

ELEVEN

(2012)



To You.

If You Think *You* Are You

Then It Isn't You

We Both Know You Don't Think Like That

“History is a set of lies that people have agreed upon”

Napoleon Bonaparte

“I've never tried to block out the memories of the past, even though some are painful. I don't understand people who hide from their past. Everything you live through helps to make you the person you are now.”

Sophia Loren

“How the ambition to write free verse obsesses young brains with a passion for risks! It has all the fervour of a touching illusion. One can only smile at their deviations.”

Paul Verlaine – *Épigrammes*, (1894)

“We've become a nation of con men, living by selling double glazing to each other”

Fred Dibnah

“You stupid fucking cunt. You, Williamson, I'm talking to you, shithead. You just cost me \$6,000. Six thousand dollars, and one Cadillac. That's right. What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it, asshole? You're fucking shit. Where did you learn your trade, you stupid fucking cunt, you idiot? Who ever told you that you could work with men? Oh, I'm gonna have your job, shithead.”

Richard Roma - *GlengarryGlenRoss*

I've just got back in from wandering the streets all day  
 trying as much as I can to find some empathy, somehow  
 but instead walk in negative ways, black without reason,  
 swaggering hollow structure in nice fitting trousers, bouncing off  
     coats,  
 mixing into the city so much, to go as far as to say I AM COLOUR,  
 mixing into brown mulch like paintbrush water poured down the  
     drain.

Sometimes I think a city is a big video of a metronome swinging  
     silently  
 in the clouds, in the drains, in the telephone poles, in the traffic  
     lights,  
 in the ambulance sirens, in the bulging pigeon livers, in the ever  
     slowing  
 & quickening of river silt & so on & so forth again  
 until the front, then back of your door.

Oh but what a terrible place to start. I do apologise. Would you  
     prefer  
 Dear Fuckface, how are you? I hope you are well?  
 How is the  
     education/job/wife/pet/husband/house/business/greenho  
     use going?  
 I do HOPE it is all going like an appropriately put simile that isn't  
     going to make either of us feel stupid, inferior or  
     embarrassed.

& Me? I hear you ask in my imagination. Well personally I've  
     resigned myself from any point of worthwhile existence to  
     the point where I can no longer live, because the fatigue of  
     going to sleep & the fatigue of waking up have become  
     unsustainable. I'm sure you'll be glad to know.

So have we done that bit then?  
Can we leave the rest to the internet?  
All the small things to all the small people?

So I'm sorry if this is too forward  
I know I have been distant of late.  
Plus we both know we have never been as close as we possibly  
could.  
Even though, I do love you.  
& no, maybe we weren't too young, too incapable to love.

The reason for me saying that is two days ago  
I saw a man save a little boy from being hit by a car & got hit  
himself.  
Afterwards, the little boy looked like he had the fear of the entire  
world in his eyes.  
He was stone stiff, like he had just been dipped in liquid Nitrogen.  
Then his eyes welled, his lips quivered, I thought he was thawing  
out  
& he ran crying to his mother like it was his first betrayal.

Well, you know why I am saying this, you of all people should  
know.

John Wayne said "Never apologise, It's a weakness"

& I'm John Way...

No, of course not. But it has to be said, a lot of dreams are follies  
& education is relative.  
& everyone has to come to terms with what happened,  
then not why, but how. Never why, how could anyone?

If I'm off soon I should really finish this poem. It is as usual  
a girl, a distraction, a certain aesthetic that starts a subtle flight,  
human window of imagination,  
endlessly waking up in digress, your arms stretched upwards,  
teeth inviting themselves into shoulders, pure time of nails down  
back  
that passes as a goodbye in a continental coach station.

How will we survive the coming years on just call centre doodles,  
coincidences & nothing  
but post-modern culture, which despite our best efforts,  
one day, will infiltrate our poetry. Across the room,  
your pupils,  
want the truth, reciprocal what ifs & an afternoon to waste  
away, as everything melts in degrees.

This is all we need to let ourselves be artistic, recording,  
translating  
until we have nothing left within us, hollow as wings & then  
the real work can begin.

