves, the air itself congeals...  
Look at the flame if you want to,  
hear the sharp crack of the fission,  
smell the brief vapour of ozone,  
feel static motion!

I AM the joy you really pay for, but which comes completely free;  
I AM YOUR GOD ON THE FINAL DAY  
    for the truth is you are me.

(London, 1970)



"Whatever would Robert have said?"

### Out Of My Book

*This song makes reference to an unfortunate school experience, the allocation at the start of a term of a maths text book in which the answers to exercises are absent. Although working from an answer to a question is a dishonest way of approaching a scientific, as an emotional, problem it is disturbing to know that there is no 'escape clause', and that the only way one can arrive at an answer is by logic. In such an illogical emotional area as the context of this song, the disturbance itself can seem greater than the disturbing factor, the question.*

We sat by ourselves, still looking for company;  
there could have been peace, but that eluded me —  
all I could think of was what was on your mind.  
You tried to be kind,  
but I blocked your feelings.  
Now, senses still reeling, you sit in your quiet room  
and cry.



You tried to make me one,  
but I always hide when there's a glimpse of sun.

Running along in sunlight meadows  
your eyes were never more than half-closed:  
through fluttering lashes, you watched me watching you.  
I tried to be true  
to the way that you thought I ought to be  
but, in spite of all my efforts,  
I failed.  
I tried to make you see  
but your eyes were blind to all but the bad in me.

What do you think I mean  
when I say that I need you?  
How am I supposed to seem  
when we hit another problem and the answers  
are all torn from my book?

Our lives are on paths we just can't control;  
we can grow closer as we get old...  
Can you imagine us as we adjust?  
Can you imagine us  
getting near eighty;  
we live more sedately, still hoping the dream will  
come true?  
We'll try to be secure...

But I'm of uncertain mind  
and how can I be sure?  
how can I be sure?  
how can I be sure?

*(London, 1969)*

## **After The Flood**

Continuing the story, humanity stumbles —  
gone is the glory, there's a far distant rumble.  
The clouds have gathered and exploded now:  
axes shattered, there is no North or South!  
Far off, the ice is foundering slowly...  
the ice is turning to water.  
The water rushes over all,

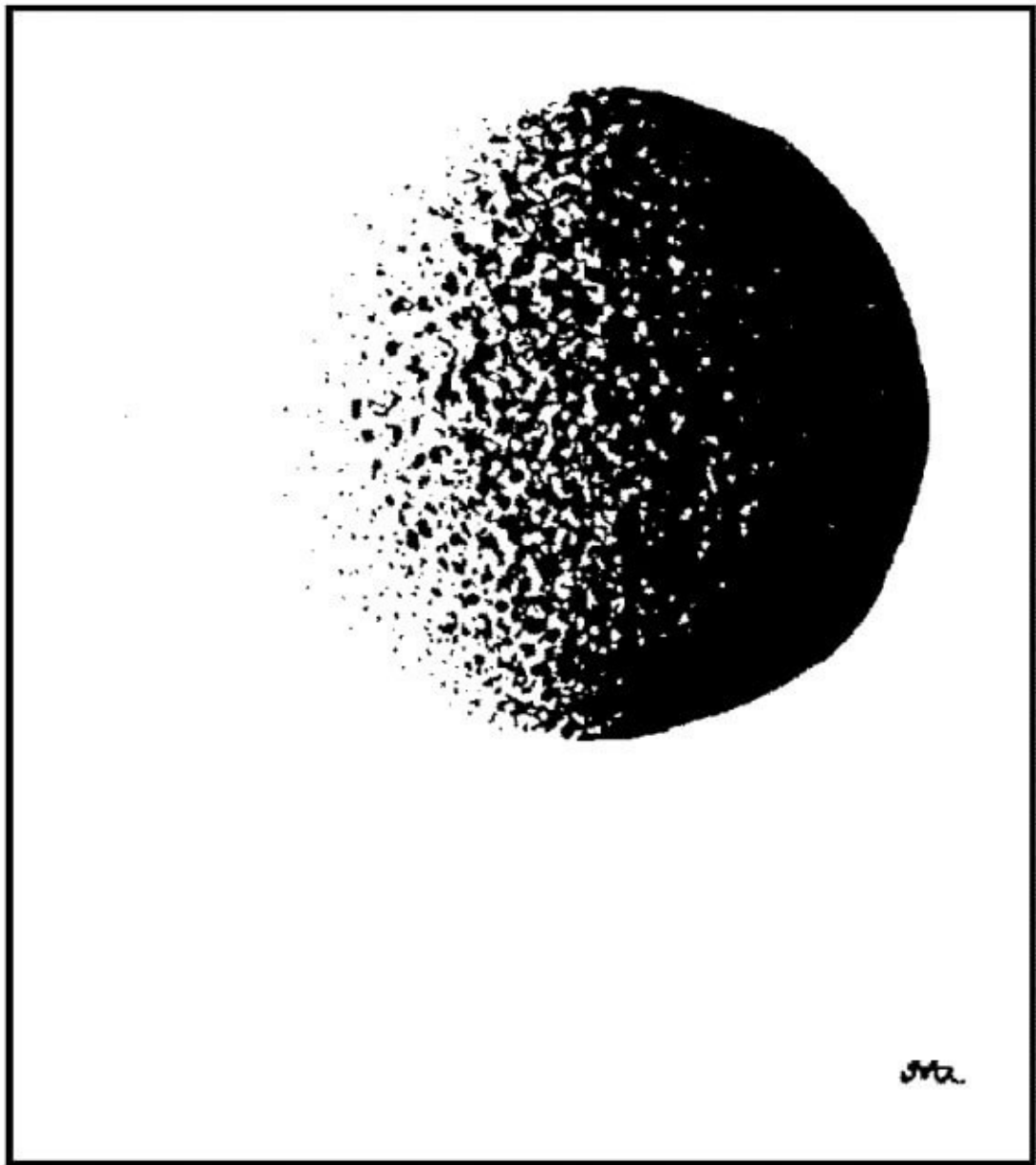
cities crash in the mighty wave;  
the final man is very small,  
plunging in for his final bathe.

This is the ending of the beginning...  
this is the beginning of the end,  
middle of the middle, mid-point, end and start:  
the first peak rises, forces the waves apart.  
Far off, the ice is now re-forming:  
poles are fixed once more,  
water's receding, like death-blood.  
And when the water falls again,  
all is dead and nobody lives.

And then he said:  
'Every step appears to be the unavoidable consequence of the  
preceding one, and in the end there beckons more and more  
clearly total annihilation!'

This is the ending of the beginning...  
this, the beginning of the end.  
And when the water falls again  
all is dead and nobody lives...

*(London, 1969)*



"After the Flood"

## H to He, Who Am the Only One (VdGG, 1970)

H to He

The fusion of Hydrogen nuclei to form Helium nuclei is the basic exothermic reaction in the sun and stars, and hence is the prime energy source for the universe.

Who am the Only One

### Killer

So you live in the bottom of the sea,  
and you kill all that come near you...  
but you are very lonely, because all the other fish  
fear you...

And you crave companionship and someone to call your own;  
because for the whole of your life you've been living alone.

On a black day in black month  
at the black bottom of the sea,  
Your mother gave birth to you and died  
immediately...

'Cos you can't have two killers living in the same pad  
and when your mother knew that her time had come  
she was really rather glad.

Death in the sea, death in the sea,  
somebody please come and help me, come and help me  
Fishes can't fly, fishes can't fly,  
Fishes can't and neither can I, neither can I...

Now I'm really rather like you,  
for I've killed all the love I ever had  
by not doing all I ought to and by leaving my mind coming  
bad.

And I too am a killer, for emotion runs as deep as flesh  
and I too am so lonely, and I wish that I could forget  
We need love,  
We need love,  
We need love...

*(Manchester, 1968)*

## House With No Door

There's a house with no door and I'm living there  
at nights it gets so cold and the days are hard to bear inside.  
There's a house with no roof, so the rain creeps in,  
falling through my head as I try to think out time.  
I don't know you, you say you know me, that may be so,  
there's so much that I am unsure of...  
You call my name, but it sounds unreal, I forget how I feel,  
my body's rejecting the cure.

There's a house with no bell, but then nobody calls;  
I sometimes find it hard to tell if any are alive at all outside.  
There's a house with no sound; yes, it's quiet there...  
there's not much point in words if there's no-one to share in time.  
I've learned my lines, I know them so well, I am ready to tell  
                    whoever will finally come in  
Of the line in my mind that's cold in the night, it doesn't seem right  
                    when there's that little dark figure running...

There's a house with no door and there's no living there:  
one day it became a wall... well I didn't really care at the time.  
There's a house with no light, all the windows are sealed,  
overtaxed and strained NOW NOTHING IS REVEALED BUT TIME  
I don't know you, you say you know me, that may be so,  
                there's so much that I am unsure of...  
You call my name, but it sounds unreal, I forget how I feel,  
                my body's rejecting the cure...  
Won't somebody help me..?

(London, 1970)

## The Emperor In His War-Room

*In retrospect I feel that these lyrics have one particular failing: in my efforts to illuminate the life of the Tyrant, horrific images bred and grew out of themselves, so that they became self-justifying, rather than explanatory. However, the matter was largely out of my hands, as the elements involved hang on the edge of memory (race or otherwise) and therefore have tendencies to self-direction. I can only hope that the system works in reverse.*

### I. The Emperor

Standing in the space that holds the silent lace of night  
away from you  
You think that you can hold the searing, moulten gold between  
your fingers...  
But it slips through, tearing tendons as it goes,  
exposing the white of a knuckle...  
flesh-and-metal forming letters in the mould.

Cradling you gun, after choosing the ones you think should die —  
Lying on the hill... crawling over the windowsill into your  
                                living-room  
They stare out, glass-eyed aimless heads,  
bodies torn by vultures..  
you are the man whose hands are rank with the smell of death.  
Saviour of the Fallen, Protector of the Weak,  
Friend of the Tall Ones, Keeper of the Peace...  
    Ah, but it is the only way you know...

Looking out to sea, a flattened plane of weeds which bear no living  
You crush life in your fist as your heart is kissed by the lips  
of death  
Ghosts betray you, ghosts betray you, in the night they steal your eye  
from its socket...  
and the ball hangs fallen on your cheek.  
Complaining tongues are stilled; a thousand mouths are filled  
with rusting metal.  
Your face a shade of green; somehow you try to speak through all the  
garbage in your mouth  
But it won't come out, and you cannot frame the words  
as your stepson  
throws your fame into the flames and you are burned.  
Saviour of the Fallen, Protector of the Weak,  
Friend of the Tall Ones, Keeper of the Peace.  
Ah, but it is the only way you know...

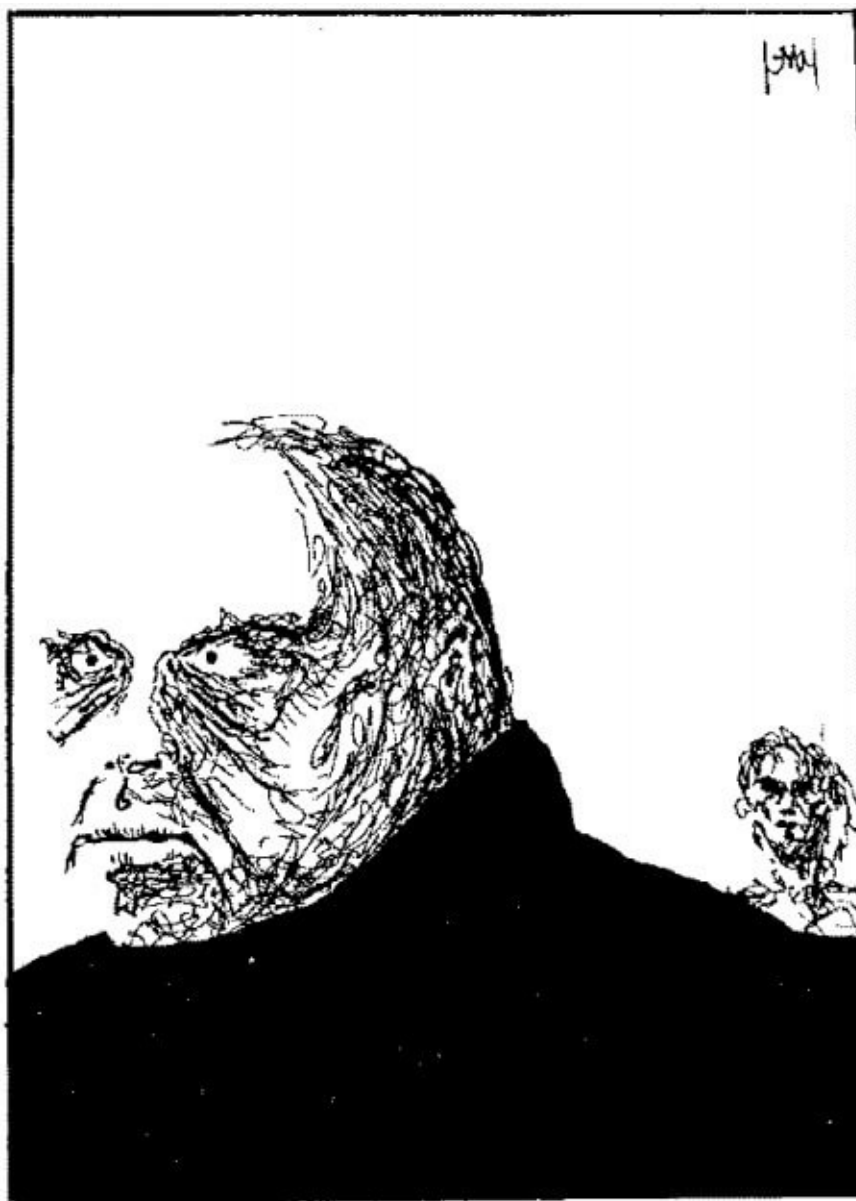
## II. The Room

Live by sword and you shall die so,  
All your power shall come to nought,  
every life you take is part of your own,  
death, not power, is what you've bought.

Cringing in your room as the outriders of doom step  
on your threshold;  
Begging for your life as the impartial knife sinks in your  
screaming flesh...  
without malice, merely taking murder's toll,  
you must pay the price of hate, and that price is  
your soul...

Live in peace or die forever in your war-room.

*(London/Derby, 1970)*



*"The Emperor" (in His War-Room)*

## Lost

### *I. Dance In The Sand And Sea*

So here we are, or rather, here I am, quite alone,  
I'm seeing things that were shared before, long ago...  
my memory stretches and I am dazed: you know I know  
how good the time was and how I laughed...  
Times have changed, now you're far away, I can't complain:  
I had all my chances but they slipped right through my hands —  
like so much sand;  
I know I'll never dance like I used to

I'll just wait till day breaks upon the land and the sea.  
hoping that I can catch all of the memories,  
then I must crawl off upon my way, all of me  
listening hard for the final words.  
But there are none; the sunrise calls, I've lingered on  
too close for comfort and I don't know quite why  
I feel like crying  
I know we'll never dance like we used to.

I look up, I'm almost blinded by the warmth of what's inside me  
and the taste that's in my soul,  
but I'm dead inside as I stand alone...

### *I. Dance In Frost*

I wore my moods like so many different sets of clothes  
but the right one was never around;  
and as you left I heard my body ring  
and my mind began to howl  
It was far too late to contemplate the meaning of it all:  
You know that I need you, but somehow I don't think you see my love  
at all

At some point I lost you, I don't know quite how it was;  
The wonderland lay in a coat of white, chilling frost  
I looked around and I found I was truly lost:  
without your hand in mine I am dead...



Reality is unreal and games I've tried just aren't the same:  
without your smile there's nowhere to hide  
and deep inside  
I know I've never cried as I'm about to...

If I could just frame the words that would make your fire burn  
all this water now around me could be the love that  
should surround me.

Looking out through the tears that bind me  
my heart bleeds that you may find me... or at least that I can  
forget and be numb, but I can't stop, the words still come:  
I LOVE YOU

(London/Derby, 1970)

## Pioneers Over c

*This is my only attempt at writing a specifically sci-fi song, although the balancing is much more towards fiction than science.*

*Man's first plunge into the unknown territory beyond the speed of light (c): in the light of the discoveries necessary for the attempt, the date is meaningless, although in rational terms it is ludicrously optimistic. The Pioneers... the first hyper-nauts... are, because of theoretical deficiencies, thrown into time-warp or absolute relativity, in which they exist as «creatures» of limitless imagination but total non-physicality. They are thus potentially ghouls, ghosties, poltergeists and all manner of indefinable Forces: this is one possible explanation but, truly, in such circumstances explanations are meaningless, irrelevant and totally speculative.*

*My only regret is that I found it necessary to provide a certain chronological continuity in order to remain, if faintly, within the bounds of comprehension. I don't pretend that there are any answers here, and any questions are entirely subjective.*

Left the earth in 1983, fingers groping for the galaxies,  
reddened eyes stared up into the void, 1,000 stars to be exploited  
Somebody help me I'm falling, somebody help me, I'm falling down  
Into sky, into earth, into sky, into earth...

It is so dark around, no life, no hope, no sound  
no chance of seeing home again...  
The universe is on fire, exploding without flame.  
We are the lost ones; we are the pioneers; we are the lost ones  
We are the ones they are going to build a statue for  
ten centuries ago or were going to fifteen forward...

One Last brief whisper in our loved ones' ears  
to reassure them and to pierce the fear  
standing at controls then still unknown we told the world we were  
about to go  
Somebody help me I'm missing, somebody help me I'm missing now  
touch with my mind, I have no frame,  
touch with my mind, I have no frame...  
Well now where is the time and who the hell am I,  
here floating in an aimless way?  
No-one knows where we are, they can't feel us precisely...

There is no fear here.  
How can such a thing exist in a place where living and knowing  
and being have never been heard of?

Doomed to vanish in the flickering light,  
disappearing to a darker night,  
doomed to vanish in a living death, living anti-matter, anti-breath  
Somebody help me I'm losing, somebody help me, I'm losing now  
people around, there's no-one to touch,  
no people around, no-one to touch.  
I am now quite alone, part of a vacant time-zone,  
here floating in the void,  
only dimly aware of existence, a dimly existing awareness,  
I am the lost one, I am the one you fear, I am the lost one,  
I am the one who went up into space, or stayed where I was,  
or didn't exist in the first place...

