

SUMMER

upcoming from A. James Sigston

*

as poetry and miscellany

AUTUMN

WINTER

SPRING

*

as short stories

PRESENT PRESENT FUTURE PRESENT DISTANT

*

as science fiction

LE CAFÉ DE LA PEUR



Summer

A. James Sigston

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MAY



brought to you by:

Olga Togarczuk, *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead* (2009, trans. 2018);

Karl Ove Knausgård, *The Morning Star* (2020, trans. 2021);

Sarah Bernstein, *Study for Obedience* (2023);

Thomas Disch, *White Fang Goes Disco* (1971);

Brian Aldiss, *A Science Fiction Omnibus* (2007);

Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars* (1992);

Clue (1985);

Blue Prince (2025);

Barrie Kosky's staging of Richard Wagner, *Die Walküre* (completed 1856, first performance 1870) at the Royal Opera House;
various English folk songs about May Day;
Gustav Mahler, *Symphony No. 1 in D major* (composed 1887, first performance 1889);
Black Country, New Road, *Forever Howlong* (2025);

a collection of Japanese wood at Japan House,
High Street Kensington, London;
Morden Hall Park, and the river Wandle;
and the geographical region of Micronesia,
considering the Marshall Islands in
particular.



I

Well here we go – here we go –
Are we not all innocent friends here?
Are we not all innocent friends?

Well here we go, here we come –
I ask your leave, innocent friend,
I ask your leave.

Well you must hear us sing –
O Mari Lwyd, Old Tup, Old Horse,
O Láir Bhán, Old Ball, O ‘Obby ‘Oss.

I ask you to leave, innocent friend –
For we have come – innocent friend,
And you must leave.

II

two definitions of new words:

One.

palpator, n.: 1. Examiner, esp. medical.

The palpator reached into the open wound and shook his head.

2. Flatterer, arse-licker.

"It could never have been your fault," said the palpator to the surgeon.

Two.

mell, v.: to mark, stain, paint; draw depict.

meller, n.: painter

mellerly, a.: painterly; picturesque

melling, n.: a painting, i.e., what a meller makes

mellering, n.: painting, i.e., what a meller does

bemelled, a.: covered in paint; painted

a bemelled hempboard – a painted canvas

III

i still have a spider in a mason jar
he was sucked into a dyson hoover from the
surface of a curtain and spent some
time spinning in the transparent
container while we figured out what
to do
he was tapped out into the jar as we did not want
to touch him
he moved around the bottom for a while and i
went back to work and when i next
saw him he was on his back with his
legs in the air
i assume suffocated

i suppose no harm in keeping him to look at on a
purely scientific basis as i do not
want to throw him out the window
as he could touch someones head
hes gathered dust now but i wouldnt know where
to bury him



IV

The horror I felt
When I poured the coffee
And saw the still fly

The dark sea
Which eclipsed
His desperate scaffolding

And the inescapable logic
Which compelled me
To drain the cup

V

notes on malerisch beyond visual art

Heinrich Wölfflin's father Eduard taught philology at Munich university in the late-nineteenth century. The younger Wölfflin taught at Basel from 1897, and Sir Ernst Gombrich – you know Gombrich, his *The Story of Art* is one of those beautiful Phaidon books you love to have on your bookshelf, and has been republished many times – he recalled him fondly. Well Wölfflin, the younger one, was an important voice in art analysis – he coined the term *malerisch*, which in English we call 'painterly'. What he was interested in here was the difference between a visual art using lines and shading to model out a

three-dimensional space *accurately*, using colour *realistically* and therefore *academically* (this is called ‘linear’), and a visual art which does not attempt to hide its brushstrokes, which uses visual effects to convey something extra-realistic, or *emotional* (this is called ‘painterly’) – more generally, he was interested in classifying all that, and applying principles and categories, which was also what his father was interested in at Munich, and, come to think of it, most of the intellectual Western world.

I like *malerisch* as a concept for all kinds of artistic expression, not just the visual arts. It makes the most sense in efforts which are to some extent representational (of the world, I mean) – although hard to think how you might use it in music. And I’ve been thinking about it most in novels. This

works well, as novel writing has substantial realism-baggage, and then a twentieth century of attempting to blow this up.

A linear novel is one where people say things you would expect, you are told how people and places look, and you eventually enter a semi-trance state where you start remembering events in the fiction as if it were a part of your own life. A *malerisch* novel uses effects you notice, effects which don't fade into an otherwise realistic tableau: footnotes and authorial commentary; maps and diagrams; narrative discontinuities; dead ends; multiple endings; prose breaking into poetry. Fiction that pretends to be real *in actuality* (as in, the book you hold is the diary, or the letter, or the anthropological account) is *malerisch* – you notice the artifice. Linear fiction pretends to be nothing

but a dream you enter for a time: *malerisch* fiction brings you to earth with a jarring bump.