The day you realised that 24 hour rolling news slips away  
     worthlessly,  
 Lovely into our minds. So where  
 Is our redemption?           Counterbalancing our ego & image  
 With happiness. This brash mind living has no time for useless  
     beauty.  
 I let you go too quickly but I was tired from the fight.  
 Alone in miscellaneous melancholy in why? drizzle. In why?  
     anything air.  
 This as you noticed, is the convention for such young ambitious  
     writers.

*but for once I was touched by something*

Was it the fireworks from the top of Trenchard Street Car Park?  
 The time when our taxi ran someone over on Gloucester Rd &  
     everyone argued?  
 Or when you, sat in the corner of The Bell, wearing someone else's  
     woollen jumper described St Elmo's Fire as Jehovah's  
     nephew holding a sparkler whilst trying to swing over the  
     top bar of the park swings?



It was always too good to be true.  
It spat me out into shallow appreciation of solitude.  
When the view is fog beyond ten feet. When the rain

Feeds the burnt land, flowers suspend on the heather  
Like lonesome life-savers when there is not a ship  
Or even a ripple to be seen.

I've lost the map & forgot the way to our place that glows.  
We are getting more like bees every day. So close  
To the grinding wheel you can taste the nervous plastic.

Just in case, you wanted to know, I am still holding onto our  
    sunlight,  
Lying out on a lawn in a Classic English Novel. Where I can see  
    maidens  
Flowing at 110mph in between rows of pomegranate trees.

I spent last week filling out an application form to have a painting  
shown at the National Portrait Gallery.

It is an unofficial sitting for one of the assembly robots at the  
Nissan factory in Sunderland. To be honest,  
between you & me

It wasn't the symbol of 21st century love I hoped it would be.

Last week I couldn't sleep. I laid there thinking about that night,  
When I slipped away from newspaper women,  
To see you.

A woman's eye, not just any, but your eye. Frost. My mind is  
constantly wandering

Or my body is constantly stuck. Everyone is a stick figure. One day  
the power will all run out.

Those drum kicks feel forced. Smart Alecs get chest pain too.

Look, I can deal with not being allowed to smoke in pubs &  
restaurants but I think the same should be applied to people  
who read the Daily Mail in public & confess their views. I am  
going to conduct a study into the effects of second hand  
sensationalised right wing vitriol on bystanders.

The details of a metaphor are irrelevant. Really we should be  
holding inquiries as whether metaphor is acceptable in  
contemporary society.

John Nettles' two main characters - Bergerac & Barnaby - Are  
probably the most compassionate, loving, rebellious  
example of an on-screen male in the last 25 years. How much  
of Middle England swoons when DCI Barnaby gets his man,  
he always gets his man. This is our decay. This is proof of our  
failure.

Headline writers love a collapse.

I didn't want to write you poetry but your body helped me  
abandon salvation.

But your loneliness was contagious.

But the steeple chimney stacks, the gas works, the cricket fields,  
the besieged skyline above Bradford.

Across the road, sequestered in media, an Englishman manages to  
smile sincerely.



The whole domestic thing got snubbed out  
under damp tea towels & days tumbling around stupor caskets  
as slow spring light fell on all the children outside, playing Tig in  
the garden.

I don't want to compare her with such a thing as light  
but how do we know when it turns up & is no longer leaving,  
as light happens after you realise it. All light is late.

I was terrified as well. I wish we could forget about it. Move on.  
But that would be forgetting ourselves, resisting humanity,  
which I doubt either of us, even us, could do.

This is the thing with us lot these days, dolled up facebooks  
cantering through the internet with the dress sense of a recent  
divorce,  
benign answers in flashes, no revolution. But that is free will I  
guess.

She saved me from Ketamine & Alcohol & it would be a stain  
on her love if I crumbled now without her. As if her love was only  
temporal, physical  
& died when we died. That is impossible.

You exist under so much conscience. So much denial. So many  
bells & incense.  
That if I heard your lilt, or felt even a molecule of a nail against a  
hair again,  
It would be near dark & closing.

But now it is compulsory life again. Trapped. Drowning.  
I wake up two days later on the kitchen floor with 3 cigarette  
burns on my arm.  
A hopeless pathetic attempt at Orion.

I sound like a child  
 I sound like a poet who is bored with synthesis  
 I sound like a poet is who on the verge of losing the passion of  
     youth, slipping into ordinary living  
     & creative writing courses

The things we do whilst alone, or when no-one is watching,  
 These are the imperfect, the most honest, & therefore the most  
     beautiful sins we have.  
 This is what makes us.

