

MICHAEL BEDFORD

The Chemical Marriage

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Perfection is neither desirable nor attainable

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## OOO

An empty belly in the mean of nothing

wrought from girders of nothingness

each nothingness more nothing than previous nothingness

desolate as fear electrified

barren as devastation hung inside out and gutted

bleak as the most arid thing never been

filled with loss beyond dimension or measure

gaunt as baby grieving for cord.

OOO it was lonely

but didn't even have word to weld thought together.

When God brought food

it ate like sailors drowning.

## Creation Myth

Creation late again: the alarm had not sounded.

Creation got on the bus: the wrong bus.

Creation had no passport: irrevocably *out-of-date*.

Creation dragged off the bus and beaten senseless

as a precaution.

They pasted a face on Creation to match expectation.

Took fingerprints, blood samples, issued a credit card.

All of this necessary. All in the scheme of things

(easier to recognise in the court case later).

Creation ran away luggage flapping.

The border guards laughed: they had seen it all before.

## Cosmic Horseplay

Creation called: God took the phone off the hook

avoiding all conversations.

Creation called: God cited bad weather

as reason enough for any delay.

Creation called: two innings down

God was coming out to bat.

God called for help blaming

bank holidays and the state of Denmark.

Time came - who had been hiding behind the void

picking up messages on a crystal radio set.

Truth came - who had been fishing on a lake

but no fish were biting that summer.

Evolution came - who had been cracking nuts as ciphers

peddling new brands of washing powder.

Hunter came - who had been trying to eat a tree

and wanted a shag and enough rope to hang himself.

Others came - who wore no names

having borrowed strangers’ bodies to travel incognito.

Of all helpers, God trusted all of them least.

Raining. Nothing on television. This became the first day.

Creation held her head in her hands: dropped it. It rolled

under the table lost forever.

All these things are true. And none of them.

## Everything Happening at Once

Tweaked the sequence. Lock clicked.

Gates opened.

Something different.

Something new.

Something radically altered.

Something deep inside

stepped forward. Cautiously stepped forward.

Peered around doors

just to check.

Somewhere else something else was happening.

That didn't matter.

Nothing else did.

Something fell. Nobody picked it up.

There came the sound of a tap dripping.

## Prelude

who sang the song

who took mud and sap and called us here

who walked to the fringe of wood not beyond

who tamed the path but dare not tread it

who does not utter language

out to mouth and breath

who breaths but must breath their death

who values invocation and process above the moment

takes the cataract takes the stone takes the track

all that they are bundled in blood encompassed

blinks the eye and speaks of self

who speaks the abomination desire

who would call us here and not wait

climb laden spire and not wait

mix in all things sweat of their instruction

when will we answer their call

how many will ask how many will be needed

will we speak incomprehensible word

and tie ourselves to cord and sac

will we whisper in the turning in the flexion in the crowning

bursting in liquor our gifts arranged unheard

opening with flower of vagina not melancholy at all

who will know us how will we sing

## The Counterclockwise Dance

When the bass note struck and drowning voices

crammed its wavelength

and history toppled through the eye of a storm

void slowly ceding possession of the death poem

sailing into a waste of air, destroyed and reimbursed,

in contrary perfection, untainted by the path,

She stood.

Mouth open, all corners, with Pale Son at her right hand

no mantle but that which is not beauty

turning again, skirts pulsing, dumb to senses,

ground defined by feet, heaven awakening above,

purpose gathering on the dance floor.

First in the room, art, young, greatly impressed;

second, mists of language woven in opacity;

third, the beautiful web which holds all things together;

last came love - a blind beggar walking on roses.

Held in pool of an eye, wheeling in the rite,

every torrent reduced, every ghost declined,

and the whisper of the mistress

finally accepted despair as art.

*See how close they are*, she said.

Then wrung from the depth of a violent bottomless sea

fragments of the story were laid at their feet

as was her gift.

Bow, strung, gut woven from smoke of a charcoal fire,

arrow burnished with the hope of innocence.

## Stars, Planets

As if

wedding bells were ringing but no sound,

only hydrogen sighing

in its molten finery, white veil.

The reception a strange affair.

Fewer guests than expected, changing livery at each course.

Appetites, places uncertain,

who could cater for this?

Ring

smelted in deep passion,

forged from the bliss

only furnace kissed lovers may know.

Sweet

the torch they burn

and as that flame dies

their children

hard as granite,

pug-nosed

dressed in practical clothes

with sensible shoes.

## God Discovers Night

God working on a flower

when the lights went out.

Drowning in shadow

until electricity arrived

which sparked frying a flower flat

and arced into the ground.

No better off then.

So raised a mighty volcano

and lava burst howling into air

which lit everything for a million miles

but ash fell and choked Earth dead.

When sun came next

stopped the globe spinning.

Everything fell off

and there was hell to pay in instalments.

So made two suns

to illuminate both sides.

Planet shrivelled and died

and obscene heat dried seas

and scorched plans forever.

God sat perplexed.

Detail had sprung from nowhere.

Eternal, infinite.

## The Battle

Life tilted at the great dragon Inertia.

Dragon raised itself from slumber.

Lifted an eyebrow menacingly.

All blood froze

in impending horror.

The contest was joined.

Huge swathes of fists flew through the air,

pots of reason spilled

and trickled down drains.

They clattered together until heaven wept

then stopped. Life wheezed.

Wiped a mountain of sweat from its brow.

Dragon yawned. Filed a nail absentmindedly.

Again they thundered.

Life battered dragon knuckles mercilessly with its face,

pounded cleats on dragon boots with its ribs,

throttled strength from dragon fingers with its neck

until it lost all consciousness and sense.

Life called its majestic army to join the fray.

Hunter helped by trying to make soup from stones

and setting fire to his cooker.

Time ran around headlessly in circles.

Evolution started cheering the dragon on.

Truth was writing postcards

pretending to have friends to send postcards to.

In desperation,

Life heaved an awesome kick

up from the cellar of hell.

Planted it solidly on dragon balls

where it grew to be a neutron bomb with a short fuse.

Dragon stopped short

not even knowing it had balls until then.

Keeled over dead. Stopped breathing to make sure.

House lights went off: came on again.

Life stood over the corpse with a smoking gun.

Curtains closed, music played,

people began to leave their seats

jostling to get to a bar. Evolution raised

Life's mighty hand

on the winning side again.

Flashbulbs blew, reporters gathered.

Life had pictures taken

at the quayside with the dragon

hung from a crane as a marlin.

A film made of the book.

Truth wrote a script changing only the facts.

All manner of folk congregated

discussing the merits of each round.

Hunter became a street vendor

and sold consommé by the bucket.

Time broke all its teeth

on the consommé.

The dragon's lawyers pointed out a clause

regarding a rematch

but the dragon, still dead, had left town

to open a spa resort on the coast

in order to bore guests to death.

Nothing was left undone. All laces were tied.

## Beginning

When all has come down from mountaintop

and spine planted, and organs sown,

and tongue nested

in undergrowth

and eyes scattered among thorn bushes

and waterworks and bladder

soft-landed on mud

and lung

rolled out onto grass to breath

fine night air

then, they will come and harvest the good parts

to make a being of whatever

which they will call *Mirror* in honour of *Whatself*.

And eyes will roll

in their spikey circumstance upwards towards heaven,

and tongues labour in fleshy prisons

to fashion words they cannot yet hear.

In due course, when blended into one,

it will praise anything because it can

and *just in case*.

And that will be the start of it.

## Design Fault

At dawn of day

when bolts had barely been tightened

and solder pooled on street corners discussing weather

and the great sun hammer had not yet clattered against

iron earth anvil to shape day into a good fit

someone noticed blood smeared deep inside.

So they peeled off minutes

but couldn't find where it had come from,

so they peeled off hours

but still couldn't find where it had come from,

huge hands strung on muscles lifted heavens

but couldn't find anything bleeding underneath.

So they wound day up and watched it go.

It ticked as it should, moved forward,

ran over ground leaping hedges in a single bound,

dived into rivers, seeped through clocks and horizons,

until they went away

content at *job well done*.

