

1

2

wired for sound

titles

some time ago

I've bent over backwards
to accommodate the darned thing.
It was a house rule to be polite to strangers
be they ever so strange
as they were invariably
in those long-off narrow days
slipping away without so much
as a nod to the four walls of Stillmort House.
Suborning minnows almost relieved the stagnance
but this was before they summoned me
on my subcutaneous bleeper;
we might have had egg on our faces
for days at a time
without it being held against us.

Yet after the relief of Looknow,
bright spot in a darkling world,
things began to self-dilapidate
without anyone noticing
in the general scramble for places.
Don't be too critical of the boys below deck.
Our cabin crew's got enough on its plate
figuring out the controls
on our spanking new
euphoria-powered dirigible
dirigible, especially given
the handbook's antiphonic translation
from the original Gibberish.
I mean, what happens if
it blows a casket and the
fuel seeds drop through the mesh?

We're already at the edge of the wood
 and it's still only three forty five;
 our guides, refusers to a man,
 scampered back legless
 to their extended families
 after drinking the dregs
 of our last poteen issue
 leaving us to cut our own path
 through to the beached hostel.
 It's not marked on any published map.
 We need to press on regardless
 before the monsoon washes away every trace.
 Are those corn dollies I see
 hanging from the lower branches?
 They're kinda reassuring
 in a listless sort of way
 if you can still hoik up
 a phlegm or two of trust
 in the curative antics of straw dogs.
 Taking this as an omen we don
 grass skirts and proceed with caution
 across the karst typical of these parts.

All this seems a long time ago now.
 Later we tried stencilling
 some of it on graph paper
 but the results just fail to convince.

sauntering

We've all got our own coats of arms
 limbless reminders of abandoned cinder tracks.
 It's not seemly to smoke before breakfast
 and in bed at that.
 The muffins are 'a'huffin' 'n a'puffin'
 for want of a better word
 to etch in some fractals of a burberry coast.
 It might be called meandering

'cept that's too, er, textually precise
 for what's really nothing more
 than an epileptic hiccup
 in a tea storm wrenched from passivity.
 Aaah! The frog prince has cut through the briars at last.
 You can serve supper now Francine.

sub judice

And after all this life
 is and is not art
 quoth Mrs Binswanger, tutor for the day.
 Try imitating an afghan hound
 or a brood mare or two
 come to that
 yaks are easier
 if you've got the right kind of fur
 and a nasal twang.
 It's something about the way they say
 'Ooooooh, Noooooo!'
 You need an ear for
 this sort of thing,
 a back-flipping imagination
 flecked with desperation
 plus reserve packs of face-toner
 - after all we don't want to fall
 down on the job
 now do we?

All this and more
 they taught me at
 our local branch of the
 White Fang Histrionic Bureau.
 Senior staff were required
 to don tuxedos come Fridays après-midi
 as protection against locusts
 and an all too oblique sun.
 Or so she claimed.
 All this is sub judice.

like they do
 you'll see just sheep
 two only
 Mix 'n Match.
 The lambs are still
 somewhere up ahead,
 their arrival delayed,
 but the barometer isn't saying why.
 They're splitting the flock
 apparently.

altogether now

hands	up	
all		those
only	here	
to		make
up	the	
numb	errs	

first out of the blocks

After climbing Begin Hill
 wanting hands on experience
 I felt for the what that matters.
 My fingerless gloves missed by a mile
 grasping only unfingerable differences in between.
 Down at Short Falls Pharmacy
 they prescribed a lifetime pack of Discrete Silences.
 'Take one daily. There's no cure.
 Might stop you tearing your hair out though.'

In the evenings I took courses in
 'Intermediate palpation for the younger tart'
 'Practical auscultation for the young at heart'
 'Learning to live with mothballs'

'Spotting the same differences'.
 Endless monitoring by outreach inspectors
 from the Office of Machine Lined Stases
 ensured that teaching styles and commitment
 were all but exemplary,
 yet the content's shrivelled sprats
 left much to be desired.

Cycling back later through shrubby vales of scented hissop
 I came across traces of just such much.
 Someone had tried sweeping it away
 but scattered grains had drifted in
 to the gutter's tiny pockets of absence.
 I almost missed my connection at Reading.
 Not being a junction they go straight through.

show and go

Come on, let's try it again,
 once more, from the beginning,
 like we always do,
 we must be familiar with the lines by now.
 Just make sure to get
 right inside them this time.
 Odd hiccups are acceptable,
 lending an air
 of apparent authenticity
 to the jerky flow.
 Don't worry if you've left
 your trilby in the locker,
 our wardrobe mistress is a gem;
 she keeps a permanent supply
 of spare thoughts ready to hand,
 and though you'll never see him
 the prompter in the wings
 is Mr. Reliability himself.

Listen out for the imitable sounds,
 they're all genuine, no effects;

gales for example are whipped up
 to plunge us instantly into
 that old gale feeling,
 and a dreamy evening in early summer,
 called for annually by the author's marginal instructions,
 is coaxed into being by
 our battery-reared cuckoos.

