

just off centre

scattered

it's a here a there
the elsewhere of a
never yet-to-be
a sparse space chiding me
for neglect of its ways to lostness
opening out slippage realms
to dispose of what became
an almost is
an active unbecoming
tactically disarranging
aside from all grammars
impolitely disturbing
enthraling me by default
in my own colluding

river boat shuffle

anyone can learn primary dancing
to one's own time-tune
self-taught sidestepping
confounds lonely evenings
it's an asocial grace
for the halt and maim

on the river
rigid shuffling is all the rage
the same boat came by
gramophone playing on still
they danced on with difficulty
it's hard to know why

in the lull before the calm
waltzers dripped through the gunwales
she lists neatly to starboard
easy on the tide

fixative

it's becoming a question of application
I thought thinking of something else
recognising limits as well
as the ecstasy of hair-splitting
and limit fraying
to delay the drift
momentarily
fixative for a glimpse
before the figure in the dust
is gusted away

sounding brass

tramp tramp tramp the boys are march
and the band has orders
to keep playing for the time being
if only to satisfy the curiosity of cats
funny the way they all follow the tuba player
at the parting of the ways
a lot to answer for
lessons from an early age
looking neither forward nor back
with only a sideways glance at now
surpassing himself on the nowhere road
in a resounding of his own passing
beyond all scores
leaving no marks

depth charges

fingers picking fingers' nails

'of a nervous disposition'
 disposing one's selves nervily
 one's nerves having one's many
 once too often

'all a problem of nerves'
 chasm-covering phrase
 of suspect reassurance

those little jerks surfacing
 intrusive pointers to the swirlings
 below the bottom
 where sands never settle

is there a bottom to touch?
 just plasma insoluble
 drawing one through itself
 itself through one
 coalesced immiscibles

just along the high street
 man-whole covers are raised
 releasing cloacal voices
 to remind us of floating intervals
 in the delays up ahead

unlosables

conjuring themselves up from
 a site before conjuring's inception
 lost names drift in and through
 making no demands save
 that of their own reverberation
 insistent echo of a distance
 a gap immeasurable
 blank cheque from used to to is
 crystallising all value

how precious is Lawrence Whelk
 who'll contribute to the Al Rinker memorial fund
 erect a stone to Simon Dee
 set Eamon in a diamond sea
 carillon Hilton's dismissal of The Don?

these and others
 banal sybils of the interrogative
 knowing a simple soul when they find one
 dispose themselves at will
 in the cracks without end
 pursuing their desire for immortality
 in lean times at my expense
 no charge for admission
 without credentials
 demand credit before it's due
 not so much as a knock
 knowing their rights
 all these coming untimely
 letting themselves in through
 slits in surface tension's skin
 legacies of the impossibility
 of covering up
 proof of a final irresponsibility
 each fronts an accusation lying backstage
 charging me with denying the will-less
 a capital charge in Nodland
 territory of unpurged ridicule
 where the terms suck themselves inside out

colanders double as seamless spoons
 and doctors Kildare and Findlay linger on
 after the dance has been declared null and void
 post-erotic profiles displaced by
 a writing of their sounds
 re-sounding within semiquivering tissue
 lacking the resolve to stamp out
 depth charge's afterburn
 at the surface of our unbecoming

in the intimate clouds of their dispersal
 they appear as the contrary
 in that state where all appearances
 are to the contrary

what's ahead

have you nothing longer I asked
 don't worry he replied
 this goes on and on
 looks can be deceptive

turn left at the womb
 and just keep going
 you can't miss it

in-between

What is it that gets pushed out,
 dribble-leaks off and away
 through the crevices
 of our careless chatter,
 unmindful as we are
 of the real significance of
 even Tuesday's foul weather?

A shroud of banter
 seals dis-easeful gaps
 between your turns of phrase;
 unfiltered years of incoherence
 clapped out
 pile up behind us,
 jostling reminders of speech's lostness,
 a sum of pure vacancies
 overloading memory's lost corridors.

But we still insist on the possibility
 of a broken-down sentence
 through whose apertures
 we might pass together
 adrift in the pastures of innocence.
 Or so we like to think.

light supper

Fetch the Nothingware for a change
 she said, hoping for a more general acceptance.
 It's time we had our name broadcast over the marsh.
 Already they wandered in from the flats, our guests
 wrapped in crinkly bright cellophane
 this side of severity.
 There was no need to make abstinence compulsory
 the times were not that generous
 and in the interstices between the tables
 small wedges of damp straw had been inserted
 products of a distant autumn's alien harvest.