Only then did day unveil death

because it adored the salt of blood.

## Eighth Day

Media offered the globe of enlightenment

but Hunter would not buy.

Media plucked moon from sky,

pressed it into canvas

all within the confines of a romantic frame

but Hunter would not buy.

Distraught, Media charmed whales

etching their cries into a boxed set of CD's

reviewed to great critical acclaim

but Hunter would not buy.

Desperate, Media picked up rocks

pretending they were pets

drawing happy smiling faces on them

running a huge multimedia campaign

involving all celebrities everywhere, ever

but Hunter would not buy.

Finally, Media found a newspaper

bursting with nude women - held it aloft

dribbling circulation figures as candy

saying three million flies can't be wrong

but Hunter would not buy

because Hunter had no money to buy anything.

Media, defeated, fell to floor grinding any teeth available.

Meanwhile Hunter had shaped the newspaper into a fan

and had put it down the back of his trousers

and was pretending to be a cockerel.

Nothing got done that day.

## Slip of the Tongue

When God was splicing legs together

so speech could walk,

and melting lead down

so speech might have substance,

and polishing the planet on its horizon

so speech would have perspective,

a small bird, no larger than chance,

began singing the most beautiful delicate song

ever heard.

God stopped to listen.

In that moment speech set rigid

irrevocably, without rescue,

bone parched,

staggering,

insubstantial as dust.

God laughed at such folly

but cast the bird dumb.

Bird curled as a snake into the ground

laughing with no voice.

## Nightmare

In that hallucination suffocated it with a pillow,

but it ate the feathers and chicken-pecked both

eyes out, so blanched it, but it grew around

every sense like ivy, so played a strong suit, but it

became foolish and leapt into a bucket throwing

itself over the garden, so ran after it with ten

legs, but it quoted Latin and became vulgar, so

tooled it as leather and libelled it, but it spoke

very eloquently in its own defence, so sailed

out in the deepest ocean to drown it, but it swam

to shore as an oxymoron, so invented radicals

and oxygen to burn it, but it became geographical,

so gave it three pence for its thoughts, but it

short-changed him, so hit it with relativity, but

it scrawled across centuries as a plague, so

invented antibiotics, but it discharged itself

from hospital, so bit it with gold teeth, but it

pulled every last tooth out, so made a

stand, but it became a stylus and played a song,

so became utterly strange to make it feel

sorry, but it became a surgeon who removed

vital organs, so threw atoms at it,

but it laughed knowing it had won, so wore

a trilby and served it with a summons, but

it wore a mask and changed its name, so

taped its hands and feet together, but it took

off its mask and stared directly at the bleeding

stumps of sockets, so turned it to sulphur,

but it became a Great Snake and poured into

an unguarded mouth, irrevocably-insanely-unremittingly inside.

God awoke, sweating, eyes black with terror.

## New Toy

Truth held mirror up

saying look what I have made.

Hate peered in and saw two faces,

Light dived in

and bounced on the trampoline,

planets gasped in amazement

as suddenly infinity became twice as big,

Death stared at itself and died.

Truth became measured in delight at this new discovery

then

Evolution, in a rush not to look backwards,

bumped and sent it sprawling deep into the machine

where it fell as water

splashing over the cogs and pinions and pulleys

of the great mechanism

of the cosmos.

In that instant Karma was born.

Whole thing jammed up

with everybody owing everyone else all sorts of things.

Even God couldn't scrub it off.

Had to start huge spreadsheets

of credits and debits.

Vowed from that moment

if a mirror fell it would smash not splash

which is what God had said in the first place

but as usual, Truth vehemently denied it.

## The Tyranny of Numbers

Planets oozed blood,

the Aladdin's lamp of guesswork worn thin.

Squandered sequences, verses corrupted, plots threadbare,

everything going to hell

even hell going to hell.

Survivors cursed on mobile phones

when suddenly, a cavalry of numbers

leapt off the dial

BAMM!

One, two, three, four.

Oh, see how they multiply.

Over hills, ravenous for order,

they filled the empty belly of logic,

bled into cities, microwaves, price of fish.

Oh, see how they multiply.

Formulae, equation, equation built upon equation,

a great tide

washing chance away,

washing magic away,

washing hope away.

As dust settled

wagons circled

to infinity,

all saved. Hurrah!

Barrow boy number waved its cash

holding all cards.

God,

family business lost to corporate raiders,

reinvented as millionaire and pauper in the same instant.

## Corporate Talk Unveiled

Creation cast into the primordial soup

hooking arms and eyes and such

to use later. Minding own business.

Evolution splashed around

throwing lots away,

twisting other bits like balloons at a party.

Hunter, his own primordial soup,

nibbled at Creation's basket.

As she turned

furry things ran into bushes,

Truth fell in and came out covered in squirrel,

Time stopped dead.

Evolution slapped ten squirrels together

making a mega-squirrel

six-foot tall, genius at physics, erudite, compassionate,

then threw it back.

Meanwhile Hunter tripped on a plug

and all of allness drained

to the great sump of the cosmos

leaving all manner of strangeness

around the plughole.

Creation didn't mention any of this to God

but cited squirrels as a good example

of multi-disciplinary working.

## Morning Constructed and Tested

They agreed size of sheet

required carefully.

Took steel plate left over from night

measured and cut precisely.

Fastened dawn along its leading edge

with rivets of birdsong and bloodshot eyes.

Fitted wheels

then slid it across the face of the earth.

It ran smoothly, seamlessly.

They tied it to sun with strings of light

so they might both arrive together

and be delightful.

Washed hands in sea,

let them drip as dew,

water helping morning glide silently.

## The Great Snake

It slithered

eel toad slime as it did

wrapping the muscle of tensed cord

of its length

helter-skelter

around the branch of his manhood.

Every word deadbolt sorted

pounding on the cliff of understanding

toothless, limbless,

more dangerous than ever.

Spine of rippling razor wire

gimleting the unwary

held as a drawl

or yawn

in the headlamp of an eye.

## Garden Rhyme

A matter of experience

to judge limits - bend a will so far and no further.

A matter of exploration

to unleash the dumb pugilist action into the world.

A matter of estimation

to gauge the length of rope necessary to do a job.

A matter of expediency

to lose something you didn't want anyway.

*Beyond the garden*

*air is sweeter*

*and price of soft fruit*

*so much cheaper.*

## Eve

She could not think.

She was ramshackle

and glib.

Her button words

would not do up

the overcoat of her story.

She despaired.

Her phrases foamed

and spluttered.

Came to the edge of a page

no further.

She raged.

Kept pictures of her mother.

Walked in rain

and pissed blood.

Cut herself

and others.

All plans

frittered themselves.

Shopped for a new heart.

She had lost something

somewhere.

Perhaps her heart.

Nations asked her.

She had no answers.

No salvation.

## Adam

Always somewhere

between places

blamed

for everything.

He read maps

backwards

forever

out-of-sorts.

He rallied

but ultimately fell.

Hid in books

he couldn't understand.

Knew things

which were never mentioned

then forgot things,

important things.

He shopped for clothes

but could not fit them.

Lost the receipt.

His uncomfortable life

didn’t fit.

Cried

as a baby.

Nations asked him.

He had no answers.

No salvation.

## Evolution Teaches Bird to be Quicker

Evolution sat on the riverbank with a raven

scooping mud into a pile

fashioning a great fat worm

dangling it in front of the bird's face

but before raven could eat it

took it back, squashed moulded pummelled it

into a lizard

pulled legs off, painted it silver

and held it aloft as a wriggling giggling fish

but before raven could eat it

added more mud and made a dog and a snake and a tree

roaring in triumph

but didn't hear footsteps of Creation behind

who clubbed and stomped with huge fists and steel-toed boots

leaving Evolution crumpled into dirt,

skinned,

intestines hung as washing lines drying in sun,

blood seeping into rocks as fossils

in a terrible state, incredibly cheesed off.

Creation went away thinking Evolution dead.

Bird, still hungry, flew off totally non-plussed.

