

Harvest Home

Still, he came alive to Tiryns out of Hades, the last of twelve labours, for the pleasure of malignant Eurystheus; and at the crossways of Mideia, rich in barley, trembling women with their children looked upon him...

Euphorion

You've taken all your harvest home
beyond the tears and ashes of fading remembrances,
centuries of toil unfolding in the baking sun
until the chance glimpse up from loam-rank fields
to peer the blue wash of sky:
it fast approaches unseen in light
bearing dusk's scythe of shadow.

You've taken all your harvest home
and while stories unfold on long Autumn evenings
the unseen striding darkness upon the land
is cloaked in storm and wind,
a moan riding the reek of shattered cornstalks
and footsteps tracing a circle around the Unsaid,
frenzied,
as children are rushed inside by stark-eyed mothers:
watch the receding form waver in the dust
and it is good to be home.

Yes you've taken all your harvest home
the circling storm weights the periphery
in glaring shadow,
the well-being inside tries not to look too far
beyond the hearth's glow dancing on the dark glass,
outside
a spell awakens the ancient animal soul-song:
a strange twilight out upon the fields
and it is good to be home.

Nefertiti

What Queen

what woman, would not emulate her perfect breasts and thighs?
could Eternity not adore the delicate bones of her face
preserved in the rubble of a craftsman's hut
a mere mound upon the deserted plain
of their once replete royal city?
who knew the dropsical figure
half man, half woman, better than she?
who traced the line of that nose with her nail in the dark
and then felt those sensuous lips
draw up into that most secret smile?
she, who would only open herself in the light of day
for the Aten to impregnate her with his blazing heat
supererogating the limp and flaccid King
grinding his teeth in the sweated glare of noon;
she who alone knew the secret of his womanness
and who loved him deeper than sex;
she who only looked like her King when she was pregnant
(how he adored her then!
joyously, he would order her fecund image to be engraved
alongside his own, a thousand-fold and more
both, reaching for the life-giving hands
of the Originator)
she who was banished from the Court, finally
to assuage the agony of his soul.

Now the beautiful young man she lies with, enraptured
loves her more as a woman of the earth
still, she smiles with love of her Lord
watching the nut-brown naked bodies
of young Amarna girls,
the daughters of Akhenaten
bathing in the Nile:

"O Egypt, the names of our children preserve."

S

S is a sensuous shape and sound, all
sparkle and sequins or Stygian shade,
a snake or shy sasquatch
skirting snowbound settlements, or seductive scent
subdued and serene, sometimes sassy and saucy
screaming SEX at straight, square, sensitive souls...
O S seems a sibilant
soliloquy shunned and sought,
as strange as sporting squid in swaying Sargasso seaweed or
sculpted in sinuous sands and surging shores...
Scarcely salubrious" some should say,
"Such a sententious and simple speech
sketching the sundry senses of S
is a sign of sick solitude spawning silly sophistries..."
Simply so!
Such shilly-shallying skepticism
simply shrouds the shrewdness of S
in seeing Satan's selfish selectivities
suppressing serendipity
stupid sod,
S is no staunch supporter
of such sordid sport
nor suffers the siren's song strapped to
some specious staff of sanity...
Shame Sir!
S scorns the slogans of servitude
the shibboleths of sentience
the sloth of secularism
and sorry schemes of science
a sanguine sorcerer
and shabby saint is S,
a salted sailor
sailing a sublime ship at sea,
shiftless and secretive to some...
Simply so!
A Sisyphean struggle I submit
to seek the slippery,
subtle, and
supremely shifty
S.

Rhetoric is a Whore (Language Makes Something Happen)