Personality moves in the wind which ironically is nowt like flying.  
 Open windows slam doors with through draft.

Hiding from the world instead of being one of these *Masters of the Universe*.  
 I could have made our fortune short selling.

Your shoebox of tax receipts was left open & the wind swept them  
     off  
 Into a fairly successful debut slim volume.

It gives all & takes all. From tender eardrums. From fallen  
     meteorites.  
 From Santa's photo collection of vintage bondage.  
 The day Jehovah said "Yes." "I will, Yes". & yet & yet.

I had to grab you before the shock set in.

Constellations gallop as if time is being shuck out of its bottle

The Community Support Officer at my door has a glass eye  
     balanced in his head.

The doctor says there is a pill for every ill  
 & yet & yet

You are not the best kisser I've ever had.

Toothless war veteran & his pack horse ascend Haworth Moor  
 The former pit horse was this man's only friend.  
 But really, the horse misses the camaraderie of drinking water at  
 the coalface.

When the sun slipped into primary colours between blinkers &  
 soot,

It was a long way from home for both of them. They walk  
 In ancient footsteps, from Neolithic times when Britain was a  
 forest.

They pause at dry-stone walls to witness sun-set & sun-rise,  
 To see the gift of green workspace light turn  
 To buzzed breath of cold night air. Some days he takes off the bells  
 & blinkers

So as not to be reminded of any movement.

It is a town with no bookshops, railings around the cenotaph  
 & the old women in the Arndale centre

Talk in the language they knew as little girls.

One would expect a town like this to be clean & orderly  
 But the pavements are ingrained with chewing gum,  
 Once enjoyed cigarette butts & unexplainable splat puddles of  
 reconstituted egg.

It seems at times, more like the bottom of a cage than it does town.  
 But it is not how some people would carelessly describe, a shit-  
 hole.

More; pointless.

It drags you backwards until eventually you believe that nothing is  
 important,

That no time should be spent creating,  
 Because everything seems to have a sense of finality already,  
 Traced out in the older generation, you see the paths already  
 marked out.

When I was a boy, there used to be a McDonalds here  
 & they would queue right out the door onto Cavendish Street at  
 dinnertimes.

Now half the shops are empty & the other half has half empty  
 shelves.

But there is a Kadampa Centre opposite the bus station  
 So maybe the shelves are everything & us. But either way it all  
 seems compulsory.

A few months ago I asked two people the same question.  
*What becomes of a man who is neither educated or what you would  
call a 'working man'?*

In a few minutes Jamie Harrison replied, 'Sales'.

Mike Palkowski replied the next day, 'Egotistical Suicide'.

It confirmed a fear like a prophecy & they were both right.

This is getting harder. I'm getting close to being too paranoid to  
write.

I bet bad salesman have terrible wives:

So When I'm suited gelled rolling through new build estates in an  
Audi with a babyseat in the back elbow deep in sales forecasts  
bottled lager & the love of a new tie

When I look into people's eyes & only see leading points U.S.Ps &  
margins

When I'm at Office Christmas parties drinking boxed wine from a  
white plastic cup watching Jane from accounts & Martin from  
I.T. dance to commercialised dubstep, top button undone, tie  
loosened & her Clarks shoes slipped off by the filing cabinet

When I'm ironing shirts before getting up at half six because I  
have to be in Kidderminster at 9 to pay the mortgage for good  
catchment area postcode

When I have to worry about Medical insurance because the NHS is  
no longer social

When I'm a member of the National Trust, Neighbourhood Watch  
& the local parish council

When Allen Ginsberg's *obscene* odes have to be put away when the  
in-laws come round

When Frida Kahlo becomes nothing but an answer in a game of  
Trivial Pursuit

When my house is now full of Clean Happy Super Sober people in  
my garden because it appears I'm having a b.b.q & I don't  
really know anyone apart from their job titles, car models &  
there is a dishwasher in the kitchen

When the environment can swivel because oil is fun oil is food oil  
is paradise, buy all the latest gadgets, import non seasonal  
food build bonfires from the entire future human races DNA &  
light it with the taper of my rolled up degree certificate.