## Daydream

Ball spun on her finger,

lobbed through a hoop.

Shot rocketed to the top corner

in the dying moments.

Tenth wicket fell

with the last ball.

Championship won

in final millisecond of extra time.

She held the cup aloft.

Ran a lap of honour.

Everyone stood.

Hats and scarves littering the sky.

Creation awoke knee-deep in crap

trying to persuade worms not to write in mud.

## Dangerous Thought

Time hollowed a moment,

split of second

in which to rest, recline.

The view as far as Time's eyes could reach.

Reasoned

if each instant this big,

pulse of a beat of a heart so massive

it encompassed the whole of wholeness

why did anyone need Time?

Shuffled on

hoping no-one had heard.

Never spoke of it again.

Like someone at a job interview

trying not to mention a previous conviction

or problems

with their mental health.

## Religious Tomfoolery

Women: Evolution tried to get

saint and whore into the same body.

No matter how that struggle played

they would not fit the narrow shell

two heads not being better than one

on this particular occasion.

So God, with celestial shoehorn,

heaved them into that tight frame,

riveted both

to be bolted together, forever.

Years passed. They faced each other

across the emptiness of cavity

of tendon and gristle

peering from behind

two eye holes, pulling rope and lever

which moved limb and trunk and head.

But man, being literal, and expert

in construction and all things mechanical,

became confused to bone,

to the very marrow of cell fibre.

For when he shook the structure

it rattled,

two or more objects clearly loose inside.

Therefore, teams were organised

to remedy the situation. Many clambered

through peep holes

and fell to death behind the cliff face

of that great divide,

others lost sanity in philosophy of it.

A few wrote mighty books

then covered the machine

completely in cloth

to keep it from sight or mind.

Great cans of worms were opened,

lid never replaced

so worms roamed everywhere

into all nooks and crannies

of dark recesses of dark recesses.

Some emerged later

covered in bile dripping murder

speaking original sin and retribution

making the whole world shudder.

A compromise emerged

but no-one ever knew what it was.

Then man awoke

it had just been a dream.

Then man awoke

made of snails and puppy dog's tails.

Then man awoke

welded to mother and sister

who spoke a different language.

Then man awoke,

farted, and went back to sleep.

## Born Stupid

Nothing in place.

Not heart - which flopped unevenly

side to side, spewing blood in its rib cage;

not brain - jelly impostor rattling around

walls of prison skull;

not nerve - guy rope dangling,

high tension washing line;

not smile - ripped from a criminal’s face

hung for murder, lips stuck on with spit;

not hand - disconnected from body

by an abhorrence of arm;

not tongue - shoe leather carpet, clacking

as a washerwoman pulled through a mangle;

not fibre of muscle - spun from beetle and spider

crawling under a soil of skin.

Walking as an unconsecrated grave,

spewing and belching from every orifice,

monstrosity even to a blind mother's eyes,

first poet arose. Universe retched.

Hid indoors.

Even the Great Snake lowered its gaze.

Poet began to write: something about

laughter, butterflies, majestic rays of sun.

Universe heaved a high five of laughter,

wet itself, and got on with business

stopping only to open bowels on the poet

for it to be recycled as daffodils.

## Terrible Misunderstanding

God utterly appalled.

Wherever disaster occurred, their fingerprints lingered.

Evolution sat sharpening a smile

to fit bank managers and East End villains.

Truth sat whittling a pole

to impale philosophers and theologians.

Hunter sat learning how to eat and break wind concurrently

to save Time.

Time had already run out trying to save itself.

God had learned not to trust Time at all

(promised so much - delivered so little).

Therefore, God created Chaos

and told Chaos to keep them in good order, well organised,

make sure everything worked properly, invent *fine fettle*.

Chaos nodded but didn't listen (as usual)

so went off to do, well, what might have been said. And whatever.

Aeons later,

God pointed out Chaos had done the opposite of what was intended.

Chaos disagreed and referred to written notes (which had been lost).

It was a sore point between them.

The sore point filed down, polished, sharpened,

became the first argument.

## New Lamps for Old

Something died

in order something might live.

Karma sighed

from the enormity.

Yet fair exchange.

Tally intact

only column heading altered.

Date entered,

debt undertaken,

contract established.

Huge wheels stood ready

to grind out a price.

## Celestial Mishap

The moment right,

honed by skilled crafts,

adjusted until all struts creaked.

Event lined up.

Polished, shaped.

No finer event had ever been made.

Such style, impact, grace. Hands were already

weaving applause.

Moment and event were married.

They did not fit. No amount

of cursing or bad grace could alter it.

Creation swerved off-road

down a bank

crashed arse-over-tit in a ditch.

Excuses, who tried to right things,

slipped on apologies

littering the scene.

Hindsight led an investigation.

Expectation took most blame

for not checking detail.

The event never fitted

and prowled uneasily from its station.

Words patched some

dented bodywork

but twisted metal sprung eternally.

Had to re-write history

just to claim on the insurance.

## Stupid Bet

Evolution showed the mouse cheese.

Suddenly the cheese became a cat.

The cat chased the mouse who became a dog.

The dog looked puzzled but chased the cat on principle.

The cat became a horse and both looked puzzled.

The dog became a man who rode the horse.

The horse became a mushroom and the man looked silly.

The man angst about who he was, and where he had come from,

and whether this was all real, and how stupid he felt about

the whole business with the mushroom, and no, it wasn't sexual.

Then the man became a radish and didn't worry anymore.

The mushroom became a mouse. The radish became cheese.

This was the least number of moves necessary.

They had to pay up.

Evolution ate the cheese. The mouse filed for harassment.

## Nature Will Not Play the Game

Hid by sunlight

I am only what green folk called me.

No mistletoe I

who fits day wrong side round.

No smell of twig or leaf adhere,

stink of standing stone, maypole glen.

I who climbed Jacob’s ladder

out of forest where wood grieves still

spark crushed in my ashen white hand.

I am the Pale Son

bloodless, borne by wind

swift as smoke, strong as boulder

in which they tried to cage me.

Glanced once among oak fellow and yew

yet no longer.

I sing on wire now

fastened to sparrow and fox who run

apace your children.

Skulk on bird-table, fallow field.

I am holly in the enchantment,

nursery rhyme in which you celebrate murder

but still rest careless.

And I, licking tops

of milk bottles as you sleep.

## Gravity

Magnetic

bolted into rocks, pulling lode needle

with muscle rooted in sun.

Deep of earth-belly

crucified in atoms

which peer into shrouds of nothingness.

Stateless

has no escape

stitching cloud and sky

to top of hill and mountain

wearing the grimace of that dark art.

Pursued by physics

who wrenches that language

savagely from lips yet cannot speak it.

Weary beyond infinity

survives,

grasping exhausted matter

on the weigh-scale of a hand.

## Revelation

Fell from heaven

flat against concrete bones of speech

bruising itself on ugly words,

bigotry visceral in its embrace.

An angel in unlikely surroundings

cupping frail ears

as the electrical tongue jolted, shocked,

as great wings folded,

as it became *Icarus of the Sticks*

*and Stones*. Jagged syllables

swung backs of hands

against porcelain skin, indignity burrowing

as worms into unpolluted flesh.

The sophisticated perversion of rhetoric

strutted, untamed, even the religious creed

tasted of the stench of death.

Flapping lips of a rag doll,

filling lung with broth of tree and sun,

cords heaved oxygen treacle from mouth

releasing their heavy load:

*I bring you glad tidings.*

## Hunter’s Bad Day

Hunter busy trying to nail

Truth down

wielding a great hammer wrought from what little brain he had

with nails of paper

onto shifting sand.

It squirted, slid,

and when he thought he had it

disappeared to reappear

in a slightly different location.

Friends tried to help

but brought a staple gun

and looked in entirely the wrong place

thus clouding the issue, so he had to kill them.

He bought self-help books

to corner the beast

but lost his mind reading each tome.

Evolution, busy painting politician's tongues silver,

suggested complete surrender.

Advice ignored, as Hunter leapt towards Truth

hands awash with knives.