Abandoning the lost courses with equal panache
 our anti-revellers, circumspectly, with relish
 attacked the crumbs of absence.
 It came out like a question of balance
 although that is not how it had begun:
 like making love on a dromedary,
 cutting toe nails on a tightrope,
 trimming your pocket to suit your sails.

You'd keep rubbing away at the intrusions
 each slight stroke an alteration
 of the feel and shape of the thing
 so that it never became again what it had been
 in what was called the-thing-beginning.

But this didn't seem to bother you
 you took it all in your stride
 oblivious to the whispering of the crimson peonies
 whose petals were already falling at your feet
 begging to be forgiven for departing so soon.

except that

if it flows
 too easily
 thenst
 op it
 cancel cancel
 that is
 not the way
 it is

but what is is
 referring to
 except the exception
 to all referring
 itself subdued by what
 is in itself ungraspable
 by all accounts
 in themselves
 implacably opposed
 to all op-
 posing

to allow the half-scrawled face
 emerging from the dust

to take its place alongside
 a sweet infinitely patient
 rendering - break -
 but why so easily lapse
 into the infinite
 cheap escape from
 the real perils
 of the interval
 soft knockings
 of disastrous letters
 divided continuously
 by that spit of silence

The Maybe Polka

All those remains left floating
 tritsch tratsch elements of an unfocussed farce.
 There is no coordination that pulls against the tide,
 non-lunar opposition to catatonic sprawl.
 The road menders are here
 levelling our tracks,
 grounds freed from history
 and little acquaintances.

Just occasionally mistakes are made in the proposals,
 fallen seeds split the gravel,
 our horizonless plateau plays host
 to the retreat of infertility,
 knowing that mules can't breed.
 An air of sparse gathering collects itself.

But don't let's get over hopeful.

Isn't all this too distant from the first-hand,
 the unfurled spaces between letter and thing?
 Is there a visceral lack,
 a withholding of thrust
 which ought to be signalled at that surface

where road turns into lane
 become track petering
 into the spoor of absence?
 Could this lack be made good from the mouth,
 precious vehicle of the listless?

I'm against flow in principle
 but what can stop it?
 And does the quaint assertion of 'there is no'
 pollute the project with an erect certainty
 standing surety against the defaults of doubt?
 Can we float away from the secure
 on anything other than an unanswerable question?
 Perhaps the wings of might and seem
 bear us unconditionally away from tritsch and tratsch.
 What losses might we then sustain?

And if maybe has been the place
 what happens when it turns out to be may
 to bay me even
 as may well be?
 Double-jointed break dancers spin
 beneath the subjunctive's conjunctives.
 Perhaps there is no longer suffices for us
 called not to account
 but only to guess,
 to reminisce
 in the space of non-committal,
 snared in conditions beyond the conditional
 beyond the ordinary terror
 stalking the gaps of the particular.
 We are maybe it is asserted.

Hey, let's not over-dramatise it my friend,
 don't you my friend me,
 this glib naming of terror's site
 declines into a terrorism of hype,
 the essence of our quotidian.

Don't throw away terror too soon
 you might need it later for something really big;

for that open and shut time after the epilogue
 for example
 a time already off the record
 and before the wall.
 For now though the polka continues as before.

accentuated

nothing works without the accent
 everything said is
 written with an accent
 that can't be spoken
 as it drives its wedge
 behind the throat
 the sound you see
 emerging from the sinews
 of your vision is etched
 far beyond the voice's reach
 onto the shroud
 that bears the text
 of your soul

bowing out

the insane necessity of kicking a stone loosely
 following its haphazard journey
 your career around the bowl of existence
 amuses an undefined pack of liminal watchers
 they follow with wall eyes
 the marbled surface of your crackpot itinerary
 surmising curmudgeons of the insolent
 it ill behooves they cried
 a being of distinguished lineage
 to self-destruct in front of crowds
 as big as this
 save your personalised implosion
 for the select few

chosen by random sample
 from an unidentifiable whole
 (and this a critique of set theory)
 from the front to the back
 a quiet scud across the waters
 don't choose the highest point
 on the busy bridge
 at noon on a fine day
 they don't deserve it standing as they are
 in gaunt expectation
 of an event to rock the world
 the final match-play series
 block-buster full to capacity
 nowhere else to go but down
 and out beyond the rim
 to slip past bloated regions
 through districts of iron ferns
 leading them a merry dance
 unfollowable save by those with twisted feet
 ambling on cracked ankles
 over rivet-laden roads
 below the faithful trackers
 cling to your last performance
 a show of shows
 dully illuminated
 a sudden intake of breath
 a flip
 inertly
 without colour but incandescent
 an absent purple
 returning to itself

