

BILL DIREEN

Hyperbaton

the Ballad of Rue Belliard

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FICTION

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OTHER

Versions Translations. Poetry. Paper edition Kilmog 2014

Tourtagebuch. Tour Diary (tr. A. Loeffler), 2012

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Personae fabulae

Rol (Rolley, Rollo ...): a lettered tramp
Mon (Monny, Monique): ma to Eg
Eg (Egustine, Ego ...): fireboy
Phee (Phoebe, Phub ...): bakergirl
Pphthrcck (Pphthrcckelwedrick ...): pa to Eg
Pugn (Pugnacious): mate of Pphthrcck
Harmon: barman
Yab Yum: ma to Phee, restauratrice
Hsi Wang: deaf-mute paraplegic sister of Yab Yum
Abdul Fayoum: baker
Voice of the Completing Illusory
Guardian of the Path to the Wood of the Waste Within
Olio: tall gaunt one
Great Iron Door: Endstation

supported by

Sisyphus: lift repairman. Codwellers of the building.
Abdul's sons.
Paranoia bureaucrats. Justice workers.
Collectors of the paperweights. Wedding guests.
Dwellers of the Fountains.
Novotny: pioneer of Ircamopolis.
Colonels, Sergeants, Corporals, Privates of The Island.
Lotmiss Argin: teacher of pretty things on two legs.
Louise Brooks: impersonator. Pugn's groundtroops.
Frida: ma of Pphthrcck. The Many-Headed Drive.
Casts, producers, technicians &c. of Hollowwood.
Bebbo: boxing boy in service of Olio. Gangs of Madoos.
The Winter Woman.

HYPERBATON

*The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherity, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.*

Tempest IV. i

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Prologue

Between the portals of Montmartre & Clignancourt
she rises with a railing of woebetidings
screithing at her pimp from loosed pantyhose
wraithing the unpard'ning inimical heybourhid
the Hoyle foibfable of pulp cryation:

Stirrnfurther foremurther
the nowhere Ego and his sunfull Phub
Pphthrckelwedrick feeble as his cack Pugnacious
Yab Yum, Hsi Wang and Abdul Fayoum
Sleepyhead donothings penitent impotentate
the fault of foreignage in their avowels
stir
as brute mack boots unpapered whore deafmute.

Drags to the bloody microbus.

In a wink the street is void.
Savage the haybaho.
Hollow dreams redeem
from hello daycages riddlefingers and yellowpages
... from the filth of night-corrupted mother-offending youth.

The First Part

Scurrying of the Unweds Among the Weedings

Light. Abdul Fayoum raises the bakery blind.

Phoeb dresses on tiptoe to the sleepwheezing of Yab Yum, pulls the fire door to and tries the lift button.

Short-circuited. Phoeb takes the stairs and foots across basin to knead dough —two shops past the automat— as the city ashen awaken.

Monnie strikes first matches— tormentuous day of fag and pancake mix! Pphthrcck blankets his ears in a hirrummp, forestalling the hour of Monnie's upbraiding. Ego a-dream as no cat nor grandmother. See! Egg striding through flame to save his only Phee!

The lettered tramp, vest-dribbling Rollo, stirs to his drying pool of vomit and sees in it enigma of Parmenides. He revives the flame to steep yestyda's brew and climbs to the scene of the harlotnightviolence to gather any centimes from the poordaugther's purse or the mac's personal fallen. Nothing proud Rollo, loosely logical—

Oh but sorry he slurrs excuses to the stains for his coma and cowardice praising this bravest of sisters beaten to serving class by the pimp of circumstance.

Young Nahno rouses to his radio (the qualifier kicks off in Chile),

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Bedbound Hsi Wang strikes incense, as at last the brain of Egustino is shaken by Monnie crying, —Getch baguettes underdone not like last time goodfrknotting!

Eg does not dally but weavers without wondering —wannabe fire boy, unpunctual, unemployed,

misplaced mishput undeemed mellowlad commoner fit for a cuffin dreg of a wellforgotten nowhero— steps groundwards

and over the railbridge, where lie retch and sputum of the sponge-abled philofoamer, and on, on to the bakery.

Man stands and waits. No man no woman jump queue. All wise to that trick. Squib, lurk tattler, earner, jeerer, mourner, scorner and kitch-caller edge towards the breadrollcounter. Behind him ham-handshakers share ire at the whore, and Eg would defend her but — he is before Phoeb the Pop-lipped, his Phlox, his song, his linnet, his sonnet, his lyre. For she carries his doily oil. She's his queenbee of Sheeb. Peeling at the tip, his heart in the blender, he would, would sing:

I am Ego to thee hear me as I'd bear you: On my floor or yours of joyous grain ever answering to my plea!

