

ruffled only by nagging doubts

foreboding

wearing full battle regalia
 with lapel badges of thrummed copper
 life members of the Slow Club
 sipping highballs through rusty straws
 shifted uneasily in their rockers
 their true colours emerging only at sundown
 as early possums tripped out of the gingko grove
 horsing about 'neath the stilted terrace

without warning the aspen-stake verandah began to tremble
 folding his napkin with studied panache
 the dumb waiter was the last to slip away.

left-overs

heading for the beyond of its horizon
 the art-thing searches for the I-word's
 disappeared referent
 knowing full well
 at the end of its day
 it always comes to nothing

sometimes there are by-products
 cast-offs left at its wayside
 we who follow in its wake
 have to make do
 with these 'instead ofs'
 some fructify
 slowly opening us
 to infinitely vague dispersal

scattering us across continents
leaving us worlds apart

driven on by the hidden storm
we are left with faintly glowing remnants
last chance way markers
on our unmarked path
offering us some bearings
they will not be understood

as such

the as such
such as it is
has one need
only to be paid
its due attention
at whatever cost
such is life
as ever was
but never is

slit

down all these years
we thought we were
narrowing it down
to nothing but itself
when all that time
it was giving notice
that it only required
widening up

we must take note
before sinking without trace
through the slit

no job

given time
(it was no present)
we may be brought
round to seeing
this all we've got
must be given back
returned to sender
without remainder
and that right soon

it's not a job
for the single-minded

all the difference in the world

for a time I wondered
about the difference
between brawn and brains
brawn seeming steadfast
while brains were an absence
brawn being available over the counter
jelly-set for low teas
brains were a delicacy
reserved for festivals and off-days

mostly it was brawn though
still is
they say

you can rely on it
feelings don't come into it

to this

the thing is
what if this
thing is more
of a what if
than a thing
that thises

to be going on with

as far as I'm aware
is as much as I can manage

it's less than I'd like
but more than I deserve

I'll keep up with it
for as long as possible

deceptive appearances

appearing to appear before us
infinity demands that we disappear
making sure our disappearance
coincides with its own appearance
being all around us

we never get away from it
even though it's not there

much like ourselves

case to answer

if what is there for all to see
is already torn to shreds
for no reason
what will become of what's left?
Is there a case to answer?
After all there's no
overall viewing spot
except from the edge
of this mottled stone.

way out

by all means live out there
in the back of beyond
if that's your heart's desire
but you'll find it's still
too near to here
for your taste

of course I can't
stomach it myself

contracting

the deal's subject to contract
 but meanwhile keeps on contracting
 by the time the law's finished
 wrapping it up
 the parties will be over
 there'll be no completion date

ins and outs

there'll come a time when
 or so we like to think
 but nothing can convince me
 that time itself
 comes separately
 as some thing
 recognisably alone -
 more likely it's our
 liking to think
 that just goes past
 without return
 without ever quite
 putting a time
 on one side
 to see ourselves
 in passing itself
 before the final sun sets

we have no capital
 but let's see what
 we can get out of it
 if we can find the in of it

hell to pay

count me out
 by all means
 I'm no longer in the reckoning
 for good measure
 which knows a thing or two
 about generous portions
 and off-shore funding

there'll be hell to pay
 if I fail to turn up
 for the countdown

before I could withdraw
 I'd drawn the short straw
 they're demanding compensation.

speck

you've got a point there,
 a speck of immensity far below,
 way beneath your dignity –
 supporting unseeable

without a wordless wrenching return
 a floating plunge - off and down
 drawing every last resource
 casting you delirious
 onto time's bank

it cannot ever be released
 given back to itself
 on your behalf

to give it a chance
 you must forever look the other way
 when - at last - coming into light's heat

throwing a shadow's hint on the surface
 it evaporates
 you'll be somewhere else
 keeping a new appointment
 without realising it

self-multiplier

putting everything into the singular
 seems to be the goal
 even though plurality
 is all we've got going for us -
 how come we're leaving it so late
 to spread the word
 when all it takes
 to talk up and open out
 our unquenchable multiplicity
 is a minute deviation
 from the one track

book-burning is no answer
 but let's begin by incinerating
 all cloning manuals
 all systemic overviews

after that we'll be able to take
 what's coming to us
 however different it turns out to be

this very day

these days
 seems like a good way
 to gather a now-here
 between them-there and us
 but I'm never sure

how and where
 it opens the space
 unrolls the line
 between these and those

haven't these days
 been forever infiltrated
 intimately saturated
 by all those other days
 making every today
 a swollen perfect time-sponge

after all
 (and there's the rub
 twixt the after and the all)
 this very all
 is just one
 giant yesterday
 always with us
 but beyond our ken
 and yet as if
 it were yesterday
 I remember all
 that's still before us.