I'll go after anything,
I'll find what I need lurking, match in hand
at the back of highly inflammable minds:
my dear, you will let loose
the agitation of the winged word
the contagion of consensus.
Admit it, you are fascinated
by my sensuous shape and sound,
my self-contained artistry,
my tongue of fire.
You must tell me what you like.
"I'm not sure if I can put this into words...."
--are you kidding me?
Lard the patois with a language of power,
sound the sluttish abyss of schemes and tropes--
the touching turn of phrase.
Confess the Lie, confess the Truth,
symbols are not impartial.
Shall we play
"Land of the Free" or "Evil Empire"?
I say,
intonation is alchemical.
READ CAREFULLY:
war of words
art of persuasion
the hype, the hook
to turn the trick
I'll stroke you, make you come
to your point of view
--MILLIONS OF PRIZES--
You just tell me what you like.
Ah, the delicious mendacity of language schatzi,
fool's-gold, the philosopher's stone
I tell you I can tell you
(just this once)
what you should know in other ways:
"Man is the Measure...."
I'll say, "Workers Unite!"
or, "For us there is no impossible!"
I'll say hope, I'll say die
I'll say shucks and jive, it ain't
FREE INSIDE:
there is no beyond the sex
and I am wiser than you know.

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Come on, you've already paid.

What's the matter?

You don't have some kind of block, do you?

Let me help you with Technique:

power without abuse would lose its charm,
compassion without pain is an empty word;

I am contemptible, I am praised, and

I'm going to have you before you can say

"Rhetoric is a whore."

Last Season (Carbondale Lookout, 1994)

An halcyon hell tinged in amber
filled with vacuous vicissitudes, vague storm-warnings,
the afternoon doldrums set in
and I pace the upper catwalk
like the captain of a rusted-out lighter
adrift with engines dead in the Sargasso Sea of the Sky,
drugged in the narcosis of this oppressive Now
this slow leak hissing history.
A heated pillar of air out there
above the green wastes of wind and wave
canting closer on the shallow waters of Acedia,
urged by unseen winds in the dead calm.
The radio now makes unintelligible noises,
the clouds contain alien ciphers,
the deck palpably rots beneath my feet
(ah, what a callow crucifixion these ten years before the mast
with no hoped-for bearing out)

The distant smoke on the horizon, I thought
perhaps another ship
but it was primeval, volcanic, gone
and now the writhing column of air roars closer
a demented sylph
I step into it, blinded, stifling the urge to choke:
where is the eye? the pith, the centre?
For a moment I am propelled into ghastly stellar wastes,
the vacuum with no sensibilities,
the blind cataclysmic clashing of immense mute forces;
but it passes me by, whipping, humming insanely away,
the ship founders upon a reef (now a high hill)
the sea shimmers in a mirage of trees below
the gull on the yardarm flaps to its dark side
(nervous blustering raven cocking his head)
the weather forecast comes over the outside speaker:
Something Low this way comes...
I find myself watching the utter purposiveness of an ant
with obscure excitement: the air is electric.
For the moment, Prometheus is back (just) in time
chained to his high rock, green,
singing like the trees, the seasons--
Ulysses strapped to a specious staff of sanity
Icarus embracing the white-heat of knowledge
too high above his depths
O shut-up already:

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"It was a tough job but someone had to do it,"
I said, descending.

Reminiscence (high que)

Mountain summit wrapped in mist
kneeling in the hot-water tub
to see the stooped woodpecker tree:
cold rain-drops on steaming shoulders.

R

There is a rumour, a recondite report rather
that R has resigned his regency, rejected his respectable record
repudiated his royal reign, recanted his religion
and run off with a rabble of reprobates, roisterers, rogues and ruffians
rebels renowned for rampaging and ransacking
reducing resplendent resorts to ruin.

Really rather remarkable
as R was regarded as reasonable and reserved
a relaxed recluse whose regimen ramified
reading and rhyming, rambling in Roman ruins
rating recipes for ragouts

R was rightly reviewed as a repository of repartee
a raconteur, a ribald romantic, right Ralph?

I say Reggie, our recent rally at Runcible's
is relevant: rumours of riots and revolts...

Ruck really, ruffraff, Reds, Revolution
all that rubbish... Reggie responded

R a Red, really, that's ridiculous!

Read his recent rants Ronny, replied Ralph
refers to us as reactionaries...

ruddy renegade!

Er, ah, Randolph is referred to as
"a rapacious Rajah and repulsive royal relic"

a rather rash remark rumbled Randolph
and R recommends that the royals either retire
or be ripped up regardless of rank or religion

raise up a Republic, run for reelection

raise the ramparts rather! roared Reggie

rally the Royal Rifles and root the rats out!