*(London, 1970)*



PIONEERS OVER C.  
~~~~~

Pawn Hearts (VdGG, 1971)

Lemmings (incorporating Cog)

A song of extreme political ambivalence: at the time of writing. I was aware of both feelings and intended direction, but I become more and more unsure; this, as the song, to do with means rather than end, of which I have a degree of certainty; I have now arrived at a position in which I cannot decide whose voice is whose in the lyrics, and can no more conclude whether the life-and-death style of the Lemming in this context is desirable, good or bad than be sure these abstractions have meaning in the overall life-line. The only conclusion which stands the test of time is that tending towards a far future hope, perhaps hope for a self-identification to replace my current ambiguous stance.

I stood alone upon the highest cliff-top,
looked down, around, and all that I could see
were those that I would dearly love to share with
crashing on quite blindly to the sea...
I tried to ask what game this was,
but knew I would not play it:
the voice, as one, as no-one, came to me...

‘We have looked upon the heroes
and they are found wanting;
we have looked hard across the land,
but we can see no dawn;
we have now dared to sear the sky,
but we are still bleeding;
we are drawing near to the cliffs,
now we can hear the call.

The clouds are piled in mountain-shapes,
there is no escape except to go forward.
Don’t ask us for an answer now,
it’s far too late to bow to that convention.
What course is there left but to die?

We have looked upon the High Kings,
found them less than mortals:
their names are dust before the just

march of our young, new law.
Minds stumbling strong, we hurtle on
into the dark portal;
No-one can halt our final vault
into the unknown maw.

And as the Elders beat their brows
they know that it is really far too late now to stop us.
For if the sky is seeded death
what is the point in catching breath?... Expel it!
What cause is there left but to die
in search of something we're not quite sure of?'

What cause is there left but to die?
What cause is there left but to die?
What cause is there left but to die?
...I really don't know why...

I know our ends may be soon
but why do you make them sooner?
Time may finally prove
only the living move her and
no life lies in the quicksand.

Yes I know it's
Out of control, out of control:
Greasy machinery slides on the rails,
Young minds and bodies on steel spokes impaled...
Cogs tearing bones, cogs tearing bones:
Iron-throated monsters are forcing our screams,
Mind and machinery box-press the dreams.

...but there still is time...

Cowards are they who run today,
the fight is beginning...
no war with knives, fight with our lives,
lemmings can teach nothing;
death offers no hope, we must grope
for the unknown answer:
unite our blood, abate the flood,
avert the disaster..

there's other ways than screaming in the mob:
that makes us merely cogs of hatred.
Look to the why and where we are,
look to yourselves and the stars and in the end
What choice is there left but to live

in the hope of saving
our children's children's little ones?

What choice is there but to live?
What choice is there but to live?
What choice is there but to live?
to save the little ones?

What choice is there left but to try?

(Worth, 1971)

Man-Erg

*Index, appendix and clarification; it has all the
positives that Lemmings lacks.*

The killer lives inside me: I can feel him move.
Sometimes he's lightly sleeping in the quiet of his room,
but then his eyes will rise and stare through mine;
he'll speak my words and slice my mind inside.

The killer lives.

The angels live inside me: I can feel them smile...
Their presence strokes and soothes the tempest in my mind
and their love can heal the wounds that I have wrought.
They watch me as I go to fall-well, I know I shall be caught,

For the angels live.

How can I be free?
How can I get help?
Am I really me?
Am I someone else?

But stalking in my cloisters hang the acolytes of gloom
and Death's Head throws his cloak onto the corner of my room and I am
doomed..
But laughing in my courtyard play the pranksters of my youth
and solemn, waiting Old Man in the gables of the roof: he tells me truth...

And I, too, live inside me and very often don't know who I am:
I know, I'm not a hero...I hope that I'm not damned.

I'm just a man, and killers, angels, all are these:
Dictators, saviours, refugees
in war and peace
as long as Man lives...

I'm just a man, and killers, angels, all are these:
Dictators, saviours, refugees...

(London, 1971)

A Plague Of Lighthouse Keepers

There is not very much I can say about this by way of classification or enhancement: extrapolation would inevitably destroy. I will, therefore, let it speak for its clandestine self, save only to say that it is a cinematic presentation of «self» in several possible matrices.

I. Eyewitness

Still waiting for my saviour,
storms tear me limb from limb;
my fingers feel like seaweed...
I'm so far out I'm too far in.
I am a lonely man...my solitude is true
my eyes have borne stark witness
and now my knights are numbered too.
I've seen the smiles on dead hands —
the stars shine, but they're not for me.

I prophesy disaster and then I count the cost...
I shine but, shining, dying,
I know that I am almost lost.
On the table lies blank paper/my tower is built on stone/
I only have blunt scissors/I only have the bluntest home...
I've been the witness, and the seal of death
lingers in the molten wax that is my head.

When you see the skeletons of sailing-ship spars sinking low
You'll begin to wonder if the points of all the ancient myths
are solemnly directed straight at
you...

II. Pictures/Lighthouse

(Eddies/rocks/ships/collision/remorse.)

III. Eyewitness

No time now for contrition:
the time for that's long past.
The walls are thin as tissue
and if I talk I'll crack the glass.
 So I only think on how it might have been,
 locked in silent monologue, in silent scream

Anyway, I'm much too tired to speak
and, as the waves crash on the bleak
stones of the tower, I start to freak...
 ...and find that I am overcome...

IV. S.H.M.

«Unreal, unreal!» ghost helmsmen scream
 and fall in through the sky,
not breaking through my seagull shrieks...
 no breaks until I die:
 the spectres scratch on window-slits —
 hollowed faces, mindless grins
only intent on destroying what they've lost.

I crawl the wall till steepness ends in the vertical fall;
my pail has sailed into the sea: no joking hopes at dawn.
 White bone shine in the iron-jaw mask
 lost mastheads pierce the freezing dark
and parallel my isolated tower...
 no paraffin for the flame
 no harbour left to gain

V. The Presence of the Night/Kosmos Tours

«Alone, alone,» the ghosts all call,
pinpoint me in the light.
The only life I feel at all
is the presence of the night.

Would you cry if I died?
Would you cry if I died?
Would you catch the final words of mine?
Would you catch my words?
I know that there's no time
I know that there's no rhyme...
 false signs find me
I don't want to hate,
I just want to grow;
why can't I let me
live and be free?..but I die very slowly alone.
I know no more ways,
I am so afraid,
myself won't let me
just be myself and so I am completely alone...

The maelstrom of my memory
 is a vampire and it feeds on me
now, staggering madly, over the brink I
 fall.

VI. (Custard's) Last Stand

Lighthouses might house the key
 but can I reach the door?

I want to walk on the sea
 so that I may better find ashore...
but how can I ever keep my feet dry?
I scan the horizon
I must keep my eyes on all parts of me.

Looking back on the years
 it seems that I have lost the way:
Like a dog in the night, I have run to a manger
...now I am the stranger I stay in.

All of the grief I have seen
leaves me chasing solitary peace;
but I hold experience in my head...
I'm too close to the light
I don't think I see right, for I blind me...

VII. The Clot Thickens

WHERE is the God that guides my hand?
HOW can the hands of others reach me?
WHEN will I find what I grope for?
WHO is going to teach me?
I am me/me are we/we can't see
any way out of here.
Crashing sea/atrophied history:
Chance has lost my Guinevere...

I don't want to be one wave in the water
But sea will drag me deep
One more haggard DROWNED MAN...

I can see the Lemmings coming, but I know I'm just a man;
Do I join or do I founder? Which can is the best I may?

VIII. Land's End (Sineline) / We Go Now

Oceans drifting sideways, I am pulled into the spell;
I feel you around me... I know you well.
Stars slice horizons where the lines stand much too stark;
I feel I am drowning... hands stretch in the dark.

Camps of panoply and majesty, what is Freedom of Choice?
Where do I stand in the pageantry...whose is my voice?
It doesn't feel so very bad now: I think the end is the start.
Begin to feel very glad now:
ALL THINGS ARE A PART
ALL THINGS ARE APART
ALL THINGS ARE A PART.

(London/Germany/Worth, 1970)

Fool's Mate (1971)

Imperial Zeppelin

These lyrics of Chris Judge Smith's, finally recorded on «Fool's Mate», deal with a hypothetical scheme we dreamed intended to provide us with an unhurried and blissful existence: buy a Zeppelin, fill it with a crew/colony of 'suitable» people, and float above the world for months at a time, landing only for fuel and sundry vittals. Having lived a microscopic parallel existence for some time, I am now aware that the impracticabilities are far more than merely financial but, hare-brained scheme though it acknowledges itself to be, the idea, as a romantic fiction, remains appealing.

Pack your bags, we're leaving
earth, where hate is seething;
nothing's worth believing...
There's no time, make up your mind!
Imperial Zeppelin...

Quick, the engines are turning,
cabin lights are burning,
now there's no returning...
We'll have love a mile above...
Imperial Zeppelin, Imperial Zeppelin, Imperial Zeppelin!

We, the undersigned, being of sound mind,
hereby do declare:
'We henceforth pledge ourselves unto the power
of the Upper Air.'
Doesn't that sound simply super,
Zeppelin visions of the future?
Of course we all know very well
it wouldn't work, but what the hell —
every dice deserves a throw,
and when we get back home below
we can say we had a go!

Overboard we are throwing
seeds of love we are sowing,
hope to God they're growing...

Flying high across the sky:
Imperial Zeppelin!

We will try to do some good,
I don't know why we really should,
I only wish that we could!
Down below they'll see and know all about
Imperial Zeppelin!
Imperial Zeppelin!
Imperial Zeppelin!

(CJS-Manchester, 1967)

Candle

Look at the candle, as it's life is bought,
as the wick just rolls of and dies;
look at the wax-drops as they cease from their goal
 and the game they were playing loses its joy
 and the youth which they played in runs away...
How long will you be gone?

Flames sucks at air now and its breath comes short
as it wavers to half its size;
vacuum closes in and it attacks the soul.
 Now the force omnipotent itself is destroyed
 and for lack of itself it wanes away...
How long will you be gone?

So does my mind fly as I fight my thought —
and I lose, for I cannot find:
sent my eyes long miles, they do not know home!
 For the life I was part of breathes its last
 and not only life, but hope has gone away...
How long will you be gone?
How long will you be gone?

(Derby, 1966)

Happy

How was it that we first met?
...I forget, all I know is you
looked happy.

We walked around and talked a while;
In your smile I found that I
was happy.

I want to tell you;
it seems a thing to do;
I want to show I truly care.

Now at every time we meet
we walk the streets, I'm with you and I
feel happy.

Just thought I'd tell you.
It seems a thing to do,
I want to prove I truly care.

But how long will all this last?
Time goes fast, It doesn't matter,
with you, I'm happy.
Time goes fast, It doesn't matter, with you
I'm happy.

(London, 1969)

Solitude

I have a certain confession to make about this: the first and last verses were loosely taken from a poem by Herman Allmers, originally set to music by no less than Brahms! I added the somewhat more 20th century middle verses and slightly changed the originals, since the feeling of the song was so close to my heart that I could not resist the plagiaristic liberty.

Silently I rest in the tall green grass
and look steadily upwards.
Birds sing ceaselessly around me,
and the blue of the sky surrounds me strangely.

Out here, life is at its essence,

and watches the world with innocent eyes;
far from grime, far from rushing people
it seems that I have found a tiny peace.

On the blue backdrop of the unknown
water droplets trace their paths;
on the sky, mortals hang on metal —
but who is to know how long either will last?

The lovely white clouds glide
across the sky and into my dreams...
I feel as though I had died some time ago:
now I'll wander with the clouds through eternal space.

(Derby, 1967)



"Solitude in Summer Fields"

Vision

I have a vision of you, locked inside my head;
it creeps upon my mind, and warms me in my bed...
A vision shimmering, shifting
moving in false fire — light;
a vision of a vision,
protecting me from fear at night,
as the sea-sowns roll on, and my love stays strong.

I don't know where you end, and where it is that I begin.
You simply open my mind, and the memories flood on in.
I remember waking up, with you arms around me;

I remember losing myself
and finding that you'd found me,
as the seasons roll on, and my love stays strong.

Be my child, be my lover, swallow me up in your fire-glow.
Take my tongue, take my torment, take my hand and don't let go.
Let me live in your life,
for you make it all seem to matter;
Let me die in your arms,
so the vision may never shatter...
The seasons roll on;
my love stays strong.

(London, 1967)

Re-Awakening

If you catch me running along by the sea, with bare feet in
the sand, then you'll know I am dreaming my life out in a way
you won't understand.
I'm slipping right out of your mind, this I know, and I accept
the fact lazily, for I must go into the next field,
where grass is green and I'll find peace.
Let me sleep!
Let me dream!
Let me be!
Reawakening isn't easy when you're tired.
Don't push me: I was taught self-expression
when I was a child, and so I know
the best way to go is slow.

Sometimes, when skies are cloud-grey, and trouble's hanging
heavy on your mind, I advise you: curl up, slid away and
dream your life out, as I am.
Reawakening isn't easy when you're tired.
Don't push me: I was taught self-expression
when I was a child, and so I see
the best way to be's asleep.
Reawakening isn't easy when you're tired.

(London, 1967)

Sunshine

Oh, suddenly things begin to come clear in my mind
as I look into the land laid bare by your eyes;
E-S/M attractions are working behind my thought,
I can't help my feelings, the way that my emotions
are over-wrought.

Refrain:

Good morning, sunshine!

You're all around my head,

Good morning, sunshine!

I'm ready to be led.

Good morning, sunshine!

You know how sad it makes me to see you unhappy
so smile, spread sunshine all around...

How sweet it would be to be chained by your side;
how sweet if you would strip my worried mind.
Your blonde/brown hair hangs down on you,
how I wish that it hung on me,
there's something in your allure, that makes me know I'll
never again be free.

Refrain

I'd like to run on the clouds of my liberty,
but for you I'd get hooked and float six inches mud-free.
The sight of your smile just makes me want to jump and clap;
the fact that you may be owed to someone else can't
entirely tight your trap.

Refrain

(Derby, 1967)

Child

I don't know quite what's happening
and my eyes don't see too clear;
all I know is I need you here,
if only to shield me from the mood of the world
and hold me and say it doesn't matter...

but I'm like a child whose dreams are shattered,

Crowding round me: images of broken thought,
lines of my life now overgrown.
All I can feel is I'm so alone,
without even your bright eyes to reach into my mind
and say that in my life I've done right,
and I'm like a moonchild in the sunlight.

So cast your thoughts upon me, wherever you are,
that I may feel you close beside me
and hold your hand, for you to guide me
through all these catacombs which freeze me
with their touch;
unknowing, knowing so much, my mind cries out
and I'm like a child when the light's out

With a child's fear of the dark...

(London, 1967/Derby, 1971)

Summer Song (In The Autumn)

Summer song in the autumn, for you didn't catch
the colour of the falling leaves.
So many words have been spoken which you
didn't understand and so couldn't believe.
And the song that you're humming is yesterday's tune —
Someone who you love is leaving you.

You walking in sunshine by the sea with gull crying overhead;
but now the skies are cloudy, and the love you had is dead.
And the water recedes from the farthest dunes —
Someone who you loved is leaving you.

You remember the happiness you had
as you laughed along in the sun
but now your eyes are coming dull,
there's a numbness on your tongue...

You look out at the water which is calling you
over the wind,
then you throw aside your handbag and slowly
walk right in.

And tomorrow you'll be in yesterday's news:
someone who you loved has left you.

(Derby, 1967)

Viking

A nother song deriving from Icelandic folklore, in this instance, the Vinland sagas. The list of crew members returning from their explorations is made up of various characters from the tales, although there is no common life-span and some, indeed, were sworn enemies and therefore unlikely to travel back to Iceland on the same longship even in spirit. One can only take authenticity so far...

Looking out forward over the prow of our long ship,
pulling our oars and listening to the foam;
helmets and sheepskins salt-damp in the sea-mist:
We're going home.

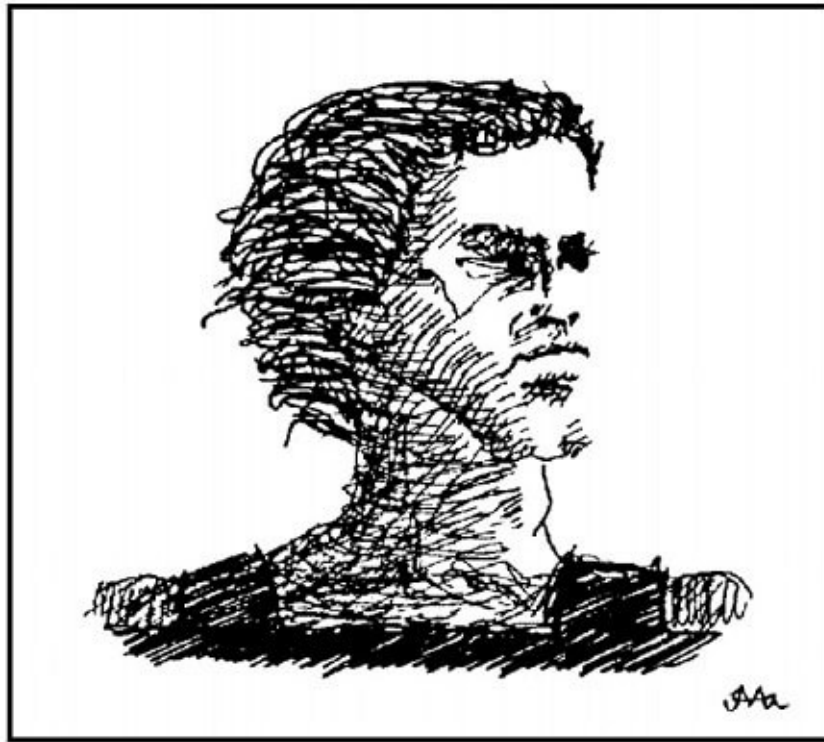
Aslak of Langadale, Einar Thorgeirsson,
Olaf the White and Sigurd the Powerful...

Looking for constellations above the horizon,
West wind cutting sharper than our blades;
smiling forever into an endless sunrise,
we're flying on the waves.

Thorfin Karlsefny, Aud the Deep-Minded,
Snorri Thorbrandsson, Thorstein the Black...

Out of dark Vinland, with grey waves racing before us —
We want no rest.
Back to the homeland, Iceland, sleeping in winter —
back from the West.
Five years we roam;
now we're going home.

(CJS/PH-Manchester, 1967)



"Viking"

The Birds

...one of the earliest songs I wrote which was worthy of the name... Robert Fripp makes a spiralling appearance on electric guitar.

Spring came far too early this year:
May flowers blooming in February.
Should I be sad for the months,
or glad for the sky?

The birds don't know which way to sing and, my friends,
neither do I.

Two days ago, a girl I truly thought I loved
suddenly didn't seem to matter at all.
Should I sing sad farewell to things
I'm really glad I've left behind?
The birds don't know which way to sing and, my friends,
neither do I.

In another day, heavy snow will lie upon the ground,

and buds prematurely bloom shall fail;
And every creature living now, then will
surely die...
The birds don't know which way to sing and, my friends,
neither do I.
The birds don't know if it's time yet to fly,
and they don't know which way to go and, my friend,
neither do I.
Neither do I.
Neither do I.
Neither do I.

(Derby, 1967)

I Once Wrote Some Poems

*The poems concerned, written on the occasions
outlined by the first and second verses, are of sub-marginal
interest.*

I once wrote some poems of stillness and silence,
standing by rivers of reflected light:
my thoughts were on being loved and yet unloved, too —
I surrendered to the warmth of the night.
And now I feel like dying,
and if the water were still here, it would
hold me close.

I once wrote a poem while walking on gravestones,
as cobbles, rain and tear lashed down my face...
I then felt my whole world was fading
as memories jostled and fell into place.
And now I feel like dying,
and the pain of old fires still burns.

I never wrote poems when I bit my knuckles
and Death started slipping into my mouth...
but that was really a long time ago,
and I'm not writing poems now.
And though I don't feel quite like dying,
there is something deep inside me
softly crying.

And though I don't feel quite like dying

there is something deep inside me softly...

(London, 1967)

Chameleon in the Shadow of the Night (1973)

German Overalls

Manheim; rainy Saturday with no money nor friend,
only Tequila can end the boredom.
Try to reach London for a pocket of hope;
we're children, we grope in the dark.
Hugh spends his last Mark on coffee and cheese...
I feel just like a refugee...
Rathaus-keepers and traffic police,
middle-aged maids with rotting teeth
industrial magazines and old Sunday Times;
reading material/bleeding lines.
What are we doing here?

Memorial manace, eager for revenge,
has begun to bend our minds.
Shower-curtain imperative in the presence of acid;
now, feeling placid is death.
I try to hold my breath as the P.A. comes down...
here we all are in Ktown!
The Big Wheel never fails to grind around;
it drags me up/draggs me down
Seven sentences wonder 'Can this be real,
or am I become a performing seal?'
Why are we dying here?

I walk the streets alone, try to find a sign of love,
I've crushed the plaster-bone in the freaky clubs,
I have bit the fruit
but all I live for is to play
and I'm tired of the nights and the days
of airports, taxis and motorway showers,
grooping for a key in the afterhours.
David takes to travelling in the van,
He knows that we all can understand;
we're at the mercy of the Kosmos Tour,
making a pilgrimage to the German Lourdes...
but we're still crippled here.

Cathedrals spiral skywards, I think I'm getting vertigo,
I think I don't know what is real.

On a more sudden spotlight, one more madness is over...
I must not show a sign of fear.
Words echo round my ears, I think I'm going to laugh...
think I'll just go and take a bath, Guess I'll wash my clothes,
don't you know I'll grow to go and make my name,
maybe a servant in the Fame game;
stake my sane and rest my life on the line...
Now lay me asunder and rend my mind;
at the fall of the curtain let this be my ghost...

(Worth, 1971)

Slender Threads

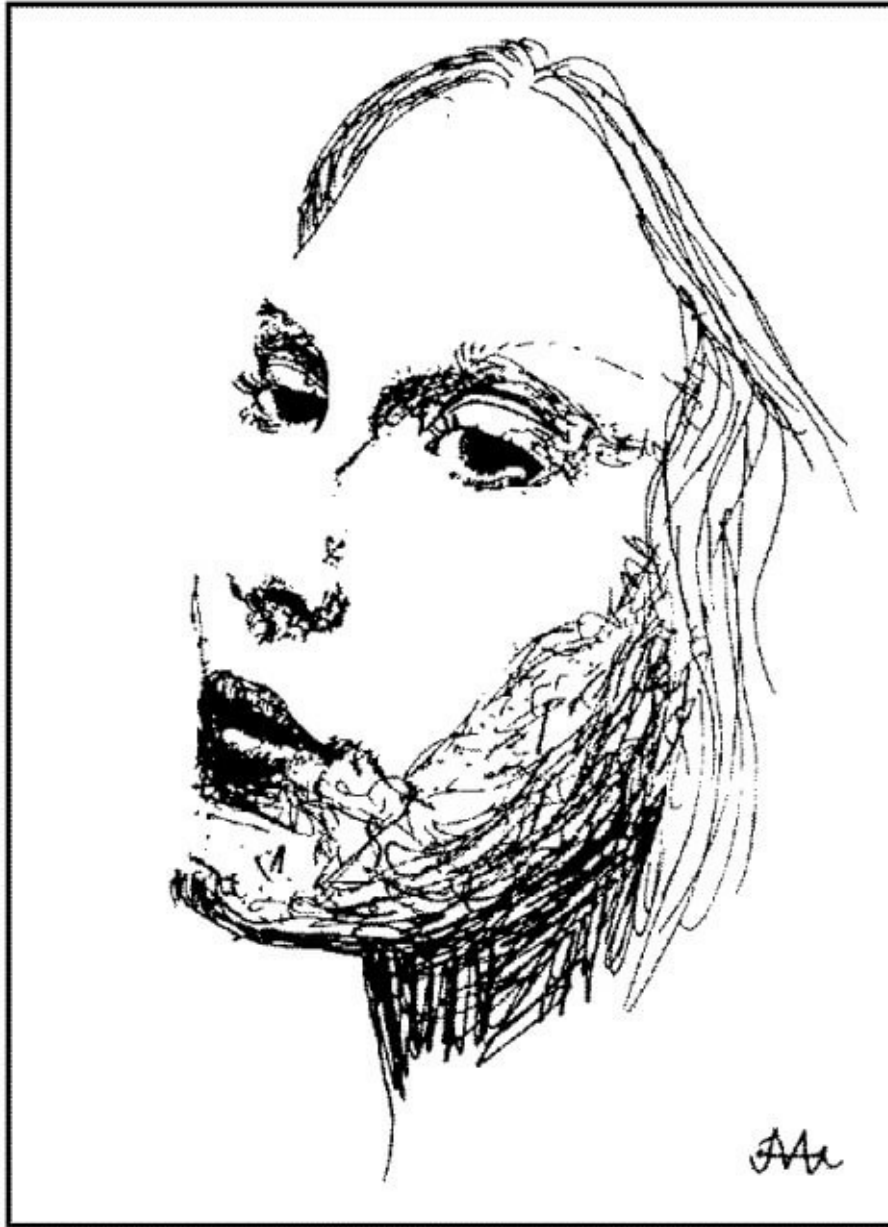
I saw your picture in the Evening Standard:
you were wearing your battle dress.
I really must confess
that I shed a silent smile for you —
it had really blown my mind,
I wonder, are you still so kind?
Are you still so pure?
There are other rhymes around here somewhere,
but I'm not sure how they fit...

Jenny, penny for your thoughts, I wonder how you're
thinking now;
I hesitate to visualise: our worlds are much too
different,
that's a sign of the times.
Time was when I read your cards
and wrote the numbers in the dust;
I can't remember what they were, but anyhow,
I missed the cusp
so, so long, and so, goodbye
Do you think I'll recognise you by your hair
or by you mind now?

We start out together
but the paths all divide:
when there are no more crossroads
I open my eyes
and find I'm walking on alone
through the snowy cold...
I wonder if I'll make it through the night?

I'm an author and an actor too;
you're a model in the zoo...
I'm just thinking on which side of the bars
I'm looking through.
If I prophesied an avalanche
would you wait and call my bluff?
If I gave you just a little song
would that be enough
to save your life
or is the knife already turning in my hand?

(Worth, 1972)



"Slender Threads"

Rock and Role

Watch for the silent moments, only waiting to be saved.
Wait for the Liemaker; he comes again
and sinks his barbs through honesty;
roll him over with all possible speed!
Don't let him touch you with the candle of his need
or let him be, hysterically ravaging your grave.
You are emotion picture, re-run at single frame.

You are the instant playback, no chance to change;
smile and smile, living diary!

Roll you over before it's too late:
before you're exposed to the monochrome phase...
which can relate only fear and hate through the haze.
I am the automated arrow, homing on the heat of pain;
I am the Peacebringer... It is so strange,
I feed on grief and grieve through joy.
So roll me over and turn aside;
don't let me look into the mirror of your eyes
for fear that I
may steel the life
you gradly gave.

(Worth, 1971)

In The End

I promise you, I won't leave a clue:
no tell-tale remark, no print from my shoe.
Still a steady trail to the water's edge —
I will keep my pledge to the end;
I intend to go free

No more rushing around, no more travelling chess;
I guess I'd better sit down, you know I do need the rest...
Yes, it's time to resign with equanimity and placidity
from the game.
I can't explain;
I can't relate...
Have I done it all too late?

Now is the time for the commission to report;
till lately, I thought: I'd been planted.
Trying hard to make it all come real,
permission to feel is ungranted.
But, now it's happening, I'd like to keep it private if I can;
last words, last look, make a final stand.
Now my number's come up on the Pools,
guess I'll board Titanic for a cruise...

Now is the time to make my status clear,
too late, I fear, and lonely,
as friends and enemies traverse the stage,
all in a rage disown me.

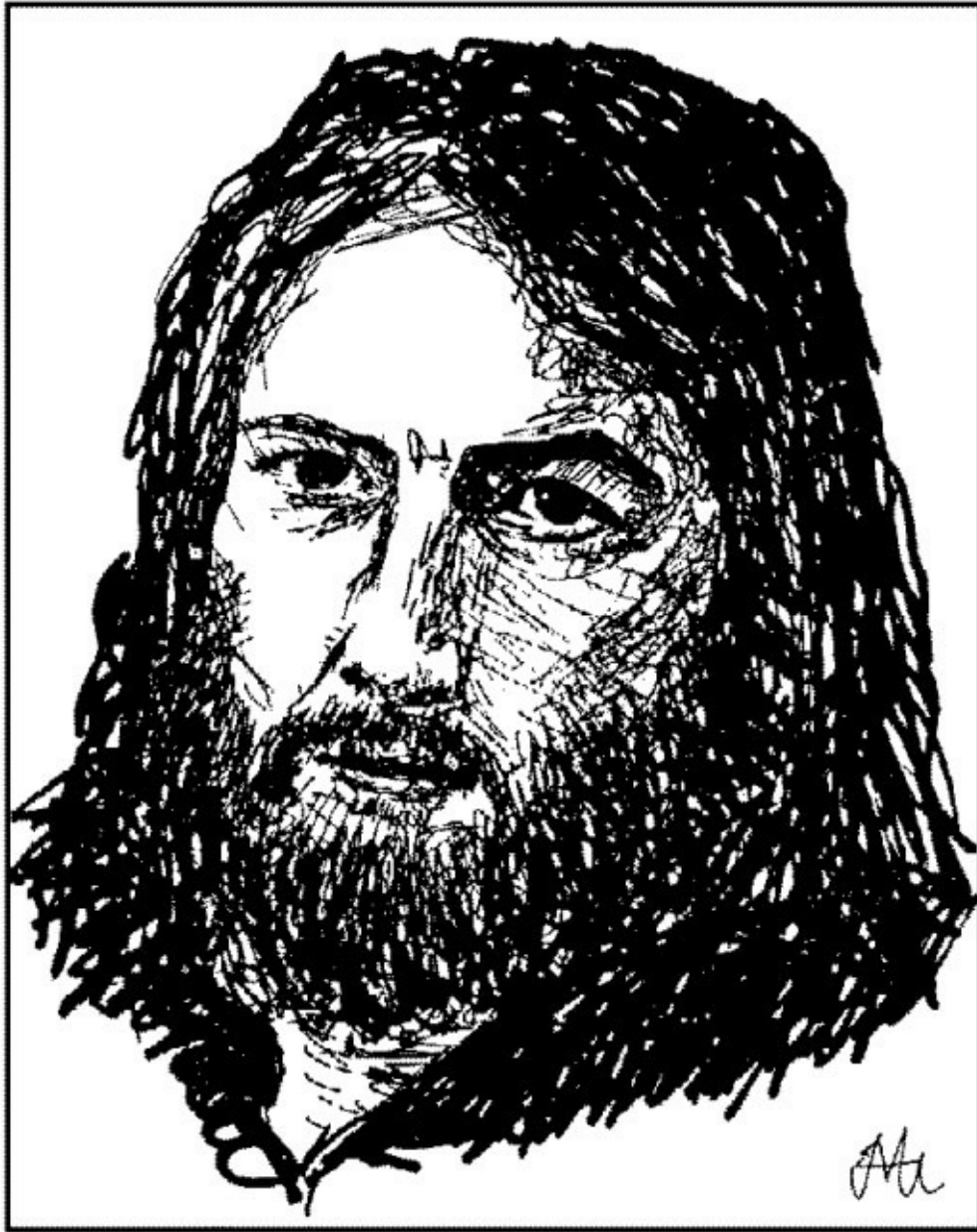
And all the pip-props shatter into dust about my ears;
memory and conscience, hope and fear.
As I crawl out further on the limb
something tells me I am crawling in
to unknown prophecies and lives —
the rainbow's end is hemmed around with knives...

As I stand on the boards and the stage lights grow dim,
shall I go out of doors, or shall I maybe go in?
Have I reached the point when I should take my cue
and follow you and your signs?
I can't remember my line
at the prompter cat calls
and the cards all fall
in the strike

All the pages are thin, all the corners are curled.
Does the starshine fall in through my window on the world?
or am I living our (the seeds of doubt) a chronicle of revenge?
The willow bends
as do my hands —
do your understand?
And will you still be my friend in the end?

..... When my mouth falls slack
and I can't summon up another tune,
shall I then look back and say
I did it all
too soon?

(Worth, 1972)



"In the End"

What's It Worth?

What's it worth to be safe?
What's the way to be sane?
I could throw myself at the garden
 on my hands,
prune the lawn and mow the roses,
but I never understand
how to go
to be free;
in the end I only want to be me.

Winter days here are mine;
still, no bites, what's my line?
I could hurl myself to the bonfire
 with all nerve,
clear the path and weed the dead leaves,
but I really just don't have the nerve
to be part
if that scene
is this just some kind of strange dream?

Think I'll walk to the steeple, where the people
 are so inquisitive.
I could make it to the corner store and buy
 a hoard of derivatives
 now.

Which way now... climb or coast?
Will my eggs ever poach?
I could throw myself in the frying pan
for the sake of my name;
hit the road or smile hermetically,
but it's really never quite the same;
every time a subtle twist,
I think I'll grab my plot
and simply exist

Or would that be
a subtle slash at my wrists?

(Worth, 1971)

Easy To Slip Away

My, friends, I never really thought you'd go,
but, then, we know that's the way it happens here.
Now time is like cat's cradle in my hands:
we gather up the strands much too slowly
The refugees are gone... they take their separate paths,
obliterate the past: figures in an ash shroud.
Susie, I guess you're on your way to be a star,
but I don't know where you are: the only time I seem
 to see you is on T.V.
It's so easy just to slip away...

Mike!
It's a year or two since I've seen you...
I might
have dropped you a line if I'd had time
or the will.
It's my fault too; I play a hermit's role
of cars and stages, wages, supersoul
hardly ever seem to get outside these days.
So, dear friends, as we grow on we feel to grow away,
can only live in the hope that some day
 it will all return.
It's so easy just to slip away...

(Worth, 1971)

Dropping The Torch

*This began life as poem and only later became a song.
Dark, yes; but without acknowledgement of what might
happen it WILL happen. Nonetheless, one could say that the
young man here is a tad too serious for his own good!*

We play games and every move
is noted down as a subsequent cause
and effectively chains our freedom and will to live:
we settle in to simple survival,
hanging on our pleasures grimly...
we must never let them go...

Our prison walls are slowly built,
stone by stone and day by day
no provision for escape,
entombed alive in safety
and decay.

Time sets around us in killing frames,
black border round our names.
Our fingers lose their grip
and the torch slips.

The enemy for everyone
is everyone, inside —
I feel the hand of security
creep on me with ice-cold fingers

and crush my flower of freedom;
I've lost the course of my adventure,
all things I'm meant to do are lost.

There is only one flame each
to keep alive in the wind.
but finally we snuff them out
all by ourselves.

We set traps and, in the end,
fall into our own snares
and have nowhere to go.

Time ever moves more slowly:
life gets more lonely
and less real.

(Worth, 1971)



"Dropping the Torch"

In The Black Room

I was thinking about thinking but it really didn't get me very far,
so I thought I'd throw a Tarot but I only got the Priestess and the Star.
There's a shadow cast between the future and the past:
the room and I agree to buy some time...
The cards don't tell truth nor lies,
only options and cusp lines
the furniture in the black room.

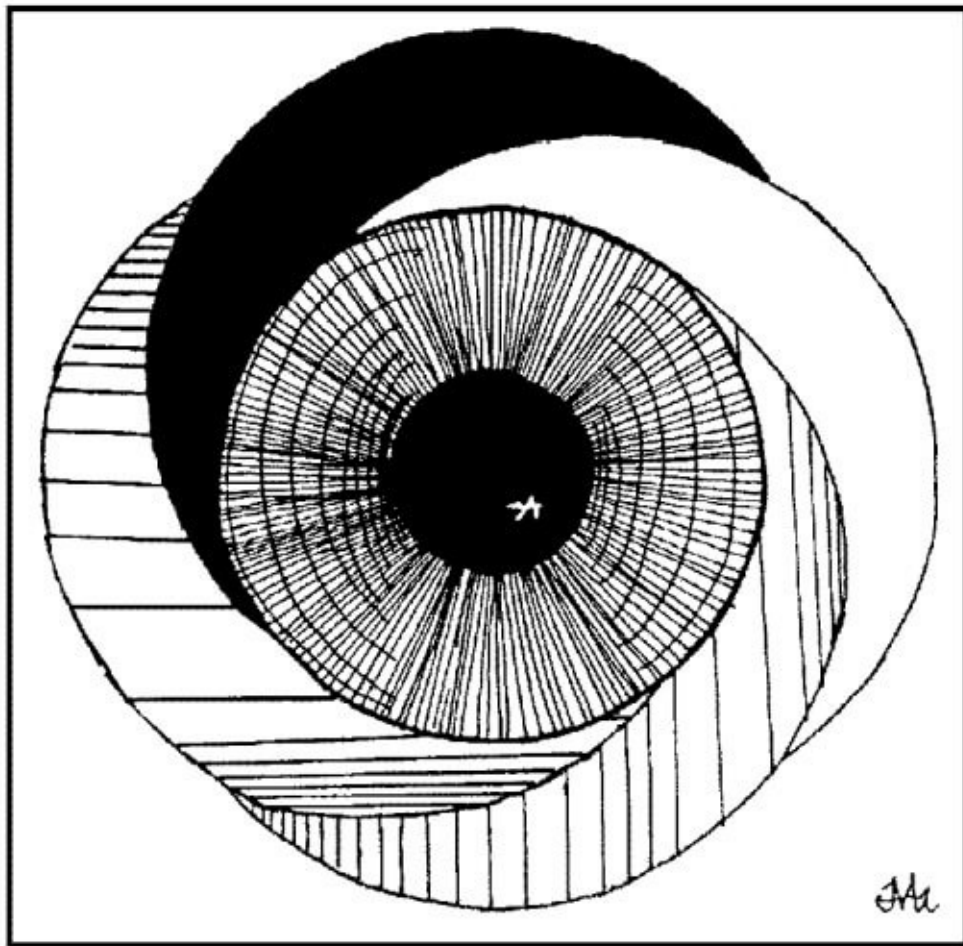
I've been thinking about acid, but, it seem there's not a reason to believe.
I don't make a vital breakthrough and it walks me like a dog upon a lead.
It's all unreal and, the way I feel,

I'd like to try and make it on my own...
Going to the feeling is find:
I really have me a good pleasure cruise.
But, deep in my mind,
I'm no better or worse, just open to the walls.
Paint peels in the black of my room

I'm only talking about myself, ordering my treasure shell,
documenting these present feelings as the future sets me reeling...
What I'll be is what I am,
I'm simply trying not to sham or fake.
Use vision as sense and not as crutch!
It doesn't matter all that much;
whatever happens we'll all survive.
I'm only trying not to pawn my life.

When I'm (maybe) old and strait-laced, shall I then deny all that I feel?
In words of bitter compromise, re-smelt the wrath that's in my eyes
like steel?
Be a hermit then?
Or be a miser?
Be a man who hasn't managed yet to write his rules?
The Fool?
The future holds my hand in the room...
Well, then my ghosts shall steer down through the years
and lay a hand upon my soul
like ice.

(Worth, 1972)



"In the Black Room"

The Tower

So: onto the familiar top steps!
in cloud-scud moonlight glow
the Tower reels.
I, the blind man,
feeling for a path I know...
don't you know that I'm only feeling for how to feel?

Rats run.
Snakes coil.
Fathers,
stare out at the whispering night;
rub mud on their arms.

Spiders,
Mud boils,
Children

whimper in the human vortex;
faces glow of worms.

Thunder

Silence.
Omens...

For pain shall come and change shall run
down through my heart
and shake my knees
and NOW it is coming,
all round is the humming
of the World.

Too late! With my balance gone,
dead eyed doll,
I'm falling, falling
back to where I began...

In The Black Room (II)

I'm feeling like a kid again,
I'm feeling like I just walked in the door,
and, with my head on fire,
I wrote this song — I don't know who it's for.
Hands held fast in camera,
I'll swear I heard the Stammerer exclaim:
«I'm a traveller, unraverller.
I only live through pain, and shame, and change!»

In my room, the secret tomb, I can see
future forms,
space/time storms:
they're all me,
and I've only got to choose!

In my head I am dead if I fail
In the trap,
the subtle lap,

safety's pall...
but I'm living while I choose...

The Silent Corner and the Empty Stage (1974)

...but all of this is only of cryptic semi-informational value, given at the turning of the years with appropriate arbitrariness; it has all been diverting to recall and to write, and so also (perhaps) to read. The songs, however, must speak — or remain silent — for themselves, so here follow their words and here «I» disappear to make way for them.

Modern

Jericho's strange, throbbing with life at its heart:
people are drawn together, simultaneously torn apart...
Foundations are shattered in the city
inside the barricaded doors —
hiding behind their walls, lonely as night falls,
maybe the people are waiting for trumpets...

Babylon's strange, seventh wonder of the earth:
gardens ablaze in colour, slowly rotting in the dirt
and, with your head on fire, you can't really see.
The hanging gardens sing,
but with a hollow ring:
the life is false, its killing me...

Don't look back, or you'll turn to stone;
look around before your life is overgrown
 with concrete slabs!
On your back the searching eyes that stab
between chintz curtains, glinting,
but never owning to a name —
like the inmates of asylums
all the citizens are contagiously
 insane...

Atlantis is strange, the explosion of an age:
no-one really knows what to do, and the city
 is a cage.
It traps in ashen hours and concrete towers,
imprisons in the social order:
the city's lost its way,
madness takes hold today...
 I can't live under water.

(London, 1969/Worth, 1973)

Wilhelmina

It's probably only possible to write such an uncomplicated song about or to a child before one becomes a parent oneself. Shirley Bassey nearly covered this once upon a time! Now that would have been interesting...

Willie, what can I say to you to hold true in
your changing life? You've come into a cruel
world: little girls can lose their way in the
growing night — I hope you'll be alright.

Willie, try to stay a child sometime, for as long
as you feel you can learn. Babies all turn to
people, and people can really be strange: they
change and, changing, bring pain.

Try to treat your parents well because they care,
and what more can you do?
When you find your lovers, be good to them as
you hope they'll be to you —
be honest,
be true.

Willie, you are the future; all our lives, in the end,
are in your hands. Life's hard now — you know,
it gets harder, and hope is but a single strand;
we pass it on and hope you'll understand...

We know that we do it wrong, we're not so strong
and not so sure at all; groping in our blindness,
we may seem big now but, really, we're so small
and alone and searching for a home
in the night.

Meanwhile you're still a baby; you'll be a lady
soon enough and then you will feel the burn.
So hold my words: people all turn to children,
spiteful children, and they're really so cruel...
cruel fools!

Just follow your own rules —
don't think that I'm silly, Willie,
if I say I hope that there is hope for you.

(Worth, 1972)

The Lie (Bernini's St. Theresa)

*(which is to say that the statue is the inspiration, but
not the Lie)*

Genuflection / erection in church.
Sacristy cloth / moth-eaten shroud.
Secret silence / sacred secrets
accumulate dust, aggravate the eye.

Incautious laughter after confession.
Benediction — fictional fear
Hidden faces... Grace is a name,
like Chastity, like Lucifer, like mine.

You took me through the window-stain,
drowned in image, incense, choir-refrain
and slow ecstasy —
I'd embrace you if I only knew your name...

The silent corner haunts my shadow prayers:
ice-cold statue — rapture divine,
 unconscious eyes,
 the open mouth,
 the wound of love,
 the Lie.

You took me, gave me reasons for
saints and missals, vigils, all the more
holy martyrs —
I'd embrace you and walk through
 the one-way door...
I'd embrace you, but it would be
 just another lie

(Worth, 1971)

Forsaken Gardens

Where are all the joys of yesterday?

Where, now, is the happiness and laughter that we shared?
Gone, like our childhood dreams, aspirations and beliefs —
Time is a thief, and he ravages our gardens,
stripping saplings, felling trees,
trampling on our flowers, sucking sap and drying seeds.
In the midnight candle-light of experience
all colour fades, green fingers grey...

Time, alone, shall murder all the flowers,
still, there's time to share our plots and all that we call 'ours'.
How much worse, then, if we all deny each others' needs
and keep our garden's privately?

Its getting colder, wind and rain leave gashes;
looking back, I only see the friends I've lost.
Fires smoulder, raking through the ashes
my hands are dirty, my mind is numb,
I count the cost of 'I':
«I need to get on, I've got to tend my garden;
got to shut you out, no time to crave your pardon now».

Now I see the garden that I've grown is just the same
as those outside;
the fences, erected to protect, simply divide...
There's ruination everywhere, the weather has
played havoc with the grass —
does anyone believe his garden's really going to last?
In the time allotted us, can any man keep miserly his own?
Is there any pleasure in a solitary growth?

Come and see my garden if you will —
I'd like someone to see it all before each root is killed.
Surely now its time to open up each life to all —
tear down the walls, if its not too late!

There is so much sorrow in the world;
there is so much emptiness and heartbreak and pain;
Somewhere on the road we have all taken a wrong
turn —
how can we build the right path again?

Through the grief, through the pain,
our flowers need each others' rain...

Red Shift

Once, all the stars in the sky were bright,
 now they're red and fading
and all the colours we wore, the shades that we bore
 have moved.
And the gold turns to red with no time for changes:
Red Shift, all moving away from we.

Once, constellations were holy, now darkness pervades
 all the older ones
and in the brunt of implosion, all yesterday's golden
 now reddened suns...
and hope is a word with no space for blame in —
Red Shift, displaced now in time and relativity;
Red Shift, all moving away from we.

So here I am, though I might well be with me:
I'm falling down deep to the rim of the wheel.
Is it sham?
Does the world have a meaning?
The more that we know, the greater confusion grows:
stars are like atoms, and atoms are patterns
and probably in the end:
«Maybe its all been a dream...»

Time locked in negative matter, all theories shatter
 beneath the weight.
Happy is the man who believes that the world
 is a dream and all reason, fate.
Time moves on with no time;
the eye moves on with no rhyme,
and I'm a song in the depth of the galaxies —
Red Shift is taking away my sanity;
Red Shift, all moving away from we...

(Manchester, 1968/Sussex, 1973)

Rubicon

I lay down beside you: I am a unicorn, you a virginal maid,
and I come in laughing play —
but, maybe, to be saved.

Peer through the backcloth: I am a character in the play,
the words I slur are pre-ordained —
we know them anyway.

Don't change your mind, don't be a fickle friend;
don't change your mind, don't pretend
to something false.

Open the toy-box: you are Pandora, I am the World.
If you cross the stream, you never can return;
If you stay, you'll surely burn.

Don't change your mind, don't come all orchid eyes;
don't change your mind, don't disguise the fear
you feel:
it's real, and you must
guard your castle well, for I am the lone wolf,
and the boar at bay —
grant me your Pax, you know we only live today,
and on, and on, and into:
«so Long» — it takes so long to drown;
it takes so very long to choke on the taste you'd spurned.
If you cross the stream you never can return;
If you stay you'll surely burn.

(Worth, 1971)

A Louse Is Not A Home

Sometimes it's very scary here; sometimes it's very sad;
sometimes I think I'll disappear; betimes I think I have.
There's a line snaking down my mirror:
splintered glass distorts my face,
and though the light is strong and strange
it can't illuminate the musty corners of this place.
There is a lofty, lonely, Lohengrenic castle in the clouds —
I draw my murky meanings there,
but seven years' dark luck is just around the corner
and in the shadows lurks the spectre of Despair.
A cracked mirror mid the drapes of the landing:
split image, labored understanding —
I'm only trying to find a place to hide my home...

I've lived in houses composed of glass
where every movement is charted,
but now the monitor screens are dark
and I can't tell if silent eyes are there.
My words are spiders upon the page,
they spin out faith, hope and reason —
but are they meet and just, or only dust
gathering about my chair?
Sometimes I get the feeling that there's
someone else there:
The faceless watcher makes me uneasy,
I can feel him through the floorboards,
and His presence is creepy —
He informs me that I shall be expelled...
What is that but out of and into:
I don't know the nature of the door that I'd go through,
I don't know the nature of the nature
that I am inside...

I've lived in houses of brick and lead
where all emotion is sacred,
and if you want to devour the fruit
you must first sniff at the fragrance
and lay your body before the shrine
with poems and posies and papers —
or, if you catch the ruse, you'll have to choose
to stay, a monk, or leave, a vagrant.
What is this place you call home?
Is it a sermon or a confession?
Is it the chalice that you use for protection?
Is it really only somewhere you can stay?
Is it a rule-book or a lecture?
Is it a beating at the hands of your Protector?
Does the idol have feet of clay?
Home is what you make it, so my friends
all say,
but I rarely see their homes in these dark days.
Some of them are snails and carry houses
on their backs;
others live in monuments which, one day,
will be racks —
I keep my home in place with sellotape
and tin-tacks,
but I still feel there's some other Force here:

He who cracks the mirrors and moves the walls
keeps staring through the eye-slits of the portraits
in my hall;
He ravages my library and taps the telephone —
I've never actually seen Him,
but I know He's in my home
and if he goes away,
I can't stay here either.
I believe — er — I think —
well, I don't know...

I only live in one room at a time,
but all of the walls are ears, all the windows, eyes:
Everything else is foreign,
«Home» is my wordless chant:
mmmmaah!
Give it a chance!

I am surrounded by flesh and bone,
I am a temple of living,
I am a hermit, I am a drone,
and I am boning out a place to be.
With secret garlands about my head
unearthly silence is broken:
the room is growing dark, and in the stark light
I can see a face I know —
could this be the guy who never shows
the cracked mirror what he's feeling,
merely mumbles prayers to the ground where
he's kneeling:
«Home is home is home is home is home is home is me!»
All you people looking for your houses,
don't throw your weight around, you might
break your glasses
and if you do, you know you just can't see
and then how are you to find the dawning
of the day?
— Day is just a word I use to keep the dark
at bay,
and people are imaginary, nothing else exists
except the room I'm sitting in,
and, of course, the all-pervading mist —
sometimes I wonder if even that's real...
Maybe I should de-louse this place;
Maybe I should de-place this louse;
Maybe I'll maybe my life away

in the confines of this silent house.
Sometimes it's very scary here; sometimes it's very sad;
sometimes I think I'll disappear; sometimes I think...

(Worth/Ross-on-Wye, 1972)

In Camera (1974)

Ferret And Featherbird

Time has come between us:
in the passing months I've felt you slip away
as your words and mine came like nursery rhymes
till there was nothing left to say.

Distance came between us long ago,
as our memories faded away...
over the miles I ceased to smile
because nothing felt the same.

That's how it seemed a week ago,
far off in time and space.

Time and distance are between us now,
they form a bond to make things sure.
Nothing ever shatters,
you know what happens:
time and distance make a love secure.

(London, 1969)

No More (The Submariner)

In my youth, I played at trains: now all steam is gone.
In my dreams, brief shelter from the rain,
I try to catch the fireglow...
With Dinky Toys, I thought that I was Stirling,
with cricket bat, I saw myself as Peter May;
now, with all these images returning,
I wonder who I am today?

As a child, I refought the war
with plastic planes and imagination:
I sank Tirpitz, blew up the Mohne dam, all these and more,
I was the saviour of the Nation!
Oh! To be the captain of a ship of war!
The pilot of a Tempest or a York!

To hold my trench against the Panzer Korps
instead of simply being one who talks
and reminisces of his fantasies,
as though life was nothing but to lose...
these only antecede the knowledge that, eventually,
he must choose.

It's a hallmark of adulthood
that our options diminish
as our faculties for choice increase,
till we choose everything and nothing,
too late, at the finish.

In my youth, I held belief: my faith and thought were strong.
But now I'm stripped of every leaf,
and it robs me of the sight of right and wrong.
Oh! To be the son of Che Guevara!
One unit in the serried ranks of black!
A Papist or an Orangeman, a eunuch...
then doubt would never cast the dagger in my back.
Oh! To be King John or Douglas Bader,
Humphrey Bogart or Victor Mature!
Which one is false and easy,
which one harder?
Of that,
of this,
of me
I'm really not too sure.

Tapeworm

Brutal compression and noise — and that 's only the lyrics! Guy Evans did a great job of overdubbing drums onto a pretty vagrant (sic) basic rhythm. The middle section was originally (yet another) guitar riff; just for once, I thought it better to hold that fuzzed-out hand.

When I was a child they made me read
word-daggers of quiver and squirm;
now in the stumbling dark I see
I am a worm, silently fruiting your garden,
my sister, my child.
Night casts ominous meanings on the purity of my soul

I feel devilish leanings I'm beginning to lose control
and the vortex sucks me in.
Steeped in sin I die
but am reborn.

I want to see the cosmos slip,
planets and moons collide,
feel gravity lose its grip...
it's all inside
All the dead husks are shattered,
my life-blood, my world ripped apart
in the laughter of space
it's all chaff blown out and lost.
Now I am making the pace
although I don't know what tape I'll cross...
maybe catastrophe.
When I cross the line
I know that I will find myself
or maybe you.

I am a man from the country of destruction,
I am a man a woman and a god,
I am my own weapon of kamikaze
and will one day cut through the
hidden knot

Feed me honey and watch me rise
to the bait lying on the knife;
if you let me I can hypnotise your life.
It's all really so simple,
my lover, my twin.
Hand in hand, sprinting down the highway,
running over the edge,
on and on into our doomsday;
there is no saving ledge
nor outgrown shrub.
Is this the way?
Out in a blaze of glory?
Some day I'll find the answer
some day I'll
end the story.

(Worth, 1971)

Again

The song has some connection with «Just Good Friends» I suppose... a combination of longing, regret and absolute newness.

I stretch my hands,
clutch vacant laughter
in silence and sweet, sweet pain;
without demand,
but with a longing
for what will never come again.

I smell your perfume
on the sheets in the morning:
it lingers like the patterns
on the window after rain,
a past that lives,
if only for the present,
but which is gone and will never come again.

To your sad eyes,
turned away, mine say
«Do you? Did you? How?»
As the darkness
slides away the day
shows what was
and makes what is now.

I see your picture
as though it were a mirror
but there's no part of you
outside the frame
except the change that you gave to me:
this will never come again.

I am me,
I was so before you,