scabbed mapless

we're none the wiser
 for all that
 and it's left us
 in the thick of things
 bemoaning the fact that
 slipping into the gaps
 between elementary particles
 where the final honey
 binds them into
 a ludic cake
 no longer seems

so alluring now
 we've found the formula
 for the taste of small pleasures
 the liking to think
 it's leading us
 past our neighbours
 out of our street
 to an eventual
 mapless elsewhere
 scrub as we may
 our surface remains
 scarred by the scabs
 of sad mistakes

roundabout

take it from me
 it's my only gift:
 there'll be no great escape.

the sun's last laugh
 its little secret
 written on charged filaments
 seared into the earth
 some sun days since
 beyond every lab's reach
 but visible to naked poets
 and pregnant women,
 tells how it's left us
 just enough matter
 to keep going round
 and round
 right here alone
 for ever
 our very own ever
 having nothing to do with
 the pure hardness
 of the only other forever
 to which nothing can belong

never forget
we're soft in the head

all ears

under orders
to stop at nothing
he makes a way
for all obstacles
falling before him
just to hear them
vibrate resoundingly
around routine's bent walls

stumbling across the open mindfeels
somewhere between now and then
he'll catch faint stirrings
of the winds of change
he's all ears
but hasn't an inkling
as yet

twisty hub

if only we could learn
to spend our gap year
in violent contemplation
of things that don't work
we'd soon be on the mend
always provided time
didn't do the dirty on us
by drifting off through
oblivion's static fields
leaving us stranded
repair kitless

beyond the city's limits

a wanderer's licence
is hard to come by
following climactic changes
to restraints of inner trade
at things' twisty hub
barely a block from here

after forging your own
make for the hills
before the advertised deadline.

the other side of the fence

'us 've bin penned in this durned sheddin ring
since first light - longin for tut out-run

still no sign o't gaffer
an' his lads wi' tut shears
us 're pencilled in for eight
but tut sun's already over tut 'ill

if us had bits to champ at
that's what wid 'uv bin doin
but it's never bin part of our kulcha
abituated as we are to millin around
an' tut permanent chompin

if summat dunt appen soon
appen us'll ave to call it a day
move tut pastures new
or thurabowts

trouble is they've never quite
given us tut run o't place
tut rub o't green like'

dry stone walls came and went

no sprigs of greener grass grow
 on the fence's other side
 occupied as it is by a grey fieldful of steel pens
 now every act's an enclosure act
 subjecting these fields to endless shrinkage

were there a cliff hard by
 lemming it might be tempting
 but the coast is clear of all steepness
 thanks to the landfill programme
 and verticality's self-erosion
 they've disappeared the open

'ne'er mind, us've enough
 to be gettin on wit fer now
 an' tut dip notwithstandin
 us 're still warm an' nice
 in us woolly bits likely'

stuff

you can't help liking stuff
 holding that swarming throng of countless differences
 clinging to each other courtesy only
 of its tautly loose enfolding

full to bursting
 offering without effort apparent
 the promise of permanent excess
 as in the present-stuffed parcel
 itchy backs of horse-hair chairs

yet standing almost next to nothing
 a great withholder
 it gives little away
 except sexually speaking
 where it tells precisely
 what is pulled off

after all the very thing-stuff
is exactly what we've never found
just like us
it's all awry

out of the blue

all of a sudden
you'll be bound to say it
sooner or later
won't be able to stop yourself
out it will pop
beating you to the draw
performing itself
before your very ears
without any help
from your best intentions
that's the way
they take place
those very words
and every word is a very word
giving the much of things
all at once in no time at all
before absolute speed
has even left the starting block

any rate

at any rate
goes too far
too fast for
our peace of mind
leaving all to
the energy of chance
instead of giving

way to thought's
 precise velocity
 as it gets to grips
 with the things
 at greatest risk
 to moving itself

its a case of

it's a case of
 tries at a throw
 to frame what's near to hand
 whose doubtful edges
 must be pinned
 down and labelled
 according to contours
 passed on to us
 by pastologists among whom
 we are all proud
 to count ourselves
 as paid-up fully qualified
 time-served members

trouble is - everything
 approaching our by now
 bravura certainties
 arrives in an endless
 train permeated by
 off-beat associations
 fractal back-flips
 and gaps between carriages
 leaving our case-full of cases
 in utter disarray
 quite unable to cope
 with becoming's multiplier effect

we can only keep on trying in the hope
 that the time will come when

early on

a star is still
 born at the time
 it fails to light
 the night sky

at first

at first
 is supposed to mark the spot
 where starting
 begins to
 take the place
 of what went
 on before
 this new thing
 got into
 its stride

