

## Standing among the philosophy class

Coats wet, we come  
fog-breathed  
to hear how we might come to know the world through pure reflection  
without recourse  
to experience

rain on our foreheads, little fists from the *tremendum*, we wait  
at the doors of an unlocked lecture hall.  
Coughing has been falling from a cold man's mouth. A huddle of minds  
in the dark morning  
apprehend. The trees  
are wearing the shape of trees.

# Vir Heroicus Sublimis

after Barnett Newman

*i.*

In deepsleep wards  
(bedside voices are sighing 'their love of beauty  
a metaphysical homesickness')  
we, like moths on a pleasure flight through a bonsai forest  
can hear  
almost nothing.

*ii.*

Inside the Institute of Melancholia, test-tubes  
spiral like the glassy echoes of unheard children  
bright rooms filling with unopened folders marked *Whatsoever You Think*  
is *Illusion*.  
The world stays cold as a memory (breathed across a mirror).

*iii.*

We packed our suitcases with dirt, held our prayers, stamped  
at the edges of metamorphosis: behind us  
the broken city's burlesques, in front the heavy institute gates  
and ether, at this height full of *gravitas*.

*iv.*

On the plains of this idea just beyond sight  
a queue, infinitely long and not speaking, an indefinite and bloodless  
transplantation.

*v.*

'Only such grievous ones as we  
could have such godless, unspeaking gods.'

*vi.*

The clocks on the walls here have never once moved.

*vii.*



on muleback  
the colour of a dusk newly-begun  
rode out the vanishing point  
    while, yes, above, a blackbird diagonal  
in the empyrean  
twittered on and on: 'how fragile  
the promise of apocalypse, how well-wrought, how remote!'  
    as the worm in its beak (I thought) shook a clenched end  
  at us all, yelling  
'metaphor  
is a cliché from which we escape by reality' while further up still  
the muffled noise  
    of pianos, pianos, pianos.

## How to see inside machines

At least

the stars still all seem to work fine

except of course for where the antimatter is.

In fact, with the exception of

1. the neo-cons remastering the How-To Guide
2. any missing space/time continuum unmoment
3. that idiot killing the last god who worked in this thing

apart from all that

*you really do gotta love Reality.*

'See you

at work church home slaughterhouse around'

ÜBER, ÜBER, ÜBER

be careful: make it your business to know

the velocity of night falling

'no really, there's no such thing as

a machine'

folk whisper in half light

WE KEEP LOSING ANGELS THOUGH WE'RE NOT SURE HOW

blinking at the very idea of their hands . . . imagine, whole evenings

lit by nothing

but *electricity.*

reality is a sound, you have to tune in to

Anne Carson *Autobiography of Red*

thus we are

gigantic. We outgrow nearly ourselves.

Did you not hear? *Sh-sh-sh!* The alarum of bells  
the calibration of psyche.

Go thither into fields of ge pigs  
and robotniks

and when you do go (close door) into that outward  
try to leave quietly . . .

everything's full of the quivers

here Superman keeps his robots, completely faithful  
copies of himself

Umberto Eco *Travels in Hyperreality*

have you seen

the proliferation? We are savants  
of our domain. How though do we sleep yet with the tzzzz  
of electromagnetics? Cities so dissonant (so neo)  
out from darkness marching in to the simulacrum. Blink.  
Scratch. Play.  
Fuck. Wake up! Pray. Stay awhile. Dystopians  
we seem so real



apprehension involves no problem for it may progress to infinity

Immanuel Kant *Critique of Judgment*

everywhere

the knell of dogma! The din of knowing  
    resounding in the fictions of our star-hung universe:  
rocking to-and-fro *ad hominem*  
    to the rulebooks of collective sanity?  
And the reckoning of laws to keep the chaotic zones of us enforced  
    . . . *lo!* to those who dare interrupt.  
Who taught the imagination

# world is a house we enter disorientated as a somnambulist

Orhan Pamuk *The Black Book*

The doorbell of every atom ringing.

There's an orgy of sleepfulness on the landing and  
a salvo of snoring in the plod-filled attic.

Doggerel has been dribbling waxen down shirt-fronts  
in the lounge; at a table of fugitive gods

clergies are banging cutlery (necking tranqs with verve)  
while we swing arms

like so many wind-up toys

sound of their voices snapped like twigs in the air

Michel Houellebecq *Atomised*

eh?

That lo-ing from the yards? Hoist. Stun. Earplugs.

Next. What commotion? Slit. Next!

Flossed neighbours nod polite and reach

for a Sunday's filét roast.