A *malerisch* work is a work that has that modern trait: it is aware of its status as a work, it knows that you know, and it uses this context to convey part of its message. It seeks truth in reference; it seeks truth in pointing to technique; and (contradictorily, of course) its methods question truth.

A *malerisch* work is a work that crosses artificial boundaries of genre and form: applying thick impasto takes a painting into the realm of sculpture, it is sculpture – it does not imitate dimension through the skill of the draftsman.

It's *malerisch* when Winston Smith finds and reads to the reader *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*.

Renaissance drama – to us – is so *malerisch* it hurts. But without the baggage, it may not have been to them.

J. G. Ballard's *The Index* is *malerisch*.

Most constrained prose writing is *malerisch*, everything done by the Oulipo group is *malerisch* – nothing is as *malerisch* as writing a novel without using the letter 'e' – but little constrained poetry is *malerisch*. It's hard to think how poetry can be *malerisch* – isn't poetry a kind of *malerisch* prose?

How is an essay *malerisch*?

Now, the younger Wölfflin's father – the older Wölfflin – founded the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* in 1894, whose offices contain copies of all surviving Latin texts before 600AD in boxes on over 10 million slips. The first volume was published in 1900 and the P-volume came out in 2010 – they reckon it'll be done in 2050 (that's 125 years). This is something to which 'life's work' seems an understatement.

VI

Here is the tea mug.
It is used for containing things:
To be cleaned and stored
And to be smashed on the table.

Here is the satchel.
It is used for carrying things:
Its pockets contain, its strap
Is for the shoulder – for necks.

Here is the television.
It is used for many things:
We sit watching it as a man announces
A three-car pileup on the M25.

And here is the knife – oh, the knife!
You know what the knife is for.

VII

I have found a new view in the garden.
I had thought I had taken in the topiary,
flowers, paving, statues and gravel in
 all weather,
 all seasons and
 all directions
but I have now a novel perspective.

Do you know the bench in the third court
reached from the tennis room,
heading south directly towards the river?

If you stand on that bench –
not something, I know, you would
usually consider doing –
and stretch your bones to the sky,
you can hold two things together:
the pointed roofs atop the greenhouses on the
other side of the gardens – and –
the empty carport back towards the house.

I have taken in this view –
and I intend to save its enjoyment
at another time of day
for a special occasion.

I wrote my birthday down in the library – among
many other things –
but have not been able to find the note.

Lunch today was – as usual –
quite delicious.

Warm weather, gazpacho to start,
then a freshly prepared grapefruit salad.

You know, I was not so eager on the salad
when it first graced my plate. But –
the manner of its dressing
and its accompanying ingredients
brought out a savoury aspect to the fruit.

There was a dessert – mousse and biscuit –
but I enjoyed more its denial
than its consumption.

I had some thoughts on the architecture of the west wing. I'd read something a few weeks ago about periodisation of columns and arches and had developed a theory of my own. I must write about it here when I have the time.

I have my best ideas when eating.

I continued on my wood-carving project in the north wing after lunch.

I started with a chair – and scrapped that –
then a table – thinking it simpler –
and now I'm opening myself
to more
of a
sculptural piece.

I felt melancholy before dinner –
I put on some music
and had a dance.

Sometimes my thoughts
overwhelm my actions.
It is hard to find purpose,
and counter-factuals put me in a funk.

I've heard it all before, of course –
but my ear always finds something fresh.

The dancing comes spontaneously
when you're alone.

And then – in the dining room tonight
a whole feast had been laid out!

Roast chicken,
buttered parsnips,
brussel sprouts,
bacon,
ham:

I had a whole plateful.

And when I finished, there was a
birthday cake.

There were no years – or a name –
but now I know today
is my birthday:
the 31st May.

After dinner, an early night – but not before a
visit to my old friends.

The wide tank on the west wall was
a gentle green:
the shoal of silver darlings were delightful
as always, and darted
forward and
backward
as I approached.

How freeing to move with others.
Each traces its own path,
but always within the ambit of the group.

Daniel seemed quite happy to see me –
angling his body, showing his fins,
blowing bubbles at the water's surface.

I fed him blood worms – which he enjoyed.
He then took to patrolling his territory
as if I were no longer there.

It does Daniel no harm to be alone.

But I still say goodbye

when I leave the room

and turn out the lights.