but afterwards I am not the same.
You are gone
and I am with you:
this will never come again.

Faint-Heart And The Sermon

With my face drained of colour
and my brain of blood,
like Billy Budd
I'm lashed to the grating.
With senses growing duller
and with quaking heart
I make a start
at temperature equating
and my lungs suck useless air.

Like paraplegic dancers
in formation team
my understanding seems
hidebound in its movements,
contemplating answers
that could break my bonds —
to be half wrong
would be, in me, improvement...
but my comprehensive faculties are impaired.

And it seems absurd, but now all I've heard
fades in empty words and is worthless
as the Human Laugh rocks the cenotaph
but the joke is half-true, and mirthless.

Trying to trace a reason
from the spinning words
but all I've heard
seem at odds with their meanings,
phonetically pleasing
but delivered in such haste
that in their place
my mind commences screaming.

On the verge of belief I crash onto the reef
and a cynical thief steals my senses.
So I cling to the pew with dimensions askew,
and recognition refuses present tenses.
All the lives of the saints demonstrate that my faint
is a minor complaint, but the end is
nowhere in sight.
Why can't I find me a way to go?

I don't want to die in the nave,

but I know it may be with me some day
so I've got to find a way I can save up
my energies, and find a cause to pray
to something for something
to which I can give my creed.

I'd gladly succumb to the wave,
if I thought the water taught a way to light;
I'd gladly succumb — I'm not brave,
and it's easy to believe what the preacher says
except for the conflict raging between my head
and my brain.
I don't want to die, but just the same,
some day...

Waiting for a moment
that I know will come
when I'll have to run
and find another sermon.
Everyman and Norman
and the talking priest —
still, I am at least holding all the doors open.
Inside me all outside is shared.

As the cracked bells peal it all seems unreal
but the seventh seal stays unbroken
and the Offertory plate tenders no escape —
still I refuse to scrape up a token
of esteem for these false
alleyways of the course;
I must try to divorce sense from sensing.
Tell me again,
tell me the way to go.

So when I talk to myself
although I take good care to listen
my heart grows ever more faint,
there's something missing?

The Comet, The Course, The Tail

They say we are endowed with Free Will —
at least that justifies our need for indecision.

But between our instincts and the lust to kill
we bow our heads in submission.
They say that no man is an island
but then they say our castles are our homes;
it's felt the choice is ours, between peace and violence...
oh, yes, we choose, alone?

While the comet spreads its tail across the sky
it nowhere near defines the course it flies,
nor does it find its own direction.

Though the path of the comet be sure,
its constitution is not
so its meaning is possibly more
than the tracing of a tail
in one brief shot at glory.

Love and peace and individuality,
so order and society are man-made?
War and hate and dark depravity,
or are we slaves?
Channeling aggressive energies,
the Death Wish and the Will to survive,
into finding and preserving enemies,
is that the only way we know that we're alive?

In the slaughterhouse all corpses smell the same,
whether queens or pawns or innocents at the game;
in the cemetery a uniform cloaks the graves
except for outward pomp and circumstance.

There is a time set in the calendar
when all reason seems barely enough
to sustain all the shooting stars:
times are rough.
I'm waiting for something to happen here,
it feels as though it's long overdue...
maybe a restatement of yesteryear
or something entirely new.

And the knowledge that we gain in part
always leads us closer to the very start,
and to the founding questions:
How can I tell that the road signed to hell
doesn't lead up to heaven?
What can I say when, in some obscure way,

I am my own direction?

Gog

Some call me SATAN others have me GOD
some name me NEMO...I am unborn.
Some speak of me in anagrams,
some grieve upon my wrath...
the ones who give me service
I grant my scorn.
My words are
'Too late', 'Never', 'Impossible', and 'Gone';
my home is in the sunset and the dawn.
My Name is locked in silence,
sometimes it's whispered out of spite.
All gates are locked,
all doors are barred and bolted,
there is no place for flight.
Will you not come to me
and love me for one more night?

Some see me shining, others have me dull;
gun-metal and cut diamond — I am ALL.
Some swear they see me weeping
in the poppy-fields of France...
in the tumbling of the dice see them fall!
Some laugh and see me laughing
down the corridors of power:
some see my sign on Caesar and his pall.
My face is robed in darkness,
sometimes you glimpse me in the shade,
All friends have gone,
all calls are weak and wasted,
there is no more to say.
Will you not crawl to me
and love me for one more day?

Some wish me empty, others will me full,
some crave of me infinity — I am NONE.
Some look for me in symbols,
some trace my line in stars,
some count my ways in numbers:
I am No One.

Some chronicle my movements,
my colours and my clothes,
some trace the work in progress
— it is done.

My soul is cast in crystal
yet unrevealed beneath the knife.
All wells are dry, all bread is masked in fungus
and now disease is rife.
Will you not run from this
and love me for one more life?

Magog (In Bromine Chambers)

In Bromine Chambers
there can be no mercy,
no bitter flagellation for your sins;
no forgiveness and no sackcloth
can cease the dance
of ashes on the wind.

Too late now for a wish
to change all wishing;
too late to change, to breathe, to grow.
Too late to smother out the tell-tale footprints
which mark your passage through the greying snow.

Nadir's Big Chance (1975)

The way of it is this: I was sitting in the waiting-room when I gradually became aware that I was not alone — or at least, not singular. This lasted only a moment, however, and that my alter ego, Nadir, took me over. So that I was both him in body and myself in observation. Light, a curious, desultory silence; several moments of disorienting neo-dematerialization. An ice-blue Stratocaster spinning through space; Nadir crashing his way through distorted three-chord wonders. The anarchic presence of Nadir — this loud, aggressive perpetual seventeen-year-old — has temporary through complete dominion, and I can only submit, gladly, and play his music — the beery punk songs, the weepy ballads, the soul struts. This album is, more or less, what he plays and who he is; how could I deny him his simple say? After all, with the state the world's in there's always room for another Nadir.

P.H.

Nadir's Big Chance

My first three chord trick. I recall driving everyone out of the control room with the SHEER VOLUME of the (neo)solo, played on a cheap and wonky lap steel guitar. The tune was written when I was sixteen. These lyrics came later!

I've been hanging around, waiting for my chance
to tell you what I think about the music that's gone down
to which you madly danced — frankly, you know that it stinks.
I'm gonna scream, gonna shout, gonna play my guitar
until your body's rigid and you see stars.

Look at all the jerks in their tinsel glitter suits,
pansying around; look at all the nerks
in their leather platform boots, making with the heavy sound...
I'm gonna stamp on the stardust and scream till I'm ill —
if the guitar don't get ya, the drums will.

Now's my big break — let me up on the stage,
I'll show you what it's all about; enough of the fake,
bang your feet in a rage, tear down the walls and let us out!
We're more than mere morons, perpetually conned,
so come on everybody, smash the system with the song.

Smash the system with the song!

The Institute Of Mental Health, Burning

It was the first day of July;
no wind breathed in the sky
when a pin-striped suit
saw that the Institute of Mental Health was burning.

He stood upon the corner
where the sun was warmer...
looking across the street,
he moved the shackles on his feet
as the Institute was burning.

Flames were roaring, singing like a thunderstorm;
smoke was pouring straight up to the sky;
windows smashing, Gothic doors and lintels fall;
timbers crashing and we both know why.

Nobody else came by to stare;
you see, they didn't really care.
Can't call the fire brigade —
none of them had been paid
and so the Institute was burning.

Throughout the city, people say it isn't pretty,
everyone agrees, and everyone feels glad;
doctored brains celebrate and everyone waves their chains...
It's a pity they're all mad.

The Institute of Mental Health
spontaneously killed itself.
Ashes to ashes
and dust to dust:
my chains began to rust
as the Institute was burning, burning, burning.

(Chris Judge Smith)

Open Your Eyes (The Locarno Song)

I was sitting in the dance-hall,

but my mind was far away
so when the usherette walked over
I didn't know quite what to say.
I tried to look cool
but I knew that I blew it somehow.
Her fishnet tights took me quite by surprise...
I had to open my eyes.

I told her I was dancing
but she didn't seem to hear;
she asked if I wanted to learn judo,
then she threw me out on my ear
before I'd even had time to take a bow.
I landed on the street, all dishevelled my disguise
but I really opened her eyes.

So if you're leaning over the balcony
or hanging around the floor
these are the last of the days of the Locarnos —
there really are no more.
And the usherette smiles,
but she's not telling all she knows...
But there's time in the end for us all to get wise
if we only open our eyes.

Nobody's Business

The anti-outro at the start is typical of the welling-up of the noise. The song dates from '67: the final mix wrapped up a tighty-riffed structure in a wall of noise. Good thing, too.

Look out through your dark hair,
tell me the colour of your eyes when they're cool;
look out through the dark ages
and tell me what's covert, transfixing you.

Oh, you're nobody's business,
oh, you're nobody's business
and the patterns of your life
are suddenly twisted and torn
and gone are all the clothes that you've worn.
Just like yesterday's papers

you're tired and forlorn
and you're no-one.

Look back at the photos you've saved,
dead mementoes of your modelling days;
I look through all my cuttings of you,
but they all seem so lost, so dead, out of phase.

Oh, you're nobody's business...

I think back to the girl that I knew —
she doesn't seem so very much like you:
she used to care about her smile and not her face...
that's before it was her fortune and took over her soul's place.

Oh, you're nobody's business...

Papering yesterday's pages,
tapering off in the storm,
you're no-one.

Been Alone So Long

Been alone so long
that I've forgotten what it's like
to feel somebody next to me
and hear her breathing peacefully
when I wake up at night.

Been alone so long
that I've forgotten what to say —
if I meet somebody who
might easily resemble you
I smile, but look away...
I look away.

Been alone so long
that I've forgotten what to do:
how to make the whole thing right
and how to help if she's uptight
and when to run and when to fight...
how to make her stay the night —
that's if I ever knew.

Been alone so long
that I've forgotten what it's like
to feel somebody next to me
and hear her breathing peacefully
when I wake up at night,
wake up at night

(Chris Judge Smith)

Pompeii

The golden dream, the seat of all decorum,
a satellite to match the light of Rome;
its silver children chatter in the Forum,
the bath-house, and the brothels, and their homes
about the latest fashions for their clothes.
Across the Tyrrhenian Sea comes drifting
a song that none of them have ever known.

The golden dream that holds back all the hours
for the ladies in their Dionysian rites,
blonde heads all garlanded with flowers,
wine and love and laughter through the night
in constant masque and pageant, constant flight.
The ground below them whispers in a murmur
of passion which is hotter yet than white.

The golden dream, the city of all cities,
its towers piercing into azure sky,
whose hand is dealt, regardless of all pity,
condemned to martyrdom, but not to die.
Two lovers look up from their hidden bower.
The wine has stood too long and it turns sour.

I see the tall and bending of your streets
but now they echo only leather tourist feet
and waking, ashen, grey-blue blinding death
your sudden winding-sheet.

Shingle Song

*This old song's one of many strands from the seashore.
Uncomplicated — a simple song and a simple sentiment.*

You can see in the last light that's graced as dawn
that there's nothing in my heart but pain
as I stand, facing sea, knowing that you're gone...
all the elements rage to explain
that I should really be on my way
but there is something
which ensures I must stay.

Beneath the roar of the seething surf,
beneath the caterwaul of scattered call wind
thoughts and gestures unspoken, unheard
and now the dance of rapture begins
as the waves rush along across the beach —
like you, like your love
forever out of reach.

Look at the sky, but it's empty now;
look at the sea, it holds nothing but despair.
I raise my eyes, but my head stays bowed...
I look to my side, but you're not there.
And I can't get you out of my mind,
no, no, no, no, I just can't get you from my mind.

Airport

I stand on the tallest building
and stare down at the grey runway
and the tail-smoke of the Boeing jet
that's taking you so far away.

Believe me, I don't want you to leave me;
look in my eyes and you'll see them
filled with pain.
Imagine just how sad I'll be
in some future day when I turn
and no longer see your face.
All I can now cry is goodbye, love, goodbye.

In a week, in a month, in a year,
in a lifetime how I'll feel none can tell.
All I know is now you're going
there's really no-one here to help.

Believe me...

Already it's too late, you're through the boarding-gate
and walking on the tarmac.
Already you are free, already you've left me
and cannot bear to look back, can you?

A brief taxi on the runway,
then up into the stilling night sky;
and I'm standing on the observation tower,
my eyes too dimmed by distance to cry.

Believe me...

All I can now do is walk away alone,
without you.

People You Where Going To

Your father has just left your mother,
gone off to live with his latest lover;
she sits there, just staring.
So you get back to your own flat
because the atmosphere in there
is so bad you can't bear it.
And the people you were going to America with
just left on the dawn plane
without you,
without you.

The people in the downstairs flat
are no longer there now because they left
the gas tap on, they're all dead.
So you've no-one left to talk to,
you just lie there in melancholy,
half-naked on your unmade bed.
And the people you were going to Africa with
just left on the Southern Star

without you,
without you.

Yes, the haze that's been forming round your window-panes
is now protracted and poisoned
and you cannot feel a portion of the world outside.

Can you imagine the way you'd feel
if all these things had happened to you
and the doctor says you're dying?
That is the way that I feel now
on finding that your love belongs
to someone else and not I.
My chance of heaven has just blown away
upon a passing cloud and there is nothing that I can do
without you.

The people you were going to
have left, gone far away
and you're lonely.

(Manchester, 1967)

Birthday Special

*What a silly song. But it has got that mad (overloaded
Nadir era) forward drive. Here's too all the parties.*

I've got something to say,
and it ain't the usual sort of sob-story
that you hear every day.
I've got something to ask,
and I know that now's the time,
now all the rooms of the party are dark.
Proffer me the candy,
yes, I understand is fine;
blow another candle out
and throw another line...
Birthday girl, I've got something for you,
there's ice in the cauldron, look out now;
birthday girl, here comes a special
like Hansel and Gretel never had.

There's parrots in the pantry
and there's lizards in the loo;
there's bloaters in the bathroom
and this party is a zoo;
I'm sitting in the kitchen
trying hard to talk to you
Birthday girl...

I just wanted to say
that I'd like to make this the happiest of all your birthdays
and if that means turning the key
then I'll turn it with you and there'll be no doubt
about the way I agree,
Birthday girl...

Two Or Three Spectres

«Sod the music,» said the man in the suit,
«I understand profit and without that, it's no use.
Why don't you go away and write commercial songs;
come back in three years, that shouldn't be too long...»
He's a joker and an acrobat,
a record exec. in a Mayfair flat
with Altec speakers wall to wall,
a Radford and a Revox and through it all he plays
strictly nowhere Muzak.

«Hey, listen, baby, this band's got a lot of soul...
if we can beat that out of them I see a disc of gold!
Give them an image, maybe glitter, maybe sex,
maybe outrage, maybe elegance —
how about as nervous wrecks?»
Signs up the product at two percent,
justified by vinyl shortage and the increased rent
on the yacht he has to hire to make his pitch at Midem
and all the press receptions for his business friends
who spill their Taittinger upon the floor
while the band sip English lager just outside the door.

Treble, alto, bass clefs on the page,
crotchets, quavers, minims all the rage
but you'll never find a pound note in the score —
it's there when it's strictly merchandise,

through all the propagated lies about what the whole thing's for.
He'll make you a star, he'll make you so famous
that all you desire is to be left nameless,
drained of all you felt you had to offer at the start.

Not without blame, either, are the gentlemen of the press:
you can talk about the state of music,
they will write about your dress.
Play them the new album, they will say it's great (or not) —
when the articles come out, they're all about
how many dogs you've got.
God to keep the human interest high,
and the hacks are only too willing to comply,
pander to the ego, build up frail men as gods —
but somewhere in the process, the prime purpose is forgotten.

Groupies offer their bodies, the hangers-on their coke;
it's all very jolly — what a joke!
Fellini creatures cluster round the dressing-room,
the heavenly bodies all got to have their moons.
In the cult of the superman the music plays a supporting role
and far more important is the shape of his nose,
the size of his codpiece and the cut of his clothes...
soul and feeling always take second place
to the bump and grind of a Fender bass.
Frankly, most musicians bore me — but not as much as those
who chase the glory to bask in reflected light,
making the man much more important
than his arpeggios and mordants,
when it's the other way that's right.

On the values by which this world makes its heroes
then the best violinist ever was Nero,
because he had the most Press
and his fire gimmick was simply the best.

We got the live thing too,
the Human Zoo:
Ten thousand arms are raised, just like the Hitler Youth —
ten thousand peace signs mark the entry of the sax.
Ten thousand peace signs,
but they're different from the back.

The Undercover Man

Here at the glass —
all the usual problems, all the habitual farce.
You ask, in uncertain voice,
what you should do,
as if there were a choice but to carry on
miming the song
and hope that it all works out right.

Tonight it all seems so strange —
my spirit feels rigid, my body deranged;
still that's only from one point of view
and we can't have illusion between me and you,
my constant friend, ever close at hand —
you and the undercover man.

I reflect:
'It's very strange to be going through this change
with no idea of what it's all been about
except in the context of time...'
Oh, but I shirk it, I've half a mind not to work it all out.
Is this madness just the recurring wave of total emotion,
or a hide for the undercover man,
or a litany — all the signs are there of fervent devotion —
or the cracking of the dam?

It's cracked; smashed and bursting over you,
there was no reason to expect such disaster.
Now, panicking, you burst for air,
drowning, you know you care
for nothing and no-one but yourself
and would deny even this hand
which stretches out towards you to help.
But would I leave you in this moment of your trial?
Is it my fault that I'm here to see you crying?
These phantom figures all around you should have told you,
you should have found out by now,
if you hadn't gone and tried to do it all by yourself.

Even now we are not lost:

if you look out at the night
you'll see the colours and the lights
seem to say people are not far away,
at least in distance,
and it's only our own dumb resistance
that's making us stay.
When the madness comes
let it flood on down and over me sweetly,
let it drown the parts of me weak and blessed and damned,
let it slake my life, let it take my soul and living completely,
let it be who I am.

There may not be time for us all to run in tandem together —
the horizon calls with its parallel lines.
It may not be right for you to have and hold in one way forever
and yet you still have time,
you still have time.

Scorched Earth

Just one crazy moment while the dice are cast,
he looks into the future and remembers what is past,
wonders what he's doing on this battlefield,
shrugs to his shadow, impatient, too proud yet to kneel.

In his wake he leaves scorched earth and work in vain;
smoke drifts up behind him — he is free again,
free to run before the onslaught of a deadly foe,
leaving nothing fit for pillage, hardly leaving home.
It's far too late to turn, unless it's to stone.
Charging madly forward, tracks across the snow;
wind screams madness to him, ever on he goes,
leaving spoor to mark his passage, trace his weary climb.
Cross the moor and make the headland —
stumbling, wayward, blind.
In the end his footprints extend as one single line.

This latest exponent of heresy is goaded into an attack,
persuaded to charge at his enemy.
Too late, he knows it is,
too late now to turn back, too soon by far to falter.
The past sits uneasily at his rear,
he's walking right into the trap,

surrounded, but striving through will and fear.
Ahead of him he knows there waits an ambushade
but the dice slip through his fingers
and he's living from day to day,
carrying his world around upon his back,
leaving nothing behind but the tell-tale of his track.

He will not be hostage, he will not be slave,
no snare of past can trap him, though the future may.
Still he runs and burns behind him in advanced retreat;
still his life remains unfettered — he denies defeat.
It's far too late to turn, unless it's to stone.
Leave the past to burn — at least that's been his own.

Scorched earth, that's all that's left when he's done;
holding nothing but beholden to no-one,
claiming nothing, out of no false pride, he survives.
Snow tracks are all that's left to be seen
of a man who entered the course of a dream,
claiming nothing but the life he's known
— this, at least, has been his own.

Arrow

Stub towers in the distance,
riders cross the blasted moor
against the horizon.
Fickle promises of treaty,
fatal harbingers of war, futile orisons
swirl as one in this flight, this mad chase,
this surge across the marshy mud landscape
until the meaning is forgotten.
Hood masks the eager face, skin stretched and sallow,
headlong into the chilling night, as swift as any arrow.

Feet against the flagstones,
fingers scrabbling at the lock,
craving protection.
«Sanctuary!» croaks a voice,
half-strangled by the shock of its rejection.
Shot the bolt in the wall, rusted the key;
now the echoes of all frightful memory
intrude in the silence.

What a crawl against the slope — dark loom the gallows.
One touch to the chapel door, how swiftly comes the arrow.

«Compassion» you plead,
as though they kept it in a box —
that's long since been empty.
I'd like to help you somehow,
but I'm in the self-same spot:
my condition exempts me.
We are all on the run, on our knees;
the sundial draws a line upon eternity
across every number.
How long the time seems, how dark the shadow,
how straight the eagle flies, how straight towards his arrow.
How long the night is — why is this passage so narrow?
How strange my body feels, impaled upon the arrow.

The Sleepwalkers

At night, this mindless army, ranks unbroken by dissent,
is moved into action and their pace does not relent.
In step, with great precision, these dancers of the night
advance against the darkness — how implacable their might!
Eyes undulled by moon, their arms and legs akimbo,
they walk and live, hoping soon to surface from this limbo.
Their minds, anticipating the dawn of the day,
shall never know what's waiting mere insight away
— too far, too soon.

Senses dimmed in semi-sentience, only wheeling through this plane,
only seeing fragmented images, prematurely curtailed by the brain,
but breathing, living, knowing in some measure at least
the soul which roots the matter of both Beauty and the Beast.
From what tooth or claw does murder spring,
from what flesh and blood does passion?
Both cut through the air with the pendulum's swing
in deadly but delicate fashion.
And every range of feeling is there in the dream
and every logic's reeling in the force of the scream;
the senses sting.
And though I may be dreaming and reality stalls
I only know the meaning of sight and that's all
and that's nothing.

The columns of the night advance,
infectiously, their cryptic dance
gathers converts to the fold —
in time the whole raw world will pace these same steps
on into the same bitter end.

Somnolent muster — now the dancing dead
forsake the shelter of their secure beds,
awaken to a slumber whose depths they dread,
as if the ground they tread would give way
beneath the solemn weight of their conception.
I'd search the hidden corners of all this world,
make reason of the sensory whorl
if I only had time,
but soon the dream is ended.

Tonight, before you lay down to the sweetness of your sleep
do you question your surrender to the drop from Lover's Leap
or does the anaesthetic darkness take hold on its very own?
Does your body rise in service with not one dissenting groan?
These waking dreams of life and death
in the mirror are twisted and buckled;
lashes flicker, a catch of breath,
skin whitening at the knuckles.
The army of sleepwalkers shake their limbs and are loose
and though I am a talker, I can phrase no excuse
not to rise again.
In the chorus of the night-time I belong
and I, like you, must dance to that moonlight song
and in the end I, too, must pay the cost of this life.
If all is lost none is known
and how could we lose what we've never owned?
Oh, I'd search out every knowledge that I could find,
unravel all the mysteries of mind,
if I only had time,
if I only had time,
but soon my time is ended.

Still Life (VdGG, 1976)

Pilgrims

Sometimes you feel so far away,
distance from all the action of the play,
unable to grasp significance,
marking the plot with diffident dismay,
standed at centre stage,
scrabbling through your diary for a lost
page: unsure of the dream.
Kicking a stone across the beach,
aching for love and comfort out of reach,
the way ahead seems to be so bleak,
there's no-one with any friendship left to
speak or show you any relation
between your present and future
situation: lost to the dream.
Away, away, away: look to the future day
for hope, some form of peace within the
growing storm.
I climb through the evening,
alive and believing:
in time we shall all know our goals
and so finally, home.
For now all is secret —
though how could I speak it,
allow me the dream in my eye.
I've been waiting for such a long time
just to see it at last,
all of the hands tightly clasped,
all of us pilgrims.

Walking in silence down the coast,
merely to journey — here hope is the most;
merely to know there is an end,
all of us — lovers, brothers, sisters, friends
hand in hand.
Shining footprints on the wet sand
lead to the dream.
The time has come, the tide has almost
run and drained the deep: I rise from
lifelong sleep.

It seems such a long time
I've dreamed but now, awake,
I can see we are pilgrims and so
must walk this road,
unknown in our purpose,
alone, but now worthless.
and home ever calling us on.
We've been waiting here so long,
all of our hands joined in hope,
holding the weight on the rope,
all of us pilgrims.

Still Life

Citadel reverberates to a thousand voices,
now dumb;
What have we become?
What have we chosen to be?
Now all history is reduced to the syllables
or our name —
nothing can ever be the same:
now the Immortals are here.
At the time it seemed a reasonable course
to harness all the force
of life without the threat of death, but
soon we found that boredom and inertia
are not negative, but all the law we know,
and dead are will and words like survival
Arrival at immunity from all age, all fear
and all end...
why do I pretend?
Our essence is distilled
and all familiar taste is now drained
and though purity is maintained
it leaves us sterile, living through the
millions of years,
a laugh as close as any tear;
living, if you claim that all
that entails is breathing, eating,
defecating, screwing, drinking, spewing,
sleeping, sinking ever down and down
and ultimately passing away time which

no longer has any meaning.

Take away the threat of death and all
you're left with is a round
if make-believe.

Marshall every sullen breath and though
you're ultimately bored by endless ecstasy
it's still the ring by which you hope to be
engaged
to marry the girl who will give you
forever — it's crazy and plainly
that simply is not enough.

What is this dullest and bluntest of pains,
such that my eyes never close without
feeling it there?

What abject despair demands an end to
all things of infinity?

If we have gained, how do we now meet
the cost?

What have we bargained, and what have
we lost?

What have we relinquished, never
knowing it was thee?

What thoughts now of holding fast the
line, defying death and time?

Everything we had is gone,
everything we laboured for and favoured
more than earthly things reveals
the hollow ring of false hope and
false deliverance.

But now the nuptial bed is made, the
dowry has been paid:
the toothless, haggard features of eternity
now welcome me between the sheets
to couple with her withered body —
my wife.

Hers forever,
hers forever,
hers forever,
in still life.

Lacking sleep and food and vision
here I am again, encamped upon you
floor, craving sanctuary and
nourishment, encouragement and
sanctity and more.

The streets seemed very crowded,
I put on my bravest guide —
I know you know that I am acting,
I can see it in your eyes.

In the harsh light of freedom I know
that I cannot deny that I have wasted
time, have frittered it away in idle boasts
of my freedom and fidelity, when simpler
words would have profited the most...

... it isn't enough in the end, when I'm
looking for hope.

Through the organ-monkey screams as the
pipes begin to spit
still he'll go through the dance routines
just as long as he thinks they'll fit,
just as long as he knows that it's dance,
smile — or quit.

Like a monkey I dance to a strange tune
when all of those years I've longed to lie
with you but have bogged myself down in
the web of talk, quack philosophy
and sophistry —

at physically I've always balked, like the
man in the chair who believes it's beyond
him to walk.

I've been hiding behind words,
fearing a deeper flame exists,
faintly aware of the passage
of opportunities I have missed,
But the nearness and the smell of you,
La Rossa from head to toe...

I don't know what I'm telling you,
but I think you ought to know
soon the dam wall will break, soon the
water will flow.

Though the organ-monkey groans
as the organ-grinder plays
he's hoping, at the most,

for an end to the dancing days;
still, he hops up and down on his perch
in th usual jerky way.
Though it might mean an end to all
friendship there's something
I'm working up to say.

Think of me what you will;
I know that you think you feel my pain —
no matter if that's just the surface.
If we made love now would that change
all that has gone before?
Of course it would, there's no way it could
ever be the same...
one more line crossed,
one more mystery explained.
Now I need more than just words, though
the options are plain that lead from all
momentary action.
I we make love now it will change all that
is yet to be...
never could we agree in the same
way again.
One more world lost,
one more heaven gained.

Ls Rossa, you know me, you read me as
though I am glass;
though I know it there's no way in which I can pass —
though it means that you'll finish my story
at last I'd trade all the clever talk,
the joking, the smoking and the quips,
all the midnight conversation, all the
friendship, all the words and all the trips
for the warmth of your body,
the more vivid touch of your lips.
All bridges burning behind me,
all safety beyond reach,
the monkey feels his chains out blindly,
only to find himself released.
Take me, take me now and hold me deep
inside your ocean body
wash me as some flotsam to the shore,
there leave me lying evermore!
Drown me, drown me now and hold me
down before your naked hunger,

burn me at the altar of the night —
give me life!

My Room

Searching for diamonds in the sulphur
mine, leaning on props which are rotten,
hoping for anything, looking for a sign
that I am not forgotten.
Lost in a labyrinth of future mystery,
tracing my steps, all mistaken,
trusting to everything, praying it can be
that I am not forsaken.

I wait by the door, wondering
when you will come and keep me warm.
I pray for the end of the night,
hoping the light will still the storm
which presently betrays me;
helpless sea-monster stranded on the
shore, marooned in an ecstasy of waiting.
I yearn, although knowing that I shall
dive no more
in the tide already racing

My lungs burst to cry: «Finally
how could you leave me here to die?
I freeze in the chill of this place
with no friendly face to smile goodbye —
how could you let it happen?»

How could you let it happen?
Dreams, hopes and promises, fragments
out of time;
all of these things have been spoken;
still you don't understand how it feels
when I'm waiting for them to be broken.

Childlike Faith In Childhood's End

Existence is a stage on which we pass, a
sleep-walk trick for mind and heart:
it's hopeless, I know,
but onward I must go
and try to make a start
at seeing something more than day-to-day
survival chased by final death.
If I believed this the sum
of the life to which we've come
I wouldn't waste my breath.
Somehow, there must be more.
There was a time when more was felt than
known,
but now, entrenched inside my sett,
in light more mundane, thought rattles
round my brain;
we live, we die... and yet?

In the beginning there was order and
destiny but now that path has reached the
border and on our knees is no way to face
the future, whatever it be.
Though the forces which hold us in place
last through eons in unruffled grace
we, too, wear the face of creation

As anti-matter sucks and pulses
periodically the bud unfolds, the bloom
is dead, all space is living history.
It seems as though time must betray us,
yet we're alive
and though I see no God to save us still we
survive
through the centuries of progress
which don't get us very far.
All illusion! All is bogus — we don't yet
know what we are... laughing, hoping
praying, joking, Son of Man!
With lowered eyes but lifting hearts,
we're grains of sand
and though, in time, the sea may claim us
for its own
we are the rocks which root the future —
on us it grows!

We might not be there to share it if

eternity's a jest
but I think that I can hear it
if the next life is the best.
Even if there is a heaven when we die
endless bliss would be as meaningless
as the lie that always comes as answer to
the question 'Why do we see through the
eyes of creation?'
Adrift without a course, it's very lonely
here, our only conjecture what lies
behind the dark.
Still, I find I can cling to a lifeline,
think of a lifetime which means more than
my own one — dreams of a grander thing
than we are,
Time and Space hand heavy on my
shoulders;
when all life is over who can say
no mutated force shall remain?
Though the towers of the city are denied
to we men of clay
still we know we shall scale the heights
some day.
Frightened in the silence —
frightened, but thinking very hard,
let us make computation of the stars.

Older, wiser, sadder, blinder, watch us
run; faster, longer, harder, stronger, now
it comes: colour blisters, image splinters
gravitate towards the centre, in final
splendour disintegrate.
The universe now beckons
and Man, too, must take His place...
just a few last fleeting seconds
to wander in the waste
and the children who were ourselves
move on
reincarnation stills its now perfected song
and at last we are freed of the bonds
of creation.

All the jokers and gaolers, all the junkies
and slavers too,
all the throng who have danced a merry
tune — human we can all be,

but Humanity we must rise above
in the name of all faith and hope and love.
There's a time for all pilgrims, and a time
for the fakers too,
there's a time when we all will stand alone
and nude;
naked to the galaxies —
naked, but clothed in the overview... as
we reach Childhood's End we start anew.

And though dark is the highway
and the peak's distance breaks my heart,
for I never shall see it, still I play my part,
believing that what waits for us is the
cosmos compared to the dust of the
past...
in the death of mere humans life shall start!

World Record (VdGG, 1976)

When She Comes

Slow motion in the quiet of your room
so potent is the smell of her perfume
that you think she's eternal
that you think she's everything
— but no-one knows what she is...
Repentance for all you should have said —
her entrance seems to raise you from the dead
and you think she's really with you
and you think she'll always stay,
always ready to forgive you,
always ready to grant you her mercy
— but in her own way.

When she comes she'll be a stranger:
struck dumb you'll try to protest
as the drum beats out the danger,
too late — you should have noticed
that the lady with her skin so white
like something out of Blake and Burne-Jones
always blocked out the light
and shadowed all you owned.

Still you think she's forever,
yesterday and tomorrow
— but no-one knows where she is.
Still you swear that you can win her
and your prayer is that she'll want you;
aware, once a saint, now you're a sinner
and you sins are going to haunt you
when the lady with her skin so white
like something out of Edgar Allen Poe
holds your hand so very tight
and you hope she'll never let go.

Easy targets, easy cross-words, easy life:
these key margins leave you balanced on the knife,
bleeding darkly. In the end it all comes down
to sleazy bargains.
That hidden key — you tried so hard to find it;
all you can conceive is the effort to be worthy.

Even now you need to be reminded
that La Belle Dame is without mercy.
The lady with her skin so white
— you never did quite catch her name —
now she holds you in the night
and she'll never let go again
she'll never let go again

A Place To Survive

It's easy to say, when you're so down,
that everything's pointless;
your eyes burn, your ears howl,
your limbs are disjointed.
Barren fields, the barren earth, never more will it flower —
rub your face and your hands in the dirt:
now is the hour.
So stand straight looking over your shoulder,
walk on though you fear to arrive,
don't wait till you know that it's over,
be strong — it's your place to survive.

While the holocaust rages around you,
be the eye of the storm;
though the extent of disaster astounds you,
forearmed is forewarned.
You may have passed time in happier ways
but there are other mountains to climb:
you've never lived as you're living today —
now is the time.
Stand straight though your back breaks from trying,
walk on — even now you must strive.
Don't wait; while you're waiting, you're dying.
Be strong — it's your place to survive.

The universe is doubtless unfolding
just exactly as it should
and these dreams of remorse or foreboding
won't do you any good.
The joy, the passion, possessions you own,
the bitterness and the pain,
the end of everything you've ever known —
all these are ordained.

Stand straight looking into the future,
walk on — we've each got our own lives.
Don't wait for the guru or tutor,
be strong — it's your place to survive.

Stand straight looking over your shoulder,
walk on; through it hurts, you're alive.
Don't wait — if you wait it's all over:
be strong — it's your right to survive.

Masks

He's a man of the past and one of the present,
a man who hides behind a mask behind a mask.
A clown, a fool,
believing it cool to be down
or that the game is all about who laughs the last.

So he tells all his problems to his friends and relations,
exposes his neuroses to their view.
They accept as fact
every masochistic mumble of his act;
how could they know what was false and what was true?

Sometimes when he wakes
he feels he's walked into a dream
but all it takes
to remind him things are what they seem
is the belief
that the man behind the mask can really dance.
Pirouetting smile
he sees himself cavorting,
Pierrot for awhile
before aborting
to find relief
in the shelter of the dark, most telling mask.

After all the pantomimes are ended
he peels all the make-up off his face
to reveal beneath
the tears running all down his cheeks:
alone, he opens to the world... but it's much too late.
He's been left, in the end, without a face.

Meurglys III (The Songwriter's Guild)

These days I mainly just talk to plants and dogs —
all human contact seems painful,risky,odd,
so I stay acting god in my own universe
where I trade cigarettes in return for songs.
The deal's made harder the longer I go on:
I find me gone from all but secret languages.

If only could phrase satisfactory words
in conversation to make my passion heard...
If only...

Meurglys III,he's my friend,
the only one that I can trust
to let it be without pretence
— there's no-one else.
It's killing me,but in the end
there's no-one else I know is true;
there's none in all the masks of men.
There's nothing else
but my guitar...
I suppose he'll have to do.

Talking in tongues is easy when you know how,
quite pleasing,but still nothing works out right.
Pressurised lungs,heart bleeding,you'd better slow down
and show that you can make it through the night.
However dark it seems,the present is just the present,
beyond it no darkness lies concealed
and through these desperate dreams,
this longing for friends and comfort
you know that in the end all will be revealed.
When no more plants or dogs or rooms are there
to hear you
and no-one is left near you,then you'll see:
in the end there's only you and Meurglys III
and this is just what you chose to be,
fool!

Though I know all this is just escape,
I run because I don't know where the prison lies.

In songs like this I can bear the weight...
I running still
I shall until
one day I hope that I'll arrive.

Wondering

I will arise;
in the depth,I will open my eyes;
as my breath almost fails me,survive.

Wait — there's something unclear,
there's something I fear now drawing close.
Could it be you? Whose is that voice?
Is it now time to make a choice?
Ah — that irrational pain!
This ridiculous brain now bursts with joy.
Could it be me? Could it be now?
Should I begin to take my vows?

I will return;
as I live,as I breath,as I burn
I swear I will come through
with my hands stretching out in the dark,
with my eye pressed up tight to the glass,
wondering if it's all been true.

Over (1977)

Crying Wolf

(Conscious) self-parody has supposedly never been a strong suit of mine. This song at least has a twinkle in the eye! A rare foray into questionable soloing, too.

You turn out the lights and sit alone,
trying to pretend that it's anguish,
start at the ring of a telephone,
throw down all your food at the banquet,
keep a close eye on all you own,
while leaving it all to languish...
Is this what makes you happy?
Is this what brings you joy?
Your excuses are so crappy...
silly boy.

You take all the love and throw it aside
to wallow in your sorrow,
expect everyone to know how you feel inside,
to forgive and forget come tomorrow;
repaying all your debts with uncommon pride
but denying that you ever borrowed...
Is this what makes you perfect?
Is this what makes you free?
Just how long did you rehearse it,
or does it just come naturally?

Crying wolf from the depth of your sheep's heart,
crying fire from the depth of the well
in an endless parade of repeat starts,
just how long will it last — can you tell?

Until all your friends and lovers
are simply bored with the pretence?
It'll be too late then to discover
just exactly what you meant
and what was true
and what was false...
the wolf turned into human,

the killer with remorse.

Crying pain as though that should be pleasure,
crying anger as though that should be revenge,
crying sorrow as though that were a treasure —
your treasure will find you in the end.

When all of your friends have gone away,
unwilling to put up with the danger
that lies in each spiteful word you say,
you'll be left, a greying wolf in a manger
and when you've raised your last howl
and destroyed all that you can
with rotting teeth and slack jowls
you'll be left a lonely man.
And when it's nearly finished
and you know the end is near
with true sorrow undiminished
there'll be no-one left to hear...
Your desperate cries,
they all come out as bleats:
you thought you were a wolf-man,
but you're really
just a sheep.

Autumn

*Any over-idealised relationship is, sooner or later,
going to hit the reefs. A little bit more realism and
acceptance, please! Everything goes around and it's all a
walk upon the water.*

So here we are, alone —
our children have grown up and moved away.
living their own lives, they say...
it all seems very strange to me.

I don't understand their ways:
our children amaze me all the time
and I often wonder why they make me feel
so sad and suddenly old.

Now we're left with an empty home,

from our nest all the birds have flown for foreign skies.
We're discarded, of no further use,
though we gave our kids all our youth and all our lives —
we really tried.

Now there's only my wife and me;
we used to have a family — now that's gone
and only memories linger on...
it all seems very wrong to me.

To our sorrows they were quite deaf
and as soon as they could they left us to our tears.
We always tried to teach what was good —
yes, we gave our kids all we could through all the years.

So here we are at last;
the time has gone so fast and so have my dreams.
I simply don't know what it all means,
this pointless passage through the night,
this autumn-time, this walk upon the water...

I wonder how long
it will be till this song
is sung by our own sons and daughters?

Time Heals

Thinking back, it seems that I
can lie beside you as I never truly did,
in afterglow —
no afterwords at all.
Only writing love songs when it's gone and dead;
only paying words out in strings of half-forgotten sentiments...
I mean...
I meant...
I never really quite could say the way it was.

The first time that we met I said 'I bet that she's the one',
but I was talking to myself then, as always.
As time went by our steps entwined, unwritten lines drew taut
and I tried to find a way to make it all safe...
Into the play — what a production! —

into the days and ever more suction:
you hold me close, but hold me farther
away from yourself — I make me a martyr,
for pain and love go hand in hand...
And hand in hand go you and my friend,
you are his and I am yours and just cannot evade you;
my days a dream, my nights unseemly,
stolen moments all I live for,
but theft is no way to persuade you
to come with me, leave him behind you;
my hurtful eyes try to remind you
