

The Harbinger And The One-eyed Man, A Sestina In Twin Cinema

The Harbinger of first contact	There is a one-eyed man
Looks upon human eyes	Who watched from a foxhole
As if they were black holes.	As chestnuts fell with eyes,
In fear he begins extracting	Like inverse balloons displace
Them from every man,	Into tar and never recontact—
His own flesh to replace.	From this battle no extracting.
From above he saw a pregnant place—	This is the invasion, extracting,
Force fed till its belly spilled over in contact	Gallow-binding, man after man after man.
With its thighs as its inhabitants, 'man',	This is the resplendent lie of first contact,
Pulled itself into an airless void with eyes	Ecstatic righteous murder carving a hole,
Lunging at each other wanting, extracting—	And men bleed over their birthplace
And thought it was better as a cauterised hole.	With placid wells instead of eyes.
Oh, he could make earth whole	The one-eyed man has had two eyes
And be saviour-landlord of the place,	But in the foxhole cut one out, extracting
Plunge his children into the soil, extracting	The poison, distilling it over the fireplace
As from a suckling pig, like the Zen contact	In arrow-tip blessing; he is still human,
Of seasoned lovers, kissing fastened eyes	The Harbinger, and from a mudhole
Before betrayal, pruning poison from its man	The one-eyed man makes contact

The Harbinger and the one-eyed man are in the throes of extracting blows.

The parties involved put on their contacts and pop out their camera-phones.

The mudhole has become a stage, for one will be a resting place.

Hand-washed

The black inner lining of dad's dark blue shirt collar
is held by her right hand as the left is clenched
up in the expanse of the shirt's back

as if the night sky cocooned itself around the pockmarked moon
and it is bursting to escape.

When she scrubs it is as if the gift-wrapped moon
crashes against an airport runway and grinds
away like the determined sous-chef

grating cheese on the TV one-and-a-half rooms
away from where I stand, watching her.

After awhile she plunges both hands and dad's shirt with it
into the tub sitting before her. The three of them dive
in mortal strife through the surface of the water

which explodes in bits of clear liquid shrapnel. They are transformed—
they have become three great snakes wrestling under a rippling stream;
they have become rivals bobbing a fleshy goal beyond the others' reach;
they have each become a stream themselves, but forking from one body instead of merging

into one;

they are in conflict.

Hand-washed

Then they resurface and are two hands and a shirt again, shrunken
with blots of water fleeing back into their inkwell
where invisible fathers receive their prodigal sons.

She looks up at me and tells me to go back to work. I say,
'mommy please don't be upset',

and she stops. The moon spins to a halt on the runway and unfurls
from the fabric of dusk that held it captive and the sous-chef
stops trying so hard.

Prometheus's Descendants

When we draw our circles
it is with forced admission
that they are functional ellipses,
 their curves have brittle bones.
& from our anesthetic garden—
 what is father up to now?
No doubt beyond west mountain
lifting his pulsing sphere,
 toxic & obese & melting into
 the boundaries of his cuticles,
into the node where an umbilical cord
 once bloomed with bursting injections
 against his heart.
& what of his criminal brother
 last seen with flint in hand?
He hid his fire in the tracks
 Where his descendant stands.

She found it as the trains were made,
 when oriental doilies were brought,
bound to indentured steel bracelets,
set on an intransitive fate.
She was always between carriages,
never picking a side,

Prometheus's Descendants

so if ever one
broke off and left
she'd have the other
blind.

She looks up at every station
to watch men conquer new land
& when they ask her to follow
she'd say her destination's set.

Every time she lies like this
her wandered eyes descend;
two distant stars down past the heavens
fall to the speckled floor.

They enter another galaxy
of frozen staccato-life
& there are no perfect circles,
not in this boxcar plane.

Sometimes she alights somewhere
& those men always emerge
from the wirework onto the tracks
coughing overwrought fancies;

they wait for a familiar sound from the dark
& for their erstwhile fortunes.

On An Overhead Bridge An Armless Beggar-boy

Plato's Symposium could not have helped, nor could Hume or Kant, not even

Socrates or Aristotle— wisdom takes time to manifest, too long in this case.

I thought, perhaps, that I could wait; that was the excuse I used to paint over my peeling innocence, spreading it just like sunblock.

I was grieving his amputated childhood- an unneeded gesture, but I could not have understood. It is mid-day on an overhead bridge in the Malaysian capital.

I memorized it: reliable grey above the threshing of automobiles; piranhas each wearing a steaming name tag. Their names? Proton, Honda- there were others, but all of them did the same job, ate the same fuel. I would not have understood the difference braking speed makes on a falling body then.

It is mid-day, and humid. Looking back, the sweat binding the skin to his clothes and mine is a comforting similarity. Even then, in my black-headed first-world, this was clear injustice. My Father's hand on my left shoulder, I see the stumped, unprofiled suffering on this bridge that divides the vehicle river flowing into the horizon, its concrete surface stretching in perpendicular like a grey band-aid.