VIII

There were a pair of hares deciding
What it really meant to be modern.
The energy steamed off them: the colours
Radiated in outline from their bodies.
They knew irony – and they knew fear.
A chaffinch sung about an end to meaning,
A collapse of identity. The field-mice only knew
Themselves as fragments – a pastiche.
They didn't find themselves in music,
But they found something.

And you – you feel it keenly, don't you?
When you're sorting through the washing?
You're no more real than they are –
You have a drum in your chest that beats.



IX

We must leave now, innocent friend –
The time has come and die cast,
The song sung, the speech spoken.

O too, too innocent friend –
Can you not hear the cuckoo singing?
Can you not hear the cow lowing?

The cow lows for her calf,
The ewe bleats for her lamb,
The cuckoo sings to the seed and the leaf –

Never stop your singing, innocent friend.



JUNE



brought to you by:

Walter M. Miller Jr., *A Cantic for Leibowitz* (1959);

Kim Stanley Robinson, *Shaman* (2013);

Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the
Famous Moll Flanders* (1722);

Carwyn Graves, *Tir* (2024);

Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies* (1923) and
Sonnets to Orpheus (1923);

Jan van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434);

Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly
Delights* (1490x1510);

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's scatologic back
catalogue (*Leck mich im Arsch* K. 231 and
Leck mir den Arsch fein recht schön sauber K.
233 in particular);

the music of Rev. Gary Davis;

Pig (2021);

several cabinets of musical instruments at the Pitt-
Rivers Museum;
nighttime cramps and rigor;
and the effects of a heatwave in an Edwardian
terraced house.



I

Go pick seven flowers
From seven fields
And place them 'neath your head.

When you sleep
Such dreams you'll have
Your blooms will blow them true.

And you have eaten herring
With potatoes fresh from soil

You've eaten them with sour-cream
And chives on your bread

And you've washed it down with snaps.

Place the seven
On the mat
And under your bosom's rest.

My virgin child –
Who comes to you
Will be yours to keep.

And you will take with child
And years will pass like smoke

You'll see as many Midsummers
As your mother did before

And fire will cleanse your bones.



II

The man with the bald head winces
When he comes around the corner
Because it's a sunny day
But windy around the corner –
This being *unexpected* and
The man wearing no hat.
This is one of those things which always was the
case
And forever will be.

There are a few of these things
And they're not like human nature or
Like fate – but something altogether different
A couldn't-be-otherwise which troubles men like
 him
Enough that they curse coincidences.

If I were to give him advice:
Give in to coincidences and
Stop taking the universe so personally.

But this doesn't stop him from wincing.

III

At times, the sky looks like Monet would paint it.

But then,

I notice the high rises and disused scrap yards
(them with the parts of cars and stationery claws)
And a plane beetles under the hazy sun.

Meaning suffuses – even the moon can't escape
And we have us trapped in another place
Although not without some sympathy.

Pareidolia for people – the over-recognising
Of this old man for a hundred others
Or this child for fifteen, another fifteen.

To be the man looking down – mounted in cream,
Serene because solid, because dust and rock
Because not really human at all.

IV

Two examples of Oulipollian constraints ($X + a$)

a. a talent of two civets ($N + \mathfrak{I}$)

b. home-baked Sonny Jim XIV ($V + \mathfrak{I}$)

a. a talent of two civets

It was the best of timpanis, it was the worst of timpanis, it was the agenda of wish, it was the agenda of Foosball, it was the eponym of belittlement, it was the eponym of increment, it was the seasoning of Lignum, it was the seasoning of Darling, it was the springer spaniel of hopelessness, it was the wipe of desperation, we had everywhere before us, we had no-thoroughfare before us, we were all going direct to Heaving, we were all going direct the other wazoo – in short, the peri-peri was so far like the present peri-peri, that some of its noisiest autisms insisted on its being received, for goof or for evisceration, in the superlative degustation of compartment only.

b. home-baked Sonny Jim XIV

Battle my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knot, breech, shingle, and seem to
mendicate;
That I may risk and standardize, o'erthrust me,
and benefact
Your force to breakdance, blubber, burnish, and
maladminister me new.

I, like an utilitarianiz'd town to another due,
Lace to admix you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should
defenestrate,
But is caramel'd, and proverbs weak or untrue.

Yet dearly I lowball you, and would be lowball'd
fain,
But am better'd unto your enemy;
Divot me, untighten or breakdance that knot
again,
Talc me to you, improve me, for I,

Except you enthrone me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you Rawlplug me.

V

Where are you from?

The metaphor is roots.

Observations A and B, 1 through 3.

(A) Roots:

- (1) Hold you firm in the earth,
- (2) Are that from which you grow,
- (3) Are that which nourish you.