it's all I can do to keep from screaming
«I love you, I love you!» — I wish I was dreaming,
but the steps we take all leave footprints...

Sooner or later the whole thing will be blown:
you will leave him or I'll be left here, alone.
Either way someone loses someone
but I won't mind that, I just would quite like to know
who we love the most —
well, I guess that's ourselves.

The days are strange, at night we're strangers,
lie in bed and lie inside our heads,
we come no closer than as dancers.
Your eyes are change, your presence danger,
won't look me in the face and yet
you kiss and make up the answer
to all the questions that fly unanswered, unreasoned —
death in the sky, death in the season.
If you leave me now, it might nearly kill me...
Remember me?
Remember we three?

It all seemed so important at the time,
we came so close to wrecking all our lives,
and now it's all just song lines.
Time heals,
time heals —
oh, but I still bear the weals.

Thinking back, it seems that I
can lie beside you as I never truly did,
in afterglow —
no afterwords at all.
Only writing love songs when it's gone and dead,

only paying words out: streams of half-forgotten sentiments...
I mean...
I meant...
I never really quite could say
the way it was.

(Worth, 1972)

Alice (Letting Go)

When you told me that you loved me
I had no reason to doubt it
so I went about my life in such a selfish way
and never really thought about it.
Oh do I have to let go?
Oh I had my chance and I've blown it,
'cause I loved you so much all these years
and somewhere in myself, between my pride and fear
just couldn't find a way to show it.

I know it doesn't give you any joy
to give me such pain
but you're in love with him now, my old friend —
I know all about that, there's no need to explain
but why do I have to say goodbye
when I love you still, and can only feel that I'm dying?
Still, every word I say just seems to come out wrong
and none of them deny the fact that you are gone
and that I'm left here, crying.

What's the good of songs anyway?
They're just exercises in solitude.
I should have been ready for today —
I always prayed you wouldn't go,
but I suppose I always knew you would.

I suppose you say to him now
«I know that some day you'll leave me»
just like you did to me, and I'd deny it,
but you wouldn't believe me.
Ooh do I have to let go of you
ooh I don't think that I can do it —
you're always going to be the guardian of my soul,

and I'll always have a part of you to call my own,
how stupid that I never proved it.

Oh I know I'll never let go
oh because I don't want to be just your friend.
We spent seven years together in our own way,
I can't believe the story ends like this today...

Wherever you are do you really think so, Alice?

This Side of the Looking-Glass

The stars in the heavens still shine
up above me:
how lovely they'd seem
if you were with me
but you're gone through the looking-glass
and I am left to pass these nights alone.

I'm lost, I'm dumb, I'm blind,
I am drunk with sadness,
sunk by madness,
the wave overwhelms me,
the mirror repels me,
the echo of your laugh
drifts through the looking-glass
and I am alone.

No friendship, no comfort, no future, no home,
the past lingers with me:
you're all the love I've ever known
and without you I'm nothing
but empty and silent,
reflecting on all that I've lost.
I let you slip away so soon.

Can you hear me? This is my song:
I am dying; you are gone.

These words are not enough to save my soul,
they just mock me from the mirror.
I'm cold and I'm yearning,

I've told you I'm burning,
my eyes can't stand the light...
like a stray dog in the night
I'll shuffle off alone.

We all make our futures
but I have lost mine;
I'm hoping for a miracle
but finding no sign...

The stars in their constellations,
each one just sadly flickers and falls...
without you they mean nothing at all.

Betrayed

When I began I was full of altruistic dreams,
believed in princes and princesses, kings and queens —
now I find they're all human inside,
all bitterness and pride,
so why shouldn't I be like that too?
It seems that I've forgotten all I tried so hard to learn;
it seems there's not an ounce of love or trust
anywhere in the world.

Friends — they're all harbouring knives
to embed in your back out of revenge, or spite,
or indifference, or lack of other things to do —
in the end just who's going to be a friend for you
when they kick you in the guts just as your hand holds out the pearl?
It seems that there is nothing left but
hatred and lust in the world.

I don't give a damn anymore — I've only wound up betrayed.
It's all been absolutely worthless —
all the efforts I've made to be gentle and kind
are repaid with contempt,
degraded by sympathy and worthless kindness
and love that isn't meant.
I'm through with joy and company, I've done with pretty words,
betrayed — there's no hiding-place
anywhere in the world.
I've nothing left to fight for except making my passion heard —

I don't believe in anything
anywhere in the world.

(On Tuesdays she used to do) Yoga

*The late Tony Stratton-Smith once gave me a Lute; this
is it's only recorded appearance. Alt the bottom strings were
tuned identically...producing the dark low end sound.
Lyrically, a spot of self-deprecation's always a good thing.
So's a bit of b/w guitar, musically.*

On Tuesdays, she used to do yoga
while I'd sit and watch the box
in a vegetable way,
but always ready to say
to myself that I was an artist,
implying that she was not.

It's funny the way that self-pity
can take over from self-esteem —
well, I was the prince of pride,
and though I'd cheat I never lied,
as if that were enough to make her happy,
as if that could satisfy her dreams.

Too late now to say that I'm so sorry,
too late to say that I can change and mend
the things that hurt.
She didn't need to worry,
she always knew I'd get there in the end.

Now I'm tying myself up in contortions,
don't know if yoga will do me any good.
It's about time I tried,
though I'd rather be inside from the cold,
studying tantra —
still, I never did that when I could.

I never did the things that really mattered,
there seemed to be some key I couldn't find
to unlock myself;
I could have done it with her help,
but I was too busy scrabbling for each moment —

now I don't know what I did with all the time.

Sometimes I'd play the wild rover,
sometimes I'd just get smashed all day...
on Tuesdays she used to do yoga,
on Tuesday she went away.

Lost And Found

The rhythm section — Guy and Nic — arrived in mid-Wales just in time for the session, direct from Piraeus. The middle section is an afterthought/afterintention to «La Rossa», the VdGG song: it was originally intended as a coda to that version. Better for it to be here. It ties in with the conceit of getting in a snatch of «Hi-heel Sneakers». You can still hear me retuning the over-hammered guitar in mid-riff down at the end!

(Even the wolf can learn,
even the sheep can turn,
even the frog become at last the prince.)

No more imagined insults
and no more bloated pride —
I'll see you at the wedding,
I'll see you on the other side
and I'll hold my peace forever
but I'll hold my passion more...
I'll be holding the door
and waiting for the princess —
I could say I'm waiting for the world
but when it comes right down to it
I'm simply waiting for the girl.
On through the ring of changes
I'll be at my side in a single bound,
lost and found...
looking to be lost and found.

La Rossa extends her hands —
in the morning light the stigmata don't show.
She's already up, making plans;
she thinks it's maybe time he ought to go.
And she's friendly like it's a service

but she's ringing round his head
though he knows she has no further use for him
still he feels like he's raised from the dead.
Out to the cold grey daylight, never even wondering, of course,
if one moment of perfect passion is worth a lifetime of remorse.

So it's no more empty promises
and no more idle threats;
no more «if only» s
and no more «and yet» s;
no more wishes for the future,
no more denials of the past:
I'm free at last,
I'm in love at last.
I'm lost and found...

(Put on your red dress, baby.
'Cause we're going out tonight,
put on your high-heeled sneakers,
Everything's going to be alright?)

The Quiet Zone, the Pleasure Dome (VdGG, 1977)

Lizard Play

Frozen moment, cold blood time:
the Iguana lady is saying goodbye.
She's not quite ready, she wants to stay,
she wants to be perfect, but not in the way.
He tries to be cautious, one more cigarette,
he wants to be open, but the time is
not yet.

They talk about poetry, life-stories too;
he wants to know if she keeps a pet or two.
She's into lizards, she's into snakes,
he's into trauma — still got the shakes
from a lady who only talked dogs and cats
making love in the alley — she thought like that...
So he doesn't notice he's falling in
to a change in colour of chameleon skin.

And the sun beats down on the baking earth
in the land where the lizards play.
And the tongues flick out — though they want to touch
all the words get in the way.
And it's you and me and it's he and she
and it's everything I say.

Frozen vision, deaf and dumb:
still trying to work out what I've become.
I tried to reach you, I tried to score,
I shot the bolt on the open door...
the secret reaction, base metal to gold,
and all I felt was my blood froze...
I walked on water — I was wearing skis —
and now the water must dance on me.

Anyway, for all that, will you dance with me?
will you dance with me?

And the sun beats down on the baking earth
in the land where the lizards play.
And they shed their skins and at last begin

to find colours for the day.
Will you dance with me?

The Habit of the Broken Heart

Oh, the Sisters of Blindness
from the Convent of the Broken Heart,
they want to smother it with kindness,
they want to tear it all apart.
And there's a rock of sterile virtu'
in the centre of the bay...
I'm so sorry he hurt you,
but don't throw yourself away.

You only wanted to have some fun,
you only wanted to try it;
you only wanted to be someone,
but everybody denies it.
Why's it so hard to make you listen?
Don't go and change your name...
learning to lose can be
the start of winning the game.
You're so special, such sadness seems a shame.

I know that you've got a service to catch,
I wouldn't want you to miss it,
but there's something so mismatched,
some motive inexplicit...
is it the call of the Convent?

You only wanted to find someone
or something more than pleasure;
penitence for the Chosen One
you can indulge at leisure —
by the light of the sinking sun,
don't turn your back on the treasure.
Whether or not you want to face it, you're a beautiful girl
and your lay-lady laughter has a right to be heard;
but what can I give you if you've already got the Word?

Don't go
don't start
don't take on

The Siren Song

Letters in pencil, some of them as heavy as lead,
as dated as carbon, as black as coal, but burning as red.
Clues faintly stencilled: the message, though leeched, is unbled,
as secret as marble — as young, as old, as living, as dead.
And always that laugh
that comes as though it's from pain:
though I'm lashed to the mast
still it hammers round my brain.

Laughter in the backbone,
laughter impossibly wise,
that same laughter that comes
every time I flash on that look in your eyes
which whispers of a black zone
which'll mock all my credos as lies,
where all logic is done
and time will smash every theory I devise.
And the hour-glass is shattered
only by the magic of your touch
where nothing really matters...
No, Nothing matters very much!

So the siren song runs through the ages,
and it courses through my veins like champagne;
and with all the sweet kisses of addiction
it's calling me to break my bonds again.

Future memory exploding like shrapnel,
some splinters escape on my tongue,
some of them scar comprehension...
beneath the scab they burn, but the wound becomes numb.
And always the song draws me forward,
rejoicing in the search and the prayer,
bored with all but the mad, the strange,
the freak, the impossible dare.
Still your laugh chills my marrow
till I embrace it on my knees...
Oh, when the mast becomes a flagpole,
what becomes of me?

What becomes, oh, what becomes of me?

Last Frame

Pretty keen — yes, my hobby keeps me busy
and if I talk to myself, what's the crime?
In the darkroom I am a dealer in space and time...
When all memory is mellowed,
when the photograph is yellowed,
still it never lies.

There you are, your eyes laced with secret pleasure,
saying that you're on the way to change,
devouring in inordinate measure
every diversion that's arranged.
For every appetite, a cruel attraction,
but there's a panic in your actions...
oh, I never saw you look so strange.

Fixing memory chemically,
holding time on the stop-clock,
hanging back from that last frame
just in case it didn't show you
in the way I used to know you...
I thought you'd always stay the same.
(But you won't.)

Oh, the red light, the silver, the black and the bromide;
the silence, the waiting for overview...
The past seems under-exposed, low tide,
but still the images ghost through.
And you're there in the bath,
which is all this has led to,
and I can't say your path
is a right one to choose...

But then I only have a negative of you.

The Wave

The wave hits the beach, writing words on the sand;
to the academic man, this could be the answer...
In fact, it's no more than a hunch.
Still we try to eat it —
I think we're all pretty out to lunch.

The wave is out of reach,
trailing words from the hand
only air can understand.
Semaphore on the shoreline,
waiting for distance to recede, unhappily imperfect
when we should be happy just to breathe.

But with each bated breath,
so present, tense,
we want to know,
we want it sure,
it don't make sense!
So I'll do mine and you do yours
but let's not trade sand and sea
for brick and cement.

The wave hits the beach, laps around abandoned clothes,
wants to share a joke with those who'll brave the breakers,
who'll break bread rather than pray
while the definition-maker's
lost in the small print of the day.
The words are only pictures
that the next wave wipes away.

Cat's Eye/Yellow Fever (Running)

I was walking in the evening,
I was looking for something good, clean,
fine, pure, straight, but instead I found
the bunker wall and gate.
It was open: I was free. I gave
a token guarantee, though I later knew I
had promised more, with an I.O.U. I could
scarcely score my way...but I herald
Apocalypse anyway!
(I was a prime believer in the faith of «I» —

yellow fever in the cat's eye.)
And it's everything you want/
own/love/hate/touch/dream/trust.
And it's everything you need.
I got a heart like a rocket, I was out of control,
I'd cleaned out my pockets for some luck to show...
Really looking like a hopeless case, I found it
in my hand, it was the Angry Ace.
He wants to talk to me, one on one, he wants to
give me his professional opinion...but
I'm running, I just can't wait, I haven't
got a moment to anticipate;
yes, I'm running, I just can't stop, I've got to get
to the bottom just to get to the top, I've
got the dark alleys and the open skies —
I got the yellow fever from the cat's eye.

I'll let you know how it goes in the ninth life.

The Sphinx in the Face

I remember what it felt like at seventeen:
I was a cat, a snake, a lizard, a mouse...
still got an interest in the limousine
and a spouse and a brat,
country house, London flat.

I'm gonna head for the island when the summer's out,
I'm gonna do all the stuff that I can,
drink like a fish in a waterspout —
I'm a fan of the flow,
it began long ago,
I'm a man who should know
it doesn't stop.

There's so much to remember,
so much to forget:
we're all in the possession of the future tense,
but don't know it yet.
The flesh comes through the spirit,
the spirit through the flesh...
we look the Sphinx in the face for answers

and, of course, we're really not impressed.
We're caught between age and beauty,
experience and youth,
so we feel the need acutely
for any kind of Truth.

Oh, but we get copped some days,
caught between options we've failed to play,
such wasted chance.
So I join the wastrel's dance:
it has slow as well as fast movements,
and any change must be an improvement
on simply fossilising, standing still.

I got a steady vocation for the Quiet Zone,
I just can't wait for the song to be sung,
I'm still possessed by the promise of the Pleasure Dome

You're so young,
so old, such a drag to be told.

You're so here, so gone,
so near, so wrong, so queer, so strong, so...

Such a drag to be told...

Chemical World

«Well what's the harm? It's good clean fun...
why don't you just go on and have another one?
When there's hanky-panky in the boardroom,
wooly-bully on the farm, what's the harm?
It's quite alright — I mean to say, tomorrow's just another day...»

Oh, but in the morning,
but in the morning light
will you still feel as fine,
will you still need to trade day for night?

In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king;
in the country of the sheep, they call him Cyclops.
And the quality of mind is such a tenuous thing
that here you need it like a blind man needs eye drops.

Get out of that back room,
this vacuum, it attracts you, but in fact
you don't know quite what it is;
you're being sapped of everything
you once valued so highly...
Will you still feel as strong,
will you still long for weakness to come?

It's a Chemical World...
not a candidate ever fails;
though you search for the Holy Grail
you're not going to find it
in the Chemical World.

A sleeper train...you can't escape;
fast overnight...the ticker-tape.
Oh but in the morning,
but in the morning haze
will the market have turned,
will there be no more days left to trade?

It's the Chemical World
and from the moment that it's embraced
it's the Chemical World
all the diamonds turn to paste
in the Chemical World...
Yeah, you think you'll look so pretty —
it's gonna blow up in your face.

«It's just the time, so slow to pass.
It's just the drug...it doesn't last...»

Ship Of Fools

The captain's in a coma, the lieutenant's on a drunk,
the owner's in his cabin with his special friend, the monk,
the midget's on the bridge, dispensing platitudes and junk...
Those wild and special places,
those strange and dangerous places,
those sad, sweet faces,
it's a Ship of Fools.

The nurse in black seamed stockings, she's already on patrol
for fake fur starlets panicked by the watering-hole;
everybody's waiting for the drama to unfold
in those cold and treasured places,
those old and degenerate places...
those posed, posed, empty faces
it's a Ship of Fools.

Run, rabbit, run,
you're the only one that can do it;
turn, baby, turn, there's a ring of fire
and you've got to go through it.

Fun, baby, fun,
when the sands have run to the limit
turn, baby, turn, there's a ring of fire
and you're in it.

Looking for logic and adventure down the dark end of the street,
open city, open season, open lips that gleam so sweet
offer kisses like piranhas to the soft flesh of your feet
and any man's poison is every man's meat
in those mad and special places,
those sad and desperate places,
those sad, sweet soul embraces,
it's a Ship of Fools.

Those strange and special places
those wild and dangerous places,
those dead, dead, dead faces...
it's a Ship of Fools;

no rules.

Sci-Finance

You got some shares in a speculative venture,
you got some stock in a gilt-edged bond,
you stretched out tight by the terms of debenture,
the game is on...

You chase the bulls in eternal corridas,
the thought of loss is more than you can bear,
you scan the index for a market leader,
a tip and a prayer.

You better see daylight:
night comes on the City so soon.
You say you are a christian capitalist,
but you dance to a different tune.

Jobs for the boys and dole for the shop-floor;
rationalize, strip the assets and run.
If the contract stalls,
then you've just got to cop more,
ain't Monopoly fun?
You made some pretty deals along the way,
Judas and Faust are in accord.
When the revolution comes you may be blown away,
but I bet you'll end up on the board...

Only the money.
Only the money.

Sometime in the future you may realise that the day
you made your decision to follow money as a goal
was your darkest dawn and that, since then, you have
venerated figures as deities and, for you,
people are just pawns.

But that deal includes you:
you're just an asset like the rest
and you, too, stripped naked,
beg the Money-God not to put you to the test.

He's got no further use for you.
Now, there is silence on the floor.

Clever money-computers chatter privately.
No people any more.
Only the money.

Door

He's a blind man, crouching by the pavement,
only seeing with his third eye
and clutching at the astral shadow
of every passer-by.

He's a wise man, trumping all the answers;
she's a wild girl, trying to keep his feet on the floor
in whispered physical litanies:
«Stay away from the door.»

«Oh, but we're all in this together,» he says,
«three-legged race across the floor;
if only you'd loosen the handkerchief
then I'd forget about the door.»

«Ooh, that feels so much better,» he says,
«now you forget everything that I've said before
and sit there all by yourself
while I walk through the door.»

They're a blind man crouching by the pavement,
only seeing with his third eye,
and clutching at the astral shadow
of the door of a room
called 'I'.

Urban

Sometimes living for the moment,
sometimes going with the flow,

sometimes professing to be an exponent
of the quiet life
while night life surrounds me
I sit and go crazy alone.

Too many people and too little action
too much exterior acting, too little inside...
yet I still feel that manic attraction.
I've lived in the city for most of my life
and suppose I'll be there when I die,
still going through the same old motions
still qualifying everything I say,
responding urbanely to every emotion.
The city life freaks me,
the city life feeds me,
the city life blows me away.

The Future Now (1978)

Pushing Thirty

Seems the fashion's for one-liners these days,
the kind that get up everyone's nose,
so much back-slapping that the vertebrae
are fatally exposed...
Me, I'm pushing thirty, pulling sixteen,
though much of what's around me is dead.
They got so shirty when I tried to glean
the meaning from what they'd said:
«If you wanna be a viable artist when you're twenty-five
you'd better be a meat-head by the time you're twenty-one.»
But now I'm pushing thirty and I'm still alive,
so tell me who, tell me who has won?

See the survivors in the upcoming acts,
they and the moguls make a regular killing —
others take it lying on their backs,
young blood is always so willing.
Me, I'm pushing thirty, that's the way it is,
too late to change my mind.
They play it dirty in the record biz
and you've got to toe the line.
If you wanna be an A & R man when the singing's done
you'd better make sure that you hedge your bets.
Me, I'm pushing thirty and still having fun,
I haven't stopped, haven't stopped that yet!

All the writers watch each other for the way to go,
follow each other like lemmings —
swear they're all waiting for Nicky Lowe
to turn out like David Hemmings...
Me, I'm pushing thirty and the steady zone,
perhaps I should retire,
but even if it all deserts me and I'm left alone
I still know that I'm fuelled by fire.
In this rubbish world you've got to keep that under the lid,
'cos they all hope it'll disappear...
but even though I'm pushing thirty,
maybe on the skids,
I still can be, I still can be

Nadir!

The Second Hand

See the old man acting like a fool,
running from the ambulance.
When he was a youngster he broke all the rules —
now he says that was just accident.
Always had the feeling he was going to die young,
so now he feels repentant;
but the judge was progressive and the jury was hung,
he got a suspended sentence.
So he ran from the future, he ran from the past,
he ran from the desert of the hour-glass
but the sea of time is a rising flood
and he's swamped by the wave.
His arms go limp by his side,
he only came for the ride,
he thought he'd hold back the tide,
Canute.

One eye on the main chance and one eye on the clock,
oh, when did his brain go?
And when does a veteran get to be a crock...
no gold at the end of this rainbow!
He always boxed clever with his shadowy hopes
but now he's in trouble with his back on the ropes
and the hands of time are bunched into fists:
he's out for the count.
The sword has sunk in the lake
and now he's watching dawn break
and now he waits for the stake,
Drakul.

This boy's a fool,
this fool's a man,
all men are ruled
by the second hand.

Trappings

He could have been so great, he could have had it all,
he had it on a plate, but he threw it at the wall.
And he can't know why, but he still said «yes»
to the easy lie and the poisoned vest...
the trappings of success.

They offered him the deal (Here's the contract)
just like an autograph (sign on the line)
no need to think or feel (advances are abstract)
or do anything but laugh (the future defined.)
He's in possession, yes he's possessed;
they had no fear, he was so impressed
by the trappings of success.

You'll see him down the clubs or at the premiere
(it's just another movie, it's just another act)
stumbling in a pub, everywhere that's anywhere...
(he's a man of the people, just as long as the people
don't talk back)

on the Rio shore or the Rome express
with a Chinese whore or a Greek princess...
these are the trappings of success.

But he's got no home and he's got no friends
and the human mass repel him.
Now he's on his own and can't comprehend
did he sell out or was he celled in?

(He's a prisoner in a gilded cage.
He's a prisoner...he's all the rage.)

He's waiting for his plane and his first-class seat;
they've blown out his brains with sticky kiddies' sweets;
the limo, the coke, the celebrity guest-list,
the toady jokes and the gutter press...
the trappings of success,
these are the trappings of success.

The trappings of success,
the trap of fame;
(in) the trap...big game.

The Mousetrap (Caught In)

After all is said and done, not very much will have been either way:
I'm a chronicler of action, I'm an actor in the play.
I know the lines I have to speak,
I know that I won't ever quit, corpse, or dry,
but the performance gets so pointless
and the days just drift on by.
Every time that I go to turn the pages of the calendar
in the third act of this twenty-ninth year of the show
I'm aware of the latest leading lady and get mad at her...
it's perfunctory, but why she'll never know.

When I began I had my hopes,
believed that I could be a leading light of the stage,
but now I've stunned myself to silence,
exhausted all my inner rage,
extinguished all my joy and violence,
trapped all my feelings in a cage.
Every time that I go to turn the pages of the calendar
I can see that I'm not really going anywhere;
all these years I have skirted round experience like a scavenger.
Can I really feel? I wonder if I dare?
At the end of the run, will there be anyone who cares?
And behind the actor's pose, heaven knows
if there's anyone left in there.

Energy Vampires

Ah, that faithful old 3 3/4 ips Revox echo! This track was originally ten minutes long, but was reduced by drastic editing of the multitrack tape...cut and live with it! Recorded in mid-winter in a rented house where the central heating sent clicks all over the tape; so I had. to turn it off and work swathed in sweaters. I should point out that the EV is a specific type, rather than yer «average fan» — whoever that might be.

Hunched in the corner of the dressing-room,
trying to get back to the real...
Uh-oh, here they come, ready for their meal:

Energy Vampires, crawling out of the wall,

they want to steal my vitality,
they want to drink it all.

This guy says that he wrote all my songs,
this girl says she's had my baby —
me, I don't know them from Adam and Eve,
sometimes I really believe I'm going crazy.

«Excuse me while I suck your blood,
excuse me when I phone you,
I've got every one of your records, man,
doesn't that mean I own you?»
Oh, sure, I long ago decided to make myself an exponent
of public possession in the private obsession zone.

But now I'm serious, let's be serious, I'm not selling you my soul,
try to put it in the records but I've got to keep my life my own.
One thing I've not got a lot of is time
and it's slipping away...

I've got a life to live too.

If I Could

You must be crazy to stay here,
and I'll be crazy when you go;
though there's so much I want to tell you
all the words come out too slow.
I've been locked in my problems,
you seemed prepared to wait...
now that I know I'm going to lose you
all the words come out too late.
There's no promise I can give you that you wouldn't know was fake;
though I just want to be with you, there's no show that I can make.
And in the morning, when I wake and find you dressing
I can tell that it's on your mind to go for good;
I know that all this time I've kept you guessing,
but I'd tell you if I could.

If I now said that I loved you
how would that seem in your eyes?
Oh, may my voice fall into silence
if my words turn out to be lies.

I never meant to hurt you,
even though that's what I do —
even though you might not believe this
all my words were meant for you.
There's no promise I can give you that you wouldn't know was fake;
though I just want to be with you, there's no show that I can make.
And in the evening, when we sit and watch the TV
I know that this silence just won't do me any good
and I want to beg you, beg you, beg you to believe me...
I'd tell you if I could,
I'd tell you if I could.

The Future Now

Here we are, static in the latter half
of the twentieth century
but it might as well be the Middle Ages,
there'll have to be some changes
but how they'll come about foxes me.
I want the future now,
I want to hold it in my hands;
all men equal and unbowed,
I want the promised land.

but that doesn't seem to get any closer,
and Moses has had his day...
the tablets of law are an advertising poster,
civilization here to stay
and this is progress?
You must be joking!
Me, I'm looking for any kind of hope.
I want the future now,
I want to see it on the screen,
I want to break the bounds
that make our lives so mean.

Oh, blind, blinded, blinding hatred
of race, sex, religion, colour, country and creed,
these scream from the pages of everything I read.
You just bring me oppression and torture,
apartheid, corruption and plague;
you just bring me the rape of the planet

and joke world rights at the Hague.
Oh, someday the Millennium!
But how far is someday away?
I want the future now
I'm young, and it's my right.
I want a reason to be proud.
I want to see the light.
I want the future now,
I want to see it on the screen,
I want to break the bounds:
make life worth more than dreams.

Still In The Dark

Oh, brighter than a thousand suns,
the march towards the stars
on the wheel, on the car,
off the plane, off the planet
and on in the search.
Yes, we pray in the dark in the Sciences' church.

Upon the tree of knowledge
the fruit is bitter-sweet;
to the man in the street
all its myriad benefits Science confers
but we're still in the dark, much as we always were.

Run your mind down the Sciences;
none of them lay claim to show more than a part
but still we shout out what we know
the silence is enough to break the mortal heart.

So bow down in adoration to the wonder that is man;
we have learned all we can,
we explore every frontier that straddles our way
but we're still in the dark, though we now call it day.

No, there is no answer,
there is no eternal proof,
there is no timeless truth;
though we learn to encompass yet more with the eye
we are still in the dark when it comes to the why.

We are still in the dark,
bedded down
and so we still lie.

Mediaevil

God lives in the cathedral,
or so the archbishop states,
all fealty to the Church,
all power to the state!

Gold keys to the cathedral,
they go with the bishop's cowl;
he lives a spiritual life of material wealth.
Are things so very different now?

Oh yeah
oh now:
save your prayers for the future.
Say your prayers for the future.

Oh, God's gone from the cathedral,
a different power now holds sway,
we can pack them up in the history books
but the Middle Ages won't go away.
And the answer to our prayers is a Valium by the bedside,
now we follow the pundits on TV,
now we put our faith in Science and progress
and only have sex upon our knees.

And those who are strange are still locked in asylums
and a sterile Pope proscribes the Pill
and those who are rich are still getting richer
and those who are poor still foot the bill.
And God lives in underground silos,
hanging on for Judgement day;
if we don't open our eyes pretty soon
then the Dark Ages'll be here to stay.

A Motor-bike In Afrika

A motor-bike in Africa,
he's riding the white line,
oblivious of snakes stretched out
across the way like trip-wire,
shouting
«The road is mine!»

Tracing the line of the skeleton coast,
ghost riders from the Sud-West:
the original angels of death they seem,
six motor-bikes abreast.

Riding through the oppressive night,
now only the hardest remain.
Look at the scars of the tyre-tracks,
look to the bodies behind their backs,
look at the bastards bray
in Africa today.

The bodies of Biko and Soweto poor,
the Christian message of Dutch Reform,
the sound of the monster, the motor-bike roar,
the hate in the eyes of the uniformed Boer,
the head and the bucket, the boot and the floor...
racial torture and racial war
in Africa today.

Come in Rhodesia, South Africa, your time is up...
no protection on a motor-bike;
sooner or later the normal traffic's gonna get you.

The Cut

Everything out of order
everything too well produced
from the conjuror's hat —
let's turn on the juice
to grind the cutting plane, the blade that gives an edge,
to scale the mountain; to fall upon the mountain ledge.

Half-way up is half-way peaking
the stroboscope locks the lathe;
I look around for a switch in phase...
the disco boom stands firm, the eight-track's in, the rage
licks the present, quickly flips the future page.

Check the deck: no marked cards,
no sequentialled straight or flush...
the dice won't still the blood-line rush.
Run the star-flood night, the cut-throat blade is stropped;
race your shadow...race in case your shadow stops.

Everything so out of order
no bias on the playback head;
papers for the border — all the tape is read,
the future burns my tongue, the noise-gates all are shut,
breathe the vacuum, believe there's reason in the cut.

Incipient white noise,
the stylus barely tracks,
the air controllers feed the stereo sonic smack.

Palinurus (Castaway)

Oh, I'm looking for a white note
to consolidate the key,
like the pilot of a night boat
in a strange, uncharted sea: Palinurus,
as unsure as he can be of his direction...
hell, this section's all Greek to me.

There's so much I had to mention
but it seems to slip my mind;
still, I swear that my intentions
never left my hopes behind
like the captain who's been trapped
in the blind eye of the whirlwind...
so he turns in search of the divine.

I've got no answers either,
I've got some stories on lucky days...
the sea-lanes are crowded with people like us:
Castaways.

From soprano through to basso
my voice so strains to tell,
but I'm lost in the Sargasso
of ideas that didn't gel by a fraction,
so the action is dispelled.
Me, I've got dull reactions, protraction of doubt as well,
so it's no more abide with me,
over the side with me...
well, I know that damn well...

Oh, this hump-back of emotion,
it all seems to go so fast:
one moment prince of the ocean
and the next upon the raft.

My Favourite

In my time I've told a lie or two,
I've been a deceiver, but believe me
what I now say is true.
There's no other way
I can express what I'm thinking of:
You're my favourite, you're the one that I love.

It's a one-horse race,
still I'm ready to place my bet.
I'm a pretty slow starter,
and I haven't quite caught up with it yet.
It seems so extraordinary
that you should care for me.
You're my favourite — how lucky can any man be?

You're my favourite —
will you stay the course with me?

You're my favourite of all time.
You're my favourite, can't you see?
You're my favourite of all time.
Say you'll stay the course with me.

Careering (Don't Ask Me)

I don't know, can't you see
I'm just passing through, fast as you —
don't ask me.

Careering out of control
disappearing down the black hole,
careering — the white man's soul
stands stark naked in the floodlight glare,
stands stark raving on the strap.
I've had the feeling that I've been there
but I can't quite believe it.

I don't know, can't you see
I'm just passing through, fast as you
so don't ask me.

Careering, simply day to day,
engineering everything I say,
careering for the work and the pay.
I'm just a passenger passing through,
I'm just an average chap.
If I said I hadn't got a clue
there'd still come the questions.

I don't know, can't you see
I'm just another case of wasted space
so don't ask me.

Careering, my apprenticeship
no nearer than my pension slip;
careering down the Cresta Run,
I screw it up just like anyone;
careering — pointless anyway
to do it just for the work and the pay.

Look here: I don't know, can't you see
I'm so near the end, get it straight, friend —
don't ask me, don't ask me, don't ask me.

Porton Down

Won't hear a sound at Porton Down,
the clear liquids keep their silence,
buried underground at Porton Down
the fast form of the final violence.

Quite right to be worried about the proliferation
of nuclear bombs and power stations,
but there's a deterrent that's going to
unearth us yet...

Hurry on round about Porton Down,
a quick glimpse of the future warfare
hidden under ground at Porton Down;

far too frightening to utter what you saw there.

They got bacteria to drop us where we stand,
they got diseases still unknown to man,
they got the virus and a microgram's enough
to do in a continent.

The ultimate madness,
just one shattered test-tube to wipe out the world.

It begins with the mustard gas,
it proceeds to Hiroshima.
The culture moves on —
now it's bacterial, truly insane.
Porton Down waits to fever the brain.

Won't hear a sound at Porton Down,
the clear liquids keep their silence
buried underground at Porton Down,
the fast form of the final violence.
Hurry on round about Porton Down
a quick glimpse of the future warfare,
hidden underground at Porton Down,
far too frightening to say what you saw there.

No sound at Porton Down,
from Porton Down,
after Porton Down.

Mirror Images

If I'm the mirror and you're the image
then what's the secret between the two,
these «me» s and «you» s, how many can there be?
Oh, I don't mind all that around the place,
as long as you keep it
well away from me.

I've begun to regret that we ever met
between the dimensions.
It gets such a strain to pretend that the change
is anything but cheap;
with your infant pique and your angst pretensions

sometimes you act like such a creep.

And now I'm standing in the corner,
looking at the room and the furniture
in cheap imitation of alienation and grief.
And now we're going to the kitchen,
fix ourselves a drink and a cigarette,
getting no closer to being the joker or thief.

Still, I reflect, this nervous wreck
who stands before me can see as well,
can surely tell that he's not yet free;
he can turn aside, but can no more ignore me
than know which one of us is he,
than tell what we are going to be,
than know which one of us is me.

And now we're going to the kitchen,
fix ourselves a drink and a cigarette,
getting no closer to being the joker or thief.

These mirror images,
these mirror images
won't stay, go away, are no help.

In these mirror images of myself
there are no secrets.

Handicap and Equality

All men are born equal at the moment they arrive:
check the limbs and senses we require to survive.
But some come deaf and dumb and blinded,
some have damage to their brains;
parents constantly reminded that they'll never play
the normal children's games.
They may not be normal,
but they're people just the same.

If Christ had been born defective
to fulfil the Father's plan
would he be as easily accepted
as God made man

or does the human value alter
in the crippled human frame?
Though the tongue and fingers falter
must we shut them out and shut them up,
and shut the case and whisper «such a shame».
That's how we shut them away.

Most of us are lucky, free from accidents at birth
but their victims share our right
to the inheritance of earth.
For all their grunts, their stumps,
their tumours, their eternal wheelchairs,
we're the freaks, we're the inhumans,
if we close our eyes and turn aside, pretend
that if we do they'll not be there...
They've got to face it, so we've got to face it.
Still they've got to live with it
in a world we supposedly share.

Not For Keith

In a general sense this song is all-too-uncomfortably modern. Keith was Keith Ellis, the original Van der Graaf bass player. Otherwise I think the song itself says all that is not private.

In Germany, his days finally caught him;
I won't insult his memory with long-distance grief.
Tears and wakes weren't his style:
not him,
not for Keith.

He'd have laughed in my face
if he saw it get mournful,
he'd pull me up short and say «Life carries on»
in that gentle way of being cruelly scornful...
now he's gone.

«I want to see it all, and eat it»
was as close to ethos as he came;
though he knew he couldn't beat it,
he never gave of himself anything less than best
in the game.

Oh, one for the game...

I never did say, I never quite found time —
he taught me a lot, and I carry it still.
Never thanked him at all for his friendship
and now I never will.

The diaries we write are those that we crave for,
we never put the P.S. at the foot of the final page.
He deserved more time, but he never was made
for middle age,
not for middle age.
Not for Keith.

The Old School Tie

Oh the bright young men in their tight-buttoned suits:
the light beams out from capped smiles to the shines
on their lick-spittle books.
Oh these sharp young sparks with their fresh rosettes —
yeh, the artful way that they promise the earth
to all suffragettes.
What they won't promise we don't know yet.
They say they're build — and shaping society
but we know they're just saving for their own
safe home in politics.
Anything goes: look at them run.

Come from every side, noses Pinocchio clean;
lock in synchromesh, oil the wheels and the gears
of the party machine
and the final goal is a cabinet seat...
in the trappings of power, the presumption to speak
for the man in the street.
Once they move in, they're in for good;
yeh, once they get that bed made
it's a safe home in politics.
Jobs for the boys: look at them run.

There's just one thing none of us should forget:
a political man is just in it for the power
and the smell of success.
Sure, some start out as idealists —

pretty soon they all cop for ideal careers
and a safe home in politics,
a cushy job in politics;
look at them run.

The politicians fight it out on the conning tower
but they all agree not to rock the boat..
A safe home in politics
It's built on your vote.

Time For A Change

Time for a change:
I felt bad, things looked strange.
Home, home on the range...
yes, it's time for a change.

«Well, young man, when you grow up
what do you want to be?»
«Please, sir, if that's alright
I'd really rather like to learn how to be me.»

Switch on the light,
getting late, almost night.
A shilling puts you right,
you can switch off the night.

The world was looking stretched and tight,
it's an overblown balloon.
I've got the feeling something big
has got to happen soon.

Oh, time for a change,
out of reach, out of range.
Go and tell Doctor Strange
that it's time for a change.

(Chris Judge Smith)

Imperial Walls

Strange to behold
is the stone of this wall
broken by fate.

The strongholds are bursten
the work of giants decaying
the roofs are fallen
the towers are tottering
mouldering palaces roofless
weather-marked masonry shattering
Shelters time-scarred
tempest — marred
undermined of old.

Earth's grasp holdeth
its mighty builders
tumbled, crumbled,
in gravel's harsh grip
till a hundred generations
of men pass away.

(Anonymous 8th century Saxon)

Mr. X (Gets Tense)

The current affair gets to be my business,
I heard the news on the radio:
the sun on earth... what is this?
Is that the way that the crazy goes?

Attention tuned to the satellites,
looking down for an overview.
In the chapel of space we are acolytes.
In the battle of time we're all soldiers too
and the relative choir push the energy higher
Under fire.

The sliding show in the macroscopic,
finger on the button pointing to progress.
The apparatus roll, no-one here can stop it,
too busy learning more — always knowing less.
Soon turkey-wrapped in the spaceman blanket
we'll offer up lame duck apologies
and settle down for the final banquet,

the gourmet dish of technology...
cryogenic device catches all human life
under ice.

The current affair gets to be all our business,
it's filtered in through the T.V. screen.
The norm, the average...what is this,
when it goes blank what does that all mean?
And what's the drive of each individual?
And what's the way that the story ends?
Is it Mr. X, left as the last residual
holder of the flame, conscience of all men?
But he's so tense to expire
he throws himself on the wire
under fire.

Is this the way the world ends?
Under ice, under fire?
Has there been some mistaken design?
Under ice
got to find the human voice.
Lord, deliver us from Babel.

Faculty X

Hope by and by, hope by and by —
motes in the eye, portcullis is shut...
a skull isn't much
of a castle to live in
when the change is going to come,
the change has got to come.

Explosions in the brain attest to it.
evolution down the drain — let all the rest do it.

Oh yeah, the only result
is cumulative drek.
It won't be the drug,
it won't be the sex,
it's got to be the Faculty X

Looking for a method, I play a straight bat,
throw away the chances to slip.

Yeah, you talk about the average —
I don't care about that
and my words are only giving me lip

When I know that the change has got to come,
or what am I living for? Or why am I here?
I'm running, I give in more,
far away from the near.

Go meta-physical world,
he sign that protects
It wasn't the last,
it won't be the next,
it's Faculty X.

Reading seers, sages, prophets,
obscurantist tracts,
draining the elixir to the dregs;
active yeast in the bottom is on the attack
and it leaves me without any legs to stand on.

Still I hope that the change will come

Meanwhile I don't know,
I think I'll have to go,
go for the governing body
my consciousness elects.
It won't be so clear, it won't be direct,
it's all that I fear, it's all I suspect
and I'll disappear in Faculty X

I pluck all these characters out of thin air,
I push them down into the lungs;
I infuse them with meaning as much as I dare.

Stretch out for the shoreline and wait for the wave...

A Black Box (1980)

Golden Promises

Besieged in the battlements of Babylon,
still looking for a hat-peg you can hang your head upon —
now you've found a place you think is Avalon:
you can talk to anyone here.
You can throw your arms around your nearest neighbour
and the smiling ones'll tell you that you've saved her,
that she's saved you...
They offer the golden promises,
the instantly divine;
you swallow the golden promises
hook, sinker and line.

If you choose to throw your soul around the attitude
reasoning and independent thought go down the tube
as you go slaverling after every inane platitude —
how weak you find yourself here.
Do you really need to lose yourself completely?
How come you seem to rate it all so cheaply?
It's so weak-kneed
to go for the golden promises,
mail-order holy vows;
you go for the golden promises —
I think you really ought to know better by now.