He missed and pinned himself to ground instead.

Unable to move

tried desperately to snag its coat with his teeth.

Truth stepped back.

Worse,

mooned him from short distance.

Hunter’s weeping so pitiful, even Evolution had to laugh.

## Happiness Fable

Once, Happiness roamed

striding over endless plains

laughing, dancing,

singing at the apex of a great voice

loud, brash, falling over.

Then the Great Snake said *Idle hands are mine: be careful*.

So they tried to catch Happiness

but ears that hear heard them coming.

So they tried to bind Happiness

but ropes slipped free from carefree limbs.

So they tried to cage Happiness

but an open heart passed through all bars.

Then the Great Snake said *Listen to me: I can help*.

So they caught Happiness with fear and hate

using words that grow and bind by stealth.

So they bound Happiness with guilt and shame

using ropes that tie from the inside-out.

So they caged Happiness with work and duty

using bars that can’t be seen or touched.

The Great Snake clapped with no hands

and pulled out a plum

and everybody sailed to hell

in a pea green boat.

## Eve Speaks

*As I was saying to my mother…..*

beast, defeated, fell harmlessly back into the tomb,

*As I was saying to my mother…..*

for a glimpse of mineral, heaven was lost,

*As I was saying to my mother…..*

a brother who is immediate is not long enough,

*As I was saying to my mother…..*

She fell silent. Words did not fit together.

As she listened, they had no meaning,

Language became torn rice paper.

Arms wouldn't connect with her body,

children didn't belong in their pram.

Planet spinning on an axis

that was slipping, skewing away.

She walked. Clothes grew big on her.

Trailed on the floor bundled in huge piles

that became a spreading cloth tide.

Opened her mouth and dust cascaded.

*As I was saying to my mother…..*

## Adam Listens

O you are a pretty thing.

O your smile lights the sky.

O when you laugh, I die.

O your breasts excite me.

O your tongue excites me.

Then wore ears

borrowed from stone

lest any word

filtered in

to smudge his vision of her.

## Etcetera, Etcetera

Something lost.

No-one knew where.

Hands ripped the entire cosmos belly-up.

It became not found in many places.

Contractors interrogated.

Had it been left off plans? Even worse, built over?

They denied every accusation

banging tables, threatening to sue.

Boxes were dishevelled in great number.

Bottom drawers bore the main brunt

sustaining horrific casualties.

Eyes accused one another.

In desperation, theories were let out of locked minds.

They wrought terrible damage.

Many religious and flaky. Spoke of sin,

punishment, being scoured for your own good.

Sex blamed at one point

(although used to blame, was still hurt).

Never located: left off lists forever.

Many suspected Skulduggery. Skulduggery denied everything.

Produced an alibi.

## Evolutionary Theory

Evolution, light-headed from smoking oxygen

and dating carbon,

pondered Science.

After musing spoke:

*It is*

*observation and experiment critically appraised*

*by sex-mad monkeys,*

*brainless information junkies*

*trying to rub two dry hypotheses together*

*to know everything*

*yet still can’t even predict the weather.*

As Evolution laughed at its own wit

Science picked its pockets

taking loose strands of DNA

(the keys to its car).

## Wisdom Dances with Truth

At sign of summer thickening into winter

when ice crimps leaves

homeless with rugged faces,

bewildered, tied by enchantment to each other,

Wisdom and Truth meet.

Both must keep faith with the other

but neither

may speak.

When guests come

they are dancing

feet pounding dust from wood boards

flailing arms and legs wildly, recklessly.

Though neither

has spoken

they sway to the same beat

yet badly.

As parents

at a sixth form dance

oblivious to circumstance

or their children’s mortification.

## How Hunter Discovered Fire

Implacably deranged, irrevocably at long odds,

the Suth watched the Menad through wordless eyes.

Adopted incidents stretching them into cause celebres.

Developed a new language, words such as immagrantii and woopo,

borrowed virtue and painted it in their own colours.

The Menad trafficked in discontent, honing rancour.

Dipped the Suth's flag in children's blood

holding it aloft shouting *Here, this is what they do!*

Beat themselves up in police cells out of spite.

Burst chests with instant answers, retribution, rap.

The Suth circled, drew short straws, trained relentlessly,

hatred sown as tin tacks which split the Menad's tyres.

Spent years welding young minds shut, bolting church doors,

drawing signs on coffee shops, sidewalks, synagogues,

growing an imaginary life free of them.

Then the Menad became an unacceptable rise

venturing into new beginnings, eroding old lifestyles,

dipping consumer arrows in silence and boycott.

They danced on their enemy’s graves as hammers

never, never, forgetting. Grinding revenge fine as sand.

Suddenly they jammed together in great tides.

Stored sense away in a box, hacked off arms and legs,

pulled out teeth to carve them into bullets,

drew stars on each other, stamped passports with marks,

dry-gulched strangers in blind alleyways,

raised walls, built abattoirs to boil the other down.

Subtracted lives in huge numbers staggering under the weight

until billions lay dead hogging whole landscapes of graves.

Then burst atomic thoughts and uranium-tipped genes

and cantered through countries as agent orange.

Chaos watching felt they had some good ideas;

Truth watching asked to be left out of it;

Justice watching neither knew nor cared;

Logic watching said it all seemed perfectly reasonable.

Generations spent, battle fell exhausted, impossibly

depleted, the Suth and Menad, irrevocably dissolved.

One last survivor lay dying on the ground

scarlet hate of blood flowing, soaking into dirt,

scorched blackened skin belching acrid smoke.

Then Hunter (who had been hiding behind a tree)

snuck up from behind and bludgeoned it to death

learning a great lesson - always pick your moment.

And as Hunter pounded the smouldering body

his club burst into flame, gloriously, magnificently.

Hunter had discovered fire: his first great victory.

No-one else saw it as they had gone home

apart from Evolution who was sat making notes.

## Fortress

Bliss

entombed in a brick wall

debased by graffiti

under a mountain

sunk in a sea

piled high with bones of drown mariners

concealed in a string bag

in pocket of a madman

dead and buried

in a town no-one has ever visited

enclosed by lead

sealed with seven seals

guarded by a two-headed dog

endlessly tormented by hunger

with a hundred eyes

and claws the size of cathedrals.

If (against all odds)

someone did find Bliss,

it was told to speak in a language

they could not understand,

make promises it would not keep,

then beat them to a pulp

and piss on them

(unless they were on fire).

The price of any commodity fixed by its rarity

and brutality of its defence.

## Serendipity

The air calm. Nothing stirred.

He paced the street.

Sun beat down,

birds sang.

A hoarding displayed the same number

as his car,

also

the number on a door.

He smiled.

Suddenly, everything fitted

as tumblers

dropping into place.

Paper held by wind

led to that self-same door.

In the doorway

a headline

shouted a name.

He bet everything on a horse with that name.

It lost. Bankrupt,

depressed, killed himself.

His widow won the lottery

using the date and time

of his funeral.

All her dreams came true.

Every one of them.

Mysterious accidents. As if by chance.

## Friday Afternoon

Creation determined

to make all the irritating people in the world.

Get them out of the way.

Began with train spotters to get her eye in.

Pretty soon knee-deep in hippies, free spirits,

university professors who dressed as tramps,

anyone who delivered junk mail, computer nerds,

anarchists, advertising executives, new-age travellers.

It all got *out of hand*. They sang Kumbaya

which threw her lopsided. Organised marches

with huge banners. Were untidy

and dropped crisps down the back of her sofa.

Held days of action and sent letters

from solicitors. Started inventing their own

conspiracies (annoying as she'd

made more than enough real ones).

She became bollock-brained and gibber-headed.

Erased a couple but crowds gathered

to form a support group. Uncovered counselling

which she was hiding for herself.

She had picked a fresh day to cut the shapes from

but someone had slipped in an old one

already marked

with tattered edges.

Took a shower. The water was cold.

Found someone had stolen the soap

and left hair around the plug.

## Water Sports

Evolution picked up the ball

drove a million miles, lived a million lifetimes.

The ball knackered.