just as well
 we're never quite
 able to fix
 the gap 'twixt an
 at
 that names a
 where
 and
 first
 which says when
 it all kicked
 off and away

otherwise
 we'd end up
 losing

sight of
 the way
 how
 gives us the only
 at first
 we'll ever have
 but absolutely
 surreptitiously
 now I come
 to think of it
 at last

only just in time

If only we knew before the event
 how to have the time of our lives.
 With tool-making become our final fine art
 you'd think we could make it happen
 with a flicked switch,
 at a dropped hat
 through avid machines
 geared entirely to placing
 things so precisely at
 our beck and call
 that all gaps between this pulse,
 that stone and those wandering minstrels
 would be abolished forever.

Though as things stand
 over here just now,
 hypno'd by our modelled reflections
 in the flash surfaces of those
 instruments for the very fast,
 the most we can manage
 is a fumbled reaching out
 hoping to catch our jolting image
 already disappearing in thin air
 before our very eyes can realise.

We are only just in time,
 a fading beyond our pathetic grasp
 at all-out speed.
 World records are always up ahead.
 If only we could bend over backwards.
 Much of it is behind us.

...ruffled only by nagging doubts...

By the time you get this
 I shall long since have disappeared
 from view, memory, thought, tongue.
 Beer cans strewn across my once velvet lawns
 will form the backcloth for original forms
 of diurnal beach parties
 put in place in time
 for the long-awaited dawn
 of the new season whose unprintable fixture list
 will not be delivered till after the event.
 It's to be put on ice
 till the rising waters reach
 the plimsoll line of ill-becoming
 in the drowned valley
 enclosing the village of the dammed
 whose kirk's twisted pointed steeple
 now barely visible
 still poses the faintest of threats
 to pleasure boaters, back floaters and
 mind sweepers drifting beyond aim
 across a surface ruffled only
 by nagging doubts about the gap
 between the singularity
 of that stale crumb's vague scratchiness
 and the map we followed quite by chance
 bringing us to this point of no return.

completely elided

I'm not at liberty
to disclose the whereabouts
of the home of silence.
Sworn to secrecy
by the whisper patrol
I was allowed to pass
gagless, trusted,
beyond din's bounds.

Accustomed to being all ears,
the demand to leave them,
guarantors against failure of nerve,
left me groping for bearings.
Proceeding by fits and starts
I stumbled past remnants
of white noise still hovering
without hope just above the surface.
Their time was up.
From here on not even an echo
of the old life made itself felt.
Whisked in no time at all
beyond comprehension into a zone
where static floating was commonplace,
in suspension, rhythmless,
I fed off the thoughtless virtues
of the very vague.
Here it was that the non-specifics of quietness
rising to its purest concretion
hit me with full force between the eyes.
My elision was complete.

what's to do

Being a single minded simpleton with absolute powers
To Do directs us, finally will-less,
down its multiple diversions

off the highway of broad intent
 depositing a grain of unseeable repetition,
 essence of the eternal again,
 in each fraction of our moving.
 Crystal of pure separation,
 a single fold turning in on itself,
 this great less, joker of passing time,
 diminisher of becoming,
 carries us off and away,
 puts us on the spot of not-ours,
 beyond comprehension's knowing glance.
 Never quite realising it
 we become its sole event.
 We are occurred.

...too soon to say...

Penned in, spot-rooted,
 waiting for the through-draft,
 I was given the run of the dust, briefly -
 just long enough to glimpse
 dancers of the other waltz,
 dervishes to a woman,
 swept up in their own typhoon,
 out-whirl time's hub.

Giving myself up on medical grounds
 to their summon-sucking siren pulse
 I was flung far beyond their teetering ambience
 clean through to a clear solution
 where infinite suspension was all the rage.
 Following a full physical
 I received a new prescription;
 three times daily before meals
 make two last ditch attempts.
 I've been on it for years,
 but it's too soon to say.

applications invited

As after-effects of uncertainty
we appear unlikely candidates
for posts only advertised within
an inner sanctum devoted to concealment.
Selections are made endlessly but
word never gets out.
Yet we keep on applying,
firing off our shots in the dark
in hope of meeting specifications
without precedent, beyond all specifics;
make sure you write in leaden prose
on crisp sheets of baked tar,
it's the officially sanctioned medium.
Send it in an unsealed cardboard coffin
marked 'not yet' to the address below.

There's no closing date but
pro formas should be in by now
if you're to be in with a chance
of making it to the longest short list
in the known world as it undergoes
continuous up-dating in the light
of new conditions appearing without warning
on the western fringes
due to technical glitches in transmission.
The law of uneven development applies
although the legal position is tricky.
You may not hear by return
but you will be seen at some stage
though it may be by an anonymous clerk
whose expression never changes between events.