They rattled, and railed, rankled and reproached

raved, retorted, recriminated

refused to retreat

redeploy, recoup, reinforce, revenge...

repairing to Reggie's refulgent and refreshing rotunda

readily revictualled and revived

they reclined in regal repletion:

I say, Reggie, this Reserve rum is rather rare, what?

remarkable, rumbled a rumbled ruminating Randolph.

Deathmask

I'll not grieve the passing day
When Irish lanes turn green to grey
And Brides of Christ then kneel to pray
Each dusk is Death in passing.

Thoughts of youth relieve the night
And old bones in old times alight,
The drift to rest then sets aright
The age of dark amassing.

Dreams of ships on open sea
Of women's love, of slaves set free
Ring'd slowly in Eternity
To the echoed Heart's refrain.

Fear not Autumn's twilight bliss
The gentle smile of Lachesis,
In Time's great hall of genesis
Old lovers join again.

There these Lords and Ladies lie
And speak now soft with straying eye
On windless heath & changeless sky
Old music fills the air.

`Leave me not' I hear you ask
Not knowing Life's most pressing task
To return... each mortal mask
A step upon the winding stair.

Sunwoman

I stop, because the archetype
requires no further movement from me.
It is all the same
this shimmering strand
the glittering mica and oxides
red-white with heat
burning the feet of Aryan man
the sky a blue bulb the sun its filament
the beach
some sort of demarcation line
where all changes and remains the same, now
ten, or ten-thousand:
a sari of magenta and beetle-blue
fluttering fan-like
beneath her dark arm raised to the sun
her opaque form dances with the wind
with the heat
a slender shadow appearing and disappearing
within her aura:
I can draw no closer
I can move no further away.

Monkey Moon

The monkey is chained to the tree, always
exploring various radii
reaching out beyond those compass strokes
for offerings of cookie and fruit
he is always there, button-eyed, crazy
intimations of Hanuman
in his close-cropped bullet-head
his mobile face
inevitably drawing attention to his delicate hands.

But now he sits upon an upper bough
a silhouette against the moon
reclaimed by the night, by the past
he might have chosen this bough on his own
after swinging through the humid dark
he would be no less free, now,
to blink at his moon
in the somnolent mood of his monkey race
wise little face monkeying the moon.

Wavemen

"Wherever you go: there you are."
except that some truly unique scenic loci
twists of my own anthropocentric plot
do seem to take me somewhere else
convincingly so:
like that Scorpio-man
beneath the thatched fronds of a beach hut
blue eyes rimmed with fire
awaiting his moon-woman
the sun's swollen eye, bleary with sea
flares in his bottle of Kingfisher beer briefly
and dips beneath a lid of cloud for the last huge exit.
We wavemen are part of the rhythm
of three every fifteen or so
diving down, as the swell takes the body
within its arched bow, arrowing it to shore
heads roiled about with frothing brine
floundering in the surf
gasping, exaggeratingly, for air
reborn, shambling back out to sea like black men
bodies stark against the smear of light on watery sand
beneath that huge red eye.

Last Resort

The off-speed good-time music
coloured bulbs askew against the tropical night
falsely festive, vacant,
the tourists are not coming, they are not
"troubles in U.P.," they say
dusky waiters sit in bunches
lolling the odd white face
like today's all-day sucker,
cultists, non-cultists, in the ashram of Beach
eat, fuck, and swim
beyond the blowing garbage, empty lots
uncompleted public works projects
pot-holed roads,
first and third-world couples form syzygies on the beach
but the sands reject our tracks
the palms know only wind and sun
cannot be crossed with silver
white faces wander about, lit like spectres
in car-lights at night
or the portentously Portuguese sunsets of Goa:
another face, another face, and something must happen.
Eat, fuck, and swim
the dogs do it best,
but two bikes hit the low-tide flats
25 pounds of tubing, cable, and rubber
flitting by the last light, the last waves limned in sun
scattering tourists and dogs alike
between here and there, one end to the other
from Taj to Baga this vestigial plane
in the half light tilting to dark
no half measures.

A Journey to the East Revisited

I still get the feeling on the odd occasion, intimations of it anyway. I'm set up for it, as always, by its antithesis mirrored in seamless gleaming modernity: in the malls that all seem to conjoin somewhere, in the medium-is-the-message flight-lounges, and brisk-marching with rush-hour crowds beneath cliffs of concrete and angular sky. One turns a frozen cheek and casts the vicarious eye inwards until one hardly suspects the transition into transitionlessness.