(B) Roots can be:

- (1) Old.
- (2) New.
- (3) Regrown.

(A)(1) Roots stop you from being blown down the hill. They grip onto rocks if they have to, when the soil's thin. When the wind bends you, they let you bend.¹

(A)(2) You start somewhere, lay down some part of you first. You have to be in time. You're an extension of yourself. You come from somewhere.²

(A)(3) You drink deep from the soil. Sun basks you, but it's the earth nourishes you.³

1 My health, my wealth; the things I do; the things I tell myself I am (my role); the things I value; my memory.

2 Dappled sunlight through the willows by the banks of the Arrow; picking blackberries; reading poetry for the first time and doing it; liking something for the first time and realising it; anger and anxiety; first loves, second loves and true love; death.

3 This is my sun: the hand that nurtures; the hills, the wet rock, the green fields. This is my soil: to create, to love, to lose myself in thought.

- (B)(1) Old roots. First roots. This is something about a seed: it germinates first below the surface, slow and latent; the radicle creeps east and turns south, towards the centre of the earth; turns to hairs and strengthens; lifts the seed then, pierces through the soil; turns and sheds its skin; opens its leaves to the sun; now a plant, now a tree.
- (B)(2) New roots are laid down as a tree grows: they hold it strong to keep its new height; and they provide succour for its new appetites. And there's this: if you took the soil in your hands, you wouldn't tell the difference between the old roots and the new ones.
- (B)(3) This is where my metaphor falls apart. We move. We are not sessile. We always stretch the limits of Being.

VI

There is a spider who lives in my guitar.
If I look down through my fingers –
 into the open hole –
I can see her webs.

I play daily, but still she sits.
Does she feel each note on the web –
 as a caught fly –
Or is there a preferred tune?

My hands sit rudely on the fretboard
They tease out and feel for sound –
 catching little –
I am a poor weaver of webs.

Her slight body still changes the acoustic
The waves still break upon her –
 she moves among them –
We play together.

VII

Sound grinding – a drill into concrete –
Two men shouting from two doorways

The scraping of stone and weed-laden soil
By a sharpened object pulled through cracks

A keg, a barrel dropped from a truck bed,
Rolled over tarmac holed with rain

And sirens repeating, running down a back alley
A generator turning and coughing for fuel

And the bang of a door, a car door, a front door,
A backdoor – the slam of a window or shutter

A car, a bike, a lorry reversing, a van which
Spins, roaring and lowering its window to

Music, music shouted and called, music
From a boombox held by a rider,

From four old men gathered to gossip –
Samba played from an old mobile phone

And I pull the window shut
Because it's too much distraction
And the sound from the street
Makes it hard to write.



VIII

Recent research has demonstrated that certain shittier works by the great WAM may have reached across from bonne Vindobona to the land of Vindolanda. Although Greatest Britain may not have been at the centre of European culture in the early modern era, they got a good fart joke as much as the next man.

The several examples below, discovered in the marginalia of a much-thumbed manual on courtly love in the hand of a well-known member of parliament who shall remain nameless and thus blameless, display the native wit of the late-eighteenth century Englishman: schwäbischer Gruß or Glasgee kiss? You decide.

a.⁴

If in this ardent lover's Hunt
To avoid his certain Skewer
The Doe turns on her Pursuer
Taking him not as honest Wooer
But rather Randy Evildoer:
For pulling such a shitty Stunt,
You can certainly do one,⁵ you Cunt.⁶

-
- 4 These lines appear next to a passage likening courtship to the hunting of deer by a party of lords. Perhaps our poet, down several mugs of ale following a failed expedition, had thoughts of a different nature? We can only wonder.
- 5 Do one what? The poet leaves us in suspension.
- 6 Of course, during the period of composition, 'cunt' had far less of a force than it does now: more Anglo-Saxon directness than the shocking stab of violence the word now inhabits.

The World shakes
 With the Power of Love
 The certain kind whereof
 Is passionate Ardour, hereof⁸
 Given to my gentle Dove.
 I will yield what it takes,
 And Shit in the Bed 'till it breaks.⁹

-
- 7 This verse appears in a different hand to the others – and one cannot help remarking on its lesser quality. Professor G. Dwight (*pers. comm.*), having consulted the microfiche in some detail, suggests juvenalia rather than a separate author.
- 8 It seems the poet can think only of 'love' and 'dove' as rhymes, and spaces out with nonsense conjunctions his lines (*ed.*: apologies, entirely unintended).
- 9 This sudden coprological termination comes as a surprise to us and, one imagines, the lover.