If you're called at short notice
take heart, natural justice invariably applies
retrospectively in cases of dispute.
Try and pick up some gibberish
before attending, interviews are conducted
in a doubled hutch by gibbons
operating the lower echelon

and trained to talk at a hat's drop.
 Many have been dropped
 but few are chosen for their style
 let alone their heat-retention properties,
 felt and fedora notwithstanding.
 The race is to the bald
 at heart and in mind.
 On arrival leave your jacket
 neatly folded on the breeze-block wall,
 depositing knapsack, hat and horn
 in the receptacle under the hedge.
 A brief rendition of 'On With The Motley'
 may help your case.

a sorta sorter

Approaching the beginning
 from the edge of stuff
 without looking down and out
 I cannot sort the stones
 into the right piles.
 Remaining fully beyond arm's length
 they refuse to fall into place
 before my eyes can verify
 how what matters is given
 in a nutshell enclosing
 the hidden terms of a deal
 I have yet to read
 let alone sign.

After this brush with the law
 of brushing up against
 the cheek of it
 I am found wanting
 by the hung jury
 on the precious little evidence
 available to the few sifters
 assigned to this lowly winnowing.
 Cheryl says I must be mad

to spend my days on all this.
 Darren's inclined to agree.
 As usual I'm not so sure,
 but I go on with it
 in any case
 in every case
 in the light of what's begun
 to happen to the surrounding dust.

'round midnight

before the spectrum
 night gardening begets unknowable colours
 black is the ground
 against which blind cherries sing
 turmoil's rule guarantees
 fruitful seething
 sempiternal return

encinctured

wrapped in a theory of everything
 believing there to be a nub
 at the hub of turmoil's incessance
 we gear our lot to a driven charge
 down into the depths

surface smashers to a person
 we aim to reach a core
 a wanted fixable ground
 seemingly at our fingertips
 but always slightly deeper
 just ahead out of reach
 on which we could plant
 our airy castles
 ether towers

a somewhere we could name
 as 'Here-We-Are'
 where our image of ourselves
 would coalesce beneath us
 allowing us to claim our stake
 in verticality at last

periscopic

As when the rabbit, popped back in the hat,
 plays it by the book, only emerging to top the bill
 in tomorrow's matinee. Or so he hopes.
 Yet none of this would or could go as far as that.
 There is a vague part that makes us content
 to waver on the tide's edge
 without ever heading beyond the beach huts
 or taking the plunge, preferring
 to leave everything to selection
 by short straw or sucker punch
 before being swallowed up in the dust storm.
 If calling did any good it would be called disappearance,
 the purest of necessary accompaniments,
 a sort of intensely concentrated frittering,
 making us pass by ourselves on the other side
 without ever drawing attention to itself,
 yet refusing to leave us alone
 while leaving us all alone.
 It nods its head sagely as, glancing
 at our watch, we yawn or stare at the vacant lot
 behind the landscape in front of our eyes.

Don't be put off by all this though.
 No good trying to defer the decision
 till the results of the opinion survey
 have leached into the public domain
 hard on the heels of the horse-drawn funicular's
 final journey to the St. Crispin terminus.
 Grasping the old goat by its unique horn
 put your best foot into forward and reverse,

noting the way the left gets left
 behind, seeming to go backwards even,
 as the right goes at it with a will,
 advancing towards the up-coming season
 of fists and callow bruitfulness
 which you will avoid at all costs
 by a casual sidling drift learnt
 on your mother's lap. Or is it in-bred?
 You'll need to pick up speed after the bend
 if you're to catch the runaway pony.

That will feed sore eyes' sight in spectacular fashion, yet
 still no cure for that crumble-topping psoriasis
 currently gnawing at the skin of things
 ready to break up and out
 without notice at the drop of a cat.
 Don't bite it, it's as infectious as a kitten
 or the conjuror's last laugh echoing
 round the hall after the final curtain.
 It can be passed on and picked up
 by word of mouth or shared tears.
 In the oratory lab's purblind trials
 no holes are barred in the search for antidotes,
 though purely anecdotal evidence hints
 at the most pleasing results from placebo effects.
 Dummy runs and deceptive horizontal appearances aside
 there's still a furry gap between the edges
 of our mean-time and half-open vowels.
 In the event of things turning out differently
 to current expectations (it's their job after all),
 wayside happenings will occur without warning.