But there it is. Something inexplicable and curiously grounded in memory, drifting with the spectred ranks of the Almost-Forgotten, moving as though underwater through the vaulted passageways of Memory (that Isle of the Dead). Something that speaks of history brought to life, something eclectic and shabby that visually jars and bucks the system. The feeling insinuates itself as I view a distant slum set between skyscrapers.

'Ah, the follies of youth,' I think, or somesuch. I'm vulnerable to the schmaltz: what the hell, why resist the deadly nostalgia? I'm not threatened by the odd flash from the past surely? Jeezuz Christ: "lost dreams"... I mentally proclaim a pause, somewhat portentously; for in spite of it all there lingers that sharp pang of a trail yet beckoning, a sense of the passed-up opportunity of course, of missing one's moment in time and having to retreat miserably into a safer future. Acedia claims one.

It is hard to say how far we might have continued, boarding decrepit buses and trains ad infinitum across vast arid expanses until some mythical edge of the world were to be reached: The Edge. Every morning it was up and rattling off into the sunrise, every mile eroding (so we thought) the stranglehold of technocracy: steam locomotives, wooden carts, then camels, all seemed milestones of Release. I wrote:

We are after the rough edges of foreign cultures to abrade the veneer of our technocratic tutelage.

A sense of history: the footsteps of Alexander in the dust, that blank-eyed statue gazing beyond the brown horizons to iridescent India; of Cyrus the Great and Tamerlane returning to Samarkand; of the outriders of the Mongol horde sweeping north over the Caucasus; of the Crusaders tramping southwards into the dusty haze and glare of Arab sands.

Mad dogs, Englishmen, and deserts. I wrote:

In the sweating flood-lit glare of noon a writhing sand-sea, an austere embrace of light and shadow, sublime and harsh, sublime and soft, where runnels of sand carve lines of sterile sensuousness in the still-life tableau that is desert, where time moves sideways in the glittering wastes, in the stellar wastes.

It is hard to say how far we might have continued. A tepid humid heat, like limp hands, gently throttled us beyond the last great desert in an immenseness of

corrugated tin, lean-tos, scrapboard hovels, mile after mile, creating a sort of airless panic with each legless, handless, beggar, each stooped bundle of rags picking through hills of garbage. Ah, the exalted northern logic withering on the vine, unplucked; the unquenchable thirst; the leaden movements as though one were pinned to the cot by a force of gravity befitting the planetary mass of Jupiter rather than sweltering Bombay. What God stokes this terrific furnace? These multitudes? This Underworld?

We made our way that evening to the train station, the heat of the day lingering an afterglow upon the ragged pavements. The sidewalk families squatted and watched, the rickshaw wallahs cajoled, their vampirish mouths red with beetlenut; the knots of child-beggars danced barefoot in the dust. The train rattled on east out of the station and the city rolled its moribund vistas past. A crowd of beggars ran slapping their hands upon the swaying sides of the carriage in the night. I wrote:

Men prayed me to set my work, the inviolate house
in memory of you.
But for fit monument I shattered it, unfinished: and now
The little things creep out to patch themselves hovels
in the marred shadow
Of your gift.

T.E. Lawrence wrote those lines facing a distance, a void, a paradox in fallen ideals. The mad flatness of the arid skyline still pulled at the psyche with its vast hidden distances trailing off into the east, a promise of a fleeing freedom there and a capacity to enfold the mind in its voidal excesses.

Or somesuch. Older now, I can stifle the irritation with false ideologisms: wry smiles for illusory idealisms, right? What can I say? The harsher proscriptions of this remove lean heavily upon such artless and naïve indulgences.

The train, in any case, rolled on eastwards forever as our bodily sickness ran its course. I wrote:

Kill the past. Kill the fucking future. Present yourselves ye swabs....

And it was time for the apotheosis, the apogee of green flight. The turning-point that confirmed we were indeed plummeting passed unnoticed. A feeling of weightlessness was attributed to the lingering effects of the dysentery.