There are only bit parts
 in this production, but next time round
 it might well be different.
 No need to audition tho',
 we know your capabilities.
 They're available on floppy disc.

You will be given a new name.
 You will glisten.

steady drip

Has the river all but dried up
 or just gone underground?
 Are there still streams
 on the far side of the wood?
 Will there only be getting by
 if flow seeps away through sands?

Don't get me wrong though,
 it's not that we're short of the necessities,
 a synthetic goo substitutes for aquaviva
 and since the baker took early retirement
 loaves of digital steam are delivered thrice weekly.
 Arteasyearn wells flood the local valley;
 they pipe the stuff into every home.
 It's available on tap, flushed into every condo courtesy
 of countless valveless suck-up pumps.
 Nothing gets wasted thanks to the steady drip
 of sticky ends through time's warped sieve
 into recycling vats ready for

instant recirculation as shapeless drops
of sullied pleasures.

Place your orders in the box
by the door at the western outlets.

blown away

now everyone speaks the language of stones
it's a quango-like decision
trouble is they taught me
in the beginning to write
blindfold in sand script
I did learn pebble dash
in fourth grade but
translation was never easy
hard words were too long
after the governor levied a sin tax
for misuse of the concrete
as a last resort I turned to dust
light breezes disturbed the letter lines
I became all but illegible

short cut

Pack enough motives to last the whole journey,
you may need to eke them out a bit.
In case of emergency I've packed a few thin ones
in the box of last resort to tide you over.
There won' t be enough room for all your desires though,
leave any surplus in the shedding ring.
I can always send a few on later
if you send me your location list.

Your route is short but complicated
due to headwinds, heart searches and off-chances.

After the first night at Cartomb it's feet all the way.
Avoid all guides they'll leave you without a reason.
Keep glancing at the edges for signs,
there are no clues in the middle of the way
except remnants of last year's cast-offs
which are no help in these conditions.

Best to go in character to avoid later confusion,
you won't have time to pick and choose.
Parts are allocated well in advance;
most require the wearing of eye patches
although you may be one of the lucky ones.
Check with the casting directress before departure,
she's over there with the make-up police.
You'll need to see them before you go,
they may want you to understudy as well.
Sometimes the stars fall away at the last hurdle
withdrawn by their agents as a bargaining chip.
Are you any good at pulling faces?
Show them your advanced arm wrestling diploma.
Work up your parrot act and demand a scream test.
But take that chip off your shoulder first.
They want everything to go without a glitch.

You could be just the wild card they are looking for.
Extras are always needed for the big set pieces.
Some of it will be shot in soft focus
but mainly they use black and white in wide angle close up.
It's nearly time now. There's the driver.
He's the one sans thinking cap.

Have you got everything? Are you all ready?
What's that?
No I won't be coming just yet,
not even for the ride.
I have to clear up after the last supper.
Besides as I explained to Kropotkin over breakfast
I'm a confirmed non-joiner myself.

There's still time to change your mind.
Why not join me?

wired for sound

Overseers assured me that being
 was becoming's stalking horse,
 constant pursuit was the only way to get by.
 It was set up from the start as a chase
 with the moving target just up ahead
 over the hill's hazy brow.
 You had to catch the scent
 to get anywhere at all.
 Everyone's task schedule had been individually prepared.
 There were no grounds for exemption.
 Setting off at the gun
 you kept running till things came to a halt.
 Delay was said to be foetal,
 although running on the spot was permitted
 at the council-run comfort stations.
 By perfecting a nonchalantly studied sidling
 sometimes I got pretty close to it.
 Once I tried to tether it to the nearest stanchion.
 Nothing doing. My hands had turned to sand.
 I stumbled in its wake, grasping
 at tattered shreds of wind fur,
 drawn by its echoes straight into a dome of silence
 whose unhinged doors closed behind me without a whisper.

Are you wired for sound?
 You'll get the drift of it all
 from the loop tape soon available on the babel label.
 Wagner's set the whole damned thing to mosaic
 but the dress rehearsal is still going on,
 they can't quite bring things to a sensible conclusion.
 Seems our director hasn't found a way
 of reconciling the survival of the fattest
 with what's beginning to feel like a pretty thin story line.
 If it flops there'll be general devastation,
 even the bit players are expecting oscars.

You'll be exhausted by the closing aria:
 'Put another token in the slot Billy,
 or we'll be here till after midnight.'

it's 'game on!'

Up here in the commentary box
 we're surrounded by blank scorecards
 though the game is clearly on.
 Many of the early molehills,
 suffering from lack of practice,
 fell in the first attack.
 Open cast wells spring up
 like wild fire all over the place
 but they're no defence against the will to power.
 No medal for the groundsman this season.