Searching for words that can see round corners
 we seem to lose sight of the peripheral essentials
 swarming around our tunnelling frame.
 That's the trouble with sizeless events
 endlessly remaking our passing away
 but never passing the message on to us.
 We never quite see ourselves in them,
 or them in us, only affecting to grasp them
 for what they might have been in passing

sometime after they've taken our place.

By then it's too late to catch
 who we were or have become,
 to account for the differences between
 trainspotting, a passion for Bombay duck,
 and the will to power. If such there are.
 At least half the known world is a lost continent.
 And it's always the other half.
 Don't think you're being got at by all this.
 Eventually, when you come down from the bridge,
 you'll see what just they're getting at.

...desperate need...

'No drinking at source'
 says the notice pinned above the ancient font.
 It's not so much ruination by pollution,
 though there's that too. Rather, in passing
 through recently formed sub-surface gravel beds
 the flow is so diverted, reversed, twisted, flayed,
 it flops out in matted gobs, gross recombinant.
 All attempts by in-house technicians at the new bottling plant
 failed to come up with a desolution.
 You can't accuse them of not trying
 But, fully accredited professionals, their hearts
 are left under an oath at the gatehouse.
 This hasn't helped matters.
 To make it available on the blank market
 it's forced to travel along transforming rods
 under parking lots for the severely impaired
 into those ink-stained vats at the edge of Briar Wood.
 They remain sealed till the daily caution ceremony is over.
 Then it's released in weightless hypo-dribs.
 To receive your due portion you need your own tap
 plus a sterilised canister shaped to mime the contours of your soul.
 Supplies appear inexhaustible but appearances
 are controlled by a management team
 renowned for its massaging skills;

catching the prevailing mood they've hitched
 the whole operation to the tail-gate
 of the 'as-if-it-were-therapy' folk waggon.
 Subliminal mythemes are slipped into news reports from the trenches,
 divorce court transcripts and cooking tips.
 Taking their point without realising but in perpetuity,
 we come to see their immaculate product,
 tightly wrapped parcels of segmented inertia,
 if taken daily in small gobbets,
 as an essential constituent of a balanced life.
 It no longer occurs to us that we are in desperate need
 of profound disturbance by something immeasurable.

what's coming

We really should make an effort
 to get to know them better,
 see things from their point of view,
 get inside a bit of thinginess.
 It's awful hard being just a thing,
 permanently keeping up appearances,
 always being itself and nothing else besides,
 no room for manoeuvre, slippage,
 just flogging away for evermore
 at the perfect performance.
 Poor loves, they must be exhausted.
 We owe them one.
 Let's give 'em a break,
 an away-day,
 a saver-return into the open.
 We can afford it.
 Might even pick up a thing or two
 in the interim.
 After all, according to the will,
 as our next of kin,
 they get just what's coming to them.

on shifting sands

Well, here we are again
 on the spur of the moment
 fumbling our ways through the day's latencies,
 leaving a spoor here and there in its dust,
 way markers for the archaeologists of density
 who'll be hard on our heels
 if the form book is to be trusted;
 they're two to one on bar the field.

We've found it a comfort in the past
 although a weak guide to future performance;
 nearly-shapes can go down as well as up.
 It's often more fun.
 Since the Fractal Trust's day-one buy-out
 no-obligation policies have been instituted.
 Surface-distressing and living-beyond-all-manner-of-means
 shape the quotidian round.
 Market leaders in no time at all,
 they press on regardless
 ignoring the odd 'now hang on a minute'
 murmured by marginal reps
 from life's discrepant walks.
 Oblivion's bishops were especially incensed
 but took to arguing among themselves.

Best selling lines have included
 'in point of fact', 'it all turns on',
 and 'extension ladder included'.
 Their PR boys, on low flat rates but hefty commissions,
 keep hammering home the message
 that it's simply a matter of changing rooms
 for the time being while destiny's shed
 undergoes refurbishment and underpinning
 in the light of recent shifts
 in the dunes' format.

Seems only yesterday that ochre-wet sand
 stuck to our cheeks before turning

a pallid grey in the drying dusk sun.
 Now Thermidor's lobsters, pincers half-beached,
 struggle to make it to the water's edge
 before the tide, egged on by a witless moon,
 turns on its tail and, passing Fort Godsend,
 heads out for the open sea.

brief lives

Listen out for that therm ode diner-mix number two,
 it spills the beans about running down, using up,
 our finally unsustainable development,
 give or take a year or two.
 At things' surface our little gangs of techno-scribes,
 hired undertakers of the infinite,
 dreaming of tooled perfection, tell us
 in their dispiriting code of brackets, noughts and crosses,
 that everything's pulsating mutation
 free-falls towards disappearance.
 Gazing steadfastly for our time being
 into middle distances where
 we triangulate precisely
 seemingly fixed gaps between
 this daisy-with-slug, box hill
 and that smooth white hole,
 we're finding it tough coming to terms
 with the pure plasticity
 of what's out-there-in-here,
 let alone recognising how we,
 the mix'n match gristle-heart lingo kids,
 sharp but clueless,
 are nothing but its playthings.