same difference

becoming was being the same
 on this day as on the other day
 that day when it was being
 just what it was always having been
 into the time of indiffering

was it being a problem
to seem to be being indifferent
were we expecting a smallness
to intervene and to push us
towards another

or

was this something
we were having no right
to be expecting
something becoming us

was this here writing
a moving back into
a gap between two
already indistinct phases
of unbecoming
establishing a time
of collapsing into
the underside of
a certain absent seemliness
occurring through a
meandering always refusing
a willed direction

against all speed

a recovering of an openness
backed up against
a closedness
a wedge a block
a shuttering which
infinitely patient
processes us bindingly
into our necessary weave

staging the event

just so and let it alone
 or the inner workings will splay out
 no use chasing a barren hare
 so saying he moved away out of earshot
 leaving us to our own devices
 all subsequent upshots were attributed
 to his abandonment of us

the trouble with the way it's applied
 is that it always threatened
 to dispose of the work
 itself in an ungainly way
 to leave it abandoned
 on a rock of distrust
 too far from the mind to touch us
 a corner taken over by the left-overs

staging the event
 the mind suffuses the rest
 dissipating its wayward patterns
 delegating them to its alterity
 this way it finds itself
 no longer alone
 no longer in control
 it gives up will
 for conviviality and suffusion

stormy

you were standing by the gate
 absorbed by the storm
 a collapse in grey
 whose details passed you by
 you saw that sky crack and buckle
 under the wind's weight

late leap

just as the dancer
confronts the hyphen
through the spring
into another space
so the argument
goes and goes

seduced by what
to be seductive
- hyphen - opening
in the world of
the earliest things
arriving late
but still too soon

just off centre

An open centre, pushing perhaps,
no, less active,
rather absenting things,
eventualities, comings-to-be
away from its discrete edges,
apertures, the throwaways
slip through our knowing nets
loss of what binds,
forgetting of slippage,
listing lostless, footloose.

How to feel around the edges
towards the seeming centres of events.

Facing the central music
which obliterates the given,
in the middle, just there,

a flattened vortex
sucks us into the depth of its surface.

Locating the absence it must be an unfinding,
a searchless quest that in its returning
half-knowingly succumbs to the
advances of its own seductions.
In the heart it finds a delay
off-centred by nothing concrete.

In medias res

there is nothing to be found
for that centre turns out to be
just to the left of
a green spiral stem
sap sucked downwards
an odd elevation when seen from the right
an inclination that declines
our polite overtures
lost reverberations
stickily overcome.

What if the centre sleeping slipped
losing itself to its endless limits?

persistent gatherers

To begin with points of return
even though we know only unparcelled spaces:
that could have been a realistic want.
Yet somehow our evasions
discourage such particulars
in favour of the scattering of discrepancies.
Mostly, and here the writing grows fainter,
we are to be found gathering limpets
from some long-abandoned hull,
pretending that recovery
feeds our self-esteem.

But the promise of perseverance grows thin,
 is extruded into a failed hunch.
 Egged on to submit to tomorrow's blue,
 persistence waters itself down.
 A last chance to join the ranks of the amnesiacs
 swinging their legs over the parapet
 as the price of futures drifts slowly past.

beach with *disjecta*

Here we are in a time of heres and theres
 surface scratched by puny messages
 unscrambled by chattering machines.
 A grooveless record winds out its stringy spiral
 as we lie back picking at the cherries
 in irritated contentment.

On the other side, just down wind,
 a this and a that add to the swelling chorus of doubts,
disjecta membra, apparently
 dissatisfied with their lot.
 Visiting scholars pace back and forth
 between the stones
 reluctantly clarifying
 for a moment
 the Biggest Things,
 while the promenade,
 underpinned by the microbes of time,
 swells, heaves, bucks, subsides
 and, forgetting its duty to the town council,
 tosses the amusement arcade into the sea.

At fathom five the asteroids lie
 green reminders of endless dripping weekends,
 time sliced and dealt
 by the depressions of countless shiny buttons.
 And here, under the pier
 a mechanical shovel,
 there, a dragged rake

overturn the beach.
Tomorrow's attendants, floored
by the clean sweep,
adopt a wait and see policy,
hoping their new smart cards will
clarify the grounds for choosing
between one thing and another.