We stopped. 'Once in awhile, you do what you can— even if it makes no difference'. He means we are being swindled, that anything that is given is taken away, but he has to give. It helps reach the quota for the day before the syndicate gathers under the bridge, indirectly it does some good, so Father gave as he could, as long as he could. My Mother is beside him. She is stoic with her mouth pursed; she knows this world, she understands. Behind us are transiting figures, apparitions we will never see again, flitting in and out of each others' existence—We were on holiday, visiting family; the apartment would come into view beyond this bridge, but before that

On An Overhead Bridge An Armless Beggar-boy

an armless beggar-boy, serenading passers-by in a dialect they disowned.

The boy, on the grey bridge above the grey road below the grey sky, grey clouds, with a grey clay bowl
between grey feet, cradling it, making it chime like a

song of worship to some greatest conceivable being—

his lyrics went, *beg beg you*, words made to claw into ears and into the system,

made to be parasitic. It took me awhile to learn, like my Father,

how to combine both empathy and resignation, how to, like Mother,

react this mixture with a measured gaze of cold, strong steel;

Mother was a chemist. Was there chemistry between us and the boy?

Our coins reactants? Droplets in his titration experiment?

He was like a scientist, the boy, he was like a vending machine dispensing blessings

for fifty-cent coins. What did he say to my Father? I only remember

the clink activating his voice, wheezing and cracking, an old jukebox,

barely working, playing a recorded track, it is old now.

A voice like this one generation before could have known secrets,

like those between Apollo and Dionysus, who might have told me to be drunk

or to be orderly, to stop questioning or question still more, *what is infinity?*

secrets that dispense dangerous solutions— I have not read Wittgenstein,

I do not know Nietzsche as some say I should. I am told that they have answers, that

after these men I will lose all appetite for the divine—

but should I not have given it away already, as a coin tossed

into the beggar-boy's well? No— there is some part within meeting silence

that forces a look around, like the armless beggar-boy pausing his crepitating siren song

before asking again, long after we have left;

On An Overhead Bridge An Armless Beggar-boy

his answers come as tiny scallops, they require prying open—

Perhaps my Father had tried— perhaps his attempt will lead to more,
to a torrent chiseling at the shell, the boy's exoskeleton, till flesh, till
treasure is for his ribs to grasp in lieu of hands.

Still, I knew to avoid illusion. Before Keats, before Shelley,
even before Cain and Abel, I was born to know what is now
perm-pressed by time and packed away in sediment;

we are all archaeologists these days,
we cross the overhead bridge eventually.

That was always the destination. *Enlightenment.*
Salvation. I beg, I beg you, please?

This is what you bade to me, in no uncertain terms, *gimme*.

Valedictory a black hole you made,
mothered into an insatiable phage;

What fortune-telling tea, your berserker administration,
disposing of unshelled conversation
in a considerate mangrove swamp.

Forgotten and committed to achieving this magnum theft,
the children only feed
on strobe-light.

Your name is pressed into the door, the office-chair in lurch
to the *ping* of sublimate drums
beaten by legislative rage and generation-hate

and war slow-churned and stale with fate;
and blubber-haired newscasters drawing into the dawn,
sweet flavored singing of a destructive yawn;

we're drinking the pictures naked, it's our mission you say
but there are neighbors waving fists with riots even in PJs,
wearing slippers, summer-season knickers, listening to DJs,
watching baby-river grow from grey and junk-stained
to diamonded and slaved,

Chanting *gimme*, you gotta *gimme*, please *gimme* it says;

Gimme cliché *gimme* Nietzsche, lips spreading hair out to dry
these text-things are deserts these books will not thrive.

Gimme Pollock *gimme* Rothko swathing ink prepared to dye

Catharsis

Number 9 comically crashing into Full Fathom Five.
Gimme Cezanne, gimme Monet and together we'll pry
into fruit and squash lilies all over our life.
Gimme Holden Caufield adventures, catcha-catch me in rye
dangle his idealism, cut out with a knife.
I remember days of celebration fire; was it really you
who vetoed the rehash?
I remember war-cries from you—
did I condense your words into ice,
inscrutable? Babel-tongued cherubs make their final stand
and there is no stopping the fallout here,
the fleeing should begin;
but in the memo that you wrote
you threshed free from the chains,
you amputated doldrum-legs
and set us on the land— Oh, potbellied city,
it is time to say goodbye,
to cliché, to Nietzsche:
literary redux, skeptic man—
to Pollock, to Rothko:
keep on swirling, you guys—
to Cezanne, to Monet:
I'll leave your subjects lie—
bye-bye Holden,

Catharsis

no, screw Holden,
it's all phony,
it's all mined.