With intimations of mortality, Bert Onestone
 and his lads scribbled some such story
 on handfulls of birch bark
 before casting it out onto the breeze
 of no return passing through the city.
 Picking up the shreds some young women of Avignon,

streetwise to the implications,
 turned sharply pear-shaped at the very thought.
 We've never recovered.
 We can see in theory
 how that granite pile
 is mere jelly for some Titan-tots' tea party,
 but the unwinding recycling that becomes us,
 that makes us real but not realise,
 is another story that can be told
 only teeteringly as we slide, faltering,
 neither inside nor outside,
 along the edge of our Mobius strip.
 We are a soft lottery without brakes.

Only after the fact is each life a normal curve,
 given the inexhaustibility of nothing,
 meant, you'll intuit, in its most positive sense,
 where growing up, focussed in the bio-coder's
 distant single eye glancing back down its inner tube,
 is always a growing down as the quotidian loop-tape's
 irreplaceable batteries discharge steadily
 into the uttering world.
 Being here is more or less becoming more and less,
 and that collie's languid yawn marks
 the end of the world as we thought we knew it.
 Frugrains notwithstanding, surreptitiously, inexorably,
 pleasure's unseen pain machine
 shreds us in time for tomorrow's last supper.
 We are the main course.
 Who'll say 'Grace'?

Hey! Don't let that word out of the bag again!
 Long-since pulped in favour of 'the news'
 it can still take my breath away.
 But there's much to catch up on before then.
 Just holding the door ajar is a lifetime's work in itself.

Over at Senzhammer Junction the last dirigible sets off
 on its long haul against the flow tide,
 full to bursting with indigent party poopers,
 over-determined merry makers, manic to a man.

Life therapy seems to have failed this time round
although many are outstanding at charades.
It's a laugh if you're the one in the middle
and the right side of forty
as long as you lay off the irradiated cherries,
they're starting to glow in the dark.
Here come those leaflets again,
drifting past on evening's acid-tinged breeze,
mass circulation circulars addressed to the blind at heart,
printed in invincible ink to protect
unofficial sources of nameless origin;
a faltering translation in broken esperanto
seems to warn of the dangers of flat-out imaging.
Let no one spot you glancing at them,
word will be relaid to the powers that are;
dockets will be filed in lieu of your name.
You'll be marked as a crypto time-bomber,
a threat to the latest train-of-thought schedules
geared as they are to running on the spot.
If you're pulled in for questioning
don't be taken in by the interviewer's hair style,
it'll be a common-or-garden blow job
made to look like folded granite;
contractual obligations demand a united front:
employees are required to put a blank face on things.
Fat bonuses are paid to the very bland.
Standard quiffing regulations are precise, exacting even.
When you're asked to recant before signing up
use your body language to make it clear
that you lost your voice on the way through.
Show them how your signature explodes on contact.
Do not pass through the 'Something to Declare' gate
lest the electronic beam turns you into a micro-dot.
Laughing like a drain, sidle crabwise
out into the fields of yestermost.
Turning left past the purple azaleas,
they're at their best just now and then,
follow the golden path opening up
only for you through the head-high brambles;
it leads directly to the departure lounge.
There are no more orientation classes

but you'll know what to do when the time comes.
 Keep both feet in the air or you'll make no headway.
 Pay no heed to the surrounding multiple,
 from now on you need to be switched to monocular mode
 to make the most of pure concentration's glowing distractions.

The Nambikwara are in on this;
 it's not for the squeamish, although the Amish
 might have a thing or two to say.
 But try telling any of this to Mr. and Mrs. Beamish,
 let alone Fatbo and the Hanger Lane mob,
 and you'll get dried hollow laughs.

You are expected.
 A place has been secured.

now a brackish carmine

Before the dust had time to settle
 a bridgehead had been secured,
 pontoons flung across and the first platoons
 had made the crossing
 unaware that back there the marshall
 was still lounging under a leafless catalpa
 chewing unsalted pretzels
 lost in measureless thoughts
 about the pros and cons of the
 attractive options for the affluent footloose,
 among whom he now counted himself.
 Brought up in a string of council
 -run homes for the innocent
 harnessed to the more or less
 bellicose ramblings of a teetering time
 he was inclined to make heavy
 weather of the distribution of grain sacks
 among the indigent
 who came to rely on him
 less and less
 turning to foraging for themselves

in the surrounding scrub.
 Concealing his baton and medals
 behind the crumbling trellis
 he faded fast away.
 Driving hard between the bleached tufts
 an early monsoon washed away last traces
 from the dust, late a brackish carmine.

a tale of inert whatness

As a matter of interest
 it grows without intent.
 The reply from the lobby scout is always the same:
 inert whatness dwells singly
 while buzzers announce the next departure.
 Something is falling short
 although it's never clear
 whether the troughs and rises
 pertain to anything other than
 itsy-bitsy flow procedures derived
 from tanks placed to the left of the shaft.