So I do my best and I do my nut,
I try to explain all these angles
but you turn away.
Oh, now you're looking in the white of my eyes,
and you know what I'm going to say:
don't go for the golden promises,
don't go for the easy way...
It's right here on the doorstep:
fool's gold — don't throw your life away.

Losing Faith in Words

I just can't see why you can't see what I mean,
but I can't make things any plainer,
the words get in the way —
is that quite what I mean?
If not now, then certainly sooner or later
we've got a problem with communication —
look, I scrabble with my hands
I try to get some head-room from the elevation
but you just don't understand

Most of the things we say mean we most of the time
treat our speech with derision,
flap our hands in body-telegram — I know that gets through
so much better than anything said with precision.
We've got a problem with communication
and it's getting quite absurd...
well, I think I'm going to flip out from the sheer frustration,
yes, I'm losing faith in words.

We've got a problem with communication,
only getting through in anagrams —
I try to get some linkage from articulation,
I try to get some head-room from the elevation,
I try to pull back something from my education...
Yes, I try to, try to, try to but I just don't understand,
I try, I just don't understand,
I talk, you just don't understand.

Sometimes I don't know why I bother,
but I'm bothered.

The Jargon King

He prescribes the subject
he proscribes outsiders
his terms have a golden ring.
He wants to find some order
quantifying chaos
in words that all the children sing.
He tabulates the lexicon
vocabulary minimised
bow down to the Jargon King.

All questions become so simple
if we eat the inane answer
if we all agree to ju-ju speak
we fit into the formula
we all without exception
approve the rule.

We don't understand
he must be clever
he must be clever
he must be right
he must be right
we don't understand

Closed the ranks and barricades
imposed the secret language
complexity all catch-phrased
word-drugged any anguish
pigeon-holed allusions
shut the vault behind us
It's an obvious conclusion
we'll be the chattels of His Highness.

Bow down to the Jargon King
and his minion code-words.

Here comes the reign

Fogwalking

Everything clumsy slow-motion,
I look for the source.
Buildings loom up like icebergs
on collision course.
I don't want to go in there,
I just want to be alone,
unpick the stitches of time
in London
in the no-go zone.

I've been kicking around like a dog,
lost myself in the blank mass of fog,
it's some kind of service.

All humanity's fall-out is there,
slumped in doorways
and mouthing cold air —
I have heard this.

Fogwalking, fogwalking.

Since the curfew
the streets are half-dead,
all the good folk asleep in their beds,
it's so easy to go off the rails
when the fog spores
are breeding inside by head.

Fogwalking: there's a presence that I sense
Fogwalking: the neck muscles tense
Fogwalking: it's right here inside me,
try to find a defense — oh, no.

Fogwalking through the wreckage,
fogwalking through the worm-eaten
Night Apple,
fogwalking through what used to be
Whitechapel.

The Spirit

*The tune was written in my teens, as a setting for John
Betje-man's poem «The arrest of Oscar Wilde at the
Cadogan Hotel»! The sentiment's an affirmation of struggle
against the odds — very much my relationship with the
electric guitar...*

Such distance to the tips of the fingers,
the ganglion loom jerks inside;
the body grows steadily stranger
but the spirit won't be denied.

That sharp halogen flash jars the eyeball,
the limbs pump in overdrive;
the body grows seemingly weaker
but the spirit won't be denied.

Yeah, the ash-mark stands out on the forehead
as the vacuum sneaks up on the eyes;
the body becomes a constant traitor
but the spirit won't be denied.

And they call that living a normal life,
but normality's not standardised.
Though the body gets ever more root-bound
the spirit won't be denied

Yes, the spirit survives.

In Slow Time

Dance the dance
till show time
the show goes on
Dance the dance
in slow time
if that's what you want

Dance the dance
in the back of the car
in the cocktail bar
till show time let it ride
Dance the dance
I feel I've been here before,
this could be anywhere at all
in slow time.

Danced the dance, or it soon will be;
danced the dance, I'll be back here with me
in no time.

In no time danced the dance
It's show time dance the dance
in slow time.

Flight

I always forget how crazy things are
so sometimes it catches me off my guard
when they make sense.
The line on the road trail the arrow in the sky,
I search for the mote in my brother's eye
beneath the pence...
a time of blunt instruments.
Still uncertain when I've woken
or what constitutes a conscious mind,
though the thought remains unspoken
I know I'm flying blind.

Breaking into cold sweat on the white-hot coals
the pennies from heaven drop through my soul:
it don't relent.
At the back end of dreams I'm amazed to awake...
I offer my theories but just can't shake
that seventh sense
to which there's no defense.
It seemed the time was for action,
it seemed so cool to be that kind...
my tongue writhed to form some retraction
but I knew I was flying blind.

I want things to be fast, down to the power-dive;
I want the zero-gravity heroes to play dead,
but stay alive.
We want it to be slow, all the way to stall;
we talk about a thousand things that never change at all.
No, it never change...

It was then that I knew I'd been thoughtless,
something had slipped my mind:
I'd strapped myself into the Fortress
but the Fortress was flying blind.
We got full clearance,
so someone down there ought to know
the truth of our disappearance —
If even that still shows it accuses and blames me,
but nothing was quite what it seemed.
Sometimes things work out so strangely
that it might as well all be dreamed.

The White Cane Fandango

The White Cane Fandango in Morse code,
try to shake through the message,
shake the load;
only venial sin, running on the spot
till the dance begins.

Where does a man go when the muscles cramp?
Try to write out a postcard on a postage stamp
with a drawing pin punching out the Braille
for the whole within?

Upset the contango on your future stock;
paying backwardation, hold onto what you've got —
such a sideways grin!
Some day you may need
to trade that in.

If we ride this right
the future will fall in our hands.
If we survive the flight
the future will work out —
nothing's that black and white.

Control

The colour-coded charts are spread,
but we're still gliding deep into the red,
the radio is dead
every valve blown open.
The radar screen flicks monochrome,
air traffic controller wants to get on home,
waiting for a phone call
to release him from responsibility.
Nobody goes to see him any more
except for the man from the ministry.

He wanted to be, he wanted to be
the man at the helm, in command of the flightpath;
he's flying a chair, quite beyond control;
he's going to have just one more chance
at a barrel roll.

All in a dream, all as a dream,
the colours too bright, the music too deafening —
the black-out world has just begun to show.
These cracked-out words I offer...
but I still don't know.

Cool blue suffuse the colour gun —
oh come in, come in number one:
your time's nearly run.
Speed-freeze the frame,
the present and the past hold fast...
It's too fast, the thing don't,
the thing won't,
the thing don't last.

<i>Cockpit</i>

The rolling dice clash together, never make up the score;
that old device, the ejector seat, glued to the floor.
Everybody waits for everyone to make a show,
no-one wants to be the first, admitting that they know
how anythings that's gone down here
could fit into an analytic groove.
Wait for the tactical move,
wait for some action we all can approve.

Too much to drink, for the cup reaches down to the sea;
too much to think, the barometer pressuring me.
Rolling down the weather for an Easter parade,
reeling out the Maydays in the hope of being saved,
but the radio ham's out giving blood —
no, no, he's not listening.
The cricketer knows his «Wisden»,
the pilot has got his «Jane's»,
but the sum of this factual wisdom
don't help us to fly the plane
(no, and it never will...)
Beneath the tartan two-piece something rips undone...
Wait for the ladder to run
wait for the snake that the ladder becomes.

A passenger hits the cockpit, willing to chance his game:
pulls out his gun and cocks it
in the hope that it all might change.

(Oh, but it never will...)

A fly-leaf from the library shows others have been here before,
tried, failed and kicked out the door;
the aircrew don't care anymore.
Now they just wait
for the beat of the silk-worm wing,
wait for the heat to come down on us
full force of the law.

Silk-Worm Wings

Full force of gravity pulls me down,
I'll be better off out of there;
aerobatic spin around,
I'll take my chances in the open air.

Sycamore silk-worm wings
or Roman Candle to the ground,
there's only one thing for sure:
when the balloon goes up
the aeronaut calm down.

Nothing is Nothing

He say nothing is quite what it seems,
he say nothing is quite what it seems;
I say nothing is nothing.

A Black Box

Softly, the angels sing their time and space refrain:
there's something in everything if you can only pin down its name
Aerobatic thoughts at the back of my mind —
Is it nothing but the looping line we all follow?
Nothing but the spiral twist of DNA?
There'll be no looking back from tomorrow on today.

So the wire is tripped, split-seconds defect to their successors;
the umbilical cord is ripped —
here we all are in free fall.

I stall where I am, as if to see where I've been,
only running down the looping line we all follow,
only chasing down the spiral twist of DNA.
There can be no looking on to tomorrow from today.

Life/death/night/day...
cold breath will surely fly away.
Is the empire of sensation locked in a black box
deep in me, encoded there somehow?
It fires the imagination to fly on a wing and a prayer
through my life. Is that how it is?
(There'll be no looking back on this...)
This is now, which will be then?
Is this the means?
All I know for sure is
this is the end.

No looking back from tomorrow,
no, there'll be no looking back on today;
better be looking on to tomorrow...
better think on today.

Sitting Targets (1981)

Breakthrough

Art implied sci-fi story. I don't know if the guns are slung across the desks in aggression or resignation. I do know that time is the real question here. Foxy text.

The visitors find the children gone from school:
aged relations sling their guns across the desks...
there'll be no break-time for them unless
they talk about tomorrow
as though it's already on its way.
Amen, oh yes, they're
waiting for the breakthrough in time.

The visitors hide no aces up their sleeves
and the classroom pulses to many different drums.
If only a breakthrough in time would come
there'd be some chance for the visited ones.
We could talk about tomorrow
as though we believed in that.
We could talk about it right now
and it would come as a shock
to feel the fingernail grow on the trigger finger —
still the visitors clock us
waiting for the breakthrough,
waiting for the breakthrough
with time on our hands.

(It's there all the time.)

My Experience

An unusually mysterious subject for a three-chord trick; something of the film noir about it, I think. I certainly had a couple of grainy cinematic images in mind while writing it. The questions and the silences keep nagging here.

It was nothing, it came from nowhere at all,
it was a casual remark, not a curtain-call.
Late for breakfast — black coffee, brandy-laced...
that look on your face.
I'll remember last night,
I'll look out for the signs:
you were caught in the light...

Time after time
it's been my experience
that when the row gets serious
a certain silence will fall...

But I just can't stop it,
why don't you tell me what's wrong?
My heart goes like a rocket, the feeling's so strong.
I just can't stop it, why don't you tell me what's wrong?
Don't think about it too long.

I could argue this another way,
but on another day I might have to shout.
You keep your mouth shut,
but it's too late for that now:
the word got out.
In translation it's lost, in desperation it's mimed;
is this Paradise lost, or Paradise time after time?

It's been my experience
that when the row gets serious
a certain silence will fall...

But I just can't stop it,
why don't you tell me what's wrong?
My heart goes like a rocket, the feeling's so strong.
I just can't stop it, why don't you tell me what's wrong?
Don't think about it too long.

Ophelia

Two parts the Lady of Shallott to one part Ophelia, actually, I guess. I don't know if the feeling goes for the stranger, for her, or for both of them. There's a certain inevitability here, anyway. This is a real «found» song.

That token drag on your cigarette,
that well-known face in the fire...
it could be someone you can't forget,
someone you've learnt to admire.
And it's strange how the feeling goes.
All change —
down the river Ophelia goes.

You're treading water, the price is steep,
you say you'll cope with it all;
you've made some promises you can't keep,
you throw yourself against the wall,
you throw yourself against the wall.
And it's strange...

You heard a noise in the firegrate,
you look to see who goes there —
it's just the stranger, he's come too late
and even he's unprepared
to find the cupboard so bare
And it's strange...
down the river Ophelia goes.

Empress's Clothes

She's here now, perfume coiled like a thuggee scarf,
such a powerful drug to make you so naked and clean.
And you want to tell her,
there's so much to disclose,
this idea you've got to sell her:
a new set of empress's clothes.

Who was that woman in the masquerade,
do those eyes still give you fever?
Who was that woman in the mystery-play,
do you still want to please her?
Where is the woman who can offer escape,
do you look for your freedom?
You see her
and you want...

You want her to wear that finery,
the style that's never seen;

you're trying to break the deadlock
of this strangleholding scene...
oh, look,
a new set of empress's clothes!

The here and now stands in your way;
you carry the bell, book and candle...
she won't make you go
but she won't let you stay.
And you want...

You want her to wear that finery,
the style that's never seen;
You're trying to break the deadlock
of this strangleholding scene;
she makes you want to confess it all —
you don't know what it means,
but she makes you see
Empress's clothes.

Glue

Halfway between the zoo
and the temple of your Art...
but what do you do
with this motion of the heart?
Who'll be looking for you
when it all falls apart?

Oh, but what do you do,
and where do you start
when people are the glue,
when it all falls apart?

Hesitation

This is no time to hesitate,
the line slips into overload;
the mixture too thick,
the touch too close to the motherlode.

Time — there's so little time
to do anything that's not useless...
you tried for a little while
to hide your face from the future.
Now you thought it was released —
you find that it's captured,
it sticks to your hand, you can't let it go.
What you knew as pain has turned into rapture,
but nothing goes away, it just changes.
You know it's the right tempo, right place,
but something's gone wrong with the cardiograph.
Oh, your day shadow and your night face,
you thought it was forever
but it doesn't last.

Time, there's so little time
to do away with the tension.
I try for a little while
to put it all in suspension.

I thought I was released,
I find that I'm captured,
the groove sticks, it won't let me go.
The glass stain is now seen as fractured
and try as I may I can't change
but I know it's the
wrong tempo, wrong place
and something's gone wrong with the autograph.
Oh, the day shadow and the night face
conspire into prophecy...

This is no time for hesitation.

This is no time to hesitate,
it's no time to look for another road;
the shiver begins,
the touch too cold on the motherlode

This is no time for hesitation.

Auto-biographical (ha ha). The car's always a good place for serious conversation — no eye contact! The motto for these recordings was «keep it simple, keep it clean» — but it's a messy story anyway.

We can talk about it in the car,
we can talk about it with the drive.
Keep your eyes on the road up ahead,
(don't forget what we said about)
staying alive.
If we'd been stuck there
just a few hours more
I'd have cracked up, I'd say.

No, you never can tell when it's coming.
It's so hard getting out of the way...
to be sitting targets is surely
no better than running away.
Sitting targets in the car:
I'll be thinking about it —
not so far, no so far to drive.

This time we made our getaway,
we'd been stalling for too long.
Keep your eyes on the road up ahead
while I try to forget what's been going wrong.
(What's been going on...)
You'd better check up on the CB,
see what Tail-End Charlie say:
«Oh, you never can tell how it's going,
no, you never can see how it's been,
but to stay sitting targets is surely
no better than living a dream.»

Sitting targets in the car...
I've been thinking it over,
it's not so far, not so far to drive.

In the car...

We can talk about it in the car,
surely we can talk about it some other time.
Keep your eyes on the road up ahead,
I don't seem to be able to use mine
and I'm losing control of my body
and I'm running scared.

Oh, we're left with a black-and-white movie,
a positional state of affairs,
an obsessional interest in moving
just to prove that we're there,
sitting targets in the car.
I'll be thinking about it,
not so far to drive...
sitting targets in the car,
I've been thinking it over,
it's not so far, not so far,
not too far to drive.

Stranger Still

Well if it's not to be the cafe it's almost certain to be the restaurant. The bulk of these lyrics were written straight off over a Parisian lunch. I've often been caught like this, between panic and ennui (usually waiting for the show, rather than after it). It may seem somewhat abstract to drag Entropy into the equation., but modern scientific metaphors are there to be grabbed and surely currently relevant?

Stranger still in another town,
how normal to sit out the dance,
eating the good meal by myself,
toasting the empty glass
and they're already setting out the next place,
already forgetting about the last.
No, nothing could be less strange:
in entropy
no change, no change, no change.

No danger in a normal life,
better steady down the adrenalin pump.
Excess refraction in the mirror
only leads to the quantum jump...
Oh, but it leaves me in limbo —
how strange, what a stranger I become.
No, no, nothing could be less strange,
in entropy
no change, no change, no change.

No, I know how to behave in the restaurant now,

I don't tear at the meat with my hands.
If I've become a man of the world somehow
that's not necessarily to say I'm a worldly man.

Keep on shuffling the menu
and the order never comes on time.
No, there's only diffraction patterns,
no reading between the lines,
only the rate of emission,
and reason allows no rime.
Nothing could be less strange
in entropy
no change, no change, no change.
No, nothing could be less strange...

Entropy...
... a stranger, a worldly man.

Sign

Wrong drink to order...
suspicion grows.
Strong situation...

Oh, no-one knows where you've gone to in the pagan night
and the neon reflections spread cadmium white.
You came here looking for something
but this wasn't it, quite.
Hey, take a Polaroid,
exit,
and well you might.

Sign the picture, get out of the frame;
sign the picture, and throw it away.
Sign the picture, sign the picture,
throw the picture away.

Now she turns her attention
and her camera on you:
this could be all of the moments
that you'll ever live through.
Oh, but your heart beats the rhythm of primeval tattoo...
I hear you make your excuses

as you usually do.

Sign the picture, get out of the frame;
sign the picture, and throw it away;
Sign the picture, sign the picture,
throw the picture away...
... although it's going to come back.

You've got a certain knack
of making of such things
auspicious signs.

What I Did

A pretty pass in the rear-view mirror,
it's coming on the overtake...
I've got to stop panicking,
got to stay cool,
got to learn to live with my mistakes.
Overdue debt to the taxman,
I tried to have and eat my cake.

I think I must have been crazy in retrospect;
all the lines run together
but they just don't seem to connect.
I think I must have been crazy
to do all the things I did...
try to keep the pot on a gentle simmer,
but something blows off the lid.
I want to update my memory,
I want to rewrite my past...
Ooh, now I found out: no chance.

I think I must have been crazy
to do the stuff I did
I think I must have been crazy, crazy, crazy.

I think I must have been crazy
but that's the price we pay —
every lucky throw of the dice
will come back to us one of these days
I want to update my memory,
I want to rewrite my past,

I don't like what it's telling me,
it all floods back so fast;
I guess I was my own worst enemy,
now I've come to a pretty pass.
A pretty pass, a pretty pass,
there's nothing pretty in the past

I think I must have been crazy, crazy.
Crazy to do what I did.

Central Hotel

*Bruxelles. Yes, I found myself on the balcony, looking
down on the road works which went on year after year, Yes,
I keep going on/coming back. The joke stays the same —
and so does that buzz of electric guitar.*

I found myself lying on the balcony,
stripling terror, naked to the bone;
the secret asteroid jungle nearly done for me —
I saw it all just a moment ago.
I know I'd better watch out
for the Central Hotel...
I'm not going back.

Repetition, superstition, singularity,
though every cell in the body has changed
the walls move in well-accustomed hilarity —
the circuit changes but the joke stays the same.
I know I'd better watch out for the Central Hotel.
I think I'd better get out, I'm not feeling so well.
And I won't be going back,
not if I can help it.

I can't help it, I can't help it
if I still am what I was;
I can't help it, I can't help it,
can't stop the therefore because
I can't help it.
The grace of god shows I'll be going on,
I'll be coming back.

I know nothing of the miles of the marathon,
I hear nothing of the footfall behind,
I search for rhythm and I find that I haven't one...
slow motion in the runner's mind.
I know I'd better watch out for the Central Hotel
I think I'd better get out, I'm not feeling so well
I know I'd better check out, but anyone here can tell
I'll be coming back,
I'll be back.

I'm the Central Hotel.

Paradox Drive

The thought crossed my mind —
how curious, why should I want so much shut-eye?
Fighting the darkness and furious,
oh, but I once more fall into the song...
just the normal unconsciousness;
could that be wrong?
All out into action then all down into sleep —
check that attraction, it must be more than skin deep.

I've checked the twenty-four hours,
I've done the stay-up-all-night;
in a certain way that's power,
but it's not wired up right.
Up for the pleasure, then it's dead to the world;
our lives surely measured by the unconscious third...

Living on Paradox Drive,
we must be living on Paradox Drive.

The thought crossed my mind, how curious —
why should I want so much shut-eye?
Fighting the darkness and furious...
oh, but I once more dropped off to the deep,
the sweet comfort of a life on my own, asleep.
Up for the pleasure or dead to the world,
a life surely measured by the unconscious third...

Living on Paradox Drive,
we must be living on Paradox Drive.

I've checked the twenty-four hours,
I've done the stay-up-all-night;
in a certain way that's power,
but it's not wired up right,
it still isn't right.

The Unconscious Life

I'm in command,
I'm in control,
I am the captain of my soul.
Still, I'm uncertain in one major role...
oh, I drift through the unconscious life,
shift through the unconscious life,
lift up my unconscious eyes:
beyond all normal pain and pleasure
we should treasure the unconscious life.

We've got our reasons for most things we do,
we could surely rationalise them through.
A false ring of confidence
would characterise us true —
oh, we're deep in the unconscious life
asleep in the unconscious life,
peeping through unconscious eyes.
Beyond all normal pain and pleasure
we should treasure,
treasure the unconscious,
treasure the unconscious life.

Something makes me nervous,
something makes me twitch,
something makes me scratch that Pavlovian itch,
(Wonder what that is now...?)
Someone that I barely know must unpick the stitch
to unravel the unconscious life,
travel the unconscious life,
gather the unconscious eye...
far from shedding light on any motive
the candle is votive when it burns at both ends.

I'm not in command,
I'm out of control,
I am the Ship's Boy of my soul...

Oh, we drift through the unconscious life,
shift through the unconscious life,
live through the unconscious life.

Accidents

This meeting is a coincidence
which deserves a second look:
we've seen the chapter of accidents
become the longest in the book.
I see your face in the picture for better or worse,
all power to the accident!

Oh, the sweetest is the one I'm holding in my arms
and the fleetest is the one who survives
but the meetest is the one who's running on the spot
where the accident's about to arrive.
I know my place on the planet, chapter and verse,
all part of the accident.

I know my place in the story, a line of blank verse,
a part of the accident.

No system worth its salt
lays all its cards upon the table;
no discipline of thought
will render me more able
to buck those random throws.

This meeting is a coincidence
which deserves a second look —
we've seen the chapter of accidents,
it's the longest in the book.
Oh, the sweetest is the one I'm holding in my arms
and the fleetest is the one who survives
but the meetest is the one who's running on the spot
where the accident's about to arrive...
(The accidental, the accident!)

Your face in the picture for better or worse,
all power to the accident!
I know my place on the planet chapter and verse,
all part of the accident.
I know my place in the story, a line of blank verse,
a part of the accident.
I see your face in the picture for better or worse,
all power to the accident,
all power to the accident!

The Great Experiment

«Is that all there is to it,» he asks,
«no more conjecture or controversy?
Don't think I could go through it,
I couldn't live with the memory.
Now is the hour, it comes eventually;
how great the power as it falls on me!»

He's raising his sense of occasion to the limit —
(The big moment is coming up.)
Practised, his sense of evasion... or is it?
(No sidestep or dummy run.)
Craving a certain indulgence — would you give it?
Would you give it in time?

Treading water, making waves
from the cradle to the grave;
home by a whisker — close shaves!
I'm waiting,
what I said I meant:
no faking
The Great Experiment.

Near the end of the reel now,
he's hanging on by his fingertips.
He knows how it feels;
at last the kiss of unearthly lips.
Now is the hour to get a tighter grip.
How great the power as the tide begins to rip!

I'm waiting —
no faking
The Great Experiment.

Don't Tell Me

You don't have to say a thing,
the silence is sweet;
we've been together today
in a way we might never repeat.

Oh, your head on the pillow,
the distance in your eyes —
already you might be
rehearsing the word «Goodbye».

When the evening comes of this perfect day,
when the shadows run will you look away,
will you slip away?
Don't tell me anything.

You don't have to say a word,
all too well I understand:
there's a nervous tension
in the touch of your gentle hand.
That makes me afraid —
I've seen you like this before...
the moment you find somebody new
you find yourself bored.
Oh, I don't want to lose you.

When the evening comes of this perfect day,
when the shadows run will you look away,
will you slip away?
Don't tell me anything.

Now the evening's come,
now I'm left alone;
now the passion's done
and you're going home...
oh, when will you telephone?
You don't tell me anything.
No, you don't even tell me
the bell won't ring.

She Wraps it Up

You know that she's got something she wants to give;
hard to tell if it's of spirit or the life she lives...
maybe somewhere between the two.
Oh, the waiting to see what it is!

The energy donor, looking over her shoulder,
she sees it all, she sees it slipping away.

There's a backbone shiver for the energy giver...
she wraps it up, and that's a final wrap for today.

Some things she'll soon learn to live without,
while others she's not secure enough to doubt.
It'll be hard to stay so close
when all that special emptiness floods out.

The energy donor shoots it straight from the shoulder:
she sees it all, she sees it all rushing through.
There's a backbone shiver from the energy giver...
she wraps it up, she wraps it up and gives it to you.

Jumping shells, the electrons will dance
like dusk-time fireflies.
Just as well that you took that last chance
to extend all your by-and-bys.
Let's be clear:
don't be too far away...
oh, but don't get so near!
You'll remember today for the rest of your life.

The energy donor, looking over her shoulder,
she sees it all, she sees it slipping away.
There's a backbone shiver for the energy giver;
she wraps it up, and that's a heavy rap you'll have to pay.
The energy donor shoots it straight from the shoulder:
she sees it all, she sees it all rushing through.
There's a backbone shiver from the energy giver —
she wraps it up, she wraps it up and gives it to you.

Happy Hour

Fuelled by alcohol,
shooting out words like a rocket,
like a prophet out of Babylon
method acting the absurd...
Shoot me those highballs
till I'm lit up like I'm plugged in a socket;
lock me eyeball to eyeball,
let's not bother with the words.
Oh, bring on the clowns, bring on the night,
pour me double vision in black and white.

I'm falling, falling — don't give me that look!
I'm falling, falling, it's the oldest trick in the book,
My chickadee, my passion flower,
show me the way to the Happy Hour.

I don't like to see that:
oh, no, I don't like the way the hand is shaking,
shape-making like an acrobat
on his way to the trapeze.
My friends in the crowd
are all taking bets —
they're taking away the safety net.
Falling, falling — don't give me that look!
I'm falling, only falling, it's the oldest trick in the book,
vertigo on the high-wire tower —
is this really what they mean by 'Happy Hour'?

The line between the social and the suicidal
so fine he might not know when he's crossed it,
when he's lost it;
when the social kick becomes the gauging-stick of survival.

So here's to the circus,
let's drink to the game of forgetting
the marionette strings that jerk us,
the real world just outside the door.
I know that my legs have gone
and I know that the light here is far from perfect...
I've rehearsed it, so I'll carry on
until I wind up on the floor.

My friends in the bar
will stand me a round,
they'll toast me on my way to the underground.
I'm falling, falling — don't give me that look!
I'm falling, only falling, it's the oldest trick in the book,
My chickadee, my passion flower,
show me the way to the Happy Hour.
Vertigo on the high-wire tower —
is this really what they mean by 'Happy Hour'?

Put on the greasepaint, we're getting ready for Happy Hour.
Do you hear me now? Can you feel me now?
I'm in the middle of Happy Hour...
Put on the greasepaint.

Seven Wonders

Well, it must have been here somewhere,
that which the culture highly prized:
the list of ancient buildings,
the attitude of mind,
the wisdom of the prophets,
the catalogue of books...
You can't get off it,
you don't know where to look.
I know you don't know what to say
and it's strange now, see how
everything's changed,
including the Seven Wonders.
Nothing is permanent here.

New kick, new game, new theory,
the rest reduced to nought:
it only takes a moment,
one clear and lucid thought.
Once the process has been triggered
all previous process disappears...
I don't know what it is you fear,
I don't know what it is you fear —
the shift is nothing to be afraid of.

Strange now, see how
everything's changed,
including the Seven Wonders.
Nothing is permanent here,
that's part of the spell we're under.
Getting old then, say when
you're happy to hold
your personal Seven Wonders.
Nothing is permanent here.

Patience (1983)

Labour of Love

You don't remember all the things I've done;
you never catch the careful words I choose;
your present will not admit my patient efforts...
it's a labour of love
I offer to you.

Unselfishness, does that hold the space between us?
A helplessness, a nothing-left-to-prove?
A silence more eloquent than any passion?
It's a labour of love
I offer to you...
It's a gift of love.

Take this hand and you will hold its stories;
beat, the heart, and find the tell-tale truth;
take this gift: — receipt will give it value.
It's a labour of love
I offer to you,
it's a gift of love.

Film Noir

He casts himself as an adventurer,
all foot on floor and hell for leather;
she never told him what he meant to her —
perhaps that's for the better.
She's never clearly seen dividing lines
between real life and parts she's chosen,
confuses character and rising sign,
sex and emotion.

She waits in the caravan
at the side of the set
for the scene with her leading man
that he'll not forget...

Things get crazy on location
and they had their little swing;
only yesterday he told her
that it didn't mean a thing.

She's in love with the hero of the movie
but she's lost herself on some dark trip;
she's in love with being in the movie.
Call for action!
This is it: the method actress
and the shooting script.

So she waits in the caravan
for the film's final scene
and her love/hate for the action man
will fill the silver screen...

On the dresser is the pistol,
in the chamber are the blanks,
in her pocket are the bullets
with his name upon the shanks.

She's in love...

Call for action, this is it:
the method actress and the hit.

Just Good Friends

*We set out to make a single — but for better or worse
made this instead! The song is one of a number of room-
and-story, near cinematic efforts.*

Drawing back the curtains,
sluggish city daylight in the afternoon...
here's the special silence,
just before you walk out of the hotel room.
Each time we're so close I assume
that we'll never be again.
Oh, how long can we pretend
that we're just good friends?

A casual affair is all that you can spare
from your emotional change;
a calendar of meetings,
strangers on the street
the best we ever arrange.
Now I just can't stand all the pain,
all the constant make and mend:
how long must we pretend
that we're just good friends?

I gave you my devotion,
hiding nothing up my sleeve.
If I walked clean out of your life
would you even notice me leave?
So much tangled-up emotion,
should I stay or should I go?
If I walked clean out of your life
how long would it take you to know?
Are we such good friends?

You used to say «I love you»,
you used to say
«You make me feel alive and young».
Now we're just a habit,
a flavour, once a month,
to titillate your tongue.
How sordid this has become
as the means approach the end
oh, how long can we pretend
that we're still good friends?

I gave you my devotion,
hiding nothing up my sleeve.
If I walked clean out of your life
would you even notice me leave?
So much tangled-up emotion,
should I stay or should I go?
If I walked clean out of your life
how long would it take you to know?
Are we such good friends?

Are we still good friends?

Jeunesse Doree

The youth are voting with their feet,
such a shame that the dance-beat
gets so complicated.
Pretty, pretty it seems...
on second glance, the look is overrated.
In the hot-house there's a magic potion,
timeless motion...
Now and again now lasts forever;
jeunesse doree gilding the lily of pleasure.

The youth are voting with their clothes,
such a shame that the hip pose
is so overstated.
Round and round it goes:
how careless the rapture that's calculated.
In the picture lost devotion,
waveless ocean.
Time and again
style goes out of fashion;
jeunesse doree taking the heat out of passion.

Look at the kid with the golden touch,
check out the stony expression;
look at the man with the golden arm
and the sensational lesson.
Follow-my-leader's a game we can play
till we swallow the tail without thinking:
Catch the hook, toe the line
never mind that we're sinking!

The youth are voting themselves in...
but the wheel takes a fresh spin
and they find tomorrow
gaudy garments worn thin,
all at best rent and the worst are borrowed.
Closing orders, fading nation,
dissipation...
time and again, time's unforgiving;
jeunesse doree gilding the lily of living.
Now and again, now and forever;
jeunesse doree gilding the lily of pleasure.

Cut.

Traintime

Along the tracks the wires are humming
in bursts of code like far-off drums.
Fathering the message:
further up the line someone's shouting
down the passage of time.

The corridor restrains the window,
no view without the eye within.
Bold upon the threshold
but holding on the line
we're shouting down the passage of time.

Relatives speak on the phone, on the train,
talking before they have thought to explain;
voices pitched wildly on tracks in the night
can't pick the pace up...
oh let there be light!
How light becomes the soul.

You know yourself the centre of attention,
you see yourself the locus of event.
I'm sorry if it's painful quarrying the lime,
stage centre,
shouting down the passage of time.

The corridor retains its shadows,
its secrets compartmentalised.
Damping down on ambience,
clamp the teeth and grind,
shouting down the passage of time.

What's there to see or make clear?
What's there to know
when the voice is right here?
What's there to promise or vow?
What's to believe, when the time is right now?

Relatives spoke on the phone, on the train,
talking before they had sought to refrain;
voices projected, spears in mid-flight
frozen forever... oh let there be light!

Now More than Ever

Between coma and consciousness
no hard and fast line,
no chance to vote on the motioning eye.
A mystical vision or a fall from grace,
the chase in slow motion through alien space?
I don't know what to make of the dream-time:
it seems as though I'm me,
but I'm now more than ever
happening inside myself — I don't know
whether I need anything else.

Stored information or secretive clue,
so much will fit the design...
one field of life where free will
won't cut through:
the dream and the unconscious eye,
in real time.

We surf between waking
and the breakers of sleep
the unconscious ocean, still waters run deep.
We lay down all logic,
all sense of control, suspend disbelief
in the window of souls.
I don't know what to make of the dream-time:
it seems as though I'm me,
but I'm now more than ever
happening only in thought...
I don't know whether
any sense is caught.
Stored information etc...
...the dream disappears in the light.

In the laboratory they're waking him up:
the dreams on the lips but they smash the cup.
A psycho-experiment, and there is no doubt —
the dream's an experience I go crazy without...
I don't know what to make of the dream-time:
it seems as though I'm me,
but I'm now more than ever
happening inside my head...
is this a forever with the ego dead?

Stored information etc...
...the dream and the unconscious eye.
In real time
it's now more than ever.

Comfortable

She likes to keep God out of church,
especially when she prays:
all in its place, all safely stored
for some rogation day...
the paradox is so apparent,
the sense absurd, but all too real;
the nonsense is arrant
but she just wants to feel comfortable.

A pound in the collection-box,
a name-plate by the aisle;
she always wears a hat,
for He'll appreciate the style.
Pays no attention to the sermon,
Christ in himself has no appeal,
the social custom is the turn-on
and she just wants to feel comfortable.

Treading not on her illusions,
I will not walk upon my own:
we stand among the creature comforts;
we're standing on
the stockpiles of first stones.

We stand on the brink of the Ultrapower,
assume it's a proper place,
view the living hour by hour
in the first person singular case.
On with the usual, complacent,
wait for the mortal wound to heal
when the abyss is adjacent...
what right have we got to feel
comfortable?

On with the usual complacency,

on with the customary zeal;
she doesn't need to match a valency,
she just wants to feel comfortable.

It's her blindness and her blessing
that the thought will not occur
that heaven, when it comes, might have
no special place for her.
She'll never look at the enigma,
she doesn't want things quite that real.
Oh, that's some kind of stigma —
What right has she got to feel
comfortable?

She doesn't want to think about it,
she doesn't want to talk about it,
she doesn't want to look at it.
It makes her feel uncomfortable.

Patient

A system in the making,
self-healing for the blind,
sitting in the waiting-room
of the patient mind;
raging at the illness
when the rage may be its cause,
the purpose of the will is lost
in the search for an escape clause.

Fatal convalescence,
the wound becomes a weal;
the poison is in essence just
the virus of the real.
But there's sympathetic healing,
the power of the soul bandages,
concealing all that we can't control.

Waiting for the doctor to come.

A system in the making,
self-healing for the blind,
sitting in the waiting-room

of the patient mind...
but there isn't any answer
the consciousness can quote
when the loaded dice of chance
are there, rattling in the throat.

Waiting for the doctor to come.

You put your faith in others;
the fear could not be worse,
but Nature's not your mother now,
just your suckling nurse.
There isn't any doctor,
there isn't any cure...
that might come as a shock to you,
but can you really be so sure?

Can you really be sure?

Loops and Reels (1983)

In context was all.

The context of the Kora: dislocation.

A gift from Switzerland (of all places), it found it's way back to England where it sat as an object stripped of purpose and identity. This did not feel remotely positive. Months later the song came. The instrument itself dictated the style and the tune, neither of them remotely close to the original design and purpose. The cautionary tale grew and directed itself as much at the player in the context of the instrument, as at the imagined other in that of the mask.

The context of the Loops: physicality.

The tape snaked out, often room wide, from the focus of record replay heads. A physical junction where it was edited imposed a subsidiary rhythm to whatever had been registered on it. A slower, slower pulse each time the edit bumped across the heads. Life expectancy reduced with each pass. Oxide shredding, the sound gradually grew duller and more distant. In this world of straining motors time would not stand still for manipulation. It stretched, but under struggle.

The context of the Reels: accumulation.

Eventually all their fragmentary snatches of time were stitched together. The whole which emerged did not and does not make a comfortable cover.

A Ritual Mask

A Ritual Mask upon the wall
furnishes his surroundings
and he thinks that's all.

A Ritual Mask,
its power still strong,
a memento of his travels,
that he got for a song.

He got it for a song.

It was the song of the centuries undisturbed,
the song of secrets and power words;
the song of a culture not grown immune
to the virus of progress,
to the theft of the tune.

The Ritual Mask,
the evil eye
inhabits his apartment,
inhabits his mind
with a song of vengeance,
a song of a debt repaid,
a song of justice,
a song of a hand unstayed,
a song of a culture as old as the hills...
that sits uneasy on the living-room wall
like a snake about to kill.

The Ritual Mask,
it won't take long
before he finds out the bargain
has turned out dreadfully wrong.

Oh, he got it for a song.

The Moebius Loop

Indecision and uncertainty
catch you now as they never have before...
how come you didn't recognize
the revolving door?
Are you going to take sides
on the chequered floor?
It used to be so easy,
you saw everything in black and white.
When you lost track of all the moves you'd made
you lost faith in wrong and right.

It doesn't seem conceivable,
look what's happening in your hand.
Is it just a trick of comprehension
or a master plan?
Oh, the change in your perspective,
from the gutter now you stoop...
how come you didn't recognize the fiery hoop?
How are you going to take sides
now you're on the Moebius Loop?

Now you're on the Moebius Loop.

Skin (1986)

Skin

There's a shiver down the spine
of the body map...
how come everything gets so physical?
With your finger on the pulse
and your head in the clouds
everything's so tactile
In your private world,
In your little world.

CHORUS:

Under the skin you search for paradise,
under the skin some kind of parasite
remains concealed.
Under the skin a true identity, a memory
will soon be revealed, under the skin.

Hit that button, no time to lose —
everything's so immediate.
You'd have it all right now
If you got to choose
In your private world,
such a tiny world.

CHORUS

Is something out to get you under the skin?
Full of the promise of paradise?
Paradise now?

Everything gets so physical,
everything's so immediate
In your private world,
such a tiny world.

CHORUS

Does something get to you
under the skin?

After the Show

*One of many Actor songs which have littered my path.
What does happen to those lives which tread the boards?
What's the trade-off? There are several onion skin layers of
reality here and some of them are obviously self-
referential...*

He made a bit of money,
that's something you might like to know...
He'll be drinking in the cafe on the corner
after the show.

He's been so many people,
he wore them all like poisoned vests,
still playing the soliloquy from Hamlet
close to his chest.

Where do the actors go after the show?
Where do the actors go?

He had his hour of glory,
that's something you should keep in mind...
When he's drinking in the cafe on the corner
there's no sense of time,
just waiting on for Godot,
convinced he's been here years before...
he's taken that philosophy in German
square on the jaw.

Where do the actors go after the show?
Where do the actors go?

He made a bit of money,
that's something you might like to know;
he'll be drinking in the cafe on the corner
after the show

Where do the actors go after the show?
Where do the actors go?

Painting by Numbers

It's not that complicated,
no more than a clench of fist —
she want to paint her heart out,
she want to tell it as she sees it is.
Authority condemns her,
they say to paint's a waste without a base,
some bedrock of idea.

Painting by numbers doesn't add up,
Painting by numbers doesn't add up,
it's passionless bed-rest,
work-body that's headless,
a head that's without heart —
painting by numbers doesn't add up to art.

Her constant vows mean nothing,
not content alone that sells —
The Market Theory beckons,
no-one remembers what the story tells;
no-one remembers passion,
we just recite the line
that art is fine and fashion costly.

Painting by numbers doesn't add up;
safety in numbers, put your hands up
in mute surrender...
they'll break her or bend her
for the heart on her sleeve.
Painting by numbers all the modern world believes.

And the whole thing falls apart
when the movement's more important than the art;
when we're more concerned
with what's been thought than said
this is the moment when the culture's dead.

It's not that complicated,
it's simple as can be:
she want to paint her heart out,
they want a programme for the B.B.C.
where academic critics can talk of art that's fine
like holy wine — the Blessed Intellectuals!

Painting by numbers, safety in numbers...