As Phoeb:

My fireboy in th' making wind-combed gentle cocksure kid write on my heart.

'Morning, moon of my lively!'

'Wee whitey wap! What kicked you out early?'

'Monnie has a visit, and the lift jammed.'

'Don't I know 't, headpiece! Monnie wants?'

'Breadsticks, beauty, underdone.'

A bastardy of impatient shift weight. Phoeb has poor tidings. 'Yab Yum wants words, hun.'

'Over my body!'

'Over us, lovely. They fear consequences and would speak with your lot. But Abdul has a pass for Monnie. The circle line locomotive society outing. And here's crumpled faulties for Rollo.' The lengthening line edgier, they ogle, snatch a kiss-kiss and Eg is to the rail lines ho! with alms for Rollo who has the liquor ready.

Conjure the Holy Rollo now out of fictif whicker time. Rol, scion of Hrólfr the Ganger who invented the gall and vinegar, or prove otherwise, Rol who knows the frozen wintertwig, the springship moultings, who handed in his bayo, failed in the olig, sold his only antlers, wakes when the trade train passes, pizzles when it surges. Rol it is who knows that one mask masks another, that face mutates from youth to youth by mask of elder, that old is less senile than infant. For he has reached his age by rage and refuge. Roll the learned, of the couple's evening classes.

Eg throws him a Monde, 'Diurnals, Rol! Crises, sackings and weather forecast!'

'Wall of creepers and finders' faults. More handshakes, sheikhs and senators!'

He grumbles joyful, they take misshapen buns with jest of porto. And in this is Eg dutiful to the washes of his firfarther, Pphthrcelwedrick, late of an analogous bottle, whose linteledge swears to the heftiest sprig of anystimulant, whose moralism knows no presbyterianism, who dredges the lyric of

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martyr and prosecutor, who mixes with vulgarprefix the basest denominator, who swill apish and cuff the first in reach, unrivalled ignoble his

talent for waking the heybaho while moaning the pishamaloog sabot in his bumpipe and the advancement of his spinal corn. Thus liquored, the part-proper twig of Pphthrck embraces his psilocinary psthisistic philosoaf whose glandlachrymimes and rhetoric are loosening.

‘Protégé of my poverty!’ Saying comes upon him: ‘Be wary of the salty pondwater!’

Eg winks but cannot rest. ‘It’s off I am, or Monnie’ll howl over the rail lines at me.’

‘Keep fidel, Ego! And forget not your lesson.’

‘We’ll be by for the reasoning!’

For reason is his daily bread, a philosoaf once is always. His lectures on nature and his wisewords his only income. His students legion, both of them, his onlies, are ardent. They’ll be by, by and by.

Eg crosses the courtyard singing a limerick lately composed for his mentor,

*‘By blueprint and by serendipity
Ungiven to rage or cupidity
His gift of first sight
Was seconded quite
By profound alcoholic stupidity,’*

when lo! the liftrepairman is slapping his hauls with satis-

faction. The lift is up, Eg rises grateful for the pulley to Monnie fuming. 'Phoeb grew the wheat, be damned!'

'Never such a queue, Marm.' 'Stop ya loying and wake Pphthrc from his bargaining.' A cheerful halo, 'Mourning pa!'

Pphthrc blinks monstrous, dreadful mornings. Few are innocent of his infantile bartering. Though eyers and pryers and social help accuse him of inattendance and workman-slip, though Padré Pompier parries threat of the next world and sin of the previous, no good intentioned yayhover cure Pphthrc of his swillful indigence, earned by right of unintentional paternity, for he was free of wedlock when Monnie provoked the gift of his goosewasp.

Eg engendered, the Café was full of flattery: 'Sign of the massed masculus, Pphthrc, to get your puggle in that condition,' Pphthrc's first mate Pugnacious. And the barman Harmon: 'You the plucky dad, then? Who the dag, then, Ma Monique-lady? Brave Trick! Top notch, Pernod?'