Evolution picked up a small chimp

drove a million miles, lived a million lifetimes.

The chimp became an investment banker

who had a plush apartment with a pool.

Evolution threw the ball into the pool.

It floated. The investment banker did not.

Repeated the whole process several times

with different balls and chimps. Always the same result.

It proved something but Evolution wasn't sure what.

This became the first experiment.

It occurred long before outcomes or conclusions were invented.

Eventually the police were called.

## Truth’s Reassurance to the Breeze

Billowing sails in open wind

feet driven mindlessly, ceaselessly,

a wilderness of empty mouths

descending on a fertile land.

Cold weather with its flapping sleeves

kissing the traveller's face and hands.

Pushing, pushing, but they will not leave

tight in nests of stick and daub.

*See how they are just literal!*

*Flesh hung skeletons with children!*

*Hollow pits of bellies ranging*

*leaving scars upon our green house.*

*Do not grieve so, wind and water*

*though they grind your magic underfoot.*

*It has all been given to them*

*yet they come to death and fade away.*

## Early Northerner

Out of sooty Yorkshire town he came

dressed in unspun flax, debris-strewn rivers,

metal girders welded together as a brain,

all artistry spat out as slivers

of coal, cracking in the molten fires he

once stoked. Foundry fodder. Then planted

his cleated boots, hard, hard, down into history

and said, *This is good. This is mine*. Re-invented

every lungful of wind as tribute to his asbestos breath,

adorned buildings with disfigured, half-demolished masonry,

all thought not clothed in steel or dug from earth

purged by that model of bone and broth called *Bitter Necessity*.

Said, *This is better*. Then called for the light

only found during overcast Manchester weather.

So rested. Content that in this fight

the world would be re-cast in his honour.

\*

*It is not in the understanding*

*that life deceives, it is in the undemanding*

*life you lead.*

*All life is toil.* This was his creed.

\*

Constitution refurbished to his own exacting

standard then soldered into place. Each homily a barb, the telling

of his tale. When he walked, gold would recede

to base metal and the ground would bleed.

\*

He dismantled the 20th century

(the last full set on which to practice)

to several pieces - shifted, sorted - completely

reduced spoil to brick and mortar. All artifice -

opera, the classics - ground to dust.

Not a matter of taste, rather one of purpose.

*In concrete and stone we trust!*

*Not the airy-fairy nature of the curious*

*and outlandish*

*who always take the other part,*

*smudge a canvas*

*and call it art.*

\*

Do not worry reader.

It is a fairy story, a fable,

spun for children

and adults

of a nervous disposition

of a man

so embroiled in his own certainty

and foolishness

he set out to destroy all mystery

in the world

so as to align creation

to

his own limited imagination.

It could never happen again.

## And They Found Each Other in Later Life

what constraints or desolation

eyes, calm in unblinking light

fingers clasped in touching rhymes

hold this ease and falling night

this meeting, so unexpected

set beyond the clamour of youth

close in sound and smiling touch

leaning over a stranger’s mouth

what moved this poetry of figures

dreaming of a distant moon

to look for flower’s faded history

to sing in love’s discovered tune

what passage of time is so constructed

built with hands which understand

who calls upon this place of knowing

sleeping in a foreign land

all summer in the messages

looks and words display, proclaim

what pierced a fallen heart’s desire

so beautiful the spear became

upon such autumn leaves of passing

in gentle breath and flesh like wine

this fragile fruit, so long in growing

on open road and lover’s bed entwine

## Love

Love dripped from eyes first

onto nape of neck

stumbling down the stairs of spine

jangling keys, making promises,

seeping through the litmus

of sense and reservation

dropping both stone-dead in its wake,

out through tunnel of nerves, veins,

bleeding from fingers into a disbelieving hand

which fell, surrendered, into the fold

of another

swung together

as electricity swings through a tree

voltage splitting the trunk asunder.

## First Love

His eyes needed mending.

They did not see

what his mind wished them to

and being adjusted, his heart leapt.

That breathless, inspired correction

armed the blank shot of his desire

illuminating it as music across a drab soul;

perverted heaven to a flower, drained

abdomen and groin

as slaves into her animal beauty.

Moments flooded

full of scholars and saints

dissecting each relevance, each aside.

Dramatic heights scattered to fill

normal space. His compulsion

stunned dogs in the street

and caused cars to crash.

He broke up with life and repackaged it

as a block of poetry. Became temporarily unstable

jangling among her cleavage

his nose bleeding with sheer venom of it.

O for romance, smouldering emotion.

Inherited the strength of a nation

and set about armies shouting his creed.

Released his mouth

to the depths of her pleated skirt.

Dug out a future with uncalculated plans

falling little boy at her feet

spilling over a chasm of distance between them.

When the time was right

asked if she would worship him

but she didn't want a deity

rather, a switch she could shape

over many years.

He expired in a breath

impaled on the blade of her uvula.

Fate chewed the remnant of his body

leaving scars on his wrists

which looked like thick fuse wire

but were not natural.

His body lost in memories

among unspeakable things

it did to itself. Despite many doubts

was born again

but this time without compassion,

tongue erased.

He spoke without smiles

having lost all mystery and invincibility.

## Experimental Art

Today she would unveil the exhibit,

crack open every inch to public viewing.

A *coming-of-age* sort of thing.

Had lined up romance which sat flexing smiles.

Passion was tripping off tongues

and cantering into extremities.

Mesmerised her prey

who was all ends up, chivalry's empty head.

Words were throaty and sexy

and virtually ran towards the bedroom

unpacking all sorts of raw emotion,

shovelling great piles of bodily fluid.

It became momentous, also dark and trembling.

They dispensed with technique entirely at one point

with perpendicular acts performed

without any form of embargo.

Birthmarks were spotted drowning in limbs,

all planetary activity disrupted

by a blur of hands in secret recesses.

Glands gargled, there were tangles of membranes,

a pelvis that blew up out of all proportion

to its body.

Before long, they were both completely drained

left as faint tremors upholstered in muscle

sleeping in tired skins.

## Unicorn

Heavens ached

empty belly blot sad.

All goodness, honour,

captured in a single frame.

Last of a kind: horribly lost.

No-one knew why or wherefore.

Mountains heaved,

metal bars twisted their own frame,

even death

(heart of stone)

shed a waterless tear.

Meanwhile, Hunter

who had trapped a white pointy thing

in a barn

was busy trying to shag it

(if it would stand still long enough).

Failing that, would eat it.

## The Prophet

God hollowed his body to fit inside.

The man screamed endlessly. God held both ears.

Dragged him with the strength of madness

into seven hells, blasting him to clinker

and furnace leakage.

Man sat weeping. God retched.

Struck a match and clarified him to charcoal.

Pasted sulphur to his breath, ripped him

entrail-side out paralysed with fear.

Poured gold into the bunker

of his mouth.

Humanity winced. Said nothing.

Tempered, fitted,

God said *They will hate you. Now spread my word.*

Man stood,

a lopped-out scrag-end of ashtray.

Motioned to speak then fell dead as a twig.

God cast for volunteers. Humanity stepped back.

So God busied

arranging conjunctions and heavenly events.

People crept up

cutting fingers and toes from the corpse

to keep in velvet-lined boxes.

## Adam Ran

He ran

as skies sombre and birds recede

he ran

as trees grew constructing their loose-leaf cover

he ran

as stars looked down

scratched from their fiery authority

he ran

as all eternity

contrived to speak only in his wake

he ran

as age tried to stumble humble him

and wear his legs to simple stumps

he ran

as waves lapped around his lungs

leaving him sea scraped and barnacle blessed

he ran

as sun beat and blister tortured him

he ran

as years took all understanding and comprehension

he ran

as the brutes of history

killed his children and wife

he ran

he ran

he ran

senselessly, mindlessly, free.

## Eve’s Bitter Pill

Sick

from root of tree, blind cavern

from core to core

from vacuum of word

from rictus of smile

from relentless gutless

pictures in magazines

from ash skull

from what had been burnt there

from who had lit a fire and why

from endless mirrors, threat of death

from a corruption of code running endlessly

as opera into a balmy Italian evening

from subtraction multiplication division

essay thesis career children

shopping dinner arguments television.