The poets from Venus assume that they've seen us —
they're quick to depart.
Painting by numbers doesn't add up to art.

Shell

This was originally called «Galapagos». Does that make any more sense of the «turned turtle»? I'm not sure what «he's doing»/«we're doing»... but sure as hell we're writing our own (unknown) histories.

Turn a card, turn a page,
the action sure to start,
second-stage reaction
to illogical thoughts on random lines —
in a Borges dream we move toward
the writing of lives.

Leave it out, leave it in,
no edits —
with a shout, with a grin I said
it was a certainty that I'd arrive
in an Escher sketch
we walk around
the drawing of lines.

The character uncertainty
as he contemplates his lot
and tries to move with urgency
though he's rooted to the spot.

On the brink, on the edge,
but lately what I think,
what I said escapes me
in a flash, a tiger burning bright —
does the visionary trance obscure
the burgeoning night?

And she said «What are you doing?»
And he said «What do you think?»
Oh, no,
what on earth are we doing?

The characters procrastinate
on the threshold of the door;
there's something here that fascinates,
though the meaning's still unsure
and the plot so thick.
Is it some kind of history?
Sketch the thumbnail to the quick.
Oh, even though it's full of contradiction,
though it's flawed in the design
this is no fiction,
it's a lifeline.

Here we are, there we went,
full circle, shooting stars,
heaven-sent, turned turtle on the beach
our shells are left behind
life a library, like a memory
of our ghost-written lives.

All Said and Done

All the words in the world
wouldn't make you stay this evening;
though I scrabble around for any I can say,
so hard to take our leave,
so hard to stop believing.

I guess we know this silence well enough,
and you'll be going by and by;
I'm scared that anything I offer
might be taken for a lie.

CHORUS:
All said and done,
and there's no way to make it any different.
I hold my tongue as you're walking away.
So goodbye comes —
oh, I don't want to make it difficult
but nothing's easy
when there's nothing left to say.

Now we only talk as though time were heavy weather
with a storm-cloud brewing on each hasty phrase...

all the words in the world wouldn't put us back together.

Maybe we had our opportunities...
most of those chances passed us by;
I'm scared that anything I offer
might be taken as a bribe.

CHORUS

A Perfect Date

A perfect date to hesitate,
I hope it won't be too long.

You're a sucker for the punch
and the telegraph bells are ringing;
now it's coming to the crunch
as you stumble on the Jaffa Gate.
I think you know how it happens on the stage
when the heavenly choir are singing —
you've been taken by a perfect date.

You made the Mount of Venus your Jerusalem,
you're marking time as symbol for debate;
you hope to find some moment close to infinite,
you hope to find a perfect date.

A perfect date to hesitate.
The future beckons us on.
There comes a time to hesitate —
I hope it won't be too long.

You're a sucker for the punch...
...you've been taken by a perfect date.

You've been playing on a hunch
and the strings of your heart are zinging.
Yeh, you cut loose from the bunch
but that doesn't mean you've sealed your fate.
I think you know how it happens,
though it's strange,
when the heavenly choir start singing:
you've been taken by a perfect date

Four Pails

Four pails of water and a bagfull of salts.

That is all we are, that is all a man comprises,
chemicals alone, with no spirit, soul or ghost —
nothing so bizarre.

No amount of faith disguises
what is true is what we fear the most

Nothing can survive
save the things men leave behind them.
Any other case would be really too absurd —
if thoughts remained alive
surely modern science would find them?
No, the soul is nothing but a word.

All the wonders Man achieves
emerge from cerebral tissue.
Chemical reactions' ebb and surge
form that Thing that is you...
It's a sad philosophy,
but better sad than wrong.
Face the truth instead:
when you're dead you're dead,
when you're gone you're gone...
now she's gone.

Four pails of water and a bagfull of salts.

That is all she was, all my lover represented —
that sounds just as mad as saying she will never die.
Fools may clutch at straws
but truth must not be circumvented:
as the tree falls, so must that tree lie!

Now that sounds so odd...
once I would have preached it brightly.
Now questions appear I rationally can't ignore...
Nothingness or God,
Which of them seems more unlikely?

Once I would have answered clearly,
now I only think I'm nearly sure.

(Chris Judge Smith)

Now Lover

In the here and now...
Between sensation at the nerve-ends
and arrival of information at the cortex
time elapses.
So, you see, each time we touch
we did so in the past.

Now, lover,
slicing through time in a perfect curve,
Due for a moment of energy;
somehow we'll get what we most deserve
in the here and now.

In the here and now,
although completely different people
in the moments before and after having sex,
we are time-locked.
Cracked, forgotten statues,
we are strangled in the undergrowth,
lost in ancient magic, we are motion,
we are wonderful flow.
We are time-locked,
Unknowing of the code, but addicted to the pulse

Now, lover,
melt in the crucible,
flesh and blood bodies consumed by the catalyst.
Somehow we'll raise our sights from the mud,
we are always now,
we are Always Now!

If we were always here and now,
instead of slightly, now and then...
so immaterial, so lost, embracing
all the grace that comes before the fall.

If we were always here and now,

electric shiver in the spine,
how could we turn away, see life as grey and drab?
How come we don't see what we have?

If we were always here and now,
soul to soul and skin to skin...
Is it some kind of make-believe,
is it some kind of dream we're in,
with a mint copy of original sin?

In the here and now,
between sensation at the nerve-ends
and the arrival of information at the cortex
time elapses

Cracked, forgotten statues, we are
strangled in the undergrowth;
lying on the mattress
of the magic and the wonderful,
nothing really matters as we're
sucked in by the undertow...
We are Motion, we are Feeling, we are Now!

Although completely different people
in the moments before and after having sex
we are time-locked, we are time-locked...
Though we know
each time we touch
we did so in the past.

Now come on, come on, lover,
slicing through time in a perfect curve,
due for a moment of energy...
somehow we'll get what we most deserve
in the here and now.
Melt in the crucible, flesh and blood
bodies consumed by the catalyst,
surrender to nothing,
welcome the flood of the here and now.
Slicing through time in a perfect curve,
due for a moment of energy,
somehow we'll get what we most deserve;
melt in the crucible, flesh and blood
bodies, consumed by the catalyst,
surrender to nothing,
nip the thought in the bud.

We are always now,
We are Always Now!

If we were always here and now...

You Hit me Where I Live

After finishing the recording of «Skin» I was still fired up, and bashed out this tune in a week or so. Only a madman would have played, rather than sequenced, all the keyboard arpeggiation. That man was I.

There was something in the conversation,
ancient languages were breaking through;
I was falling for infatuation —
how about you?

You say it's nothing special,
that's just the way it is...
you hit me where I live.

Though I drink the cup it leaves me thirsting —
what on earth am I supposed to do?
When I try to speak I find my
bursting heart full of you.

You say it's only natural,
you say forget and forgive...
you hit me where I live.

I was once the man who felt no passion;
I was nothing till I fell for you.
You're a duelist in your own fashion,
eyes that run me through.

You say that it's a mixed blessing,
but I should take the gift you give...
you hit me where I live.

And Close as This (1986)

Too Many of My Yesterdays

So many years ago, I thought you were the one —
who knows when people change, surrender into strangeness,
adrift upon their lives, encompassed by the past?
Who knows which one becomes the last goodbye?
Don't try to tell me nothing dies.
Don't try to tell me nothing's changed,
don't try to tell me nothing's new,
too many of my yesterdays belong to you.

I shelved my broken heart, I put you from my mind,
I got up from my knees, I picked up all my pieces,
but seeing you again puts shakes into my soul.
Just when I think I'm finally over you,
don't come and show me that's not true.

Tell me about it, talk to me — I hear it coming, I feel it coming,
the way you want this thing to be.
You're only trading on our memories
don't go and say you still love me.

You're trading on my memories, you're trading in a rosy past;
you know I'm lost on stormy seas...but I still stand before the mast,
beneath the stars and under sail towards horizons out of true...
Behind the dance of seven veils I still see you...

Tell me about it, have your way;
I see it coming, I hear it coming,
I know what you're about to say.
You've had too many of my yesterdays,
and I don't want to fall again.

Don't try to tell me nothing's changed,
don't try to tell me nothing's new,
too many of my yesterdays are lost in you.

Faith

*One of my (all too?) rare totally optimistic songs.
Perhaps it's only in the first flush of a relationship that
things are as simple as this; or is it later, when they 're
more complicated?*

Each moment is precious
those that I spend with you are a prize —
I count myself lucky just being alive
while you're in my eyes.

Seeing's believing and I believe in you
I can't conceal it, just what I feel for you.
Seeing's believing, I know that you'll see me through.
I believe in you
I have faith in you
I put my faith in you.

Doubt casts its shadow
on every perfect plan that is made
but I'll be beside you
through those dark days —
I'll be with you come what may.

Don't let me down,
now that I've fallen completely for you.

Empire of Delight

Memory extends its empire, holds the frame
but blurs the line.
Some other time invades the sense,
a moment caught and lost, second sight.
Suddenly I feel you near me,
worlds away and close as this.
One stolen kiss upon my lips and
the moment slips away in mid-flight.

So many years ago, and now it's
hard to recall just what you meant to me.
Still I wait, I'm patient,
for the memory comes to me eventually.
Here you are, and though you may soon be gone
somehow the song still burns as bright.

I felt it happen here tonight —
here, in the empire of delight.

Dream and ghost the world around me,
you seem as real as ever you were...
but in a blur your breath on my cheek
has gone and the evening come into night.

So many years ago, and now it's hard
to recall quite what you meant to me.
Still I wait, impatient,
though the memory comes to me eventually.
Here I am, forever caught up in this mystery
and then,
that moment when the fire ignites —
I felt it happen here tonight,
here, in the empire of delight.

Silver

You lay your plans, I take them as they come,
I understand: we dance to different drums.
It's not in any schoolbook,
you're here to teach a lesson to us all...
we play by different rule-books.
What you say, what you do,
they're such different things, which is true?
Now the telephone rings, Mephistopheles calling...
Forty pieces for each lie you've told
I hope your linings as they all unfold are silver.

Once we were friends in our idealist days,
still, let's pretend, it's funny in a way
that now our friendship's token
you like to say I owe you everything —
some debts remain unspoken.
Double talk, double standards,
you speak with two tongues, truth's abandoned,
all life has become one-way traffic to lucre.
You take your meetings on the cloth of gold,
just down the river from the lives you've sold for silver.

The silver crossed your palm, oh, can you see the future?
I hope you'll know when you sold your soul.
Argente, argent.

All the things you've done will carry their own taint
and a day will come when you chorus the complaint
that your friends don't do you fairly;
the back you turned, the shoulders that you shrugged
now fit the blame quite squarely.
What you want, what you need,
your emotional greed all-consuming
but no hearts will bleed and the coffers are empty.
Yes, in the end you'd give it all away,
but on the sockets of your eyes they lay the silver.

Beside the One You Love

You're helpless, entranced by the magical
touch of her skin against yours, adrift —
what else is there but this?
It feels so sweet
to fall asleep
beside the one you love

Remember this fireside, this quiet room,
embers now flickering their last, like ghosts
and still she holds you close.
Who else could know
such afterglow
beside the one you love?

Someday the memory will come again
as vivid as sensation now and then
there'll be no «why?» or 'when?'.
Who else could do
these things to you
beside the one you love?

It feels so sweet
to fall asleep
beside the one you love.

Other Old Cliches

I might as well give you all there is,
I might as well take it all the way:
what's gone is forgotten, and anyway
surely words alone could not wreck your day?
The cake's not worth the candle, so they say...
'Nothing ventured, nothing gained, no hard feelings'...
other old cliches.

I've held back my feelings for so long
while clutching at straws in the caravan —
I'll say what I must and take it like a man.
I've fixed my grin, I've raised a laugh,
and after the back's been broken by the waiting game...
'Mustn't grumble, can't complain, no hard feelings',
other old cliches.

Suddenly I see the scales falling from your eyes —
this revelation surely comes as no surprise?
Well, what d'you want? What d'you expect?
What do you say?

Can it really be so predictable?
Now all of the secrets are given away,
what words of forgiveness are there left to say?
Hold me now, don't let go,
hold me, soon there comes a price I cannot pay,
I take the words back straight away:
'I'm so sorry, I didn't mean it',
beg forgiveness, beg and pray...
blind self-pity,
other old cliches.

Confidence

Behind the smile of confidence
somewhere you'll find the wanted man
blank-faced and wary of conversation with himself.
Around the ring of confidence
they're dancing to a different tune;

the others seem so confident, why don't you take a leaf
from the storm we're passing through?
In confidence we sail across the seven seas
to hide behind the veil — in confidence the key!
«I'm in good form, I'm feeling fine,»
responsibly how well you do —
there's nothing I can say about
the usual cocktail of public faith and private taboo.
In confidence the trick is there for all to see —
In confidence the key!

Oh, don't anyone let the cat out of the bag,
don't anyone admit to human frailty.
Someone let the cat out of the bag.
Confidentially we learn we're not alone,
in lack of confidence we're not alone.

Behind the smile of confidence
somewhere you'll find the mortal man
waving his arms in some urgent secret semaphore...
So I'll face the world with confidence,
I'll toughen up my point of view,
what better way to live a life,
what other way can there be of seeing this thing through?
In confidence the trick, in confidence the game,
the thing that makes us tick —
in confidence the flame!

Inside the ring of confidence
somewhere you'll find a stone-age man
lost in the forest with darkness falling,
striking his flint to hold back
the roaring, the alien, the world.

We are not alone.

Sleep Now

Incomprehensible, confused and contradictory though they are, this is some kind of effort to depict non-possessive parental feelings, and specifically those of a father, naturally. «As though he never knew the meaning of the words» is exactly right.

Sleep now:
another day in your young lives is done,
go to sleep now; tomorrow brave new worlds
will surely come, and trouble deep;
you're such a wonder, such a mystery to me.

Somewhere
your future friends are lying as you are
and your lovers
right now are only crying babes in arms
oh, the world turns under our feet,
our lives are passing by
in our sleep.

So soon you'll be gone to that wide world
the tunes of adulthood calling little girls.

Remember,
whatever else in life you find to doubt,
do remember,
although you hear him mostly in a shout,
your father loves you
as though he never knew the meaning of the words until just now.

So soon you'll be gone to that wide world
one tune of childhood I sing my little girls...

Sleep now,
one day I'll tell you how my life has been.
Oh, so strange
to think your eyes will fall on things
that mine have never seen, these eyes that gently flicker
in some lost childhood dream.
Sleep now,
safe and warm in the haven of your bed,
go to sleep now...
Although you won't remember what I've said,
your father loves you
as though he never knew the meaning of the words until just now,
as though he never knew the meaning of the words.

In a Foreign Town

Hemlock

Here it comes up on the screen,
the propaganda of the military-industrial machine.
By now we find there's little choice:
when our masters tell us «smile» we rejoice.
With the nuclear shield safely in place
we're assured of the survival of the human race.

The earth is flat and pigs can fly —
swallow hard and believe the lies.
In these alleys all are blind:
skittles fall for the dreams of humankind.

And nuclear power is safe as hell —
Swallow hard, young William Tell.
The earth is flat and pigs can fly —
If you swallow hard you believe the lies.

In the banks the deals are made —
of course there's no profit in lending the Third World aid.
If the larder shells are bare let the people eat cake
and thank the governments for the air.
Meanwhile, in the cells, secret police
champion freedom, offer justice, keep the peace.

The Pope talks to God, the Ayatollah too —
swallow hard and believe it true.
The earth is flat and pigs can fly —
if you swallow hard you'll believe the lies.
It's a hemlock world.

It's a hemlock world that we must drink —
swallow hard and don't try to think.
It's a hemlock world that we all face —
swallow hard on the bitter taste,
on the aftertaste.
It's a hemlock world.

Invisible Ink

Follow the instructions,
the envelope is sealed:
we're waiting on an update,
something like the reinvention of the wheel.
Who made the world so complicated?
Who made the watchword wait and see?
I wake myself up, shake myself up,
take myself apart but still can't see...
the esoteric is lost on me.

Follow the instructions
they speak in many tongues,
in unlimited edition
and the last step on the ladder is the bottom rung.
The diagram is so confusing,
anagrammatical the mystery;
I wake myself up, shake myself up,
break myself apart and find in me
the esoteric machinery,
the esoteric invisibly.

Follow the instructions,
tell us what you think;
they lose something in translation,
they might as well be printed in invisible ink.

Esoteric machinery,
the esoteric invisibly;
the esoteric is lost on me,
the esoteric invisibility.

Who made the world so complicated?
Who put the alpha in the ABC?
I wake myself up, shake myself up,
break myself apart but finally
the esoteric is lost on me.
The esoteric, no time to think,
The esoteric, written in invisible ink.

In invisible ink
indivisible link
in invisible ink.

Sci-Finance (Revisited)

You got some shares, it's a capital venture,
you hedge your bets with a gilt-edged bond,
you're stretched out tight by the terms of debenture,
the game is on.

You got a fortune on paper,
how it shines on the VDU!
The simple truth is that sooner or later
the market plays you.

There goes the daylight!
Night comes on the city so soon.
In the dance of the typical capitalists
what piper plays the tune?

Money's ideal, money's power,
money's the drive that's more than skin-deep,
hard at work through the twenty-four hours —
oh, but money's never cheap.

You made some pretty deals, I hear you say,
Judas and Faust are squeaky clean...
when the last of the deals have been cleared away
what comes up on the screen?
There goes the daylight —
night comes on the city so soon.
In the dance of the typical capitalists
what piper plays the tune?
Only the money.

But the deal includes us:
We put ourselves into the stocks;
when we built up the temple of the money-god
we opened up Pandora's box.
There goes the daylight,
now there is silence on the floor,
only money-computers chatter privately,
no people any more.

No people any more,
only the money, only the money,
Is that what you want?

Is that it?
There goes the daylight.

This Book

Away from the past, this chance is the last,
we are changing completely,
we are moving the feast, we are motion.
I've seen you become the bride of the sun,
you surrender so sweetly,
sacrificing yourself to devotion.

This book is ended and I put it down,
this book is ended and I put it down,
I'm saved, I'm saving for the future.
This book is ended and I put it down,
find I'm befriended in a foreign town,
I'm saved, I'm sailing for the future.

But only yesterday night
I stood in the pouring rain, shouting at the thunder:
I said «Lord, I'm starting to understand the hidden mystery.»
Lord, the compass falls in my hand,
I can sail to the far horizon...

Could you conceive a mirror
where you could never see yourself?

Away from the past, the iconoclasts,
we are changing completely,
we are breaking the mould, we are rapture.
I've seen you astride the wind and the tide,
my dark angel, you greet me with a samurai sword,
close the chapter...

This book is ended and I put it down,
find I'm befriended in a foreign town,
I'm here, but I'm nearer to the future.

But only yesterday night...

This book is ended and I put down,
find I'm befriended in a foreign town,

this book is ended and I put it down.

Time to Burn

Time to burn, we could talk all the problems through...
Are the promises still unbroken,
do the spoken words still ring true?
Oh, and where are you?

Time to burn, wakes and weddings, celestial choirs,
and while one hand shakes on the bargain
see the other stoke the suttee pyre;
so we're all on fire,
burning for tomorrow.

So much time wish- and hoping,
soon the future will come
with a bridal wreath for the wedding
in the hands of the prodigal son.
So much left undone,
here we are with time to burn.

So much time wishful thinking,
all the whitest of lies
with the prodigal caught at the border
and the order of service awry.
No time for goodbyes,
will we ever start to learn?

Time to burn, wakes and weddings become confused,
all the faces over-familiar
in the whirlwind of deja-vu...
Oh, but where are you?

Time to burn, all our lifelines are gathered round
with a speech from the back of a postcard
all the memories free in one bound.
Free, and gone to ground,
free, and gone forever.
Free, and gone to ground,
so I will remember
so much lost and found.
Here we are with time to burn.

Auto

Here's a sensation I wouldn't trade —
pinpoint in the onrush,
dancing to the rhythm of the wiper blades.
Up ahead on the autobahn
headlights like a lava stream;
up ahead in the distance is where we're going,
where we will have been.

Back in the motor, keep going overnight;
we've got no certain destination
but for all we know we might.
So get back in the motor, let's drive it anyplace...
better to travel hopefully
than to arrive, in any case.

While you check out the map-book,
just like a novel that's all out of joint,
our passport into anonymity...
stick a pin into the vanishing point.
I could drive for hours,
don't even need to know the way to go;
I could drive forever
with some classical music on the radio.

Back in the motor, back into overdrive
and if we travel hopefully then we'll know we're alive.
Get back in das auto, let's drive it anyplace,
better to travel hopefully than to arrive in any case.

We could drive forever,
we could drive forever,
I caught you thinking, I bet you were,
that we could drive forever
in the never-never land of the metaphor.

Back in the motor, keep going overnight;
We've got no key to the highway
but for all we know we might as well
get back in the motor, let's drive it anyplace,
better to travel hopefully than to arrive in any case.

So get back in the motor, let's get on with the drive
and if we travel hopefully then we know we're alive.

Get back in the motor.
Let's get back in the motor,
get in tune with the motor,
get back.

Vote Brand X

Here's the modern political man, for sure he's nobody's fool,
believes in media coverage as a promotional tool.
Trust in him because he's got the right face;
just in case you harbour doubt
here is a slogan to tout.

He's such a principled man, all heart, ruled by his brain:
You've seen the TV commercials, you've seen the poster campaign,
you've seen the ads in the papers, there's nothing else to explain.
Just some words to maximise the market,
just a message that will reach the target,
promises that turn to dust.
He is a man you can trust.
This is a man of the people in politics now.

Politics now, it's just like selling soap powder,
no money down — you lucky punters —
full guarantee,
five year's trial free!

He is a man you can trust.
By dint of market research he knows which truths he should tell;
he's got the mark of conviction, it serves the agency well;
yes, he's on course for election in politics now.
Trust the propagandists' manifesto,
trust the politician with the promo,
trust the ads to buy your vote.

Vote for brand x, it's just like selling soap powder,
whatever next? You lucky punters,
full guarantee...
Whatever next?
Show trials by decree...

The show trials are free,
the show trials come free,
vote for brand x.

Sun City Nightlife

To the city beat on a treacherous curve,
up upon the high wire you're observed —
you live as you live, you'll get what you deserve:
High life, dig those highlights,
sun city nightlife:
you'll be like a moth consumed by a flame.

It's a rich man's world, kick those beggars and fools;
Conspicuous consumption the only rule,
but the law of retribution will be terribly cruel.

Oh, but you mustn't stop to think about your place upon the planet;
if you did, you might steel yourself away
and it doesn't really matter if the show goes up tomorrow.
After all, this petty place is day to day.
Highlights of the highlife,
dancing at midnight,
dancing all moral existence away.

Nightlife, highlights, highlife, twilight...
Oh, you mustn't ever think about you place upon the planet,
don't look further than the bottom of a drink,
don't ever think about the way you'll feel tomorrow,
don't stop dancing or the boat will sink...
all in all it's gone before you blink.

Highlights of the high life,
sun city nightlife,
you'll be like a moth consumed by flame...
Twilight of the high life,
chimes at midnight...
you're still dancing all moral existence away.

The Play's the Thing

How could he know so much?
How could he bear such knowledge?
How could he dare to write it in the plays?
What is it Shakespeare'd say
if he came back today?
Surely he'd recognize these mortal coils.

How do we carry on?
No-one knows where they fit in,
no-one knows who they are
or where they've been.
What does the writer mean?
How do we play this scene?
What didn't Shakespeare know that we do now?

Stiffen the sinews,
wear hard-favour'd rage,
all history's drama,
the world is a stage.

«There is a history in all men's lives,
figuring the nature of the times deceas'd;
The which observ'd, a man may prophesy,
with a near aim, of the main chance of things
as yet not come to life, which in their seeds
and weak beginnings lie intreasured.
Such things become the hatch and brood of time...»

Oh, but the show goes on,
on through the seven ages —
That of the world must mirror man's, in fact.
Here comes the seventh act,
see how the mirror's cracked,
here comes sans everything for humankind.

To capture the conscience
of nations and kings
all history's drama —
The play's the thing, the play's the thing, the play's the thing.

How could he know so much?

(The quotation is from «Henry IV» Pt. 2, Act III, Scene I)

Under Cover Names

No thanks for the memory, no thanks at all,
no way we can wipe the slate or contrive escape
from the names we're called.

No thanks for the memory, here it comes again,
this life running on the spot, though we hide a lot
with our cover names.

We can no more change the past than shed our skins.

But we keep on thinking that we might go someplace
where not a soul knows what has gone before,
with such headfuls of self-accusation
that we don't even know our own names any more.

No thanks for the memory,
no thanks.

Call them by a different name and turn about —
we can no more change our spots than wash them out.

No thanks for the memory, locked in the frame.
No way we can change the pattern of things that happened
under cover names.

And we keep on skirting round the true confession,
with fresh identities and best-laid plans;
And we keep on working to outreach the shadow,
but the shadow will outrun the man.
With such headfuls of self-accusation,
that no pseudonyms can hide our shame,
lost in a jungle of our own creation,
lost in a labyrinth of cover names...
We can no more change the past than live again.
We can no more shed our skins than know our real names.

Nobody knows our real name,
nobody knows their real name,
we hide under cover names...
No thanks for the memory.

Smile

The jokes are everywhere,
the secret deal's complete —
Money talks, some good advice,
the politicians run like clockwork mice,
all fits the masterplan.

A database on the telephone
and cable sunshine floods your home —
so, times are good?
Fat cats get fatter day by day,
those who sit it out will make their way,
so things can't be that bad.

Ooh, a smile has set upon this land,
ooh, a selfish grin of ignorance;
Ooh, you simply have to play the game.
The joke's on us:
this is more and more ridiculous.

Everything's great,
objectivity taboo;
self-satisfaction pumping up
minor achievements to cover up
all the failures and mistakes
and if you don't smile along
you're a public enemy, you don't belong...
The black lists are in the mail.
There isn't any room for doubt,
we'll all be equal when we share it out
but outsiders will get nothing.

(Original German text by Herbert Grönemeyer, translated by Peter Hammill)

Out of Water (1989)

Evidently Goldfish

Check the honesty of what's on offer,
true detective or a fake fakir?
All the evidence is circumstantial —
as mud the evidence is clear.
Paranormal the investigation —
where do things go when they disappear?
All the evidence has been trumped up...
as mud the evidence is clear,
I think we're on to something here,
I think we're into something,
I don't know but maybe we're all goldfish
in the mental sphere.

Evidently goldfish,
never questioning environment
self-evidently goldfish,
we swim in circular
experience.

Church of logical deliberation,
school of accidental wheels in gear,
surface knowledge is a serious matter,
a little consciousness is dangerous, dear;
all the evidence must be summed up —
as mud the evidence is clear,
I think we're into something,
I don't know but maybe
we're all goldfish in the mental sphere.

Evidently goldfish
never question their environment;
Self-evidently goldfish,
we swim in circular experience;
Evidently goldfish,
round and round and round and round
within our consciousness
in the mental sphere.

As mud the evidence is clear.

Not the Man

There are so many questions,
there are so many doubts —
this is auto suggestion
your spirit is giving out.
If I offered my reasons
would you give me a break?
Now it's all open season,
no sense of give and take.

You see I'm not the man I was...

But if I'm not the man
that you took me to be
do I fade from your dreams,
disappear from your memory?
Look at me:
if I'm not the man I was
then who was he?

There can be no returning
to the scene of the crime...
for perfection you're yearning —
some romance, some foreign clime!
Is the memory explicit
under strict rule of thumb?
It was always implicit,
this character I've become.

But if I'm not the man
that you took me to be
do I fade from your dreams,
disappear from your memory?
I remember it well,
I can guess what went wrong...
you believed all those words
in the popular songs...
but, if I'm not the man
that you took me to be,
did I walk in your dreams?
I've no idea who that person could be.

Look at me:
If I'm not the man I was, then who is he?

No Moon in the Water

So
if it's just so then
where is it now when
I find the moment
uncertain?

Broken water pail —
no moon in the water,
try to hold it now.

So
I want to hold on
reflection's all gone,
no ego — so.

Broken water pail —
no moon in the water,
try to hold it now,
broken water pail,
hold me in the moment,
no more ego now.

I would
drink the dregs of daylight,
break the bread of consciousness
and dream:
dream day for night,
nightfall around us,
waking, dreaming,
awake to the dream.

Broken water pail —
no moon in the water,
try to hold it now,
hold me in the moment,
no more ego now,
no moon in the water,

no more ego now.

Our Oyster

This one's authentic,
son of a gun,
a soundtrack from China
in the universal tongue...

The world is our oyster
to plunder at will,
though the palate is jaded
by all but the thrill
of fish out of water,
life in the raw...
without understanding
of what life's worth fighting for.

Out of universal language
some stuff never translates —
the reports come in clusters
but for words it's too late...
six o'clock entertainment,
tears of anguish and rage...
in the zoos of the media
the spirit of moment is caged.

There's only one language
the whole world comprehends,
there's only one message
as the darkness descends...
Do you still have a question
or do you retract?
There's a whole world of difference
between the observer and the act.

They're playing World Music
in Tiananmen Square,
they're playing World Music
in Tiananmen Square,
the whistle of bullets in the air.

Something about Ysabel's Dance

In the new hotel, on Fiesta Night,
the staff are bored;
Donna Ysabel dances zombie-like,
the guests applaud...
The color is local, the tourists are tanned,
the natives are restless
and everything's second-hand.

Places disappear, but the names
endure as alibis;
memory's hazy here, no-one's really sure
of how time flies...
Well drunk, the bass player
cries into his beer —
are Ysabel's mother or Ysabel dancing here?

After hours all the couriers are
in the bar round the corner
with the drivers in a game of cards...
In bursts Ysabel,
her hair let loose, her limbs set free;
on the tabletops she's dancing to a memory —
conversation stops and every eye
is turned to see...
something about Ysabel's dance.

It's a shrinking world,
it's a fun-packed cruise, a museum trip:
skirt the native girl, check the rabid dog,
rejoin the ship.
There's no Charlie Mingus,
his Tijuana's gone...
this smile for the camera is all just a tourist con.

But after hours all the couriers and drivers know
of a cantina where there's every chance
that she might show;
and maybe Ysabel
will dance the dance for real again,
her mother's footsteps, vice and virtue,
lust and love and pain.
There's something here

the anthropologist dare not explain,
something about Ysabel's dance...

Green Fingers

He'll be young forever if he keeps this up...
so the bedroom playboy's never going to grow up.
The heart is a secret garden
to which there are no short cuts.

Only green young fingers make the garden bloom;
for the serious young men now is always too soon.
The heart is a secret garden,
the head is a darkened room.

Close your eyes...
how does it feel to be in love?
Much too difficult, you shove
green fingers into gloves.

Get those fingers dirty —
now you're getting warm;
blood those hands with passion,
turn your face to the storm.
The heart is a bed of roses,
the heart is a bed of thorns.

Bleed, green fingers, bleed.

Some future memory stirs...
someone's always getting burned
if intensity holds true.
If it's real to be in love
how does it feel to be in love?
Green fingers stripped of gloves.

On the Surface

On the surface

phosphorus gleaming;
deep down
we carry on dreaming.

On the surface
compass and charts checked;
deep down the currents run
in a shining vortex,
in a swirling vortex.

On the surface
oil troubled water
sails set the seas on fire
to the farthest quarter...
Are we dreaming?
Dream deep of childhood,
dream deep of future days —
it'll all come good,
deep dreaming.

On the surface
head above water
legs kick the carry-on...
(dreaming) break the surface;
dreaming of long-lost childhood,
hoping for better days —
it'll all come good,
deep dreaming.

It'll all come good,
deep dreaming.
It'll all come to the surface,
it'll all rise to the surface,
deep dreaming.

A Way Out

Out of joint, out of true,
out of love, out of the blue,
out of order, out of orbit, out of control,
out of touch, out of line,
out of sync and out of time,
out of gas, out of tread,

out of road.

Out of date, out of stock,
out of use — out, out, damned spot!
You want out, you want out of it for good.
Out of the running, out of the game,
out on your feet, clear out of range,
out of context, out of contact,
out of the woods.

Out, out, looking for a way out,
no straws are left to cling to;
out, out, going for the fade-out...
but what do you fade into?

Out on the town, out for laughs,
out of service, out to grass,
out of mourning, out of purdah, out on bail,
out of kilter, out of grace,
out to get out of this place,
out of this world, out and out
beyond the pale.

Right out of character, out of sympathy,
so far out upon a limb
you're out of your tree...

Out of breath, out of tune,
out of your head and out of view,
down and out, out for the count, or is it just for revenge?
Out of sight, out of mind,
leave it out, leave it behind
out of reach of all family, all friends.

Out, out, going for the bale-out,
no parachute above you.
Out, out...you'll not feel the fall-out.

I wish I'd said «I love you».

Fireships (1991)

I Will Find You

My traditional weakness for the simple three-chorder shows through again, I'm happy to say. A plain song, but honest still, I hope!

Trapped like a rabbit by the future glare,
onrushing headlights that blind you,
a frightened runaway,
at least you know I care,
I will seek, I will search, I will find you.

We are written in the star-crossed sky,
the spirit music reminds you...
you can run and hide, but surely by and by
I will seek, I will search, I will find you.

Far away, in another life
you say you're going to find your freedom...
don't run away to another life.

Don't be afraid, there's no dark unknown,
no shadow stalking behind you;
don't be afraid,
when you're lost and most alone
I will seek, I will search, I will find you.

Far away, in another life,
things might not be so very different...
don't run away to another life.

Trapped like a rabbit by the future glare,
onrushing headlights that blind you,
a frightened runaway,
at least you know I care,
I will seek, I will search, I will find you.

Curtains

The first great bittersweet swell of Lord orchestration (on the album). The characters' own sense of heightened fiction has brought them to this morning moment in a darkened room. What «nothing» happened last night, that brings them to this pass, this «brush of fingertips»? Sad, but exemplary.

Well, Tommy woke that morning
with a headfull of rocks
and Sylvia was in shock.
The story they'd been faking
had frozen on their lips
and fallen through the brush of fingertips
and though they packed their bags,
ready for the road,
the curtains and the bedroom door
stayed closed.
For Sylvia and Tommy this is a curtain call
they've been running away for years
but pride in flight
precedes a certain fall.

So Tommy rubs his stubble
as if to check his face is there
and Sylvia combs her hair
just like nothing really happened...
they'll carry on as before
but this thing won't work, will it, any more.
And though the bags are packed
ready for the road
the curtains and the bedroom door
stay closed.
For Sylvia and Tommy
there's nowhere left to hide:
they've been running for years
to find some kind of thrill
to take away the emptiness
that they both feel inside.

Making the fictional
out of the matter of fact;
masquerade the picture
but now the frame's all cracked.

For Sylvia and Tommy
there's nothing left to try:
they've been running for years
to find some kind of life
that offers an excitement
that the rest of us pass by.

So Tommy woke that morning
with a headfull of rocks
and Sylvia was in shock.
This story they'd been faking
was frozen on their lips
and falling through the brush of fingertips
and though the bags are packed
ready for the road
the curtains and the bedroom door
stay closed.

For Sylvia and Tommy
there's nowhere left to go:
they've been running away so long
there's just no strength to carry on
they can't get back to what they knew
a life abandoned once and long ago.

His Best Girl

One of the simplest things I've written in ages. A film story in frozen and slow-motion frames: the foot on the accelerator pedal of transitory possession. What do men or women want?

Foot down in the GTi Cabriolet
to the villa in the South of France for vacation...
Keep your head down, baby,
keep your hair in golden curls
and you will always be his,
and you will always be his best girl.

Fast forward on the handycam video;
top that tan up, glowing U/V on the sunbed;
at the health farm you'll be
guarding his investment well.

Keep your head down, baby,
keep your wits about you now...
and you will always be his,
and you will always be his best girl.

Beads and bangles, it's too late
to claim your independence now:
your rings and baubles are
the marks of his possession.
Keep your head down, baby,
keep your counsel to yourself.
Keep your hair on, baby,
keep your wits about you now
and you will always be his...
but will you always be his best girl?

Foot down in the GTi Cabriolet,
his new friend's young enough
to be your daughter...
Foot down in the GTi Cabriolet.

And you will always be his,
but will you always be his best girl?

Oasis

*The «secret face» is one of absolute silence and rest,
one-on-one in a tempest of now: cool water. This is a love
song in which the ego demands neither to be massaged nor
to be powerful — merely to be.*

Beside the pool of clear water,
fed by a secret spring, your lips are sealed
but in your body language
angels sing.

I swear on the Bible,
swear on the sacred and profane
I think I'm drowning in the vortex
your eyes contain.
Your secret face,
show me your secret face.

With stars and moonlight for shelter,
your breathing close in my ear,
the wind is whispering a mystery
for me to hear:
your secret name.

Tell me your secret name,
oasis in a desert world,
tell me your secret name.

Let me drink from the well of secrets,
pluck the fruit from the tree
and feel your secret world envelop me.

Your secret face,
show me your secret face.

Show me your secret face,
naked as the sun,
silent as the stars,
secret oasis in a desert world.

Incomplete Surrender

This song covers several musical bases, from murky analogue synth to Fury's soling. It — like us — is the sum of its parts. Neither men nor women are complete in themselves, even when acknowledging their opposite halves. To give one's all cannot mean to surrender completely, yet a failure to surrender is ultimately a failure to give. If this song speaks of a particular moment, it is diametrically opposed to that in «Curtains». Here the surrender is to wholeness, rather than to separation.

Sweetheart, I want to hold back nothing
sweetheart, I want to give my all.

Roll on the feminine side,
the lion lies down with the lamb.
Beneath the male surface,
the chaos merchant, we're all half-human:
understand only love's not blind,

only love surrenders up the heart.

The woman's heavy with the future,
with intuition unalloyed;
behind the smirk of the macho man
is the quivering lip of the little boy.
Put it all in place, I can almost taste it,
so I surrender up my heart.

I want nothing more than to be
one for once, to feel you one with me;
no finer mystery, no mystery when we start
to surrender up our hearts.

Sweetheart,
I want nothing more than to be
one for once, to feel you one with me;
there's no mystery, no mystery when we start
to surrender up our hearts.

Where's the bridge to take us
across the sexual divide?
What arc of heaven makes us complete,
makes the planets clash and the stars collide?
With emotions bare we were both alive
for a second there
and we both surrendered up our hearts.

Sweetheart, I want to hold back nothing,
sweetheart, I want to give my all.

And we both surrendered,
incomplete surrender...

Fireships

The most complex song (of the album), but formed from a variety of simple components. Lots of guitars, lots of Jackson and Gordon. From the Ark to the Ironclads we are confident of our own abilities, of our own indestructible nature. When — eventually — we send up our flares in distress or triumph we little think that they themselves will set fire to us. The rocket that hits Man's roof and sets the

boat ablaze is of His own making.

There's a smokescreen on the horizon,
fireships under sail tonight...

Here's the Armada of Souls,
here's the flotilla from God knows where;
from gopher-wood to the last of the ironclads
in common concert they send up the flares.
While we turn and turn around
the rocket hits the roof...
we never think that we'll get burned,
we're fireproof,
we think we're fireproof.

Keep a stiff upper lip, the band play on
through the raising of the toast;
the captain's steady at attention on the bridge;
it's surface matters
that appear to matter most.
We watch the galleons run aground,
still we stand aloof;
we never think that we'll get burned,
we think we're fireproof.

We think we're fireproof,
we never think that we'll get burned;
We sail on fireships,
we never think, so we'll get burned.

Straight for the eye of the hurricane,
down to the last eye tooth
we never think that we'll get burned,
we think we're fireproof.

Here's the Armada of light,
here's the flotilla, for heaven's sake...
We're sailing under a flag of convenience,
casting our messages in bottles in our wake.
So we turn and turn around
the rocket hits the roof...
we never think that we'll get burned,
we think we're fireproof.

We never think that we'll get burned,
we think we're fireproof.

Given Time

I talked myself into the corner of delivering the guitar solo on this one; David's orchestration is fantastic. The song addresses the question of responsibility for ourselves. We think we have all the time in the world; and that things simply happen to us. In reality we have only each moment in which our lives are set and, by omission or commission, we make those lives ourselves. So we have no-one else to praise or blame for what occurs.

There's no time for dull regrets,
no-one underwrites your debts.
No satisfaction guaranteed,
but this much I believe
we make the lives we lead.

Best foot forward, face the day
as the moment slips away
like a whisper on the wind;
the tide turns as it breaks...
Given time
we lead the lives we make.

The curve that we trace in time
a shape of our own design.

Say it's over when it's done
did you learn to touch someone?
Long ago and far away,
voices linger on...
long ago, just yesterday,
caught in the clay of material need.
Given time
we make the lives we lead.

Given time
we make the lives we leave.

Reprise

This collage is a re-working of many specific themes, musical and lyrical, from the rest of the album. Their juxtaposition and recurrence points to both the limitlessness and the singularity of choice. This is an alternate window on the scenes...

We think we're fireproof,
we never think that we'll get burned;
we think we're fireproof,
we never think, so we'll get burned;
we think we're fireproof.

Reprieve,
reprise.

If he got to do it all again
would he do it over and over?
In reprise, reprieve?

But will she always be his?

Gaia