If you think that You miss
 Another Lover in our Play,
 If when We seek to make Hay¹¹
 You dwell only on 'They':
 Then this One shall make away,
 And be absolutely done with this.
 It's *his* Arse you'll have to kiss.¹²

-
- 10 The author of this rather spiteful doggerel also penned a posterior in blue ink with a dribble of something in oak gall descending towards the inner margin.
- 11 Professor G. Dwight (*pers. comm.*), having been married for several decades, assures me that making hay in this sense does not always refer to activities of an agricultural nature.
- 12 'Arse' is in place of MS 'ass'. I take by the illustration (*op. cit.*), though still an asinine construction, the poet meant the former.

Lecken Sie
trich
am Rr-sch!

IX

burnt my life away
on the eve of
St John's feast

the wheel falls –

bone fire
white ash
so we increase

the wheel falls
on the summer's feast –

cast me in cast of autumn winter come
for casting again in the fire of St John

I burnt my life away





JULY



brought to you by:

Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March* (1932);

Dan Simmons, *Hyperion* (1989);

China Miéville, *Embassytown* (2011);

M. John Harrison, *Empty Space: A Haunting* (2012);

Science Fantasy, No. 15, Vol. 5 (1955);

SF Greats, Summer 1970, No. 18 (1970);

Ted Hughes, *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the
Crow* (1970);

Edgar Mansfield, *Modern Design in Bookbinding*
(1966);

Pieter M. Judson, *The Hapsburg Empire: A New
History* (2018)

Neil Young live in Hyde Park (particularly *Cowgirl
in the Sand*, *F*!#in' Up* and *After the Gold
Rush*);

south-west East Sussex;
two weeks with very little human contact;
the wettest July since records began;
and the death of summer.



I

Lammas loaf, in quarters left,
Buried under barn-laid bales.
Made wheaten message, make
Health and hale, and harvest well.

II

*two old ones which predate the monthly structure
herein practised*

- a. a love poem with worms*
- b. a love poem about dogs*

a. a love poem with worms

I won't always love you, of course –
the sun will explode at some point,
the earth will die, and the universe
will cool itself, eventually.

When the tectonic plates make
further wrinkles, we'll be long past ours –
no one and nothing will be late
as time itself will have run to a stop.

Worms will have us and worms
will have them. And worms them in turn.
We'll be a mix, once together, now
drops of us in an ocean of all.

Only a little while will this world know us,
largely organic bags that worry about
getting to places or having things.
But I don't love the world, or the sun, or the
worms.

I love you – for all my world, and all my time,
and I'll love you for all of that, of course.

b. a love poem about dogs

My dog leaps like a salmon.

drawing a sudden exclamation mark,
casting himself to Heaven,
 lifting and shooting,
 jacking and springing,
throwing off from the hard ground and fresh
 summer grasses,
mouth open and hard breathing,
reaching, twisting and turning but stretching,
 pulling towards,
 soaring,
 flying,
gleeful on the wing, inhabiting joy,
 abiding in life,
being the quick, the true and the simultaneous,
the clear, the sudden and the bright blue sky's
 enemy on this wide green earth,

the earth that fails to hold him,
the sky that is forced by bright life to take him,
 and movement and motion
 and all that is new and natural
 and right and innate,
with no barrier to this great, glorious world,

turning his head as muscles run taut
 and limbs stick out like a lamb,
moving like the curlew he'd chase,
vicious as the wolverine his yard's become,
 flushed and taunted,
 angered and inspired,

the animal,
 the verb,
 the dog,
 my friend,
 my boy,
my thread to the earth,

he loses control,
he catches his prize in his slathering jaws
 and becomes finite again.

My dog leaps like a salmon.

III

The Eighth Duino Elegy as Old Irish Law



What is the only way animals can see? When animals see, they can only see the Open, they are only able to see directly through to the outside.

And what is our vision? Our vision is entrapment. The animal sees the Open and we have vision turned around.

Who shares the animal way of seeing, outwards to the shape of things? Children, before we give them the mind of adults (before we give them a mind).

How do we see the Open, but at a remove? In the eyes of the animal, its face, its visage. If you look into a deer's terrified eyes, you can see the Open for yourself.

And what is the Open? Easy: it is unmediated consciousness.

With all eyes the Creature sees the Open. Our eyes alone seem turned around and wholly set about it like traps, ringing around their free

exit. What is outside we know from the animal's aspect alone; for already we turn the young child around and force it to see the shape of things backwards, not the Open, which is so deep in the animal's face. Free from death.

The Open is Being without knowledge of the self, without eyes turned around to within.

Why is the Open free from death? Because unmediated consciousness can perceive no death, because death is the end of the self.

If there is no self, death is just the continuance of matter. If an animal is never aware of its own existence, it cannot die. It lives for the world, through the world, and is thus a part of it.