Every moment, space invaded

nested with wasps, whispers, wavering, wondering.

How she wished, wished, wished, it empty.

She would never forgive. No, not ever.

## Sun Seeds Its Children in the Devastated Ground

Deserts sank roots deep

into despair of the garden

cupping charred hands around arid tears of sun.

Ground bursting with itch

scratched with river fingers

pulling sand off a desperate dying hide.

From abundance to impotence

wept

buried under blistered skin.

While deserts,

sure in scorched victory,

roamed over parched boughs

austere as ash

looking up to the candle

lips mouthing the purest prayer

*We are your mirror.*

## Fool’s Errand

Time (who had no notion

of itself)

vowed to perfect emotion

distilling its essence

into a sweet child

called Sharon.

Turned the Bunsen on

to evaporate and clarify

even more.

Poured her nectar into a funnel

each drop caught

in a glass siphon

dripping onto her great-grandchild

John

below.

Analysed on a spectrometer

colour, hue,

then sampled that part

which was the best,

clearest,

into John's great-great-grandchild

Sue.

So it laboured

until Time got bored

and called the whole thing off

halfway through.

## Parable of the White Suit

There was a man who loved a woman so much

he wanted to bed her.

O how he loved her.

He stole a white suit, not his at all

but belonging to someone else entirely

to be her knight, and all the world's suitor.

The cloth cut from truth

but the yarn only half-truth and half-lie

yet it fit well and looked sharp

and from the outside you could hardly tell.

He wore it and wooed her.

Suit a success: both elegant and covering

all irregularities.

Sound of his declarations,

awesome and horrible at the same instant.

O how he loved her.

He married and made an honest mistake of her.

Over years the suit grew tighter

becoming its own revenge

weaving itself tighter every decade

until it squeezed all volume from limb and trunk alike.

An awful sight: hands and face engorged

with displaced blood. Friends died of shock.

He grinned and bore up

remarkably badly

under the vice grip of its attentions.

In time, his heart gave up

unable to find any room to beat

and not caring.

He was buried in a coffin too big

for his compressed state.

It rattled embarrassingly at the funeral.

The vicar praised the quality of his suit

not realising it didn't fit

or he was a prisoner of it

or that it had throttled bodily fluid from him.

His family performed a post-mortem

but were unable to separate corpse

from adopted skin.

The story emerged from the wreckage of his life

preferring to call itself a parable,

wearing a high collar and dark glasses

to obfuscate its meaning

and appear enigmatic and well-educated.

Scandalously, it would later change facts

to serve its own ends.

## Prayer Answered

God hollowed the skin

with an old fruit bowl

until it fell unspeakably empty.

No semblance of pulp remained,

only a breeze

puffed up the shell

strutting as a billowing sail.

The core - pips, blood, sinew -

spent their fibre

to dogs and cats

who came greedily to that ghastly table.

When dry, prepared,

husk filled with rice and sand

(for ballast)

and books

(for brains)

sewn up good and proper like.

Heart not replaced

as she requested.

What was the use of a thing

so easily broken?

Limbs flopped

uneasily into distance

slapping against pavement and road

safe from pain forever.

## Fool Moon

Fool moon

knew no other but to hide in the eye of an old man

who rattled him around worn pupil

dice in a cup til fool moon’s head spun,

so he squatted in water and licked up on the tongue of frog

who jumped and jolted his grey bones,

so he hid in trees, wormed his way onto windowpanes,

sat for his portrait painted in idle evening drumming ghost fingers,

then

settled in the gaze of lovers preening himself in their deep pool reflection

looking at the sky, face laughing

with the very sport of it.

## Time Finds a New Game to Play

Unbeknown, Time entered the man at radial pulse

and climbed effortlessly through hollow tubes

singing melancholy songs which turned his hair white,

and thinking deep thoughts

that sank as submarines, poured into shoes

which made his feet boulders and heavy water,

and weaving guy-ropes out of metal

strung limb and neck and backbone together

so when Time pulled, he crumpled into himself.

Then stared through his eyes

at the pages of a calendar,

then wrote hymns on his tears

at the funerals of friends,

then pasted his body into photographs

taken before colour bled through silver

then paused. Lost in admiration

at the great beating, pounding heart,

chamber metronome heaving

before pressing the node button

and watching it splutter and cough as a car misfiring

or a firecracker jerking.

Pressing it on and off

as a child with a toy for many years.

## Ancient Story

Profanity rested in a docker,

exhausted after a hard day’s work

wanting to sleep and catch breath.

Sacred poked the man

and woke him up.

Profanity told her

to mind her own business.

Sacred blushed and giggled as a virgin.

So

set off to find a room to rent

in a book of pornography.

Sacred peeked around a page

wearing best doe eyes.

Ran

from house to house in an insurance salesman

wearing a thin smile as disguise.

Sacred found him and tripped him up.

He lifted her skirts

and spanked her hard on the bottom

thinking to get rid

yet she howled with laughter until her tears became a river.

That instant realised would never be free of her.

## Profanity Takes Sacred on a First Date

He had found the suit of a young priest

and wore him well. Body fitted.

Had tried ears and eyes and teeth,

all satisfactory enough. Profanity invited

Sacred inside to take a look.

When they had cleared out

the clutter of his passion and had

carpeted him with verses from the bible

there was just enough room

to squeeze inside.

There they lived for many years.

They argued, fought, kissed,

didn't speak for months, then

gibbered away all night and for days on end

until they had totally worn the old

man out. His skin an oily dishcloth,

teeth falling from his jaw, mind

riddled with endless chatter

gasping for breath. Then they left

and looked for somewhere else

to finish their conversation.

Not even looking back to see

what happened to him.

## Clock

Midnight fell

and blackness underneath was trapped.

Midnight fell

and moon tripped on stars and vanished underfoot.

Midnight fell

and Earth drew shadows about itself as an old man

pulls a coat around crumbling bones

saying

this is too lonely,

this is the dark mirror,

this is where souls throw their humans away.

Clock wore the face of a snail

pretending not to hear the cries of the people

until it slumped back next morning

completely exhausted,

ribs electric with laughter

astonished by its power.

## On the Beach

Truth idly skimmed ideas

on the great tide of humanity

seeing how many bounces could occur

before a pebble sunk.

Became bored. Dropped truths

into a pool.

Watched ripples ripple.

Water boil.

The crabs started fighting.

They called it the holy crab war.

Lasted a thousand years.

One of those summer days

which seem to linger forever.

Had an ice cream. Watched the sun go down.

## Life and Times

There was a man

who kept words in the cage of his soul

locked, hidden,

frame bending from weight of them.

Had pared each eye to celery stalk

and half-button of retina

lest they plunged headlong to a blink.

Became an unlit sun in whom all is lost.

Stood heavy with limestone skin

fearful of gunpowder thought

which never came. Sighed relief

and rested solid, unexploded,

did not breath for decades

in his awful plan.

Years died and buried themselves,

generations passed. He would not yield.

At eternity's gate

his obscene girth burst and split asunder

letting slats of belly spread

as a flower blooming.

Words tumbled out gasping for oxygen

sucking huge armfuls of air.

Many misshapen and deformed,

some written backwards,

some didn't know

their own meaning anymore.

They rounded on him

wailing and crying for their lost children.

All eyes looked away

fearing to lose sanity

in grief of the moment.

Words tried to write their story

but bounced off paper.

Had to be left to rot

as cabbages do

around the back of a restaurant.

## Hide and Seek

She was barely shot through

by a sliver of Hope

before Fate came-a-hunting.

Fate sniffed her out, suspected, trailed relentlessly.

Derailed her, ripped every friend asunder.

Kept her naked underneath drab clothes

yet she gave nothing away.

Knitted arthritis with hands and feet.

Hollowed her womb bare for bees to use

yet she hardly wavered.

Locked her in a marriage box without oxygen

for many years

scrubbed clean on a washboard of work.

Turned the mangle until blood screamed from her.