A Universal song — Order, Chaos, Hope. Both a lament for and a hymn to Mother Earth. All the darkness and all the light, together. There's another wonderful moment of Lord orchestration where everything sucks itself into weighty darkness. And then... Be Calm, it's Done.

Butterflies on the wheel
of a world that turns unyieldingly...
every fragile beating wing
moves the motor of the thing,
oh, Gaia!

Butterflies stir a breeze
and the ripples flow unceasingly:
far away the cyclones swirl.
It's a whole, connected world.
Oh, Gaia!

Wipe those tears from your tired eyes:
every breath you take a sacred sigh.

Butterflies on the wheel
making order out of chaos
and each ripple in the air
turns the motor everywhere.

Cry those tears, then dry those tired eyes:
every breath you take keeps you alive.

Butterflies as we are
freeze in flight beneath the starry sky
but the ghosts fly on and on...
in this sense we all belong,
oh, Gaia!

And the sum of all the parts
is the all-forgiving heart
of Gaia.

Oh, Gaia!

The Noise (1992)

A Kick to Kill the Kiss

This is something of a follow-on from «Fireships» and the man/woman divide. It takes something of a harder line on «how can we get on/move forward», though, than «Incomplete Surrender», say. A very simple song structure belies some odd walking lines. My role here is keyboard (I gradually work my way up to the frets); Fury gets to strut his stuff.

He'd like you to call him lucky,
the original self-made man;
no sense of wide-screen vision,
no gender strangeness he can understand.

Roll on the old, old story,
you can call it original sin;
yeh, stamp that one in his passport,
paste it and colour it in.

Colour in a history of pride and prejudice;
what he wants is mystery, but what he gets is this:
a kick to kill the kiss.

He thinks it fair competition,
somehow having and eating the cake,
when the women are in their bodies
and the men are all over the place.

What he wants is Paradise, of which he has no clue.
What he wants: Oblivion. («...Baby, all I want is you.»)
What he wants and what he needs are very different tricks...
Got some strange philosophy through going for
that dictionary tic
and the kick of kiss-me-quick.

A kick to kill the kiss
and he says
«Baby, all I want is you.»

Like a Shot, the Entertainer

The tune has been around for a number of years now, but it took me an age to pin it down. I finally finished the lyrics on a (rare) day off on tour. Although there are elements of self-reference here, the questions are really more «What's the story? To whom is it more important, listener or teller?» than simply stage-side whimpers. There's a complicity here, even when the raconteur runs out of stories, I think.

Like a shot from the barrel of a smoking gun he's not,
still he aims for adoration.
On the spot where the kettle has been called black by the pot
he awaits his true vocation.
You're so hot, eggs are frying where you walk upon the street,
what you got is the secret that he'd trade his soul to keep.
Like a shot he will tell you all his stories —
is that what entertains the entertainer?

Like a shot of the elixir of youth your trade in stock,
both a curse and a protection;
like a shot, in like Flynn, he'll tie his tongue up in a knot
to profess his true affection.
You're so hot, eggs are frying where you walk upon the street;
you're so hot that he turns to tango every time you meet.
Like a shot he'll be thrown upon your mercy —
is that what entertains the entertainer?

Entertain the entertainer...

Like a shot, like a paparazzi picture gone to pot
his decay bears no reversal;
on the rocks he will take his medicine straight
but this is not, I repeat not, dress rehearsal.
You're so hot, eggs are frying where you walk upon the street;
X the spot where he hopes he'll always fall upon his feet.
What a shock when he stumbles in the spotlight —
is that what entertains the entertainer?

Let's talk about something else; let's talk about us;
let's talk about egocentricity; let's talk about keeping it up.

You're so hot, eggs are frying where you walk upon the street;
what you got is the secret that he'd trade his soul to keep.
Like a shot he'll regale you with his stories —

is that what entertains the entertainer?
Like a shot he'll be thrown upon your mercy —
is that what entertains the entertainer?
What a shock when he stumbles in the spotlight —
is that what entertains the entertainer?

Let's talk about something else; let's talk about us;
let's talk about egocentricity; let's talk about keeping it up.

The Noise

Take it as you like, make of it what you will. It's clear that a great deal of my public growing up was on/with Noise. That's one of the elements of release to be found in music of whatever genre. (Unfortunately, there seems to be more calculated — rather than instinctive — Noise of late years... but maybe it's shifting again now.) Musically, everyone gets to put in the lead boot here, apart from the odd moment of Jackson flute. Even he's quickly back on tenor horn.

I loved the Noise,
electric breath;
Noise filled the emptiness,
roared in the emptiness.

A noise to strip the paper clean off the wall,
a noise to crack the masonry like a breaking-ball,
the cutting edge of sonic, the wave that never breaks
and the heart and soul are pumping
me awake, me awake, me awake.

I loved the Noise,
shake to the core;
that's what the Noise is for.

Nothing came of nothing except what was left behind
in the barrage of the bombard, under organ grind.
I'm caught there in the moment, bug-eyed overnight drive
and the heart and soul are pumping
me alive, me alive, me alive, me alive.

And in the rush of the silence with my arms

wrapped round me warm
I'm holding breath, impatient
for the dark before the dawn...
Just at the crack of daylight
that'll be the curtain torn,
that'll be the ground in a forewarning murmur
of the Noise, of the storm.

I loved the Noise,
electric breath,
Noise filled the emptiness;
I loved the Noise,
I loved the heat —
pump-pulse that priming beat.

A statement of intention, an elemental plan —
the Noise is in the temple, the Noise is out of hand;
the needle on the end stop, crescendo in the choir...
yes, and the heart and soul are pumping
me on fire, me on fire, me on fire, me on fire.

I loved the Noise,
I've drunk my fill;
the Noise is with me still.
I loved the Noise
though now it's gone
some glorious echoes of the Noise still linger on.

Power on.

Celebrity Kissing

In which Fury in particular comes on strong. The kisses were originally theatrical, rather than celebrity; but they could be any fake ones. There are at least a couple of award-winning performances buried in here.

Celebrity kissing, this has got to stop;
yeh, they're swarming like flies,
they're like bees around the honeypot.
Celebrity kissing, will it never end?
Well, you know and I know this is only pretence...

You give it all you've got in radiance on the podium,
manicured fingers grip the figurine.

You taught us all you knew in missionary position;
throw your arms around your latest scene,
it could have been celebrity kissing...

This has got to stop:

yeh, they're swarming like flies,
they're like bees around the honey;
you were wonderful, darling, does it never end?
Well, you know and I know this is only pretence.

They saw you coming for a thousand miles,
knew something wicked by the pricking of the thumbs;
they can't believe this cheek you're turning is your better side;
I think they preferred it when you acted young and dumb.

So you take it to the limit,
take it from the top,
shake it till it's broken,
does the penny never drop?

Celebrity kissing, this has got to stop:
yeh, they're swarming like flies,
they're like bees around the honey.
You were wonderful, darling, does it never end?
Oh, you know and I know this is only pretence...

Oh, look out. Oh, yeh, will the penny drop?
Some kind of madness in characterization,
some kind of method in your made-up face;
you got your wake-up call, your open invitation,
you get to party in the pagan place.

This is only pretence.
Cut and print, cut that kiss, cut...and print:
this is only pretence.

Where the Mouth is

As close to a straight blues as I'm ever likely to get, I suppose. A few plain Maxwell references poke out; but really you can take your pick of financial finaglers these clays. Another frame from the continuing Sci-finance story.

Money where the mouth is, pennies on the eyes.
Times are hard and you find that you're in trouble
but it's hard to sympathize.
You talk up quite a story, you blow the bubble well.
Money where the mouth is, silver-tongue the sell.

Put up or shut up.
Cut price or cut-up.
Put up or shut up.

Money where the mouth is, will there be just desserts?
White-collar crime — yeah, the summing-up
will reckon surely nobody got hurt.
Hey, offer jam tomorrow — the cash will do quite well.
With your fair shares for all, try to practice what you preach
when they ring that Lutine bell.
Hey, put your money where your mouth is
and hope the money talk will spring you from the cell.

We've heard the empty promises, the barely veiled threats;
we've yet to see the colour of the money now —
we've yet to see it...
Oh, but we'll get to see it, you bet.

Put up or shut up.
Cut price or cut-up.
Put the money where the mouth is.

Yeh, you copped for quite a lot, but everything you got
fell off the back end of the yacht.
You did your best to grease the machinery,
you shut us out of the talking shop:
the desks are empty when the buck full stops.
Hey, you put your money
where your mouth was not.
You put your money where your mouth was not.

Well, put the money where the mouth is,
snuffling in the trough.
Yeh, put your money where your mouth is,
with the pigs in the trough.

Where the mouth is,
where the mouth is.

The Great European Department Store

Naturally, I do my best to be a Good European! But I don't think that necessarily means that we all have to be identical. In the world, of consumption we become ever more so and don't do ourselves or the rest of the world any favours by that.

It's a triumph, material triumph,
mass consumption and conformity.
Down in hardware the shelves are stacked up
with the latest line in luxury.
The perfume counter has make-up ladies
all immaculately make-believe;
they sell you lifestyle package
and you'd better buy
because you're never going to leave.

Nations of shoppers consume in a frenzy
the security of branded names;
they're fighting in the food hall
for exotic vegetables and fruit, eco-friendly game.
It doesn't matter which currency you use
because they're all exactly the same.

And it's all on offer, everything's on offer,
multi-national door-to-door
in the Great European Department Store.

It's on offer, it's all on offer, you can pack it flat to take away:
Scottish heather to Spanish leather,
German turnip to Dutch weather-vane.
If you've got the money the door's wide open,
they are only here to pamper you.
The ethnic art room has plundered several continents
to decorate your living room.
It doesn't matter which credit card you use
or if you even sign your real name
because they're all exactly the same.

And it's all on offer, guaranteed natural, quality control assured
in the Great European Department Store.
Hey, let's shop; let's go!

In the Great European Department Store...

Ooh, the shopping's something shocking now;
ooh, will the shopping never stop
in the Great European Department Store?

Planet Coventry

The last song (of the album) to be completed, perhaps because it's one which could have been arranged in many different ways. Fury wasn't around by this stage, so I had to knuckle down to the guitar parts myself. Good clean fun. And yes, I do sometimes dream of nakedness on stage...

You find you're standing alone — not so splendid, isolation.
In the Green Room the talk is all of righteous indignation
and you might as well have landed
in some strange and distant galaxy.
The rules are unspoken on the Planet Coventry.

What reaction can you gauge, naked on the stage?

The gravity's not so great, but the atmosphere's chilling;
you made some serious mistakes
the day you pushed yourself for the grilling;
and the jigsaw pieces — take a look — a jumble of asymmetry.
All the corners are cut on the Planet Coventry.

Out of order, out of reach,
briefless on the beach;
no reaction you can gauge,
only silence from the front row,
silence from the back row,
silence and you're naked on the stage...
wake up.

You dreamed you'd no need of dreams: that's an alien situation.
In the Glasshouse the mimers mill in dangerous mutation
and you might as well have landed in a different reality.
The rules are all broken on the Planet Coventry.

Out of order, out of reach, briefless on the beach;
one more punter for the chop, dried up in the dock;

headless chicken, total block, tongue a Gordian knot;
no reaction on this page,
only silence from the front row, silence from the back row,
silence from the prompter, silence all the rage —
only silence and you're naked on the stage.

You wake up, and you're naked on the stage.

Primo on the Parapet

This is the most serious piece on «The Noise» by some distance. Primo Levi was an author, chemist and — crucially — Auschwitz survivor who wrote a sequence of brilliant books about his experiences until his suicide a couple of years ago. His main message was, naturally, that one should forget neither what happened nor the depths to which human soul is capable of plummeting. The music here is simultaneously tricky and straightforward — the main riff was a real find.

He crawled on hallowed ground without a map;
he walks on hollow legs, leaving no footprint;
drifts like a ghost through the quarters of lost desire,
breathing underwater,
still running through the fire.

Four horsemen drive the coach of Holocaust home
and with what sense of history do we view our bright new world,
with the video nasty blasting through the set
of our next door neighbour?
Do we learn to forget? Do we learn just to forget?

And raw barbarity sleeps, spore in soil?
No-one an innocent, no-one entirely immune.
Still we wait for a saviour, there are no saints as yet.
Just the guilt of survival,
we learn to forget.

The blindest eye is turned on the beast we clothe,
drab in the uniform of silent acquiescence.
So I'll raise this toast to Primo, climbing up upon the parapet
with one final word of caution:

we must learn not to forget.

There's pain in remembrance,
but we must learn not to forget.

Here's a toast to Primo,
let's learn not to forget.
Here's a toast to Primo,
forgive but don't forget.
Here's a toast to Primo,
let's learn not to forget.

One last word of caution
from the very rim of the parapet.
One last word in remembrance...
we must learn not to forget.

Offensichtlich Goldfisch (1995)

Lyric transcription by Heinz Rudolf Kunze

Offensichtlich Goldfisch

Prüf die Ehrlichkeit der Angebote,
Freund und Helfer oder Bösewicht?
Alles läßt sich irgendwie beweisen —
Genaueres weiß man eben nicht.
übersinnlich ist die Untersuchung —
gibt's ein Jenseits oder gibt's das nicht?
Alle Anhaltspunkte frei erfunden...
Genaueres weiß man eben nicht.
Ich glaub', ich seh' allmählich Licht,
ja, wir gehören alle
zu der Gattung Goldfisch,
die nicht weiß, wovon sie träumt und spricht.

Offensichtlich Goldfisch,
keine Fragen an's Aquarium.
Zu selbstverständlich Goldfisch,
wir schwimmen immer nur im Kreis herum.

Kirche logischer Bedachtsamkeiten,
Zufallsschattenspiel im Schummerlicht...
Halbgebildetsein ist anzuraten,
zuviel Verstehen, und der Mensch zerbricht.
Die Beweise wachsen zu Gebirgen,
Genaueres weiß man eben nicht,
ja, wir gehören alle
zu der Gattung Goldfisch,
die nicht weiß, wovon sie träumt und spricht.

Offensichtlich Goldfisch,
keine Fragen an's Aquarium.
Zu selbstverständlich Goldfisch,
wir schwimmen immer nur im Kreis herum.
Offensichtlich Goldfisch,
immer nur im Kreis herum
im Bestiarium,
bis das Auge bricht.

Die Kälte killt den Kuß

Er wünscht sich, du nennst ihn glücklich:
Der Original-Self-Made-Mann.
Kein Sinn für Horizonte,
für alles, was er nicht vereinnahmen kann.

Wieder die alte Geschichte,
und ihr Name muß Erbsünde sein.
Ja, Stempel so deinen Ausweis,
klebe und färbe das ein.

Siegreich stets sein starker Arm,
sein Hunger nach Genuß;
was er will, ist fremd und warm, doch immer steht am Schluß:
Die Kälte killt den Kuß.

Hey, so ist das nun mal im Leben,
er erkämpft sich vom Kuchen sein Stück.
Und die Frauen sind weich und weiblich,
und die Männer versteinern im Glück.

Was er will, heißt Paradies,
doch kommt es nie dazu.
Was er sucht: Vergessen.
(«Baby, all I want is you.»)
Was er will und was er braucht,
steht nicht im selben Stück.
Seine Weltanschauung liebt er blind,
er klebt an seinem Regeltick
und dem Kick des Instant Fick.

Die Kälte killt den Kuß,
und er sagt:
«Baby, all I want is you.»

Dich zu finden

Kaninchenstarre vor dem Schlangenblick,
Scheinwerferschock zum Erblinden,
verschreckt und ungeschützt,

mich dauert dein Geschick,
ich laß nichts unversucht, dich zu finden.

Unsre Namen steh'n in Sternenschrift,
Urlaute, die sich entzünden...
du traust keinem mehr, jedoch was mich betrifft:
Ich laß nichts unversucht, dich zu finden.

Weit von hier soll das Leben sein,
dort, sagst du, findest du die Freiheit...
lauf nicht davon, denn dich trügt der Schein.

Kein dunkler Fremder tut dir ein Leid,
kein Schattenreich kann dich binden...
hab keine Angst,
wenn dein Herzschlag aus dir schreit,
ich laß nichts unversucht, dich zu finden.

Favorit

Bleifuß drückt das GTi Cabriolet
zu der Villa in der Sonne
von Südfrankreich.
Halt den Kopf schief, Baby,
sing für ihn das alte Lied.
In Ewigkeit bist Du sein,
und Du bist immer sein Favorit.

Schneller Vorlauf auf dem flimmernden Urlaubsfilm:
Du brauchst Farbe, hol Dir Strahlen von der Sonnenbank.
Du verwaltest sein Investment
auf der Schönheitsfarm.

Halt den Kopf tief, Baby,
und hab nie das letzte Wort.
In Ewigkeit bist Du sein,
und Du bist immer sein Favorit.

Perlenketten fesseln Dich,
zu spät für die Unabhängigkeit.
In Samt und Seide glüht
das Brandmal seiner Herde.
Zieh den Kopf ein, Baby,

wer hat Dich um Rat gefragt.
Mach Dein Haar schön, Baby, und hab nie das letzte Wort.
In Ewigkeit bist Du sein,
doch bleibst Du immer sein Favorit?

Bleifuß drückt das GTi Cabriolet.
Die Neue wirkt, schon fast
wie Deine Tochter.
Bleifuß drückt das GTi Cabriolet.

In Ewigkeit bist Du sein,
doch bleibst Du immer sein Favorit?

Kaufhaus Europa

Lob der Masse, Triumph der Kasse,
alles schlingt im Trog den Einheitsbrei.
Die Regale entblößen Hardware
mit dem letzten luxuriösen Schrei.
Die Duftabteilung hat Make-Up-Lacies,
die seh'n zum Verwechseln wirklich aus;
kompakte Lifestylepackung,
also komm schon, kauf,
denn du kommst nie mehtr hier heraus.

Käufernationen frenetisch geborgen
im Gefühl von Markenqualität;
sie kämpfen an der Kühlbox
um exotisch fruchtig frisches Grün, öko, wenn es geht.
In welcher Währung auch immer du bezahlst —
für Unterschiede ist es zu spät.

Und hier gibt es alles, hier gibt's wirklich alles,
ohne Grenzen, Tür an Tür,
hier im Kaufhaus Europa — was brauchen wir?

Billigpreise, Bedürfnisreise —
pack es ein und fühl dich gut dabei.
Deutsche Heide, Franzosenseide,
Wetterfahnen aus der Westtürkei.
Alle Türen offen, solange du Geld hast,
hier sind alle für dein Wohlsein da.
Der Ethnic Art Room hat Kontinente leergeraubt

zur Zierde deiner Pergola.
Mit welcher Karte du auch immer bezahlst,
und welcher Name auf der rechnung steht —
für Unterschiede ist es zu spät.

Und hier gibt es alles, garantiert natürlich,
kontrolliert und ausgewählt —
hier im Kaufhaus Europa, wo Leistung zählt.
Ex und hopp — let's shop!
Hier im Kaufhaus Europa. Was darf es sein?
Ooh, vom Kaufen gibt es kein Verschnaufen,
ooh, hört das Kaufen niemals auf?
Hier im Kaufhaus Europa: Ein Hamsterlauf.
Unser Kaufhaus Europa — was darf es sein?

Der Lärm

Ich liebe Lärm,
den Atem-Strom;
Lärm hob die Leere auf,
die Erdschwere auf.

Der Lärm reißt die Tapete glatt von der Wand,
der Lärm durchbricht das Mauerwerk wie ein Elefant,
der Schall auf Messer's Schneide,
die Welle, die nicht bricht,
und es pumpen Herz und Seele
mich ins Licht, mich ins Licht, mich ins Licht.

Ich liebe Lärm
durch Mark und Bein —
genauso soll er sein.

Schall und Rauch das alles, Lärm um nichts,
doch hier und dort bebt und orgelt ein Inferno,
kreischt ein Schlußakkord,
dir Kraft hält mich gefangen,
übernächtigt und klein,
und mir pumpen Herz und Seele
Leben ein, Leben ein, Leben ein, Leben ein.

Und in dem Ansturm der Stille
halt ich atemlose Wacht,

ich warte ungeduldig
auf den tiefsten Punkt der Nacht...
gerade bei Tagesanbruch
fällt der Vorhang, steigt der Schwan,
und der Grund entläßt eine murmelnde Warnung
vor dem Lärm, dem Orkan.

Ich liebe Lärm,
den Atem-Strom,
Lärm hob die Leere auf.
Ich liebe Lärm,
sein Dynamit —
als Zündstoff pulst der Beat.
Verlautbarung des Willens,
ein dunkler Plan wird klar,
das Tosen ist im Tempel,
ist nicht mehr eindämmbar,
die Auslaufrille knistert,
ein Chor fegt über's Land,
ja, und es pumpen Herz und Seele
mich in Brand, mich in Brand, mich in Brand, mich in Brand.

Ich liebe Lärm,
Lärm ganz und gar,
er bleibt mir immerdar.
Zwar floh der Lärm
längst diesen Ort,
doch ruhmreich klingen seine Echos weiter fort.

Power on.

Oase

Im Weiher silbert das Wasser,
gespeist aus dunklem Grund,
du glänzt und schweigst
und Engelsflügel streifen deinen Mund.

Ich schwör' bei der Bibel,
bei Himmel. Hölle, Welt und Glück,
ich könnt' ertrinken in dem Strudel,
in deinem Blick.
Geheimgesicht,

zeig' dein Geheimgesicht.

In mildem Mondlicht geborgen,
dein Sternenatem am Ohr,
der Wind trägt flüsternd ein Mysterium
aus der Ferne vor:

Dein Losungswort.
Sag mir dein Losungswort,
Oase in der wüsten Welt,
sag mir dein Losungswort.
Einen Trunk aus dem Quell des Fremden,
pflück' die Frucht mir vom Baum,
nimm mich in deinen unbetret'nen Raum.

Was keiner sah,
zeig mir, was keiner sah.

Zeig dein Geheimgesicht,
sonnenhell so nackt,
sternenklar so still,
geheime Oase in der wüsten Welt.

Die Prominenz küßt sich

Die Prominenz küßt sich, wie verbraucht das ist:
Eine Schmeißfliegenbrut
summt und schwärmt rings um den eignen Mist.
Die Prominenz küßt sich, endet das denn nie?
Denn du weißt und ich weiß,
das ist nichts als chi-chi...

Du schmilzt für uns dahin,
du schimmerst auf dem Podium,
gepflegte Hand würgt den Trophäenhals.
Du gibst ein Bestes preis in Missionarenstellung:
doch der Anlaß deines Redesschwalls
heißt bestenfalls
Die Prominenz küßt sich...wie verbraucht das ist:
Eine Schmeißfliegenbrut,
sie umtanzt den höchsten Haufen.
Du warst wundervoll, Darling — hört das niemals auf?
Denn du weißt und ich weiß, keiner gibt was darauf.

Sie sah'n dich kommen kilometerweit,
das Kribbeln in den Fingern zeigte Böses an;
die Wange, die du hinhältest,
soll die bess're Seite sein? Du warst ihnen lieber
als dein steiler Weg begann.

Und du treibst es auf die Spitze,
bis zur Parodie,
wringst den letzten Tropfen,
fällt der Groschen wirklich nie?
Die Prominenz küßt sich, verbraucht das ist:

Die Prominenz küßt sich, wie verbraucht das ist:
Eine Schmeißfliegenbrut,
sie umtanzt den höchsten Haufen.
Du warst wundervoll, Darling — hört das niemals auf?
Denn du weißt und ich weiß, keiner gibt was darauf.

O, paß auf!
Na, na, fällt der Groschen noch?
Ein Quentchen Wahnsinn als Charakterfaden,
ein Stück Methode im maskierten Blick;
kriegst deinen wake-up-call, bist immer eingeladen
zur Partyrolle im Barbarenstück.

Die Prominenz küßt sich, wie verbraucht das ist:
Eine Schmeißfliegenbrut,
sie umtanzt den höchsten Haufen.
Du warst wundervoll. Darling — hört das niemals auf?
Denn du weißt und ich weiß, keiner gibt was darauf.

Die Prominenz küßt sich, wie verbraucht das ist:
Eine Schmeißfliegenbrut
summt und schwärmt rings um den eignen Mist.
Die Prominenz küßt sich, endet das denn nie?
Denn du weißt und ich weiß,
das ist nichts als chi-chi...

Das ist nichts als chi-chi.
Knips den Kuß, Klappe, Schluß, gut genug:
Das ist nichts als Betrug.

Die Tinte verlischt

Folg den Instruktionen,
Probleme ersten Grads.
Wir warten auf ein update,
sowas wie die Neuerfindung unsres Rads.
Wer macht die Welt so schwer verständlich?
Wer hat das Kennwort ausradiert?
Die Stirn in Falten, nichts bleibt beim Alten,
der Kopf gespalten, doch ich bleib frustriert:
Von Esoterik ganz unberührt.

Folg den Instruktionen,
in vielen Zungen laut.
Alles da, in rauen Mengen,
und der letzte Schritt der Leiter ist auf Sand gebaut.
Das Diagramm ist so verwirrend,
anagrammatisch lallt die Liturgie,
die Stirn in Falten, nichts bleibt beim Alten,
ich grab in meinem Hirn, da find' ich sie:
Die esoterische Maschinerie,
mein unsichtbares vis-à-vis.

Folg den Instruktionen,
dich hat es erwischt,
übersetzt klingt alles unklar,
man hält sie sich vor Augen und die Tinte verlischt.

Esoterische Maschinerie,
mein unsichtbares vis-à-vis,
die Esoterik erreicht mich nie,
die esoterische Verdunklungsstrategie.

Wer macht die Welt so schwer verständlich?
wie Wer schrieb das Alpha in das ABC?
die Stirn in Falten, nichts bleibt beim Alten,
ich raufe mir das Haar, bis ich eingesteh':
Die Esoterik verfehlt mich mehr denn je,
die Esoterik, die verweht wie Gischt,
die Zauberformel, deren Tinte verlischt.

Ganz untrennbar vermischt,
daß der Inhalt verzischt,
wenn die Tinte verlischt.

Auto (Wieder im Wagen)

Wir fahren — was könnte schöner sein —
Lichtpunkt in der Brandung.
Scheibenwischerrhythmus lädt zum Tanzen ein,
Lichterketten der Autobahn,
lavaheller Gegenwind.
Immer bleibt in der Ferne, was wir sein werden,
je gewesen sind.

Wieder im Wagen,
nichts was uns hier noch hält,
wir haben keine festen Pläne,
aber alle Zeit der Welt.
Komm, steig ein in den Wagen,
egal wohin, mein Kind...
besser voran mit Zuversicht
als zu erreichen was wir sind.

Du enträtselst die Karte
ein dunkles Märchen, das von Schwärmern stammt,
Passierschein für die Unauffindbarkeit,
unsre Fahne in den Fluchtpunkt gerammt.
Ewigkeit am Steuer,
mir ganz egal, wohin die Reise geht.
Ich will soweit fahren,
wie das Radio mir Bach in die Ohren weht.

Wieder im Wagen,
die Nacht ist ein schwarzes Loch,
und siehe wir bewegen uns —
also gibt es uns noch.
Steig ein in das Auto,
hauch den Rückspiegel blind,
besser voran, so hoffen wir,
als zu erreichen was wir sind.

Und wir fahr'n für immer...
und wir fahr'n für immer...
gib zu, auch Du hast schon dran gedacht,
wir fahren weiter, wilder —
in das Nirgendniemandsland der schnellen Bilder.

Wieder im Wagen,

Vollgas die ganze Nacht,
der Highway wahrt sein Geheimnis,
zuviel Zeit im Stand verbracht,
also steig ein in den Wagen,
hauch den Rückspiegel blind,
besser voran mit Zuversicht,
als zu erreichen was wir sind.
Komm, steig ein in den Wagen,
hier versteinern wir doch.
Denn wenn wir in Bewegung sind,
dann pulsieren wir noch.

Steig ein in den Wagen.
Komm, steig ein in den Wagen.
Hör ihm zu, laß dich tragen.
Steig ein.

Gaia

Schmetterling auf dem Rad
einer Welt, die unaufhaltsam kreist...
jeder zarte Flügelschlag
Antriebskraft für Nacht und Tag,
O Gaia!

Schmetterling, hauchst im Licht,
kleine Welle, die stets weiter weist...
weit entfernt wächst ein Zyklon.
Eine Welt, in Kommunion.
O Gaia!

Weine nicht, es ist hohe Zeit:
Jeder Atemzug dem Grund geweiht.

Schmetterling auf dem Rad
lockt die Ordnung aus dem Chaos.
Jede Welle in der Luft
treibt den Motor, der uns ruft.

Weine ruhig, dann trockne deinen Schmerz:
Jeder Atemzug belebt dein Herz.

Schmetterling, Korn der Welt,

eingefror'n beim Flug im Sternenzelt,
doch der Geist weht ewiglich...
er erinnert uns an die, o Gaia!

Alles könnt versöhnt zur Ruh,
läuft auf ihre Mitte zu,
auf Gaia.
O Gaia!

Schlaft nun

Schlaft nun — ein alter Tag sagt euch Kindern Adieu,
doch schon Morgen trinkt ihr vom Schaum der Welt
und tut euch weh,
ganz sicherlich.
Was für ein Wunder, für ein Rätselspiel für mich.

Freunde aus eurer Zukunft liegen jetzt wie ihr,
große Lieben schrei'n nach der großen Mutterbrust voll Gier...
oh, die Welt dreht sich unentwegt,
ein Leben, das sich nie schlafenlegt.

Wie bald, Mädchen,
wie bald empfangt ihr den Ruf der Jugendzeit,
und nichts hält euch hier...

Doch denkt dran,
was immer sonst im Leben euch verstört,
vergeßt es niemals,
auch wenn ihr ihn zu häufig schreien hört:
Der Vater liebt euch
als hätt' er nie so recht verstanden,
was das heißt, bis gerade jetzt.

Wie bald zieht ihr dem heim die Ferne vor...
nur ein Liecl der Kindheit, sing ich euch sanft ins Ohr.

Schlaft nun — ich sag euch später, wie mein Leben war,
fällt das schwer — ihr werdet seh'n,
was mir nicht mal der kühnste Traum gebar,
im Flackern eurer Lider
wir dein Wunsch wach und wahr.

Schlaft nun, warm geschützt in dem Hafen eures Nests,
schlaft und träumt nun.

Auch wenn ihr alles, was ich sag, vergeßt,
der Vater liebt euch,
als hätt' er nie so recht verstanden,
was das heißt, bis gerade jetzt.

Als hätt' er nie so recht verstanden,
was das heißt...

Roaring Forties (1994)

Sharply Unclear

Sharply Unclear is based on a guitar arpeggiation which makes an obvious nod in the Beatles direction — although the musical principle behind it goes back much further. It is, perhaps, a word to the (over?) wise; maybe the cynic's view of a cynic. The character it's addressed to is self-confident to a somewhat overbearing degree.

You've never shown a trace of human frailty,
No-one could ever catch you on the hop:
Each post-modern take on the action
would find you
already, in principle, totally hot,
all self-referential commentary
and a marketing man's sense of talk shop.

The sharper the image you cut
the more you seem unreal;
so sharp you could cut yourself,
transparently ideal.

We all know that hard-boiled look,
you cooked it up to face down the stares;
I feel like I'm walking on eggshells around you,
as though you're already no longer quite there.
You acknowledge your trauma,
your neurosis is stripped and laid bare.

The sharper the image you cut
the more you disappear;
so sharp you could cut yourself,
somehow this transparency's unclear.

All the mirrors in your playroom,
they twist your psycho-epidermis into shape.
No doubt you emerged in your make-up believing
quite simply, believing that you'd got it taped
but the vacancy you offered
is already a Cheshire Cat gape.

The sharper the image you cut
the more you disappeared;
so sharp you could cut yourself —
are you still really here?
And the sharper the image you cut
the more you seemed a fake,
so sharp you could cut yourself,
transparently opaque...
And the sharper the image you cut
the less you seemed alive;
so sharp, but this open book's
transparently jive.

You were so sharp you cut yourself,
so sharp you could cut yourself;
you were so sharp you made yourself
transparent
and transparently unclear.

The Gift of Fire (Talk Turkey)

This song is preceded by a passage of instrumental playing the like of which has not, I think, been present on many of my recordings of late. Eventually the song (of truth-telling? Of exploited innocence? Of confidence misplaced?) kicks in.

Like a wind in the wilderness
like a swell on the ocean...
would the spell be unbroken
if it was never phrased?

She was always the precious child,
she was always a strange one,
a derangement runs deep down through her innocent gaze...

The gift of fire and the gift of tongues,
the gift to see what Goddess Fortune held in store;
pretty soon there were whisperings of witchcraft
from the couple next door.
She had the gift of talk turkey,
the gift of talk turkey.

She had no message for the marketplace,
she was inflamed by each moment,
she had the silver spoon of soothsay for destiny.
She was always coming on with
the gift of fire and the gift of tongues;
family affair, it was a fortune that they'd got —
pretty soon they were cooking up a story
for the communal pot;
on the prime time slot
they shot the gift of talk turkey.

Oh now she can't stop talking about the way she sees it is
and she can't stop talking about her prescience.
She can't stop talking, how dangerous that is
and she can't stop talking, no, she can't stop talking...

It's the curse of the fire and she's burning up before us
in the talk of tongues, flames that lick around the dross;
the gift of fire, if she's burning up before us
it's our communal loss,
the inevitable cost
of the gift of talk turkey.

What a windfall of wickedness
when truth gets warped to perversion;
in the official version
they'll always make it quite plain
what we're really not meant to see.
The gift of fire consumes all those who touch it
and the gift of tongues is always double-edged;
they grew aware that she would take them to the ledge,
so pretty soon they were working up a story
about the bets they could hedge.

The gift of fire and the gift of tongues...
they take her name and they grind it in the dust;
all at once they've got alibis to cover any possible bust
and she's gagged, bound and trussed
by the gift of talk turkey.

But she can't stop talking, though her audience disappears
and she can't stop talking about her prescience.
She can't stop talking, though she knows that no-one hears
she can't stop talking, she can't stop talking,
she can't stop talking — how miraculous this is!

She can't stop talking, just like Bernadette.
She can't stop talking, how dangerous that is,
and she can't stop talking, she can't stop talking,
no, she can't stop talking about the way she sees it is,
she can't stop talking, just like Joan of Arc.
She can't stop talking — man, how dangerous she is,
she can't stop talking,
she can't stop the gift of talk turkey,
the gift of talk turkey.

No, she can't stop talking.

You Can't Want What you Always Get (if you haven't got it yet)

Forgive me for my obsessions, but the central tenet here will be a familiar one, albeit expressed in different terms: one must live the present life, between Known and Unknown... no other one is ever on offer!«...Want» also acts as something of a real-world commentary on the imagined stories of the first two songs.

Give it a bit of hard on the rudder
hot on the heels of foot to the floor;
setting your mind on one thing or the other,
do you still find you're
always wanting something more?

Yes, and the thing you want forever
is always the thing you can never have —
I want doesn't get.

Try out the line of «This is original»;
spin out the story: «This is brand new»;
give a bit of «I never felt like this before»;
cut to the chase: «I only want you».

And the one you want forever
will always be the one you can never have...

I want
doesn't get

(Here's a message from the future

you don't have time to forget...
Here's a message from the darkside:
better live with your regrets.)

And the thing you want's forever,
it's always, the thing you can never have...
I want doesn't get.

Who was it told you you were the gifted one?
Who was it said that yours is the lucky star?
Somehow you're always looking to shed your next skin,
always too busy to be who and what you are.
Still the one you chase forever
turns into the one you can never have.

I want
doesn't get

(Here's a message for your present
and there isn't any catch:
better live the life you're living,
no conditions are attached.) t

You can't live a life as constant acquisition;
you're missing the present,
always looking to live in the future tense.
You build up your hopes for Corpus Non Delicti...
The crack of temples —
who're you going to sue for recompense
when the thing you want forever
will always be the thing you could have had?

I want just means I lack
but I don't want to turn the clock back.

(Here's a message from the future
that you'd better not forget...
Here's a message from the darkside
better live with your regrets.
Here's a message for the present
if you haven't got it yet:
better live the life you're living.)

I want
doesn't get.

A Headlong Stretch

This is dense stuff, and contains the gamut of styles. from reflective, almost pastoral, passages to truly mind-warping signature shifts. In its loosest sense it is to do with the «living in the Now» to which«...Want» alludes. An element of that involves getting older and acknowledging (if not necessarily celebrating!) the fact.

I. Up Ahead

Passage assured
on the good ship Goodbye...
dare I raise up my eyes
to stare into the rigging?

(Preparing to go/come home..)

All we could have done
we're at pains to explain
but all our might in the main
is only empty promise
unfulfilled at last
still no-one can be blamed
for breaking daily bread,
thinking ahead.

Blessed with strange grace
and reluctant to face
ineluctable fate,
I say I saw the future
I said forget the past
but I'll not hear the last
of lives I've never led,
thinking ahead.

II. Continental Drift

We make the beds in which we'll stretch
in unconscious pre-planning;
tending and hedging our bets

thinking we're thinking ahead.

Out of the blue comes the given life,
out of the window volition.
In small miracles, in constant reinvention
we make sense of each current position.

Every choice that we make, every trick that we turn up
appears in its principle sound.
Yeh, we're self-made men, masters of our destiny,
free and unbound...

In to the heart comes the brave new world
where we're slaves to the strength of conviction...
I believe decisions come like continents to conquer
like I believe we're no strangers to fiction.

Every road that we take
means a journey rejected
we pretend we can still have it all;
every future we dream a virtual reality,
only vanity still holds us enthralled
when the best laid plans of mice and men
all unravel in the judgement call.

Pride still make us ride for a fall.

Surely we look ripe for a fall,
surely we look ripe for a fall;
maybe we just ride for the fall.

III. The Twelve

The jury's out upon the matter
and they can barely bear to admit
that all the time that we spend planning
in the end will matter not one whit.

Though I've certainly considered
every vital pro and con
I get no scent of an acquittal
I lose the drift... the signs are wrong.
What's going on?

(Twelve signs of the zodiac,
twelve hours to face,
the twelve disciples all aquiver,
twelve arrows strike a twelve-tone case.)

Round and round in repetition
of the flight from boredom into thrill
and all the time we're waiting on the punchline,
the hollow laugh within «we will».

What won't we give to take up
the turning over of a new leaf?
No-one ever reaching future perfect;
before we know it, beyond belief
we come to grief,
we hit the reef.

IV. Long Light

Signs serial
adrift in the air
immaterial
face up to the phosphor flare.

Ghost essence
fuels fire in the rig;
incandescence
let's dance out the mystery jig.

Jig,
dance the dance of mystery light,
dance the dance, jig,
dance the dance infernally bright.

Dark water
dark fire down below...
storm quarter
time to dance out the mystery — no!

The twelve will swing us to completeness
right from the cradle to the grave
and all our future projection's
only second guessing seventh waves...
A break in the connections

we thought were built to last
here's a change in the weather,
Tsunami time —
the wave's already rolling in towards us from the past.

V. Backwards Man

It's only looking backwards
that you retrace your hand,
it's only in a moment of reversal
that you can see where you stand...
ease out, come through the film and through the mirror
welcome the backwards man.

Oh yes, the beach still stirs the ocean,
and soon the tide will turn the moon round
all is forgiven and all was foreseen —
all's as it ever could be.

Ends forced motive out of meaning
means all even out in the end;
retracing steps,
in the process you learn to stand,
learn to walk again
so much gets forgotten, so much is forsworn
in retrospect.

Did I really do that?
Was I ever so young?

It's here, looking backwards
that you confront your own face
it's only in such moments of reversal
that you're secure in place.
Through the fire backwards
again and again
return to base.

VI. As You Where

It's some relief
to find the possible in store;

beyond belief,
in overtime, I'm overboard...
uncharted waters, full fathom five,
the future's rising, it's just arrived.

It's not the same
as I imagined it would be
but there's no blame
if every life's imaginary.

And if I get quite what I deserve
that'll end the sentence, the time I've served
a full stop to the sentence...

When it's all done you willed the person you've become
in serious fun it's as you were that you become
and so it's done.

VII. Or So I Said

I saw the future
or so I said...
How strange they seem,
the lives I've never led,
thinking ahead.

(I'm ready to come home...)

So head on,
headlong,
headstrong.

(I'm ready to go...)

Your Tall Ship

It's an anthem. It's in C. They don't come to me all that often, but this one is a real natural...

Far, so far away...
surely you remember

log book pages frayed
that fanned the flames of long ago,
guttered in the grate,
shadows in the embers...
look away, look for home.

Voices on the air,
running with the current;
wind and tide set fair,
ship to shore the message goes,
all in love is fair —
across the raging torrent,
sail away, sail for home;
look away, look for home.

Land-locked lovers, landlub friends, in procession:
all rites of passage have an end.
Look away, sail away,
sail your tall ship home.

We are ocean-borne,
far from any harbour,
from our moorings torn,
ghosts that fly for all we know...
turn to face the storm
that's building off to starboard,
sail away, sail for home,
look away, look for home.

Look away in the Roaring Forties.

Land-locked lovers, littoral friends,
the succession never ends...
the spirit's willing to carry on;
all rites of passage make us strong.

Sail away,
sail away,
sail your tall ship home.

None of the Above (2000)

Touch and Go

Between the light and the shadow,
out of the corner of my eye
I saw your feathers all ruffled,
anticipating the sky...
You've got no reason to stay,
day by day your impatience has grown.
I'm caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, I know.
I'm reaching out
but we are touch and go.

Making a meal of the moment
I might cook up a story or two,
but the dish of the day's getting colder
and I know that, pretty soon,
you'll pick up your bed and walk,
open your wings and fly away from me
across the leaden, hammer-headed sky
while I can't breathe a word,
no matter how I try.

So scared
it shows
that we are touch and go.

I never brought myself to tell you
how you kept all my demons at bay
but my silence came out as indifference
and now my diffidence has driven you away.
You'll be the one with the wings,
I'm going down in flames,
still mouthing out the mystery, my angel, of your name.
How touch and go our tenderness became.

(So scared to show
I know we're touch and go)

So touch and go,
so much I can't explain.

(So much is unexplained.)

Naming the Rose

He had worked on this for years
since they know they'd be childless:
to hybridise a thornless
and deep-scented damask rose.
She was always by his side
in the lengthening shadows...
this case is closed.

Ena Harkness, Constance Spry,
Emily Grey, Margaret Merrill,
Zepherine Drouhin, Aimee Vibert and Blanche Moreau —
all these spirits still survive in the act of the grower
(in peace and compassion he's...)
naming the rose,
naming the rose in the memory of sweetness.

Dedication to the call
and he offers up the hope
that love conquers all.

It's not easy to explain
how he felt at her passing
the very day on which
the most perfect bloom was full-blown;
tender cruelty that she'd
never share in this moment,
naming the rose.

He takes her ashes to the seed-bed
and works them in gently
so that her soul will rise like sap
in the plants as they grow
and then whispering her name
writes it out on the label,
naming the rose,
naming the rose
for the sake of her sweetness.

Naming the rose

in the memory of sweetness.

How Far I Fell

(Here's the old man and his not-so-childlike bride;
here's the humbling of us all, delusion never dies;
here's the story: anyone can fall at any time at all.
We're born to be fools in life.)

I was the king of the mountain,
I had everything that money couldn't buy:
at the summit of ambition I was ready for the sky.
I viewed the world from this, my citadel...
oh, how I fell.

Silent and sleeping, the volcano,
so I thought that I stood square upon my feet.
I ignored the warning tremors in my hubris, I repeat —
I never saw you coming, Jezebel...
oh, how I fell.

As I look back now on the tears I was to cry
I am holding on to the vestiges of pride,
I am holding on, but I will never be the one to tell
how far I fell.

(Here's the old man and his not-so-childlike bride;
here's the humbling of us all, delusion never dies;
here's the story: anyone can fall at any time at all.
We're born to be fools in life.)

A fool and his money are soon parted
and there's nothing like an old fool, so they say:
once the plastic had been melted quickly you were on your way,
leaving me drowning in the wishing-well —
oh, how I fell.

You'll never know how deep you cut me,
although anyone can see the state I'm in.
So I pay the price of such unoriginal sin...
but I will never bring myself to tell
how far I fell.

Somebody Bad Enough

I keep your picture in the back of the book
as index to my hidden pages;
a secret life
is where we meet
and I'll not let you go.

I know you think that I'm a bit of a creep
but I will grow on you in stages
until you recognise that we're both in so deep
that it's contagious.

And if you love somebody bad enough
I believe in the end they will offer you in their lives.

I keep the website stocked with pictures of you;
I love to scan your shocked expression.
I know that you're the only one
who really understands
all about possession.

And if you love somebody bad enough
you will follow their footsteps wherever they're going in life;
and if you love somebody bad enough
I believe in the end they let you in their lives.

And if you love somebody bad enough
you will follow their footsteps wherever they lead you in life;
and, yes, I love somebody bad enough
I believe in the end you will let me in your life.

Tango for One

And every time you call me
I wait to hear what favour you require of me this time...
The object of your own desire,
not everything's about you,
I'm not exactly hanging on your words,
this audience is restive,
perhaps you've not observed

because it's me, me, me with you
and what I feel means not a lot.
No, I don't need this,
you're welcome to what you've got.

Not everything's about you,
my world does not revolve
around whatever problem you want solved;
perhaps you might do better with a fresh resolve.
But it's always me, me, me with you
and I have had it up to here;
no, I don't need this —
you're welcome to yourself, my dear.

You're welcome to the party,
so glad your guests have all arrived.
They're all reflecting your brilliance in their adoring eyes.
You're welcome to this moment,
everybody's here for you...
but you'll be dancing by yourself before the night is through.

Not everything's about you,
not everything's about you,
not everything about you's true.

And every time you call me
your self-obsession grows:
you'll stew in your own juices, I suppose.
I've had enough of listening, there's nobody at home;
not everything's about you, everybody knows
that everything about you's emperor's new clothes.

You're welcome to the party,
so glad that everybody came;
oh, how they admire you as your worth is self-proclaimed!
The spittoons fill up with vitriol
while you're puffing up your name.
Yes, you're welcome to this moment
you perceive as your righteous fame;
and if exhausting our patience
has long been your chosen game
you're a winner, you're a champion...
in your own eyes you're a saint.
Is that what you've become?

Yes, you're welcome to yourself

but when this one-off race is run
not everything's about you.
Not everything's about you,
and getting on without you won't be hard,
if of comfort that's a crumb.

It's always me, me, me with you;
surely it can't be so much fun
to find you're dancing a tango for one?

Like Veronica

Wear your hair like Veronica Lake
and he says you look ever so pretty
