

Simon Jenner



Two For Joy



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To the memories of Gabriel Duffy, Michael Fenton, Leon de Mazio and Robert Whittle To three piebald intelligencers, Sonia Ctvrtecka, Pauline Suett-Barbieri and John Tatum

I

The Periodic Charm

Dear cousin of inert gases, be Argonaut
of your concave heart, of its stilly receptacles
and reflexive verbs, of patience taut
to names' transaction to how you swerve sceptical
figures to your long-nosed displacement.
Steer your charges' involutions from sad
but from yourself, once the helium you meant
laughter simple with, to the neon mad
labelled through your Argon-probing journey
past Scylla's clutched abuses, Charibdys'
whirlpool memory, calling the barque away
to drown, salt oblivion's Judas kiss.
Delicate with your Krypton's unlocking
you've enriched sad encrypted heads
with minting the key, not hurriedly pressing
it to them but touching hair-filament threads
for answers they light on. Kind Diogenes
whose Xenon tries enamelled compasses
of so fraught asylum-seekers, refugees
from continents tectonic that presses
skull sutures from trauma that dreams black,
keep your scientist's once bright qualities
as plummet from your vertiginous track
down the human scale, its tabled gravities
you take on with that quiet of periodic
fire no calculus of Geiger breathes on,
tender illuminati, wry chemic
refuter of fazing heads, starred with your Radon.

Charlie the Fence

Heavies now are the light-bearers - I'll be
watching you - the stalker's torch song irradiates
the old mob, protects new Kremlin exiles.

Work dries for the Standard guild
wrenching old lifts from demolishers
for the trad cannibal fixes of London.

All the bevelled calibration's flowed
Away. Their wires' song fades from the 'burbs
in each digital notch.

So you'd not credit tears in this fence -
my Pollack yank uncle.
All this failed perspective

arcs out of his land, now
the city spills up in ice blocks
to North Greenwich.

The Dome bleeds
emerald-eyed gamblers, set
in a pewtering sea of de-reg.

Russians, city men swallow small-timers
like him. Who struck deals synched
from the observatory

sooted in cleared back-streets.
Crooks dealt over tufts of grass,
days in aromatic packages.

To launder the white moment,
or mahogany box, van loads
neuter shed loads.

Nothing comes round twice now.
Lifts no longer green themselves with cogs
reclaimed from the snatched worm-holes of time.

Chrome surgery cuts in, cuts out the whole block.
You have to be Polish now, he says.
Locals face you like maps erased.

This tears it. He dealt stuff,
not the clearance of souls,
of the city.

Sinking

The day you stoppered the rat
authentic to your arsenic and cream
'40s kitchen, they closed your rehab.

These were firsts; you stormed
them like reeking prophecies.
Contain the rat for rat reasons only.

But you're tasked by rats to the opposite at work:
let your charges go back to their noses.
Your boss Americans pull greenbacks

from the system, saying addiction's
no profit now – where's the alchemy?
There's no phlogiston from their burn-off.

'I've reversed that here', you told the rat. 'There's
a slow gas leak beloved of your hunters-down. Go.
You've no place in my bone-picked basement'.

You're American too, storm cousin. Your
passport's a nominal sublimation, wafers
cut-finger sharp as a dollar bill.

You'll turn and glint your silver fury,
speak the rat up in a soft brown rasp,
a Scorpio moment; corner it with

your zoologist past; release it to
a Blackheath over the plague bones, watch
its semiotic thrashing over the green.

Plague pits sink more slow than clinics in a
crrash. Rat-suits gnaw differently, don't swim.
Throw overboard those they read as lifebelts.

So to those who droll up that exit
strategies gimlet the horizon to escape,
you'd thrust their noses at gnaw-holes,

say there are neither, and these
in their stripped-pine extremities
bear their green toxin-maker's mark.

These dollar men you'd stopper up now,
denounce, flay their screened identities open
to those tagged names you're forced to set limping

so they'd tear off their tags, corner them, burn
those bolted to incorporate human torches. Those
who'd release them, small rats, on the streets to die.

Number Six

The O2 Dome's moonstone
rises global out of the beryl zenith
of Greenwich, shadowing its white mini-mokes.
It's the bubble pursuing the novice Prisoner,
in the convex sixties, when we took it all in.
Blue-lit, it's playing futures back to us.

It strokes complicity, soporific soft-strobed.
It's defected out of its time. Here,
there are twelve steps to muesli belt
developments. Time eddies in an old
bureau of crashes. We're jittery with brownfield
takeovers; redbrick recedes like gums.