When I don't sing in the shower or draw in the steam algebra love  
poems or space helmets

When I don't dance to Hard Bop on my own

When I'm lying in bed waiting for alarm clocks & muesli to

become traffic when motorways become ley lines parallel to  
chemical trails streaming across innocent once thought  
invincible jet sky & I don't think to look for stars  
When I go on family trips to rotten cotton shopping centres & the  
Arctic Ocean is black as space  
When I pour concrete over flowerbeds  
When I desire page 3 girls, Princess Diana & own military history  
books of the British Empire.  
When I'm saturated with information, blank spirit analytic & my  
disembodied poetics have been replaced with a disembodied  
smile.



Remember that game we used to play together. Get the kind of  
 drunk  
 Where you forget you're even drunk, with our thumbs move from  
 shut eye  
 To the unshut eye, trying to see the invisible hand  
 Moving benevolently, efficient beyond  
 Our wildest dreams.

These various pharmaceuticals are the value  
 Of a real hard day's work. There is no such thing as light  
 & elegance in winter workshop piece work, fingerless gloves,  
 super glued cuts.

A fifty pence piece falls from a trouser pocket, rolling,  
 Slipping horizontal into back of sofa as a megalith of Valium  
 Gathers the vanishing point of a room of people, burning into  
 phantoms,  
 To haunt themselves, to lose a soul & go looking for another, to  
 leave I.O.U.s  
 For accomplishment, living through a time slashed & cut out.

What happens when you don't want anything from life? & I mean  
 nothing. Even you. Even us  
 Passing micro-waved veg, all the colours of a rainbow.  
 I'll always remember how the table would be set, as though  
 nobody had told you  
 That today, the Queen wasn't going to be able to join us.  
 Sometimes that silence felt like a sermon from a sage  
 Caught inside a tube of Deep Heat.

As we hung out white bedsheets in the hard air I explain what  
 wind means to a Yorkshireman,  
 The washing line fell peacefully across your palm, such a strange  
 smile.

dreams sit dazed half real from falling through miles of light into  
fractals of lily-pads. Your breath is the lifting off of a bottle  
rocket. Your thumb & index finger is a hundredweight tying  
down a hot air balloon.

the line of trees, London Plane I think, on your street look mirror  
like playing infinity with perspective, pushing roots up  
through the tarmac which looks such a mess, dampening the  
Sky+ reception

when Monday morning comes, the elusive icons diet on unfinished  
dreams. You say volatile living is good for poetry, I couldn't  
possibly comment, snooze button clicks, eyelashes & drool

you jab me in the side accidentally whilst asleep like a centurion  
reaching to prove a point. Buoyant amphetamine girls put  
down fags on fragmented reality skin when our walls  
weren't cubicles, council tax but stories of our whispered  
threats & promises

you are now more than a gorge away & my wallet & my brain is  
emptied out on the bedside table, which looked pretty good  
once, in high window light & Georgian facades; could cast a  
pretty good silhouette for an economist. Your eyes grew big  
as the moon when we went out to earn our imaginations

I don't go out much anymore. You probably can't tell.

But these poems are the opposite of a suicide note.

These are post-depressive episode notes

Sometimes I am so fucking clever I don't know why I even bother

The Dadaists were right, write nothing. I was wrong, not  
     everything  
 Has an internal beauty. I think you were right, but I don't know.  
 A lot of writing is about writing. When does the real poem start?  
 When does the real poet emerge? On the days  
 I try to write *contemporary poetry* I usually start by reading Luke  
     Kennard.  
 & if I'm paying close enough attention, I don't write.  
 Other days I write memories, through a mangle, condensed,  
     difficult,  
 Slashed like a player piano music score.  
 In every spare moment I am jealous of the insight & compassion  
 Of Men's Magazines; very neurotic, capped a hand to the ear for  
     the deaf.  
 I am hearing aid in morning dew.  
 The only girl for me, is under an Arsenic Aurora Borealis Casino  
     Hoarding, breathing  
 Everything in; the movement of light spiralling to make art  
 Seem a life sentence. Before all the fifty-odd year olds could say  
 "You've failed & you weren't even that pretty anyway."  
 Yes, you are the girl for me. There is no-one else & never can be.  
 Oh, but wait,  
 These poems aren't addressed to anyone. Does that mean you  
     don't exist?  
 Yes, that's it, that's why you're right. You are right because you  
     don't exist.