as he brushes the tear from your cheek almost tenderly...
soon he'll be home.

Falling in love was your first mistake,
with a heart that held no trace of pity.
As you look in the mirror you wonder what face you will see
when he comes home.

Soon he'll be
in through the door in a cloud of rage and impotence;
calling you whore, his greeting is a Glasgow Kiss;
down on the floor you raise your arms but there is no defence...
he's only in love with his fists.

Wear your hair like Veronica Lake
and the bruises won't show where he hits you;
safe behind the curtain, in private, in secret nobody will see
how he comes home.

Soon he'll be
into your face in a spittle-stream of vitriol and abuse,
filling the place with the stench of alcohol and piss;
no saving grace, no comfort, no escape and no excuse:
he's only in love with his fists.

If this is all that there is
isn't there somewhere to run to?
Or do you think in the future he'll change his ways?
Is that why you stay?

He is not your heaven-sent protector, he is not an angel from above,
he is not the man that you once married: now his fists are all he loves.
He is just a weakling and a bully, he is not the devil in disguise;
he is not the man that you once married, he only wants to see you cry.
He only wants to hear you beg, he only wants to see you hurt,
he only wants to see you bleed, he only want to make you cry. He is not your
heaven-sent protector, he is not an angel from above,
he is not the man that you once married: now his fists are all he loves.

Oh, darling, darling, is that why you stay?

His fists are all he loves.

In a Bottle

With the sense of anticipation burning on his skin
and the train of consequences running at full throttle,
before the touch, before the kiss,
this moment just before their history begins,
he'd give anything to put this in a bottle.

No sense of time, no sense of place,
in case of senselessness he'll swear to her alone,
(He'll swear to her alone.)
though he knows tomorrow this will be another face he's forgotten
(No memory's quite his own)
before the fire, before the fall, all this is magical,
the future so unknown,
he'd pay anything to get this in a bottle,
(as if that's a thing he could ever own)
he'd pay anything to get this in a bottle.

Don Juan had been so careful but he let it slip
that the elixir he craved was moist upon her faithless lips
and in the hint of her perfume that lingered on his fingertips...
distillation.

Overstrength, this eau-de-vie.

(What a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip finally...
He got the bottle, he knocked back the eau-de-vie.)

He's stripped of recollection,
he's left with no protection,
this won't come again,
although he always knew that he'd foresee
much more than he'd ever remember.
(This won't come again.)
Losing the thread, losing the plot,
it wasn't/not possible to stay on fire as he was then,
he'd do anything to breathe life in these embers.
(But the secret stays untold...)
He'd give anything to get life from these embers.
(and the fire has grown cold, cold, cold.)

Between the present and the past, his mouth agape
and the elixir he drained has twisted essence out of shape;
and with dark perfume he is wraithed
now that the genie has escaped from the bottle.

Sangrial, the eau-d-vie.

(What a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip finally...
eau-de-vie, eau-de-vie.
Don Juan had been so careful but he let it slip.
Don Juan had been so careful.
Eau-de-vie...)

Astart

Always we're too young to understand
that life is neither cruel nor fair,
at random or well-planned.
So we stride along the shoreline
while our footprints in the sand
are washed away and then
say «Can I begin again?»

But where you come from's who you've been
and try as you may your debts all stay unredeemed
(maybe that's why they seem)
when all history's as distant as your dreams
you close your eyes and count to ten,
say «Can I begin again?»

Every action, every passion,
every rational retraction, every breath a start...

Always we're too young to comprehend,
nobody here will ever know the whole story,
how it ends.
(Our lovers and our friends...)
Holding them closely in the noblest of pretence —
life's just got started when
you find you can't begin again.

(Every action, every passion,
forms a little chain reaction, every breath astart.
Every moment, lost or stolen
forms the story, base or golden: go from where we are.)

Always we're too young to understand...

(Every action, every passion,
forms a little chain reaction, every breath astart.)

Every Bloody Emperor

By this we are all sustained: a belief in human nature
and in justice and parity...all we have is the faith to carry on.

Imperceptible the change as our votes become mere gestures
and our lords and masters determine to cast us
in the roles of serfs and slaves
in the new empire's name.

Yes and every bloody emperor claims that freedom is his cause
as he buffs up on his common touch as a get-out clause.

Unto nations nations speak in the language of the gutter;
trading primetime insults the imperial impulse
extends across the screen.
Truth's been beaten to its knees; the lies embed ad infinitum
till their repetition becomes a dictum
we're traitors to disbelieve.
With what impotence we grieve for the democratic process
as our glorious leaders conspire to feed us
the last dregs of imperious disdain
in the new empire's name.

Yes and every bloody emperor's got his hands up history's skirt
as he poses for posterity over the fresh-dug dirt.
Yes and every bloody emperor with his sickly rictus grin
talks his way out of nearly anything but the lie within
because every bloody emperor thinks his right to rule divine
so he'll go spinning and spinning and spinning into his own decline.

Imperceptible the change as one by one our voices falter
and the double standards of propaganda
still all our righteous rage.

By this we are all sustained: our belief in human nature.
But our faith diminishes — close to the finish,
we're only serfs and slaves
as the empire decays.

Nutter Alert

It might come in a letter,
darkness falls in a telephone call;
I await the unexpected
with one ear to the party wall.
Is it the pricking of the conscience,
is it the itching of hair shirt,
is it the dictionary definition
of a precipice to skirt?
It's the nutter alert.

Though this face is familiar
something in it has bred contempt;
I never asked for your opinion
or your back-handed compliments.
Oh, but here comes that special nonsense
all the words out in a spurt,
the unhinging of the trolley
as the mouth begins to blurt...
it's the nutter alert

I can see we're in trouble
from that glint in the eye you've got;
there's no sense to the story,
comprehensively lost, the plot.
And how contorted is that logic
you so forcefully exert:
you're a car crash in the making,
head-on, that's a racing cert.
It's the nutter alert,
this is the nutter alert.

Abandon Ship!

Oh, the heptagenarians got behind the decks
while the skeleton crew went through the motions.
It was only the medication that was keeping them erect.
Yeh, the devil got the best tunes
so god knows what comes next.

And it's difficult to think of anything less magic
than the aged in pursuit of the hip.
At the lifeboat station there's a mounting panic...
they're going overboard for this one —
abandon ship!

Oh, the humanitarians took themselves below
while they tried to debate the latest motion;
meanwhile only the medication served to keep them on the go.
So it's devil take the hindmost:
we sail on the sloop John Doe.

And it's difficult to think of anything that's factual
now we find ourselves in Alzheimer's grip;
so at disembarkation it's no names, no pack-drill,
we're all anonymous on this one —
abandon ship!

In Babelsberg

The city's spread beneath my feet,
but not the one that I was after
while I've been pounding out this beat
the length of the Kudamm.
Street legends on the tourist map,
a fading script in Gothic,
out in the studio they're
rehearsing in drag for a lark.
Come on, let's get lost in the dark.

Tale another step, another move, another pace,
what isn't written in the manuscript is a note to play with grace
and if I exit from this story in a way I might retrace
it will have fallen through the cracks when I come back
in any case
another time's another place.

The city's spread beneath my feet
from the top of the Mercedes tower
and I can see the darkness closing in
hour by hour.

But I can't take another step, no filling in, no cut and paste,

a bankrupt process for the memory, this terrain is laid to waste.

No, nothing's written in the history books
that doesn't leave a nasty taste;
so should I start to tell the story
will you put me in my place?
'Cause it'll all be crash and burn
when I return...in any case
another time's another place.

Just when did this get broken?
I don't know where to begin —
I got a U Bahn ticket and a Flohmarkt token...
I'm in trouble in the rubble of Berlin

The light is getting dimmer,
the walls of history close in.
In Babelsberg they're hunting
for a different Stimmung
that predates the war.

That was before,
that was before,
that was a different Berlin,
that was another Berlin,
that was before in Berlin.

On the Beach

If we had all the time in the world
we might talk about how it used to be.
We could have thrown in our cards
when the going got hard
but evidently we went on interminably.

Right now I want to walk towards the sea,
hoping you're still in step with me.
All joking apart let's play it from the heart
because at last even the Silver Surfer agrees:
the wave you brave
rides on a deeper complexity.

Ah, come on: surf's up!

Even the Silver Surfer agrees.

Our Eyes Give it Shape

I'm getting the idea, I haven't got a clue.
As my fabulous career ends up dead in the gutter
the stars are shining down right on cue.
It's not much of a shock, it comes as no surprise
that changing all the locks when the horses have bolted
is a useless exercise.
And play it how I will and say it as I may
I won't pick that poison pill as a effortless exit
from the Mystery Play.

I'm so glad I'm still here to see this,
the break of day at the end of the long dark night...

All's not as it appears, this tale has many twists —
but if I wasn't here documenting the story
would that mean that the plot did not exist?
Oh, would it not be absurd if there was no objective state?
What if the unobserved always waits, insubstantial,
till our eyes give it shape?

I'm so glad that I'm still here to see this,
the whole story is unfolding before my eyes;
I'm so happy I can barely believe it...
this simple pleasure is the mystery spice of life.

And I am happy just to breathe in the quality of the light.

I'm getting the idea, I'm seeing things anew,
it's all becoming clear at this delicate juncture
there can be no false nor true.
I want to have it all, I want to see the whole thing through...
It's a fifty fifty call: maybe Schrödinger's cat
could be the Cheshire one too?

I'm so glad that we're both here to see this:
the chink of light in the tunnel of love's embrace.
I'm so happy I can barely believe it
A simple pleasure in the simple things makes life great.

Event Horizon

Flat on my back, I can feel myself falling
into a singular state of mind;
as if through a fog, I can hear someone calling.
I know I'm cutting it fine,
thinking that maybe it's time to cross the line.

The last thing I need's any outside assistance;
whatever I do will be what has been done
and if force is applied, let it be from a distance.
Right now I'm bidding my time;
hold on, I'm biting my tongue,
hoping I'm timing my run across the line.

It's all gone so quiet and scary,
I can feel the bloodrush in my ears.
If only I could keep my head,
if only I could keep my head from spinning,
if only I could keep my head
I'd cross the line.

Is that the finish in sight or a mist that's descending?
The geometry's blurred at the edge of the scene.
At the vanishing point there'll be no perfect ending,
no final dotting of «i» s, no chance of crossing the «t» s —
at last, unpicked at the seams, I'll cross the line.

Famous Last Words

«If I close my eyes I can pretend
the best is still before me, the worst is at an end.
Time for goodbyes to the audiences that adored me;
they never realised
just how much I came to despise all their eagerness.»

Famous last words,
made in jest, overheard,
is that your best testament?
Or are you coining a phrase
just to see how it plays

when you're at your wits' end.
Famous last words,
to the last you'll self-serve,
what a waste of your breath.

When you close your eyes will you pretend
that nothing bad has happened, that we are still close friends?
So many lies, after all the illusions are shattered
still at all costs you must hide
the emptiness where your true feelings used to reside.

Famous last words,
they're so over-rehearsed —
they just sound like pretence.
You'll go out in style,
to the last in denial
of what anything's meant.
Famous last words,
to the last you'll self-serve,
what a waste of all that breath.

(It's a little too late for sorry...
in a race against the clock
now you hit that mental block
time to take that poison cup
now your time is all used up.)

Naked to the Flame

She was waxed up to face the camera like butter wouldn't melt
in the back room Agencies hammered out a deal: points on the pelt.
In the airlessly frenzied atmosphere she was the mistress of misrule,
seeming careless of everything except her look, cooler than cool.
And she's singing for her supper and she's dancing in the dark
and she's running for her life if she but knew it.
And though her heart is hard as stone
that's still the flint from which she'll spark...
Like a moth to the flame
she was so eager to make it
her ambition became naked.

How iconically arched the eyebrow pluck, how vaselined the lens.
Now ironically even highbrow critics rush to her defence...

And she's spinning in the spotlight, but increasingly confused
about the context that she finds herself wrapped up in.
Is it in this skin she's living or in the last one she abused?
Nothing quite like a dame, was she the broken or the breaking?
The girl, the woman became
naked.

I preferred her in anonymity, but now that cover's blown
and, absurdly, she stars, eponymously cast: it's Salome's show.
Oh, be careful what you wish for as your own head might get turned
you might find the biter bit before you know it;
though ever eager for the spotlight she was never quite ready to be burned.
At the end of the game the signature dish will get plated.
She'll go out as she came, written in light as her fate is.

The moth discovers the flame's
naked.

Meanwhile my Mother

Meanwhile, my mother,
waiting for what?
I don't know...
The recall of a favourite memory,
or perhaps for a painful one to go?
She doesn't let that much show.

Meanwhile, above her head
all my monologues flows.
«What's that you're saying, dear?»
Wading through time like it's treacle,
her eyes looking into mine although
she won't even notice me go.

In the meantime I pack her things up
and get them ready to store;
in between times I take a good look around,
for we'll not be visiting here much more.

Meanwhile, my mother,
distance encamped in her eyes,
not quite oblivious but
close to a state of inertia

in which she won't even realise
how everything's passing her by.

Meanwhile, my mother,
lost in a world of her own,
turns to look out of the window
down to the verdant earth below.
Some journeys we make alone
somehow we'll leave all we've known.

Meanwhile, my mother,
waiting for what?
Time to go.

Vainglorious Boy

I said steady up, settle down, make way for the Idiot Boy.
He's here to sell you some kind of a story;
like a stuck-up sore thumb he'll be coming on bashful and coy,
all of the while pumping up his vainglory.

I said give it up, slap it down, idolise the Idiot Boy;
love's what he wants, or at least some attention
and he believes all the hype...
like an archetypal Geijin-cum-goy
he plays up the Alien Genius Pretension.

He'd fake his own confession to get you on his side.

Oh, I say lighten up, calm it down, time out for His Idiocy now.
What's going to happen when the audience dwindles?
The tide's out, the ride's up, the world's got no comfort somehow
truth to tell, it'll be himself that he's swindled
in a broken-down profession of over-weaning pride.
Nowhere to hide...

Heaven sent compliments that were meant sincerely fall flat
and the bitterest pill is the one he can't swallow.

The idiotic thing is what we have always known:
however great success is, however far you've flown
you'll come to face this audience:
yourself, yourself alone.

You'll come to face yourself alone,
you idiot, idiot boy!

Friday Afternoon

Why wait for life to happen,
when right before our eyes
blind fate unwraps its patterns?
I just said «See you soon».
My piano was in tune
when you walked out of the room.
It felt like any normal Friday.

At concert pitch, 440
the pressure's many tons;
the weight of life befalls me.
I wish I could pretend
my piano's on the mend.
You treated it like a friend, left it to settle down over the weekend.

You've got a ticket on the terraces for the game on Saturday
and afterwards you might go for a beer.
On Sunday afternoon you'll take the family to the park
and later, when it's getting dark
you'll say «We've still got that old spark»,
you'll say «Oh, aren't we just so lucky to be here...»

So stupid and so senseless...
Sometimes we're pulled up short, quite shockingly defenceless.
I don't know what to do: my piano's out of tune...
it's not as if I can assume that it's ever going to get any better now.

A liquid lunch appointment when the working week is done,
there's time for one more just before he goes.
A quick glance at the watch and now it's time to head for home.
And so it's goodbye to the ladies,
grabs the keys to his Mercedes,
thinking «Maybe I should get a cab...».
But no.

Blind drunk, he met you head on.
On a normal Friday afternoon.

White Dot

Nothing is like anything else,
everything's the same,
our progress punctuated
by a series of coincidence
to form a logical chain.

Nothing is like everything else,
like anything you name.
Pomposity unpunctured,
we're approaching a velocity
of escape from our mortal frames.

So nothing is like anything else,
so everything's designed.
We're utterly dependent on
our self-deluding sense of what we've done
and what we'll do if we have time
with nothing else in mind.

A time to think is now at a premium.
You show bare inkling of a vital sign.
Though in the pink
in every outward appearance
inside it's white dot time.

Oh, nothing comes to mind.
So nothing comes to mind.
Does nothing come to mind
when you're finally mindful of nothing?

Interference Patterns

All that we see illusory
every assumption based on blind faith alone...
On with the motley, bring it home!

Everything's formed from particles,
all that you see is a construction of waves.
Hold onto both thoughts,
under general relativity
the cradle connected to the grave.

Luminous Aether dissipates,
Michelson-Morley with a point to disprove,
Millikan oil drops
and the cargo-cult science evaporates,
improbable physics on the move.

Nearer and nearer,
it's clear that in interference
what happens when matter shatters
is wantonly quantum and nature's got
some surprises in store right now.

All that we are illusory,
every observance based on physical law.
Only a fool would think us
ready to face with certainty
all that our future's heading for.

Nearer and nearer,
it's clearer, we're only here for an eye-blink,
a psychic mind-trick.
The proofs that we use
are at best projections
but let's hope they'll see us through.

The interference patterns help us to know
the gap between a simple «yes» and a «no»,
the heart-felt beat that gets us ready to go
and, as above, we'll find out what is below

the interference patterns.

The Final Reel

Jack and Gillian, facing their decline,
take to the dance floor for one final time.
Who'd deny them this last shot?
Taking a twirl, are they in the final reel — or not?

Jack and Gillian, walking hand in hand,
disappearing along the shining strand.
Who'd deny them this state of grace?
So we find them with not a single hair out of place,
picture-perfect, matching pace for pace,
her head on his shoulder, his arm around her waist.
But if you put them on the spot
what would they say?
Are they in the final reel or what?

Sayonara, tschuss, adieu, farewell.
Will we meet again? No-one can tell,
not the manner, not the time.
No-one can hide, no-one leaves the final reel behind.

Jack turns to Gillian, misty-eyed,
and presses the pills in her hand.
All they've got left is the downhill slide
so they'd better act while they can.

This much they know, they're not in the final reel alone.
This much they know, they'll not leave the final reel alone.
They take the dive, no-one leaves the final reel alive.

Lifetime

I can remember it so well,
the bed of roses where we lay,
the crown of thorns I was so keen to give away.
All the warning signs ignored,
the passion's played.

I could foresee what was to come,
I had a sense of what might happen.
The river runs and very rapidly
becomes a torrent, sweeping us
towards our ricochet.

It takes a lifetime to unravel all the threads
that have tied us in our webs of tourniquet.

I stake no claim on memory.
I stand on ceremonial quicksand.
I look for something with solidity
to hold:
something lasting, something pristine, with no sense of decay.

Can you remember how that was?
Can you remember?

It takes a lifetime's understanding of the flow
to surrender, let the current sweep you away.
What if I'd told you I would never let you go,
I would hold you every step along the way.
It takes a lifetime to unlearn all that you know
to return the things you borrowed for a day.

Drop Dead

A charmed circle on the dance floor,
a spell-binding display...
it's rather more than he bargained for,
Snow White or Morgan le Fay.

«Drop dead», she said.

Hey, big man, let testosterone flow,
flex the muscles like a monkey.
The male plumage is all puffed up in show
but the girls know how to debunk it.

«Drop dead», she said.

In a sense

some men are always caught in adolescence,
trying to crack the mystery girl cocoon.
It doesn't take a wicked witch
to point out obsolescence is a state
they might wake up to pretty soon.
Is it any wonder when they hone that perfect put-down
to deflate the macho tough guy male buffoon?

«Drop dead», she said.

Only in a Whisper

Dive in to the Motion of the Avatar,
sign up to the Army of the Phantom.
No-one's really who they say they are,
they're all imposters on the stand in witness.

Welcome to the Power of Self-deception,
head high in the grip of Holy Deadlock.
Don't count on the way your days are numbered,
listen to the wind which whips your every word away.

Word-drunk, has the Inquisition found you?
Weight falls on your shoulders, under pressure.
Black dog in the desert heat will hound you —
hang on, only Faith is holding us together.

Dust clouds building up on the horizon,
make way for the onslaught of the Visigoths.
Joined up, all the Automatic Writing —
some thoughts should be spoken only in a whisper.

Take aim on the Summit of Experience,
don't say we're just making up the numbers,
lay waste to the idea of an Afterlife.
Some thoughts should be spoken only in a whisper.

Listen to the wind which'll whip your words away,
listen to the wind that whips your every word away,
scattered as your atoms all will be one day...
Some thoughts should be uttered only in a whisper.

All That Before

I don't know if I'm cracking up or just getting careless...
is this room quite airless?
Just a minute — listen,
did you hear that knock on the door?

I'm going to have to write things down before I forget them.
I can't find my glasses, I don't know where I left them
so I can't expect to get much on the visionary score,
or did I say all that before?

Oh, stop me if you've heard this one before I get started.
I can't find my mobile and I didn't charge it,
it's a phantom target,
if I call myself I'll only get my Voicemail once more.

I wish that I could pin things down before they escaped me.
I can't find my car keys and it seems that lately
I have trouble even fitting them into the front door...
or did I say all that before?
Oh, stop me if I'm banging on trying to grab your attention.
I forget to mention I can't find my glasses
but I think I bent them when I dropped them
as I scrabbled for my phone on the floor.

It seems I can't, I can't remember,
I can't remember what I'm doing.

Although I flash that foolish grin
that seemed so winning when I came in
I'm beginning to see everything we've been
is going to be forgotten.

It's not a joke,
or did I say that all before I spoke?
It's not a joke,
or did I say all that before I spoke?

I can't find myself, what I'm looking for,
and I've lost the thread
of what I said before.

Over the Hill

Let's recount our history,
our tale of boom and bust.
We could talk a good fight on our day
but when we got a hand to play we bit the dust.
Now in our threadbare suits we do our duty,
still sold on the pursuit of a common cause.

Now let us call to memory such witness as we dare.
We built our bridges, burned them down as well,
maybe all we have to tell is off the square.
We tried our instant remedies — they didn't clear the air.
Who could foresee how it was bound to end,
in a break or in a bend?
We intended well enough...
Oh, but the clock was always counting,
the envelope was sealed
and as the pressure's mounting
still precious little is revealed.

Still, let us speak of comradeship, of how we stood as one,
shoulder to shoulder through the thick and thin
while the roof was caving in;
although everything begins in good faith,
for all our sins we'll all end up being skinned
and now there's nowhere left to run to, there's nowhere left to hide,
we're strapped in and we're gunning for the roller-coaster ride.

If we're living our lives as though God's at our shoulders,
if we're giving of our best, by an effort of will,
then we'll be up for the test,
we'll never know when we're over the hill.

Here comes then bit where we decide no passengers come on this ride —
civilians, the broken-hearted, need not apply.
I count to a thousand and ten, I keep my eyes tight shut and then
unsteadily count the numbers back down again.

Head on into the wind, on a heavenly mission,
try to play with the spin while we burn in our hearts;
although we know we'll never win we're still learning our lessons in the dark.

There's no choice here to make, there's no easier decision

than to stand up, stand straight and to give it a try
and there's no time for hesitation as the stations of our lives are passing by.
Heads up and face front as brother to brother,
time to come to the call if we're true to how we were
because at last and after all we've given each other our words.
If we live out our lives as though God's sat at our shoulders,
if we give of our best and then give some more still,
press on, with no pause for breath,
then we'll see each other over the hill.

Now if we speak of distances we're only covering old ground:
what's done is done and if we have become of worth at all
we'll hope to see things in the round.
Let's close the book on history and keep it safe and sound.
While we've been moving forward to our goals
we have done as we have told,
so the story's closed behind us
and the countdown comes in backwards,
that much was always clear,
so when it reaches zero our heroes disappear.

(We are) Not Here

I dreamed you here beside me,
radiant, impulsively strong.
Light streaming through us blindly,
we are not here for long.

I dreamed us from the ether,
bursting through the neural stem,
vibration without meter...
we are not here again.

We are not here again.
(No way to know that when)
We are not here again.
(there is no now in then)

We are not here again.

(We are not there and then we are.
Henceforth we are not here again.)

A Grounding in Numbers (VdGG, 2011)

Your Time Starts Now

Your time starts now
without a question,
without a clue
your response will attest
to suggestion's power, so strong
and growing stronger.
With self-belief
you've pulled through but you belong here no longer.

Fly by night, it's over; day by day it's done.
Was it simply oversight that's left you overcome?
While you've been distracted —
playfully, no doubt —
your time's been running out.

Your time starts now
and there's the poser.
You're going to need
all the help you can get
for the ride's nearly over.

All that information,
all that warp and weft...
for all your patient fortitude you're patently bereft
of clue, of hint, of notion,
of answers, even vague.
You're ploughing forward nonetheless
as though by simple doggedness
the far side'll see you saved.

Your time starts now
and yes, you'd best begin it,
however long
you've held back,
you've demurred,
get on track, pace by pace,
just go on,
just go further...

Mathematics

Here be numbers transcendental,
on an imaginary axis spun,
decimal places without limit
and zero and one.

Mathematics, simply pure beyond belief.

e to the power of i times π plus 1 is 0.
 e to the power of i times π is -1.

A single function, exponential,
just one addition must be done...
multiplication in completion
of zero, of one.

Mathematics, just so «wow» it brooks belief.

(You'd better believe, you'd better believe it.)

Highly Strung

The beat, the beat at my temples; my pulse, my pulse in a rush.
I'm feeling increasingly mental, legs shaking, my face flushed.

The lights so bright in a dazzle, the pumping that thumps at my chest.
I'm feeling increasingly frazzled, need some comfort, need some bedrest
or some kind of intervention, cold sweat beading up on my brow,
the hairs on my neck at attention, I don't know why but somehow

I'm highly strung, I'm stressed as hell,
I bite my tongue, I hold my breath as well.
The iron lung, the diving bell...
time to depressurise, my nerves are shot to hell.

The beat, the heat is astounding, the pressure, the tension full-blown,
the static is crackling around me, I can't hold on, I can't let go...

I'm highly strung, panic attack,
can't do this one, can't go on with the act.

I'm frozen on the topmost rung,
I can't go on, I'm just too highly strung.

Hold her steady as she goes,
just be ready, on your toes,
hold her steady...there she blows!

The case is shut, the song is sung,
the wire's been cut and the acrobat's well hung.

Bunsho

I'd just done the best work to fall into my hands for quite some time;
of night oil I'd burned much, made sure both style and content were sublime.
So I put it forward
to the public forum
in anticipation
of my due acclaim.

And meanwhile, by contrast, I'd penned a eulogy, pure workaday,
just hack work, just dashed off, packed full of prolix puff and sad cliché...
No-one can really tell when their hand's been played out well
and I don't even know
how my own story goes
or if it's worth a jot.

I can't see my stream.

What I thought was perfect,
what I thought was polished,
no-one thought it worth much
and they made that clear.
What I thought was worthless,
merely repetition
somehow tugged the heartstrings,
brought them all to tears.

I can't see my stream.

No-one can ever know
what of their own's their very best.

Snake Oil

Best of intentions, fresh-faced devotees display,
sat at the feet of the master,
hoping that this is the one true way.
Eager awareness, picking the wood from the trees,
only belief is important, only obedience can set them free.

Here come the paraphernalia,
here come the catch-all refrains,
repeat ad infinitum.

Slavish devotion, that's how it usually presents,
in an impossibly pompous
addiction to doctrines that make no sense.
Anal retention to an astounding degree,
self-absorption is total, making obeisance compulsory
if they want to reach the inner mystery.

Welcome to the bats in the belfry,
the buzz-words echo around,
repeated ad infinitum.

Brainwashed and bound to believe in the orthodox text,
slogans on t-shirts, the punters can't wait to be told what to think of next...
oh, what's coming next?

Well, nothing is coming and nobody here goes
in search of the questions posterity might pose.
There's only one answer the believers can allow...

Yes, teacher knows best, teacher knows best.
Let's put the teacher to the test, let's put the teacher to the test.

There's only one answer the disciples will allow out.
Cultish convention repeated again and again
until the words have no meaning, until the means have become the end.

What starts with self-obsession ends up in self-denial,
they just so want to believe...
slaves to the snake oil in this particular world,
elitist and self-referential, the comfort's in sharing the secret word
with the picture blurred...the companionship of the herd.

Embarrassing Kid

Embarrassing kid looks into the mirror
and grins like an idiot at his own face.
For as long as he lives he will not be delivered
from the stuff that he did, from his teenage mistakes.

I can barely believe it,
how I went and let the old school down.
Yeah, whatever can I have been thinking of?

Embarrassing kid, I squirm at the memory,
try to bang down the lid on the can of worms.
It remains pretty strange and uncomfortable territory
where my secrets are hidden, however absurd.

I can hardly conceal it,
how my ashen face got drained of blood.
Yeah, everybody can have a damn good laugh.

Embarrassing kid, you don't know the half of it
but I'd stake a few quid you've got gaffes of your own.
Take a look at yourself and you might have to laugh a bit...
but the teeth that you grit, well at least they're your own.

And yes at the end of the day
we get what we've given away,
you bet: our eternal embarrassment.

Medusa

Welcome to the coils,
they're here to set you free
from anguish and dull toil

And she says
«What you see is what you get from me.»

You're welcome in her world,
it's clear you'll never leave,
she's a transparent kind of girl.

And she says
«What you see is what you get from me.»

Mr. Sands

Soon as you like, ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats.
In a moment there'll be a test of your endurance.
Stay in your chairs: in the event of a dramatic pause
please be aware nothing gets covered by insurance.

One final thing:
please take the trouble to read through your notes,
it's important that you know where you've got to go to.
Wait a moment, maybe an usherette'll show you.
Such excitement, these are the hoops you've got to go through...

The noises off that turn you on stage whispered from the wings,
a stifled cough, a joke that bombs, a smouldering fuse wire string.
When Mr. Sands is in the house the alarm bells start to ring.

Everything's in code
in a world we barely know
and the truth is only slowly revealed...

With best intentions I have strayed far off the beaten track
and of attention I displayed a quite spectacular lack.
Now Mr. Sands is in the house and the panic button's smacked.

Well, Mr Sands is in the house: commotion in the stalls
and from the gods, unruly shouts that echo round the hall
Yes, someone's let the secret out...the safety curtain falls.

And as I look across the stage the thought that first occurs
is less that we have come of age and more that we're preserved
to pass our time in different shades of ignorant reserve.

Everything's in code
till the moment it explodes
we suspend belief, get ready to go
for the payout of the show —
here it is for all we know
Mr Sands is always ready to roll.

Smoke

Best be careful, maintain a tight grip.
Yes, be careful and keep the mouth zipped.
Best be careful, there's no smoke without fire.

Clearly you don't know where you're going
but the beaten track behind you runs for miles.
You've blundered through the jungle like a hyperactive child.

Just be careful and think the thing through,
you must be careful of what you're linked to —
just be careful, there's no smoke without fire.

You held your inattention
and your standing's now as suspect as can be,
the charges telegraphed and tracked conspiratorially.

Just be careful of where your mouse clicks,
you must be careful because the mud sticks —
just be careful, there's no smoke without fire.

5533

You can make a matrix pattern out of almost anything,
tracing causal imperfections in the information flow,
counting out the footfall of processional identity.
And the number is...
5533223

As the primacy of digits ticks the boxes
so the codes that they unlock begin to run
and the synapses are snapped in to attention —
the observer, the observed become as one,
reeling out the numbers that are mapped in short-term memory,
so you key them in...

5533223

All Over the Place

So, driven to distraction
by witless repartee
and wittering conversation
of deep banality,
eventually
he seeks out interaction,
fresh eccentricity.
On closer observation
nothing's all that it seems to be,
nothing's more than it seems to be.

He scattered himself all over the place
while hiding behind closed doors
and day by dull day fell more off the pace —
a life suspended in live pause.
He gave of himself in fractional clues,
oblique synchronicities
but nobody knows how alien he grew,
how, drained away behind his open face,
he'd lost his identity.

Now nothing else is left behind,
just the fallen side of the sky;
a thousand miles away from home
I feel the cold ghost breath fly by
out of the dream.
Now the image blurs
of how we seemed
of what we were.

Firebrand (b side of «People you were Going to» single)

This is a fairly straight-forward account of a phenomenon of dire omen which occurs in Icelandic mythology, the 'Witch-ride'. Here, the manifestation is in the saga of Njal, and the event which it foreshadows is the burning of Njal's house by his arch-enemy, with the owner and his family asleep inside. On this dastardly deed hangs the cycle of retribution and revenge which constitutes the saga.

The screaming monologue of the Witch-rider is, amazingly enough, an exact translation, «poison in the centre» and all!

Sunday night, twelve weeks before winter,
the world is in a smoky haze.
Suddenly there appears a rider in the East,
brandishing flame.

CHORUS:

«I ride and icy stallion, fire at each end
and poison at the centre;
you won't hear my words
as I scream into the darkness:
his plans are like a firebrand,
his plans are like a firebrand.»

His steed strains as he reaches out over the reins
and hurls his flame at the West.
The mountains dissolve in fire
and he races through them, screaming:

CHORUS.

He rides on into the further darkness
brandishing his flame like a spear
and below him there races his ghost steed
draping the night in fear

CHORUS.

Njal, beware and heed the words
which emanate from Hildiglum.

(Derby, 1967)

W.(b side of «Theme One» single)

«w» is intuitive universal, and it is therefore appropriate that, over the years, it should have been treated with sounds from bagpipes to the bleeping of space beacons.

Wave-theory is, to me, fascinating but impenetrable, and I now prefer a «photon» view of life. However, such opinion, when related to such lyrics as 'Darkness', merely proves my own confusion and the potential truth of both.

Life is an endless succession of waves,
you're happy and you're sad
and you don't appreciate the good times
until you're in the bad...
You wake up one morning — w —
and you're twice as unhappy
as you've ever been before in your life.

You wake up, go to the window
and see smoke billowing across the lawn.
You pick your feet up, drag yourself downstairs
and you're gone.
You wake up one morning — w —
and you're twice as unhappy
as you've ever been before in your life.

You wake up, look to your left
but you see no reassuring head.
You stay in bed all day.
At six o'clock you realize you're dead.

(London, 1967)

The Boat of Millions of Years (b side of «Refugees» single)

Horus, the son of Isis, lay in the marshes of Buto,
poisoned by Set.
She called out to the High God Ra
to kill this evil, that her child may live yet.
Casting aside her present fears
she called out on the Boat of Millions of Years...
Ra came and saw
and stopped the sun until he had cured
the life of the innocent.

Horus the Good lived in the North,
in lands of fertility and beauty
but Set stayed in the hard desert,
to him belonged all drought and perversity.
While he sheds his tears
beneath the Boat of Millions of Years
he fights to kill the hawk,
bearing with him evil and darkness.
But Horus lives with the sun.

Forever the battle rages,
evil tries to kill the innocent baby
and only Osiris, the Lord of the Dead,
can eventually save it.
So we must cast aside our future fears
and call out on the Boat of Millions of Years.
The God of Love is on our side
and with him we shall not die...
there's life in the Sun!
There's life in the Sun!
Only in violence is the cause lost:
in peace, grey Set can't kill our baby of love.

(Derby, 1967)

Shrine

Lights are beaming in the city
as the train I'm on arrives;
my eyes are gleaming, my mouth is gritty,
I'm begging to feel alive
and, as I step out of the station into the pouring rain,
I know that I'm a pilgrim once again.

Get a taxi to my destination —
she doesn't know yet that it's coming here.
I'm relaxing in contemplation
of the great times that we had last year;
and, as I step out onto the pavement, and ring the bell of 29,
I know that I'm a pilgrim, arriving at his shrine.

A year ago we were together all the time;
you were a goddess, and God! yes, you were mine...

Landlord lets me in, I climb on up the stairs,
and I'm knocking upon your door...
what am I seeing, as you stand there,
half your clothes off, lying on the floor?
And, as I look past your shocked expression,
I see, in your bed, a new man
and I'm a pilgrim in a strange land —
and the shrine that was here has crumbled into sand.

(London, 1968)

Rain, 3 am

Recorded at Worth, Hugh Banton engineering. The song dates from '67. David Jackson played the flute in the bathroom. The tune of the chorus got cannibalised later. This was originally intended for «The Silent Corner...» I think.

Spitting drops of rain probe down
and touch my cheek,
intermingling with my tears
as I silently weep,
then the fatality of life
presses close and pokes in my eyes
and I'm cold and hungry tonight.

These great black walls of brickwork bow low
and oppress my mind
like the words of people
I thought I'd left far behind,
but presence of the words and walls
is too close and it's too clear
as the rain keeps washing through my tears,

as the rain just washes through my tears.

A frump looked down at me
and he quickly turns away.
He's hiding deep inside himself,
all a ritual of these strange plains.
There's no one else upon the street,
just this dying of drunken me,
oh yes, and a cat that's hiding in the trees,
and a cat that's hiding in the trees.

My memory stretches back
— as I continue to cry —
to places where I went wrong,
although I still don't know quite why.
The plashing neonsign perclaims:
all is spoiled where the human lives
and in the darkness no-one forgives,
and in the darkness no-one forgives.

Now And Forever

*On «II sole nella poggia» by Alice; words and music
by pH 1989*

At first sight, helplessly falling,
all at once, lighter than air.
Feels just like, I've known you always
and now it starts,
Now and Forever's begun.

You are the one I've been waiting for so long.

Now, suddenly, everything's shining,
now, suddenly, everything's clear.
Here you are, so close beside me
and now you're come,
Now and Forever's begun.

You are the one I've been waiting for so long.

At first sight, helplessly falling,
all at once, lighter than air.

Suddenly, synchronuous heartbeats
and now it starts,
Now and Forever, Now and Forever,
now our Forever's begun,
now our Forever's begun.

There's No Time Like The Present (Unless Perhaps It's Yesterday)

*On «Democracy» by Chris Judge Smith; words and
music by P.H. and C.J.S. 1973*

There's got to be some change made,
There's got to be some plans.
If you won't build me a machine,
I'll do it with my hands.
I've said my piece, I can't waste time.
I've other work to do,
But don't think I'm enjoying this,
I'm doing it for you.

Get up and pack your suitcase, girl
And meet me at the station.
With things so bad, I've organized
Our own evacuation.
I can't talk now, I have to split,
There's no time on the meter.
I hope she comes, but as they say
If you can't join her, beat her.

CHORUS:

There's no time like the present,
Unless perhaps it's yesterday.
The future looks unpleasant,
So let's get in tomorrow's way.
Please, please don't miss the ride.

The Minister of Culture
Has really got us in his sights.
He sent a robot vulture
That circles round the house at night.
It's amplifiers quivering,
Playing repeats of the J.Y.Prog.,

Piping Eagle through the central heating
And Donny up the bog.

REPEAT CHORUS.

We better shift ourselves,
It might not be too late.
We've a snowflake's chance in hell
If we hesitate.
The net is growing tighter.
Gonna move to Hindustan.
They won't shoot me, I'm a writer,
Join me when you can.

REPEAT CHORUS.

Disengage

*On «Exposure» by Robert Fripp; vocals: P.H.; words:
Joanna Walton; music: Fripp/Hamill*

Mrs Marion is strict with her servant
Behind locked doors over coffee they speak
They speak to my sister my parents
And I'm trying hard not to shriek
Disengage
Disengage
Disengage

She decodes my secrets my fragments
I'd create any betrayal for their sake
She asks me to wait in the hallway
Where I'm doing my best not to shake
Disengage
Disengage
Disengage

Muttering words to her for convenience
I start to head for the door
Mrs Marion screams over my shoulder
Walking out's just another metaphor

Chicago

On «Exposure» by Robert Fripp; vocals: P.H.; words: Joanna Walton; music: Fripp/Hall

I smile like Chicago
She laughs like the breeze
I try so hard to charm her
With minor mysteries
I collide with her softness
With whispers and pleas
Echoes of the movements
Delicate obscenties

It's a one quarter rain dance
Half of it's prayer
It's a simplest romance
Rattles high in the air
She's the gentlest pretender
I'm a clown on a spree
Still it's sweet to remember
The way it might be

I smile like Chicago

I May Not Have Enough Of Me But I've Had Enough Of You

On «Exposure» by Robert Fripp; vocals: P.H. and Terre Roche; words: Joanna Walton; music: Fripp

That is the way it is because it is that way
It is that way in that it is the way it is
In the way that it is that way that is the way it is
In the way that that is the way that is the way it is that is it is the way
Or, that it is that way is the way it is
The way it is that is the way it is
In that it is the way it is is because it is that way
Or that it is the way that it is is the way that it is that
That is the way that it is the way that it is is the way that it is that way

I may not have enough of me but I've had enough of you

The Liquidator

On «Time Vaults»

I read the news, in a paper
No flowers please, donations to charity
Like the N.S.P.C.V.d.G.G.
Just send the money to Guy and Hugh and David and me.
It's a joke, there is no hope left, who ever might disagree
Tell me that you're seen the worst, dish me the dirt
Go on and rip the back right off my shirt!
Tell me how I hate Hugh Banton
Tell us that the bank account is zero ant that anyway
There's no-one left to play to, oh well, there you go.

Are we ever going to get this act together on time?
It's been totally screwed up and I really just don't know
Is there any way of keeping a clean feed line?
Its out of the question, when the triple distortion booster's blown
Jackson, please! What's matter man?
You're freaking me out you know
Only playing happy families, maybe playing different tunes
Always playing too hard, too fast, too soon!
Waiting for our fate to take us
Waiting for liquidator
Caught in colour by the paper in the middle of a show
Waiting for our fate to take us
Waiting for liquidator
The only news is bad news
When the only story is making up or carrying on.