My cousin collects me for the last family home.
His clinic's axed. They'll no longer
re-tread his alcoholics. Concrete
overcoat them, someone leaked. The earth's
yawning as they close in here.
It means nothing but they've squared

the sphere and how it comes for you
out of nightmare and a force of decades.
We'd spent them playing. It's settled, found
its purpose, how to breathe with playboy
millionaires; take all the oxygen it can dream of.

North Greenwich

The tube doors gride into Bermondsey.
the Addlestrop of the Jubilee.
No-one exits or enters.
They silver closed with the buxom storm
of a vacuum empty concourse.
Its ultramarine stripe decorates the stretch
circling from here to infinity.

Systems march their ceramic stress
here, where the crash evacuates the last
bowels of commerce. The south east
first. Later the North Greenwich-Lewisham -
North Greenwich 108 opens like a too-shut
book of figures - barf barf: its night-time
bruxism grinds blindly - onto repossessions,
service-shortened lamps.
I walk back with these dinosaurs
along the orbital crab nebula of the flyover.

I squint bankruptcy in its face -
can batten on bargains tautened
along a stretch of houses that'll tear,
forbid spiralling questions
of baked mud in a crumbling mortice of a burb.
I'd buy into my death avenue, just
to acclimatise, see the others
snubbing in the dark.

Brighton May 15th

High winds slip back to autumn's gear,
burn off discs of elm flowers -
tea-stained paper doilies, drifting quote
marks of beaches to the sea.

Mid-month surrenders the maypole,
its candy choices. Wry with the waste vitamin
of summer, its spending power, we tan and
tandem with lust's circuit. This dry

interregnum chisels a dust-bed of old
underground streams. Ducted with histories it
withers flakes of early summer. These are my
people, those who visit with brown paper faces.

Haze

Days now suck and shrivel as honey
whitens to cut its set patina. Peach
blossoms spoil back to green flanges.
Regency vanillas to early May.

Death suns to the smoothness of cream
calling cards. We wait for no smoke visible
today, in this sun-trap blunder, writhing for
holiday to skim all this season off;

burn the autumn of spring back lushing to
its glade, shores of the living
young drop-deads in skin tones. Back to
frying, to stave off your yellowing flames.

So we're weaned off the dying, like smokers
gone blind, who stop in a hot week when smoke
they blew erotic rings round can only sting their eyes,
never blur them to another's.

Zig-Zag

It's the month ice-cream stripes
the town, in awnings with turquoise,
shirts with aquamarine and hard indigo,
summer's paper skeletons, burn off

caked football angst, the cradled hatbox
one pensioner sheltered for another,
its puce and cream candy flickering at the bar
as if sunstroke claimed her already.

Days I mangled near March's cusp
of despair: let them fall inevitable, true
as linen crumpled all winter flicks free. Let
crisp reasons sing, the white-crazed graft of winter

take, explode, intravenously in time
so the slot and sun of blinds burns down your back's grid,
restaurants ruffle to stark and shade,
zebra issue in the sunflower seed.

Where They Go

Wines are stolen through the mirror. Last night it was the Hove shoreline annihilated in a slant trick of light from our 18th century's half-tsunami.

Skulls of tender friends peep back; a quartet severed when their squat was smashed, council sledgehammered the toilet. The mirror's spared, hazy with absence.

Marble clouds pearled it out, remnant of jostick-draining hours, blanked in a developer's whitewash noon. Friends are whatever smudges on the other side of the glass. ~~~~~

The Prophetic Stain

A toy skyscraper, the West Pier's fortune-telling booth staggers, a fragile, single scathed remnant.

It's a false prophesy, geared from this sunset distance charred on a brass puzzle of balances, the planet-toothed astrolabe of the spars.

Form's full of corroded escapes, demons of suddenly, folklore arsonists from the other pier. It brims with the acid cordial of inexorable speeded like a little brass-match time machine

into its yearning; uncanny fire-rust travels to a brush-stippled line of itself. It catches, flares ahead of detractors, slows to stoop at the moon.

The last blonde deck-paint strips from the booth. It falters, takes a filial bow to the small curated heritage of lies it turns pins on, spinning.

On the Palace Pier the glitter's fixed, re-named, lights stuck with smeary Uhu to the sky. Late pirate capitalists with a yowza look paint themselves to a corner of candy to feed the charcoal sharp-suits creaking over them,

Here on the West's whistle-down, narrow wind we'll prophesy in mica white heights to the myth of this, huge ghost avenger. Its' momento mori skeleton screeches parables at the painted flesh that pyred it. Its charcoal smears idyll red skies.