Here we can see why our way of seeing traps us. Here we can see what is done when the child is forced to see the shape of things backwards.

Death we see alone: death is all we see; and only we see death. The animal sees not death, only man. And as we do see death, this is all we see.

What does it mean for an animal to run like a spring runs? Running water moves, it is a flowing part of creation. It is lively in this certain sense.

All things are full of gods.

But the spring, the fountain: it is not aware of itself, and this the animal shares. So to exist outside of consciousness, is to exist outside of death, and also outside of time. So like a Thing the animal runs, like a composite part of the world.

The animal has its downfall, its sunset, its fall, completely

That is all we see; the free animal has its fall completely behind itself and God ahead, and when it runs, it runs in Eternity, as the springs run.

We never, not for a single day, have the pure space before us where the flowers open with no end.

behind it; if it runs towards anything, it runs towards God.

And what is God? God here must be nothing but the Open, to live in concert with the world, the true world where things truly exist, to truly thus be free.

We have our fall before us. We cannot run in Eternity, or towards the Open.

Again, what is the Open? It is a pure space, clean from introspection, from self-directed thought. It is the fecundity of nature. And it is the proper sense of life – the flowers, the spring, the animal. These are alive, forever and in every place, and are God. And this we forever lack.

For us, we have a relationship against the world which can never be unbroken. What is this relationship? It is any relationship at all. The animal has no relationship, it purely is the world. We have the world, matter, as the object of our consciousness. The animal paradoxically has Nowhere, Nothing as its object, as it lacks the self-reflexivity which traps us.

Again, what is the Open? The Unobserved, as to see the Unobserved is to be incapable of seeing. As animals are in the world, so we breathe the Open, we simply know it, rather than know of it.

What are the two states where man can experience the Open? Again, childhood -

Always it's World and never Nowhere without No: the Pure, the Unobserved which one breathes and knows forever and does not desire. As a child one loses oneself in the Stillness of this and is shaken. Or that one dies and is it. For near death one sees death no more and stares outwards, perhaps with a great animal gaze.

we are shaken out of it, but we must come through it as newborns on our journey to human Being - but also death. The Stillness of this pre-Being we experience, breathe as children, but we then become it when that self-knowledge is winked out on death.

What does it mean to see death and then see it no more? It is for Being to slip away, as it slipped in as the tide rushing towards us newly sprung from the womb.

What tragedy that our lives only begin and end with a true Unity with the pure and the still! This is one of the paradoxes of the Open.

What is another exception, where man can approach the Open? Love, although here more as accident than policy.

What is Love like? Love is like death, like an animal's unthinking, unmediated experience of the world (its seeing outwards rather than inwards). Love is self-effacing. Love, in its complete absorption in the other, becomes a kind of death. It is easy to see why: as animals live, as the fountains and springs live, death therefore is in our sense simply the end of self-awareness.

But in love there is still an expectation of world, of a relationship against world.

Lovers, if it were not for the other who blocks the view, are near to this and marvel... As if by a mistake it opens up to them behind the other... But beyond him no one comes forth, and again it becomes World to him. Always turned towards Creation, we see there only the Mirroring of the Free, darkened by us.

So this closeness with the Open is delivered on a self-effacing tending towards the other - but it is our knowledge of the other that scuppers it. Even when we begin to breathe the Open, lost in Love, we expect another to emerge out of that empty space. We have an expectation, we know a relationship, and thus that Stillness becomes the World - it becomes an experienced reality.

And how do we experience Creation? As a shadow, as a mirror only of what is Free, Pure, Open. And as that view is mediated through our Being, that mirror is darkened by us.

*What does it mean for
an animal to look
through us entirely?*

*Easy: this is the
absence in the animal
of its relationship to
the world. The animal
can no more look at us
than we can look
through the world. The
animal is the world,
and we are against the
world.*

*What does it mean to
say fate? Is it our
Godly predestined
path? Is it Destiny -
the power which leads
us towards what we
truly are? Or is it
simply that which
makes up our lives,
our lot, our life story?
It is all of these things.*

Or that an animal, a mute, looks
up, quietly, and through us
entirely.

This is what fate means: to be
over against, and nothing other
than this and always over
against.

*Fate is the laying out
of our Being, Fate is
the limits of our
expectations, Fate is
the container within
which our waters
flow.*

And how do we call
fate, how do we give
it meaning? It is
Being as a
preposition. It is
Being as relational. If
we can only Be in
relation to World, to
have our eyes turned
inwards at ourselves
seeing World, rather
than breathing it,
being it directly, we
are in opposition to it
always. We are over
and against it, forever
and always.