The terrain's not exactly rough
 but the beagles are finding
 it difficult to follow their noses;
 it's known as 'the catalpa effect'
 covering all exceptions to the general rule
 and preferred play mode of
 going for it without a sidelong glance.
 Scoring's simple enough, just kick it
 past the last post
 if you can get that far.
 Some dolphins are better
 than others at this,
 seem to have a nose for it,
 just a pity the rules exclude them.

Peering as we have to from this vantage point
 through fen-sucked ochre fogs
 all too common in these parts
 thanks to Bodyswop's suturing machines,
 it's becoming clearer
 if clear's the word,
 as it still seems to be,

that Debbie's new modal army
 with Cheryl in hutch position,
 though not exactly out in front,
 is in with a chance to qualify.
 At least that's the position towards the end
 of the third of five quartiles;
 apparently the gaffer's been training 'em
 on the sly as it were.
 Fiddle fit it seems and performance enhanced.
 Hey, who laid out these lamb and honymous sarnies
 'neath the pawlonia's drooping panicles?
 And why are the marching bands
 playing the Doolally Stomp
 before the interval's even started?
 Someone up there bending the rules?
 There may have to be a stewards' inquiry
 if the bottom is to rise to the top of all this.
 Perhaps it's a matter of strategy after all,
 putting faith on one side
 or the other for the nonce.
 Don't worry, from now on it's down hill all the way.

It helps to see round corners.
 By the way the referee
 never has the last word.

the play's the thing

Once we had grasped the rudiments of breathing
 they enrolled us as the junior branch of the Assetshire Strippers.
 Exemplary combinations of will, lust and matchless aptitude,
 we soared past our trainers' trainers.
 Global tours quickly followed.
 We were the toast of the internation,
 prodigious basking mini-sharks
 in that post-critical region
 the other side of Bootstrap Junction.
 Our little displays of naked theft
 so charming in their knowing innocence

captivated droves universally.
 In adulation's wake came the instauration of pure mimicry,
 a doing again, over quotidian's bottomless pit,
 keeping the engines purring nicely thank you.

Soon after, everyone qualified as antique dealers
 summa cum laude at the Cloacal College of History Recycling.
 Inspired by our show they learned
 to cover every surface with make-up
 and sell everything that appeared to be the case.
 Lord Inchbald was delighted.

Not all our performances convinced.
 Some of the parishioners of Little Blinkered,
 indigent to a fault remained
 untouched by our o'er weaning charms.
 Seems they'd taken Idle Jack as role model
 after the Xmas panto,
 backdrops courtesy of Al Berberian and the thirty fauves;
 a mite garish for some tastes no doubt,
 though ideal ground for the villagers'
 permanent Festival of Taut Relaxation.

After we'd passed through
 they reverted to crabbed apple dunking
 endemic in those parts,
 though now a prime target for Heritage Incorporated.
 Sorry but this is the parting of our waves.
 You just keep going straight on.
 I have to drift off into those dunes,
 unless someone forgets to turn the page.
 The marram grass is pretty spiky.

plain speaking

To be hoarse with you doc
 I'm losing my voice,
 the one I rely on to overtake me,

what's your dire gnosis?
 Nothing too complex mind
 though the blue ear muffs give adequate protection.
 In any, and every, case
 you can be frank
 with me, in a sense.

Relax honeybunch, I only need to check your verb levels
 in case there's nothing doing;
 you may show signs of hyposyntaxia.
 There's a worldwide shortage of Very Useful Sentences
 and life's one long discontinuous symptom just now.
 Be prepared to be a patient patient,
 quick cures are dotted few and
 far between the inverted comas
 scattered across the newspeak plains.
 Our medicaine's nothing but
 short cuts to hiding the tunnel
 at the end of the light.
 Ask the nurse for our rechargeable glow-worm pack
 on your way out.
 You'll need to pick your way between
 the jettisoned canisters of excess descriptives.
 Test results will be sent
 sometime before rogation day.

seasonal offerings

New strains of helminth are emerging
 seemingly resistant to our latest probiotics.
 Something needs to be done about them
 but we prefer serial drifting
 after a hard day's graft in the chutes.
 Currently we're spreadeagled on a rock face
 somewhere to the west of Port Carryon
 trying to catch parting shots from a dying sun.
 Since crop circling replaced the harvest festival
 there's general disagreement about the role of autumn;
 august frequently pips july to the post and
 june has been hidden by strips of coconut matting.

It' s getting harder to find takers
for the composer of the month slot.

Whatever the season you'll find all bolt holes fully booked.
Before rising to the surface the cream manages
to go off on its own somewhere.
This still leaves us with much to play for,
provided the dealer lays his cards
face up on the green baize spurge.
Try trading your tattered queen of arts
for that spunky jack o' nightsticks,
you'll need it for fending off
shoals of suckudri in the financial districts.

Ask Mary for her little lamp,
it's in mint condition and ideal
for lighting ebony voids en route.
We could cling on like limpets in a loampit
but it's time to evacuate the tots to the outback.

Several were spotted munching the foreshore.
Do not invite them in. They are not pets.