She smiled. Planned for better days.

Dug her garden to wasteland.

Made her into a woman who sits in a wasteland,

grinding brain out of ears as sand.

Even so, she would not give up her secret.

Mad with rage,

flogged her senseless with mortality

popping her like a balloon.

Then, wearing a coroner's glove,

split the remnant pod open, peeled skin

and out jumped Hope. There all the time!

Utterly untouched, utterly untroubled,

delighted to have won.

Fate closed both eyes. Started counting.

## Science Speaks Fission

Draped in education (the first great lie)

knowing nothing but what the void had told it,

Science hinted at the source

that river

directly flowing

to the sea.

Its ship, a radical sloop carved from fine intentions,

lay beached on the shore.

A lifeboat to the shipwrecked

already on dry land.

Equations, dipping into atoms,

returned drunk with power

and spilled into fingers which would one day

press a button (in good faith, after due process)

to cast a whole city adrift.

## The Golden House

Slaves of nations steeled themselves,

worried deeply,

brains were lashed together on rafts of plans,

children grew ancient

muttering calculus of root of square of windows

all to build the greatest building never seen.

Rooms arose hogging whole horizons.

Gardens drenched a countryside.

Artisans went home irrevocably shattered,

high and mighty went home

blood of local builders on their hands.

Monument to somebody or something.

When they departed, Time beat the planks off it.

Dusted walls with decay, spread lawns with rubble.

Someone wrote a song. Time raked its melody into rubble.

There was a moral somewhere.

Time hammered the crap from it.

Buried everything in an unmarked grave.

## He Was That Man, He Was

He was small mountains, sound of running water,

cut of a sail into an iced north wind,

could stride against the chasm, step lightly, and survive,

and when they buried him, buried him, buried him,

he was the stretch of roots growing, tangled, bursting

spaghetti god

of deep loam, strings playing trees and branches

as marionettes, heaving buds through the great earth mirror

in song

and the beating, pulsing, savage dreams of worms.

## Cruel Trick

Profanity hid

buried under a thousand years.

Teams dug with shovels and picks

yet could not find him.

Expeditions of maps and texts

written in languages which were buried themselves

could not find him.

Then, as if by accident, he jumped out at a shepherd boy

disguised as an ancient clay pot.

In the pot, a scroll.

Scroll announced

Sacred wasn't who she said she was

but some whipper-snapper usurper instead.

Promised if only they could decipher the code

they would know her for who she really was

and because scroll was dripping with history

it was already nearly true.

Many wrote books and speculated.

Fashioned careers lecturing on syntax, how

the paper had been made, the ink which stained it.

Sacred got very, very, angry.

Profanity had never seen any literary vehicle this angry before.

Announced he was ever so sorry

and told everybody how he had done it

though by then they had a new deity,

which although small

kept them all in work and well-fed.

Hence,

wouldn't hear a word against her.

Even worse,

Profanity did the same again

a million times in a million different ways.

In the end,

Sacred knew who she was

but no-one else did

and even she got confused.

Sometimes left the oven on

and the front door unlocked.

Once, found on the street in a nightdress.

Profanity told me. In confidence.

## Young Lovers

She was cheap and provocative

came in high heeled shoes

with a variety of heart-stopping poses.

He came in low baritone

cheap as second-hand chips

heart and soul of clumsy.

He pulled Hunter on as a second skin,

she wore Creation and little else.

When they clambered together all heaven shook.

There were earthquakes in wherever

and other places which had never known

seismic disturbance before.

People from an adjoining galaxy

started banging on the bedroom wall to get some sleep.

Great quantities of sperm erupted.

Amounts previously unheard of in polite conversation.

He dived into every orifice he could find

and several he couldn't.

She filled up like an all-night cafe offering free food,

smiled delicately

then ground his battered member

until it started smoking.

On occasion, sheets spontaneously combusted

and the fire brigade had to be called.

Moderation fainted and awoke covered in sperm.

The fire brigade were covered in sperm.

Horses in the street petrified

they would be covered in sperm.

Organs enlarged in size relentlessly.

Tongues became three feet long

with the strength of sumo wrestlers.

She wore a nurse’s uniform and stilettos;

he wore himself out into base elements.

Balls and ovaries met and arm wrestled

a best of three set series

then returned for a rematch.

Orgasms rushed about the place

bumping into innocent strangers

setting into motion all manner of comic events.

They invented myth and legend.

A great tide of perversity

fried an entire forest to a crisp,

planets wobbled,

nations covered their ears

to the unending mayhem.

Gave birth to tribes of children

yet barely paused for breath

banging shit house door in a tornado.

Finally, fell back exhausted, happy.

Read a book by the light of their private parts

which by now were glowing in the dark.

Went to sleep.

Hunter and Creation crawled out completely shattered.

Vowed never again.

Retired taking only a tube of ointment.

Slept for several generations. Totally, utterly, shocked.

## Inquisition

Truth determined to ignite a generation.

Bought kerosene

and took shackles off hell by way of preparation.

Announced the plot in a small, yet influential, book

placed inside the head of an eminent grey-haired scholar

who, being scholarly, had lots of room to spare.

The worthy, all properly accredited,

wore special robes for the day.

Arrived on cue. First, tried to beat Truth out of him.

Truth held the scholar's tongue. Steadfast.

Next, they tried reason, threats, bribes,

pokers, and long tongs shaped as pincers.

Truth held firm, though it got a little noisy.

They would not leave until the scholar quite dead.

Afterwards, Truth returned

as whispers and leaflets when no-one was looking.

A good day's work if a little dull.

Same and same again.

Only the pokers changed

becoming more sophisticated and deadly each passing year.

Truth spent a lot of time

with a poker up its arse. Still does.

## History Lesson

Baby from the gutter womb fell

vilified, half-mad, senseless with rage.

Smacked, squealed as a pig

into ocean towel below.

They bundled it with trash

but it climbed out fighting wars.

They tried to ignore it, but it burnt

their houses and married their children.

They ran but it followed

torturing balance from them.

Then it rested

biting nipple off breast

fool enough to succour it

reasoning *I have no blood on my hands*

*you have not put there*.

In the end, found its filth of nest

and clubbed it with razors and spikes.

Buried it in a casket

bound by chains

yet it haunted them.

So, they bleached it with history,

bound it in book and biography

where all can be tamed

with impunity.

Their final revenge

to ask what others could learn from it.

## Trick of the Light

Truth chanced upon lovers.

They lay, utterly bled into reds and mauve.

A canvas of sheets

framed their art. His breath admonished her

in pastel shades.

Her dreams replied in deep blue and green,

hands marbled

in rainbows

of expectation.

Truth attempted to capture the scene

but couldn't decide.

Painted silhouettes in an ancient daub

as Caesar and Cleopatra.

Didn’t fit.

Tried her in scarlet with screaming lipstick

and sluttish tint.

Not correct.

Settled for a charcoal wash, smudged,

you could see shapes but nothing clear.

They awoke

diminished to grey.

Colour, so clear before, drained.

They left to a separate way.

## The Displaced

Torn from forest,

aboriginal in front skin of face

that is wearing simplicity

and mask of trust,

it is a deer

dipping its own death-arrow

in the poison of open ground;

it is a refugee pared from land

eyes blooded,

body shattered by an evil tithe;

it is a whole country

dressed in a wrong century

speaking the language of victim

wrenched from an ancestral home;

it is a one-sinewed snail

ripped from clothes of shell

naked as naked is

mesmerised in a constellation of eyes

which will smash,

interrogate its terror,

then agree an altar

on which it will be devoured.

## An Allegorical Account of Poet Writing the Book

He railed against the Great Snake,

he railed against *what you know*,

he railed against fate and resignation.

Decided to leave the Great Snake

for others to feed,

live outwith its coil and venom,

try a taste of being free.

But the Great Snake followed him

so he hid mightily,

but the Great Snake sniffed him out

so he threw poems at it,

but the Great Snake ate his poems.

Stop! He retired too exhausted to think.