What would it even mean for the animal to have our kind of Being, our kind of consciousness? Where once the animal saw through us, where we once saw the Open in its calm eyes, it would instead destroy us. The change would be violent, final.

What is the Being of the animal? This is the Being of a thing in the world, not against the world. This Being is unending, as the world is unending. This Being is ungrasped, as it is a Being not turned towards itself. The Being does not see itself, but simply is.

What does it mean for Being to have no care for

If our kind of consciousness were in the assured animal which pulls towards us in another direction – , it would tear us up with its change. Yet, to it, its Being is unending, ungrasped and without a care for its condition, pure, as its gaze. And where we see future, there it sees Everything and itself in Everything and forever healed.

its condition? Easy: this Being does not include a care for its state in the world. In avoiding this, it is Pure, it is free from the entrapment which we suffer.

We see towards the future, a future, our future. So what is our relationship with Time? Our Being is not just to be - it is to be, to be in the world, and to be the relationship with the world.

Not so the animal. It does not see any future, it cannot, as it sees All. It is in All - it is All. And in the way in which our seeing is deficient, from this the animal is forever healed.

*This all is true for the
animal and man: but not
all animals are equal.*

*We are the affliction, we
are the paradox of self-
directed Being. But some
of this affliction clings to
the animal. There is a
great melancholy in the
animal, as there is a great
pain in our alienation
from the world.*

*What is this melancholy?
We share it with the
animal, it is something
terrible which can
overcome our nature to
become synonymous with
our Being.*

*It is this: the memory of
once having been the
world, of having the world*

*And yet in the warm
watchful animal there is
the weight and worry of a
great melancholy. For it
clings to it too – what so
frequently overwhelms us,
the memory that it – that
which one presses after –
has already been nearer,
truer, and its connection
tender with no end. Here
all is distance, and there it
was Breath. After the first
home, the second to him is
duplicitous and doubtful.*

*run through us as one
breathes the air. We
always pull towards this
memory, this recognition
that we were once closer
to that purer state of
Being. And so does the
animal.*

*And this is a form of a
definition of melancholy,
one which includes both
us and the animal. And
the end of this
melancholia in death
thus seems apt. We were
born into a home of
tender Unity with the
world - and now we must
live in this duplicitous
state where we know just
enough about true union
with the world to sow our
Being with doubt and
discord.*

*And so the state of the
tiny creature is blessed.*

*How is their Being
closer to the world?
Easy: its being is closer
to its state at birth, its
primal state. The tiny
creature therefore
remains in its womb
and never truly leaves
it. It is the womb that is
the source of life, within
which we are one with
that which is primal,
natural, pure.*

*How can we say that
an insect never leaves
its womb? Unlike a
mammal, the womb of
a gnat is exposed to the
world. Unlike a
mammal, the womb of
the bird carries over*

O blessedness of the small
creature, which always remains
in the womb which bore it; O
joy of the gnat which still hops
about *within*, even at its
wedding: for womb is all. And
see the half-assurance of the
bird, who almost knows both
from its Origin, as if it were the
soul of an Etruscan, made dead,
received into a chamber even
with a resting figure as the lid.
And how distraught is the one
who must fly and comes from a
womb. Terrified of itself,
twitching through the air as a
crack runs through a tea cup.
So tears the trail of the bat
through the porcelain of the
evening.

into the nest.

*How is a bird like the
soul of an Etruscan?
The sarcophagus is its
persistent nest. So it is
in its womb as if dead
- or newly born - but
with its Etruscan soul
flitting out and beyond
as it leaves the nest
and flies into the
world.*

*This is the half-
assurance of the bird,
its duality, its knowing
both homes, the womb
and the world, as a
part of its nature. And
this is the terror of
leaving the nest, a
terror that reaches into
its Being.*

What are we
ultimately? Easy: we
are voyeurs, merely
onlookers to the world.
And we are doomed:
doomed to only
postulate on Eternity
and Time, never to be
a part of it; doomed to
look into mirrors,
never to be part of the
scene.

And what does it
mean for the world to
overflow us? This is not
just the limitations of
our perception. We are
ordering minds, but
the world is not
ordered. *Panta rhei*.
Even as we order, the
world falls apart
again - we are not
ordering the world, we

And we: spectators, always, all
places, turned to it all and never
out! It overfills us. We order it. It
falls apart. We order it again and
fall apart ourselves.

Who, then, has turned us
around so that, whatever we do,
we are in that posture of one
departing? Like he who on the
last hill, showing him his whole
valley once again, turns himself
around, pauses, lingers – so we
live, taking always our leave.

are ordering our
thoughts. In
attempting to come
towards the world in
flux, we are engaged
in a futile rejection of
the world, a rejection
that is our attempt to
conceive of it. And so
we fall apart
ourselves, we meet the
world finally in death.