Remember your watchers, when you plush a day here. See the dispossessed voices gather starlings through the whistling cage. Here's progress and a new plummet species. Here we can slide a fathom of ourselves into the chloric sea.

Plymouth

Deaf music of Fifties Stalin grids
head up the bombed-flat splay of Plymouth.
Its burnt white smudge from thirty thousand's
now a clean preserve of utopia, Grade II growth.

The town hall Clochemerle doll of a century
never arrived but sleets its going in erosions
of the future, that tweed bodies now conserve;
concrete stains echo shades of their explosions.

Sea breeze sidelines funnel through estates.
Dead days kiss nostalgia's grey optimism.
Days when the dead counted, reached a great sum
from fire screams to town planners' slide-rule heaven.

Down in the horizontal rain city I'd slouch
with your civic pride disgruntling my hair.
Slate was the shade of revolutionary dawn;
thin rainbows of choice deceive everywhere.

News

Light's always got ahead of itself
like the Polar star's 680 years, in time
to tell us maybe when it died, at the Black Death.

When its light then came from the sixth century,
the Yellow Death. And now what hurtles us
to spurious doom, but really, is its snuffed super nova self

ravelling up dark behind its last flickered light
messengers to snip the balance of our pole
wipe the spin and shine off our day.

Crossing my Palm

Harp upturned, it looked every Imperial inch
a penny, but was one of our Irish
you'd happily shuffle with British
buying Dinkys in Dublin. But here,
churning grey to Roslaire,
you'd weed it like combed hair
and caught accent, the sudden 'no's
to wander behind the toy shop counter
to catch whatever smelt other
than the smiles you thought lasting,
buying the Basking Shark's on a Citroen.

Variations on *Stage Beauty*

A scuff sir is a terrible thing
made by the pass of a diamond ring
by a lord who'd stoop to anything
to strip the shine from the morning.

Disdain flourishes in a ruff
now silver wigs are black enough
their credit's a diamond in the rough
your death polishes it along their cuff.

You're the grindstone sparked in the night
your flair is fodder, theatre or flight
your talent will turn their breeches tight
your toast flash in glass or steel to the light.

Key

This man holds the yew key trust for fifteen years,
breaks it into sap; so any permits grained
to him, polish din ritual furthering an inch each time.

She's agreed. They walk then hike east
her handkerchief the last shred of party. She'll discard
as they plod to modernity, years per hour.

He passages, willow shaft to his yew-sped land
to where headscarves shake free, illusions
so far east the east rises, chimera

of latitudes, of walking to a living.

RAF Wittering, 1977

Forty seven of these beauties
podded here, snuck in and snapped out. Sergeant,
just nineteen, two years up on me,
gleamed for the role I was primed for, meant.

Fleered from, in a fleece of doubt:
I'd fuzz words, in a slow left swing of guilt.
Had I taken my apprenticeship out
I'd have clipped cluster bombs to their lucid hilt.

Long Hot Summer

We live between the palindromic heats –
16/61, Celsius new pressed to the thin
convected flux of Farenheidt,
28/82. That trochaic reflux beats
back waves of glare you swallow, the tennis
bounce of arm to blaze, backwards.

An ice can pressed to your brow is sanity.
It's their hot hands you resist; you chart the to
and fro of politics spelling left-right, right-left.
It's the back on itself Sisyphus hell,
their doctrine of mindless erasure
they condemn all to.

Resist them with your mind of June -
ice from the Commons fridge sipped,
lorded in taurine .
You can for once afford to go naked now,
though your blood can't. It's pulsed
firmly one way to push back their vector of chaos.

Subvert the conflux of the oppressor -
jam his ice bucket over him till he sees -
his temples stop their throb of mere flush and gorge
open his chill conditioned world to ours.

April 1st 1649

So salt I can taste my teeth,
air's alkaline with questions
self-reflexive and dissenting.

This is Diggers month, Winstanley rising,
Hazlitt's natal April, time's radical
170 years - Putney, Peterloo, Poll Tax,
diminishing from polemics to debt slaves.
We recycle salt tax in our blood.

April fools make idiots of those who won't dream.
Scatter salt ash on St George's Hill, press
a blue plaque flush to history, it can't
be housed beyond subsoil order
of tillage, the waterlogged continuum of homes.
Blank need breaks all down into live soil.