Colours blurred; actions disjointed themselves. We drank glass after glass of crushed cane juice squeezed out in pale green rivulets onto buckets of ice. The days stretched out, light and dark, beyond our dwindling expectations: crowds moved through crowds like exploding universes.

Act IV: The Last Moments of the World. The high-water mark of intellectual dissolution whispered seditious thoughts. Round guarded eyes a pale flame of

dementia beneath that old sun, on jaded lips the sweet taste of cultural treason (Machiavelli would have raised an eyebrow at the devilishly subtle pragmatism of it all), ID-angst. I hung suspended, about to drop into that hell of confusion; my skin was visibly turning nut-brown: post hoc ergo propter hoc, some sort of lethal joke unravelling one's mythos, one's mind, and the inevitable road back to the West became a retrograde cynicism, idealism in reverse, back through the calibrated miles, days, and years, back into the straight-jacket of the mere mind-being... (?)

Ho-hum. A little too neat it seems.

But I recall that we stood there upon a dusty rise above a squalid marketplace where one walked ankle-deep in rotting verdure. Those smells, and incense, wafted up with the babbling noise in a blur of late-afternoon sunlight diffusing about us in the haze. I cannot idealise this: it was a terrible beauty, and I see us as casuists surely, caught inextricably in our own fictions, our innocuous pretensions mired in a hopeless dichotomy of self, but that too is probably exaggeration.

And then, perhaps predictably, wavering in the distance with all the juxtaposed incongruousness of a photographic overlay, a shimmering tower of a luxury hotel rose above the tottering roofscape, our claustrophobic slumworld, to gleam a lurid beacon for our thoughts.

I turn from the hovering similitude, the ambivalence, and the almost-aphorism that says that the truth always lies "somewhere in-between."

`Ah, the follies of youth,' I think, or somesuch, and glance at the time. It is somewhere in-between.

Bad Homburg Quartet

4.1

Crystall Nacht (Mainz, 26/12/88)

Perhaps they should go back to the forest
try it again somehow
return the lost legion its standard
stay behind the Rhine
learn from their mothers, the trees.

Things still flick into black and white
into rubble and sirens
then back to the tasteful glare of Sodom:
'window-shopping in hell,' thought I
as I joined in.
The old people see the trick, I'm sure
staring at the long show-windows
at the glittering fruit,
shadows of schadenfreude;
they remember a night of shattered glass
sparkling and crunching underfoot
in the straying lamplight,
reflections of feral forms behind them in the night:
their bellicose evening songs
haven't changed that much.

A drunk is barked an order
by a doorman dressed like a Feldmarschall
then marched out the door as though on drill;
there are still small dark men
in the attics of tall blond houses
hidden by their clean lines of light--
a girl sells me a large apple
selecting it carefully
smiling at my thanks
at my fear
and desire

4.2

Englischer Hof (Frankfurt am Main)

The Englischer Hof was destroyed, finally
by English bombs,
but before the wars he used to go there daily
after his walk
to read the English papers.
A fine drizzle slicks the streets
flayed with light
an animal-rights activist stops me
they have a house in the country with 70 cats
I donate 7 marks knowing he would approve;
there are still the infernal cracking of whips here
a man with a beard eating a sausage
has no idea why I laugh
but there is irony
on Schopenhauer Strasse
a priceless moment:
 "Never a rose without a thorn,
 many a thorn without a rose."
I pick them carefully.

4.3

Alle wege fuhren zum Bahnhof (Leaving Frankfurt train-station)

All roads lead to the train-station
as I walk across the square with its props
an ersatz fantasy
entitled `Salome's dream'
mere blocks away she eyes me
as she leads him behind a curtain:
if I wait
will I be the next John--
or perhaps the one who follows after?

Alle wege fuhren zum Bahnhof
a web extending in and out
beneath the iron vault
a higher order adumbrated
by Goethe, or any representative artist,
a libretto in a lower key:
every soul, like notes, shall arrive and depart

on time.

Alle wege fuhren zum Bahnhof
she cried out as the train lurched
precisely at 19:47
she had been robbed
by a man in drag in the WC
(she a woman in drag US soldier-man)
this was the wrong direction
the wrong train
she got off at the next stop
for the return trip:
"I'd like to hear what happened to you,"
she said.