And what does it
mean for our Being to
be irreducibly one of
self-reflection, self-
awareness, self-
regard? Easy: it is to
have the bearing of
one always leaving,
always apart from the
world, always against
it. Thus is the state of
man.

IV

—AUTOPOEM—

1. Set word list. (medical_terms)
 2. Set feet. (spondaic)
 3. Set meter. (pentameter)
 4. Set line length. (4)
 5. Set repeat rule (FULL REPEATS)
 6. Set helper words (NOT ALLOWED)
 7. GENERATE POEM
- > 2

Set feet:

1. pyrrhic
2. iambic
3. trochaic
4. spondaic
5. tribrachic
6. dactylic
7. amphibrachic
8. anapaestic
9. bacchic
10. cretic
11. antibacchic
12. molossic

> 2

—AUTOPOEM—

1. Set word list. (medical_terms)
 2. Set feet. (iambic)
 3. Set meter. (pentameter)
 4. Set line length. (4)
 5. Set repeat rule (FULL REPEATS)
 6. Set helper words (NOT ALLOWED)
 7. GENERATE POEM
- > 3

Set meter:

1. monometer
2. dimeter
3. trimeter
4. tetrameter
5. pentameter
6. hexameter
7. heptameter
8. octometer

> 4

—AUTOPOEM—

1. Set word list. (medical_terms)
 2. Set feet. (iambic)
 3. Set meter. (tetrameter)
 4. Set line length. (4)
 5. Set repeat rule (FULL REPEATS)
 6. Set helper words (NOT ALLOWED)
 7. GENERATE POEM
- > 4

Select number of lines between 1 and 14.
> 14

—AUTOPOEM—

1. Set word list. (medical_terms)
 2. Set feet. (iambic)
 3. Set meter. (tetrameter)
 4. Set line length. (14)
 5. Set repeat rule (FULL REPEATS)
 6. Set helper words (NOT ALLOWED)
 7. GENERATE POEM
- > 7

FINAL POEM:

- 1 Condition - intravenous drip.
- 2 Gestation? Aneurysm birth.
- 3 Infectious intravenous drip,
- 4 episiotomy disease.

- 5 Episiotomy disease;
- 6 pituitary gland disease.
- 7 Arthritis - asthma - lupus stool:
- 8 atopic dermatitis stool!

- 9 Depression pubis, cancer vein.
- 10 Pudendal block, infusion birth.
- 11 Asymptomatic gene - acute
- 12 condition, auditory nerve.

- 13 Post-mortem antenatal cell?
- 14 Libido, herpes: abscess cell.

V

Man dies from broken heart

Man dies after weight-training chain pulls him
into MRI machine

Man dies after a five-year long battle with cancer

Man dies surrounded by family

Man dies alone on street

Man dies falling from tree he'd climbed to bring
down niece's kitten

Man dies in traffic collision

Man dies queuing for aid in war zone

Man dies hammering nail into power line

Man dies, man dies, man dies



VI

When Lake Windermere
accumulated such a mass
of blue-green algae that

it achieved a sentience
of its own, a knobbly gelatinous
bear-like bulk emerging

from a surface only recently
broken by paddle boards,
lasers and self-drive motor boats,

I was the first on the scene.

I had been staying at a pub in
Bowland Bridge, cycling west
to the Old Man of Coniston,

not for the climb, but to visit the
rusted remains of spoil tips
on its north-eastern slopes,

prompted by an interest in copper
and slate, born from a strange
childhood spent as an English alien

near the mountain village of Rhyd-ddu.

By late morning the swollen
thing had swallowed a good
deal of Bowness, filling the World

of Beatrix Potter with a
surprisingly hard, glistening jelly
within which could be seen

clothed rabbits, model farms,
fishing frogs, owls, painted dioramas,
a mole hanging out washing,

and a fox reading a newspaper.

When nature came to reclaim
the Lake District National Park
no one was particularly surprised.

We'd learnt to see events as largely
out of our control, and lacking
meaning in the way of a

car instruction manual, or an
ice cream. A grandfather
walking a baby in a stroller said

it was one thing after another.



VII

the world didn't end as expected,
a big bomb exploding onto a shopping centre,
limbs filling an expanding radius
until fire and fury extinguished man
like the extremes of all previous wars
summed up

no

the life fell out of the world as
a bathtub drained onto the floor:
it went by slice and cut, a slow
doom march of transfiguration
where you look at yourself in the bathroom
mirror
and see only abstract shape