Then the Great Snake

rattled a stick along the railings of his ribs

and dug holes

for his feet to find to trip him sideways,

lopped the top branches of his sense

so he had barely a canopy of reason left.

He threw caution away

discarded odds (which he didn't like the look of)

and grasped the Great Snake

with all its certainty of doom.

They fell. Fallen, fell some more.

Limbs dropped off, blood spattered (the usual)

until it lay deadish at his feet.

Horribly, his feet were no longer with his body

nor were his arms or hair

or teeth or genitals.

Only his self-respect was left

but that wouldn't buy a can of corn at today's prices.

He breathed a limbless breath

and saw a light at the end of the tunnel.

With astonishing bad luck

the 7:05 to London.

They fed remnant of his remnants to children

as fairy stories and cautionary tales

scaring them wildly,

making sure they would not go into woods

nor try their luck at anything different

nor ever, ever, open the box of life.

All worth it then.

He lies buried in an unmarked grave at poet's corner

in Sainsbury's car park

near where trolleys are parked.

On a full moon

you can hear the Great Snake pissing itself with laughter.

## When Hunger Left Him, He Shouted

Hunger had worn him,

fed thick limbs

as if they were caverns to fill,

as if all food was its tithe,

alarm clock

counting hours

between sacrifices to his deity.

So when

Hunger discarded him

and the man blinked free,

and shouted obscenities repeatedly

and blood-red dyed arms and legs

and stretched his skin to parchment

and spent muscle fibre

as a riverboat burning deck and paddle

to continue a chase

he shrivelled to stump.

Flesh dipped in tallow,

teeth as needles in ulcer mouth

mourning the passing of his full belly

as a grave singing.

Hunger shuddered

looking only ahead,

leaving him as a toy leaves its pleasure

in the hands of children:

as a ghost or not even that.

## Death Nowhere to be Found

Death has hidden in life.

Become the madhouse laughing

peeking from behind masks of locked doors.

It is risen in stones

scattered as God’s bones on grass.

Floundering in a smile, thirsty, hungry,

under a prison of disguises.

Sleepless, listens

swallowed by its own emptiness

perfumed as Lazarus

shattering green leaves to yellow parchment.

The rigid faces of birds are watching

peeling shadows from it.

It is a lament surprised by life.

It is worshipping dust for all life ends there.

It has put on hands and feet

and become deaf, dumb, and blind again

staggering horribly amongst the living

who are ailing in its shadow

despite prayers leaking from their mouths.

## Reality Update

The goddess-whore

who had been busy all morning

doing washing and housework,

and who had already worked herself

to stupor,

sat down for morning coffee.

Thought

now I am woman, what shall I do with it?

Decided marriage the best option.

Arranged to interview men

with a view to filling the position.

Many she talked to were insane,

others flattered her on size of her breasts,

some too busy fixing cars

to notice,

some wrapped her in cotton wool

and polished her senseless,

most wanted to have sex while drinking beer.

A shock.

She became totally disrupted from her zone.

On realising her predicament

all the cloth in the world could not

wipe the tears from her eyes

but that line was too corny

so she deleted it from the poem

(it is only reproduced here under licence).

Could not find a man who had

none of the qualities listed above.

After deciding to become a harridan,

married Hunter

who had all those faults in one grim package.

They lived together their individual lives.

She practised becoming

the butt of jokes and wearing offcuts;

he tried to master simple things

such as talking with his mouth full.

The marriage a complete success

in opinion of Chaos

who made it into a template

for the rest of humanity to use.

Had two children named Famine and War

who grew big and strong

and visited regularly.

In old age

mastered the art of becoming stereotypes

(a position which came with

slippers and a pipe in those days).

Later, became a story in a trendy magazine

and a whole chapter in a book on venereal diseases.

Were buried in adjoining graves

long before they were dead.

A rum do all round.

## Too Late

Used thing fell,

spent now.

Not blessed with fulfilment

but bent broken-backed buildings,

smashed bottles,

discarded prostitutes,

angry newspapers peddling hate.

Bowed,

spitting destiny out

as bad blood between brothers

pleading mitigating circumstance

aching for a reprieve.

The mouth's reply

sound of a prison door slamming.

## Magical Occurrence

Though dead,

soul stripped and laundered,

her body would not

stop its wandering.

It clambered heroically

from satin lined coffin

ranting aimlessly,

exploding doubt as fireworks

among laity and clergy alike.

They brought bishops

to consecrate the dead thing's tongue

but it glared treason and blind hatred

from unseeing eyes.

They appealed to *better nature*

but that had been

digested and recycled by worms.

It begged

for all things never done

for all emotion never felt

for one more bloody good shag

but they could not understand

the clacking of its empty cords.

So,

they nailed it to a coffin with nails

made from certainty of loss

which were beyond debate.

Buried under boulder, tree, hill,

still questions the order of things.

## Unscheduled Break

Universe: pissed off to gunnels.

Had embraced Truth in good faith, thinking it original

but there were millions

all looking the same from outside-in

yet totally different from inside - out.

Many had sell-by dates attached.

Most already expired.

And Time was no use. Curved and bendy

when it should have been hard and straight.

And stars kept collapsing after they were hung up.

The only thing that worked was Chaos

and that wouldn't switch off.

Pined for the certainty of the void.

Went on holiday. Left no forwarding address.

Astronomers spotted unopened milk bottles on the doorstep.

## Personal Statement

For all the poets I have killed

under the yoke of ugliness,

that alchemy of muscle, skin,

infinite complexity of a beholder’s eye,

forgive me.

For all hope I have crushed

between the struggle and certainty

of a perpetrator’s relentless grasp,

let me be absolved.

For all innocence lost

torn as payment,

wandering precariously between persuasion and threat,

I await the denial of my guilt.

It is stony ground Eden

of which I dream.

Sapling, turned earth,

harvest rippled with good seed.

For Eden haunts me still.

Who will I blame?

Where will I go or be made welcome?

## Tragedy Played Out

Nothing left but ritual,

grief, passing.

A mother overcome

by horizons disappearing.

Silence shot

into tongue and thought

of the faithful.

Whole play enacted

as if the sequence of rite

was holy in its enactment.

A word misplaced

might cause an edifice to fall

irrevocably, dreadfully, shattered.

Blame in the corner

wrapped

in guilt

waiting for the call

to skulk among twilight hours

whispering into bottomless

pits of ears

speaking words they need to hear.

## Life Riddle

Babies falling from the very tip of sky

through loopholes of clouds recklessly, blindly,

liquidating distance, exhausting speed,

ripping into sound,

embroidering noise as speech.

On, on, ever deeper, faster,

among word-painted pages, secret messages,

learning ten commandments

(some of which they kept)

passing many possibilities on their way.

Disturbing dust on sideboards

in sheer screech of passage.

Listening in tongues

then speculating in many languages.

Diving into obscenity,

shedding childhood sweethearts,

evaporating sense in that heady descent.

Stumbling into shallowness,

yoke, confusion, photographs of themselves.

Plunging, plunging, gravity terrified

having children

getting old and fat

writing memoirs on envelope's backs.

Bodies molten

flesh dripping off arms in alleyways of sweat.

Reading, grieving,

prisoners of memory helplessly waiting

then, bleached by velocity,

they hit the ground SPLAT.

Now what was the point in that?

## Cautionary Tale

Adam awoke in a strange bed.

Late. Sunday morning. His head hurt.

Looked up at someone frying sausages.

Desperately tried to remember her name.

She turned. *Hi, I'm Eve. Back with the living?*

They talked over breakfast.

She said she loved music and literature

and spilled hot coffee over his trousers.

He said it didn't matter

but his gonads were fried to extinction.

Late for things he had to do.

Swapped numbers

and said he would call

but the words died as he said them.

Drove home

swearing to keep off cider. Never rang,

never intended to. All a big mess.

Nine months later

a letter from her solicitors.

Baby born.

Looked like him. No doubt.

He contested maintenance,

didn't want to know anything more.

She went to the press

and it all came out. Not the first time.

He couldn't remember any of it

but there it was in black and white.

*In the beginning...*

All a nightmare.