Half way into the first shift
 our screen wipers remove fluffy wisps
 allowing vision to reassert its natural authority;
 they're paid by direct debit.
 It's hard to account for all this
 in familiar terms although
 and and but still come in handy.
 Verbs allow simple doings
 to pass through without incident
 or comment but too often discrepancies
 between ought and might
 work to prevent any sort of
 take-up. Use-value went by the board
 when we were sentenced to birth
 at about the same time as
 slow-drip racing became fashionable
 amongst the comfortably on.

After overtaking on the near side was banned
 hairline fractures began to appear.
 The meadows were aglow with optimism's hard light.
 Several hares were convicted of person decoursing.
 Stewards looked on aghast.
 They're taking a long hard glance
 at the new rule manual to see
 if there are clear guides for the
 way mentoring should proceed.
 Under the last regime it was
 best to sit on the by-lines
 awaiting one's call as substitute facilitator;
 all too often the tiniest of obstacles
 entered the arena expecting to
 be blown up and out of all proportion.
 Experience generally proved them right.
 Few gave it a second thought.
 This was their profound error.

the story of this and that versus an other

In any event
 it's settled then
 they assure us through
 outfacing codicils
 pasted on to
 plate-glass windows of certain stores
 the trick is to strike a just balance
 between ticking over virtually
 and the blue urgency of accelerating countdowns
 popping up randomly across the vale.

Moving twixt lab and escritoire
 with regular forays into the pulpit
 the order's treasonless clerks
 set out settling down's terms:
 signing in the space beyond the dotted line
 grants entry to the all-too-daily infinite.

Bolts slide to behind us.
They injunct us not to pass
the melting point of distress
while sliding down the cushioned banisters.
At the bottom the programme begins in earnest.

It becomes clear that double vision
is success's precondition.
This and that are the twin foci.

Down here there are only this and that,
any trace of an other being eliminated
with minimum fuss. Swift silent
extirpatators thrust their vacuuming nozzles
into all suspect crevices.
Long-secreted specks of lostness,
sub-atomic pods packed with
still congealing differences,
tiny porous sachets of uncertain distinctions,
teeming creels of self-splitting apartness,
all disappear forever into extractor sacks
emptied later at the depot
down vinyl chutes through
to the sub liminal regions.

They have to draw the line somewhere.
It seems.

fateful ceremonial

taking the brain
as the incomplete diary
of our past and future present
they shred it page by page
microwave the shreds
on full power for ten seconds
pound the steaming mash briefly
freeze dry and pack into cartons
stacked in rows

five deep and ten high
 for use in thursday's
 memory ceremony

it only ever occurs once

it just pops out

as well talk about unbecoming
 as seek to fix process
 by word of mouth
 in the becoming word
 which promises something
 on its way to be
 a something else
 that never will arrive
 as long as time's tables continue
 to turn the tables
 on ourselves

a struggle

History being a throw of para-dice,
 a pair of dotless witless cuboids,
 chance and no-chance
 stand shoulder to shoulder
 bound together for the three-legged race
 which finishes just as the starting gun explodes.

There being no competition
 they award the themselves the Victor Ludorum
 and, grinning, step in step off the podium
 each grasping a handle of the Caritas Cup.
 Later, after serious celebrations
 in the hospitality tent,
 they fall out, pull apart,

teetering off along opposite paths.

With no hope of reconciliation on the horizon
 the sponsors withdraw their support.
 Unable to face the new season alone
 History swivels round and,
 staring fixedly at yesterday,
 begins to run on the spot.

the pace of things approximately

After all, it's not that we've just arrived at sixes and sevens
 with our inordinate seam-bursting baggage
 spilling cryptic trails across the steppes
 encouraging sequent trackers, led by their noses,
 to sniff out our mistaken logics,
 cancelling chance and the very vague
 by their attribution of mundane destinies
 drawn from fairy stories told to tots.

No, we've milled around this interim
 for some little time, trying to read off
 the pace of things on our lunar-powered stillness meters,
 needles flickering randomly at the merest hint of silence.
 Accurate readings are proving impossible,
 all bench marks being suspended
 following the relief of Ladysmyth
 by our first mule brigade
 in that last skirmish.