Hypermart compact smiles

over bang-arsed trolleys: a tireless grotesque plays out.

At the freezer aisle 'one must be so careful

re the disappearance of hope' and trundling under fluorescence  
toward checking out: 'it's ok' (*blip blip blip blip*) 'they don't  
even have minds'

# the giving of pleasure with some useful precepts for life

Horace *Ars Poetica*

raising your eyes

unclamped and all the while seeking  
immortality? The golden means of production  
enchant and then make real . . . the clangour of us imperfect  
as sensoria awaiting the succour  
of authenticity. More important: beauty or its purchase? Our minds  
burn with zeitgeist while curators slink and cost-analyse  
neon signs signifying 'Buy Our Thoughts  
We Make the World'. Such delectation! Gnash the gleam  
of your dentures and sunglasses your widened gaze. Something new will  
vaunt soon  
(something always does)

## Illogos

It all began with me trying to open a small wooden box from the inside. This was a quiet place and windless too though I left it nonetheless, kicking my way through and into a slightly larger wooden box. Here things were filled with a quietness and not much wind. I kicked in the wooden wall of this box and clambered into yet another quiet and windless box where I thrashed the wall and took a run-up before breaking into a slightly larger-still wooden box. 'How charmingly windless and quiet it is here,' I noted as I kicked down the wooden wall to discover a still slightly larger wooden box. Inside, it was windless and quiet. As was the next wooden box, the next, and every other box I discovered the rest of that week.

# Epyllion

New York, Winter

I am knocking

the table clear, skinning the room, in either hand

her rosy arse

Hell's Kitchen through the window a snowing postcard, moonlight falling  
on our backs in four panes

. . . never come to thoughts. They come to us

Martin Heidegger *Poetry, Language, Thought*

A trapdoor has been opened in the head. Inside, historical figurines are rowing, spectred and quaffing logos at the feet of mountains. See here: among them Ern Malley's shape, roasting Plato and the Elysian mosquito swamps. In the next boat, glass to ear, Buddha, whispering 'oh!' to a Neanderthal just returned from flower-picking in Nirvana, where there are said to be bookshops in corridors of infinite regress. Not much good if you can't read. The Neanderthal opens a picture book, cloud shining from the pages, an archive of first things in unrenovated air. Not a brassy knob or black hole out of place. Up-and-coming nature poet W. Wordsworth, seasick as usual, peers over a prow and moans. He's neither heard of nor visited these bookshops, yet, but half-believes it when he overhears a Cambridge shadow lament one evening how 'the world is all that is the case!' Maybe there's a force at work, Wordsworth thinks, a force that can open heads to screw ideas into place. It is night as if there hasn't been a night before. Malley sighs, the wind calls, and a shaft of moonlight rumbles through the trapdoor

across the Neanderthal's picture book, which now slams shut. Like an eye.

*from Still lifes*

i.m. Gianluca Lena

iii.

A population of marble people  
is milling in Westminster Abbey, gabbling the tongues of history.  
Someone's left a note, 'come  
Lorde Jesus, come quicklly,' etched in stone  
before rushing  
into eternity. Outside, crowds of DIY men  
are crossing the creative commons like Mayan acolytes to a beheading  
and the afternoon begins to fit nicely  
as a straitjacket. In a garden of strange flowers I'm told, 'the peal  
of stillness isn't anything human,' a friend wincing  
from the other side of a teacup.  
Inside my head there's the scratching of wings toward a pale rim of light.  
Down the road  
they're selling monkey hands for voodoo.

London, 2007



iv.

Under the alabaster saints, the louche  
and the wolf-faced shelter from ice storm and scowl  
for caffeine. This old town  
scanned by empty-roomed eyes. Where are they all? The unsound  
and non-hearing, the shrill-hearted  
and too-loud, prefacers and professors, the unforgotten  
and not-remembered, those who read more than a third of *Purgatorio*,  
the desperate and hopeful, prayerful and wilful, certain-voiced  
shouting down phones at those  
who believe truly  
in nothing at all . . . *where are they?* All we few see are boatloads, shapes  
hurrying ashore to the promise each back alley makes  
where light won't go, and the rats in their slick  
bed down and look on.

Genoa, 2009

## Poets

as if

there's graveyard dirt on our soles, as if we live  
in houses with covered mirrors, as if  
each mid-morning there's no right side to climb from our beds  
so many muttering about silence,  
spruiking the godhead  
non-descript as our job descriptions and  
making memos to the immemorial  
so many thinking on time, on love and where that goes, on  
nothing,  
some days hearts may shudder

as we stoop, moan, and blink  
below an audience of stars arriving early