4.4

Interessierte: bitte sie sprechen an Sophia (Bad Homburg)

People and places plucked from the past
like roses
swept along in the flux:
no, memories can't change
the old town remains--
the remains of the old town
touchstone of the mind, I can pull it out
the esoterica of long ago
preserved in details that are just so
because the castle weathers it all.

The woods wait for the brown house we lived in
to slip away
already the young family is gone
the child Marcus left his memories here
I know. I know the mother-in-law
can no longer transform the front hall
into her shining sanctuary--
the careful potted plant is gone
with the young woman who fell in love
with her sister's son.

Alt stadt, alt stadt
intimate the forbidden lovers
their ghosts circling the pond
arm in arm beneath the castle,
walking into Spring.

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I sit in the same pub
the same Christmas aftermath
while they are out there somewhere,
Chris and his goddess.
the sign on the wall
tells of the coming New Year,
a celebration:
"those interested, please speak with Sophia."

Zerzura

[Zerzura was long rumored to have existed deep in the desert west of the Nile River in Egypt or Libya. In writings dating back to the thirteenth century, the authors spoke of a city which was "white as a dove" and called it "The Oasis of Little Birds"]

I found, in the middle of nowhere
as though it has a middle
a tank in a depression
buried above its tracks by one prong of a crescent dune
desiccated bodies inside
a hand still gripping the throttle shaft
we all have different reasons for coming here
and if we stay will end up the same
the dune moves some 19 metres a year
and so the unknown soldiers will be buried
in their time capsule
and then reappear in five or ten years
like a submarine surfacing in a sea of sand:

I came upon a circle of rocks
and looked about
as though the hands that placed them might be near by
I walked and walked until the sun went down and I slept:

I came upon a place
in the honeyed light of morning
mountains o'er a blue lake rimmed with palms
a deserted white city:

I felt a sleepless godless dry wind
softly muttering in the frond roofs
and faintly whistling through the gapped teeth
of white stone walls smiling vacantly at me
small mud-brick houses clamoured and clustered, collapsing
finally, breaking in a wave of rubble
at the foot of the castle walls
something has come over me
in knowing that all are gone
as though I alone returned from a great exodus across the sands
and the others cannot recall the way back
or do not care to:

I thought, `it is as though I am dying'
my physical being drying out, stiffening
and I am awaiting soft release

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the eyes with their bright blindness
see a tethered underworld dissolving
my thoughts circling on mild emotive updrafts
the psyche's thermals
scanning a leftover carrion of ideas without appetite
I have no bloody idea what the hell:

I remember textures now
silking across the skin
roughing and ribbling the tender flesh
a softness that encompasses the hard and rough
allowing it to become what it is
and smells as vivid as colour
in a chiaroscuro of white and shadow
drawing me off down empty side streets these beguiling whiffs
perfumy musk, the sweet sweat of women after love-making
the pong of workers as they lug sand past
in a shuffling line
curry, the alchemy of spices blended and blown in the wind
flowers, drying dung, the smell of water
then abruptly gone
and tastes as swift as wet coolness cleaving a dusty palate
luscious as the spray of a palm nut
whacked open with a machete
the ratcheting crushed cane
pulsing pale green sugary sweetness onto ice
and hallucinatory fruits tumbling golden globes
from ancient crabbled trees in the waste
bobbing in pools
where I might naked dive for them
a blade of flesh shocked into the cool depths
and, surfacing, hanging, see the hand of Eve
diffracted image above the water
holding out a choice one for me
and sounds, sighs, moans
voices rising in wordless disharmonies
plush, soft, evocative and strange chorales
that would drop one to ones knees'
in a cathedral
clasping the ears at the intensity of a tolling swoon
I remember or imagine all
and wish only to commune with the deified dead
the living only draw me down
into my tortured flesh yet again:

I listen to a silence now that is not silence
it is a fullness of voices that quiver in a will to become

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but do not yet manifest themselves
I keep mouthing words and phrases
not just talking to myself
it is compulsive and sure
this feeling that there is a profound listening
at work here
an alchemy of conjuration
be it only a desert metropolis of the mind:

“I am I or am I?
the psychic hermaphrodite
is complete, s/he needs no lineage
past or future
I would prostrate myself
not supplication but a collapse of faith into faith
flaunting my anomalies, my inspired purposelessness
my hollow personage, uselessly following me about
staggering like a golem, and then running after me like a dog
when I get too far ahead
I wish it no ill will but desire it to leave
at high noon it must leave with my shadow
nomos and physis
societal laws--physical laws
cling to me like a cheap perfume
pawing me with sandpaper gloves
goaded this will to survive
I have become like so many
fearing not death but the searing gradients of pain
that guard the door
and so I head off along oblique tangents
on the rim between falling into the sun
or back to earth
what does “transcend” really mean?
I had a brilliant aphorism about my edifying amnesia
but I forgot it
float down to me spirits
drift at me
part the veils of this illusion
if carnal extirpation is the price of another existence
I gladly pay it
and expect no refund
Christ’s crucifixion, the image
pales beside a sensuous and spontaneous necrophilia
of his women taking down his body and washing it
with oils and unguents
Magdalene would draw forth an erection
from me in death

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like Isis would perform the final rite
eros is my thanatos, my death a love as bright as I can fan it
something larger than life:

I had thought I was underwater
limpid light as horsetail clouds
stream by high above waving the flies off the sun's face
I honour death
make her tea and talk about her inactivity here
her amber lynx-eyes unwavering, mirthful
watching me from beneath her blue cowl
her sharpened nails and tattooed hands elegantly inert
perhaps thinking about a myriad of awaiting practicalities
but she is unhurried
and graces me with her casual presence
I jest her
"marry me... say ` `til death do us part"
and she laughs
I was right, I must come for her
and she leaves, smiling and flashing me a look
an ambiguous devouring passion that enlivens:

I am sick of talking about illusions
as though anything I pen or do
can spring from the void
and remain suspended like a mirage
no, I have walked across the baking dust field towards that sheen of water
reflecting the rugged escarpment
and have bathed in its warm pools
felt tiny pink and orange fishes nibble and flit through my fingers
this mother of all deserts is my final canvas
upon which I heave the colours, slashes, smears, and words
of a life
rioting and seducing in verse my calm chaotic inner self
now external in deep-breathing solitudes of feeling
exquisite featherings of her hands on my face
another solemn goddess
warm brown thighs and swelling bosom
held in trust
that my quiet yearnings find their mirror
for she is he, and he is me:

I am reliving the old rite again
on a cliff with no name
and I cling, like a child to a heartless mother
precipitous ascent onto the precipitous
I have been here many times

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the terror
my friend died this way, long ago
when I was still alive
and I wondered why him and not me
incestuous love is a meaningless denigration
for love is love
and the taboos need not have killed him so young
but then what other Adonis
could have so perfectly held the world
a golden apple
and then discarded it, having taken but a bite?

I am building a monument here
at the gateway in from the desert
to a deserted white city
an obsession of mine
I've laboured for years at it
my own tower of Babel reaching up into Saharan skies
covered with disconnected thoughts and feelings
in ancient long-forgotten scripts, antique rhymes
outmoded stanzas and a dictatorial diction, and now
a monumental full-stop of a life's labours
at first done nowhere for no-one
marking my immense solitude and proud futility
that mocked but not too much
through the years since he left
yes, more for myself than he, perhaps
but for him nonetheless
aye, for him:

I of course lost it in finding it
these things have a way of sifting down
beneath thought
like dreams rolled on the tongue a vintage wine
leaving an aftertaste vague and partial, an evanescence
fading, waiting like dry desert seeds
for years and years
until the chance miracle of desert rain
brings it all up in fields of short-lived efflorescence
the experiences were certainly marvellous
but I often can't remember them very well
until something unseen, an inner cloudburst, triggers them full-flushed
I am a seed rolling across the sand
with only the reverberations of feeling
and that waiting will to become:

I have reached the outer end of my radius

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and prolonged the caesura of Zerzura
but you can't stay the very stones and trees tell me
the lake too agrees
the king and queen lie side by side
in unwaking enchantment
I walk back out into the abyss from whence I came
thoughtful, in an opaque mood
marvelling at each footstep raising the dust
that I can leave in the very process of returning
and when I turned again, Zerzura was no longer behind me
it lay, unseen, ahead.