Since then there's been a general re-jigging
 of the nature of events in the night sky
 in the hope of deferring
 eruptions of countdown syndrome,
 unconfirmed reports of which already drift in
 from far-flung outback clinics.

Meanwhile slicing-edge research on
 sub-cranial mindo-suction proceeds at a canter.

Only time will tell.
It can't be soon enough for me.

a sort of glue it seems

Something's still holding us together, just;
but we never quite get to grips with it.
Is it a gravity able only to laugh
in our face with extreme weakness,
so that, just when giving way seems inevitable,
this tiniest twist of humour lassoes
our out-spiralling bits
stopping them in their tracks
for the time being.
After all it's all that's needed
at one's wits' ends.

almost seamless

We're handing it over to the park glider
since it's not exactly the stuff dreams are made of
better perhaps to be seamless than
to have the matter in hand
get out of hand through too many
acts of timid circumspection.
Let's leave it at that then.

I must finish the Hoovering
before Sergeant Treadwell's farewell kit inspection.
They'd never forgive me if...
Still there are better ways of sliding down a hog's back,
if you'll excuse the expression, as implosive
as ever on all fronts, not least
the one we typically park by the cellar door;
it has a certain genteel fragility

considering the battering to which it's subject
daily by rams of a different water.

But the map does not cover
this part of the stream;
they've tried the usual ordnance tests
but there are no visible targets.
And the rest, folks, is a just history.

the play's the thing possibly

If they'd told me it was just a play,
a minor off-broadway epic ignored by the critics
that, self-confused, never quite made it
to the bright lights, I'd have auditioned early
for a bit part, a Wo-Wo, something appropriate
to the dolly mixture of dust particles,
ambient swarm, hovering above highway thirty one.
But the auditors of becoming-less,
having already dumped their life tables
in the ante-room, gave the key
to the cleaner from Gondwanaland.

That's a long way back even as the gnat flies
which, in every case, is always sideways on
by unpredictable jerks aside from known destinations..
I'll just have to make up the ground somehow else,
without too much reference to the ways
of the others when they took
to the rough tracks somewhere
east of Boulevard Non-passerons,
before the whole pot of messages
putters into the sand afore the end
of the week ending the thirteenth.

All this is cast in granite flecked with
infinitely ductile rubber bands. Something
in the firing produced a manic craquelure web
of disconnected slits across the unchartable surface.

Binomials were all the rage among initiates.

And all this just so a pop era
 can be inaugurated in the theatre of cleanliness
 right there under our very snouts.
 I was at the investiture while this took place.
 I missed out on the fun.

Within ten minutes of hearing the news
 I'd donned my new sou'wester
 and was heading for the open sea,
 but got back in time to catch
 the tiger on the zebra crossing. What a lark!
 Elbow nations came and went
 at the drop of a cat; the passage from
 dusk to night was instantaneous,
 feeling like nothing on this or that earth.

Official circulars recommended circular breathing
 as antidote to early attacks of mass-lung.
 Sometimes this worked a treat.
 More often, disillusioned campaign managers
 returned listlessly to the fold
 bemoaning the lack of conveniences
 along the fluted highway.
 A jackdaw's shadow fell across the radish bed
 without a trace of self-consciousness.
 It was too late to complain; we had arrived
 at the court of less appeal just as
 the final rehearsal drew to a close.
 In any case mime artistes had long since
 fallen from favour. Aaaah me.

Are you a precipice collector too?

sloping quietly away

not wanting to be famous
 but to have your whispers heard

in the trenches of the powerless
so that transalphabets might slip in between
the words for toast
guns
and slippers
making a way for dribbled histories to slide
into slightly new positions
from which the old articulations
fall away into the sack of past nothings
leaving the field almost clear
for the separate - currently unobtainable
in any mall we know

knowing there is no simile for this
likening is a process that goes to the wall
stuck fast in a gilded frame fixed
by the picture restorer's fastidious commitment
to the particularities of coloured pastimes

like that moment last thursday
when three or four of your confused emotions
stood up together demanding to be counted
but you'd left your calculator in the drawer
under the sink - they collapsed in unison

like what happens to time
when you drum your fingers in patternless rhythms
on the table's edge - a seeming aimlessness
laden with unabsorbed directions

you can't account for any of this
only allow it to shuffle past in the way
yesterday's weightless dead thoughts
drift away down that slope

you only ever catch a glimpse of their backs

élan's lance

celan

battered

lanced

by glancing blows

he brews writedrink
 bruised
 he drinks juicespeak
 at songdown
 till auld ling
 seer-singed
 is re-signed
 to lastsing
 self away