Pugn and Harmon were of the classical bent. Let the child be Spangleston, Newtfungus, Splendide Mendax, Peccatolomy, or Johnjon. But the naming of the pair had long been patented. Not child reader, but childers. For the barblimb bedad-ded not once but twice. Monnie doubleyokered. By hangover and hernia long-odds paternal, Pphthrc's first words were ignoble, "Na! Na! Na-n-yo-yo!" So Nahno was christened, who would find no fame. Mon, moreover, made over by sense of place and occasion, knew the spume had homed within the crumbling walls of the once-wasmonasteryofEgustine, Saint. Theother,forthenonce, would be Eg, after the boohaunt on

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the old goat path. Pphthrcck rested, names inscrutable.

So it was, the fireboy and the footwatcher were brawned in a pigtripe, sporey lean-to of a monk's outhouse. They burst from the blister divided boys would know no sister. Mon had had, had she, a daughter in mind. Had had hope, see, seed of fertility on the waning quarter, of a she-zygote, but the cunning nematode dragged Xes from chromosome chaos. They saw the light uncircumcised, inhaled the holy smog, screeched and filled their napkins free of amniotic. Twins were suffered that would fully deserve their proper nouns, bragging long and spitting mediocrity from the mouth of youth. Monnie saw augur and rubbed oil on her paps: 'This one Ego, that one Nahno, or vice versa' and for the first three years none but Harmon could tell them apart.

Egustine and Nahno joined the best of a generation of bawling peripherists, incredibly conceived to scrawl tags, jam lifts, smoke jints on rooftops and lead caretakers up the garden of their giggling no-respect. Ego would be the eye of Phoeb, Nahno a footwatcher and good for mouthing.

Full eighteen years in the ethyl, marital, Pphthrcck the sharpshooter fired horny blank. That, and Monnie suffered the missing putter when home he roamed, slipping from the bridle, deflected from the promise of his gormsaddle, no oomp to ump. No sister, then, but tried they and cried they. The mut had taken Pphthrcck's bit, severing the vital tuber. Tried they but sighed, Pphthrcck erred without fail. Many a

midnight knew his futile da-doing. Mon never shut him out, but let him do his best to the full extent of his halitosis. For he was hers. And what the plumdark whiff of chemiocclusive subvenals raining from his renals? And what, the blight of his lie-in, old-sold-and-weary, lamp gutted, good-for-harping? And what, distributor of the liberal hove of his fasting spittle? And what, the hypochondriac prototipping pounder of the fault he find in others? He, hers, & back Mon in any argument: ‘Grow the dough, didja?’

Eg levers baguette towards pater at no uncertain angle. Pphthrck whipsnorts his scrinty honk, growbling at his anyson, ‘Don’t fletch me in that hoolboy figo! Bad apple! Shut! What’s your pen in your pants up to? Makin’ hay with that drollop of pathos!’

‘Lay off me! She’s better than a man and many!’ ‘Answer, dudsack! G’lor! Me own mug gizzard!’ ‘Drear and drang! Pheeby up before the lot o’ ya!’

‘Some say it, in the doughslop for her laggardry.’

‘She’s got free tickets to the locomotive society summer outing.’

Now Monnie has long longed for nothing more than a trip around the periphery in the old steamer. ‘Pphthrck! Y’hear luv?’ She takes the panis and coddles Eg inside out, ‘Ouff! Phoeb’s full of thoughts but herself! We’ll have her over for tatie scrapple!’ Monnie mollied, Pphthrck is on his way to the bathroom when Nahno cries from the broadcast, ‘Gandy! Rainzonizway! Play in the wet!’

Thus discovered, Mon drags him from the laser beams.

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Nah squirms under the towelcorner, eighteen summers and can't clean his canal: 'Where you get such grommetmuck? Such a filthy earole.'

Reliable on the Hanglish pools and the weather warnings, gifted memoriser of slogan and team lists, Nah, wax in middle ear, is inept at anything even football.

Cloud bedspreads pale pancreas pancakes over the Montmartre rock. Eg's first thought is for Phoeb. Her with no umbrella.

Now Phoeb has her excuses. Garden Phlox common, neither lowly nor ponce, Phee was, like all, hardly thought of the night that started her ma's ninemonth burden. With import and

premonition, a pale crescent rising, the reflection of the virgin downcast, teenage paternity gasped and spilled his pearls in the lap of lady; like loot and booty easy easy farewelled he won her, readers, and knew not how to hold her. His Countess, he called her, and that was the poem of it.

Phoeb's father had Europe in his dangles from the day of clayfingering Argilla and a bird-fingering priestess recently deserted by a gangly stone fancier who knew no tobacco. The pearlful engenderer, fearing opprobrium of father or cellwall of civil debt, emigrated to New Worlds, twisting his mentools for gonorrhathions, feeling for strange bedlamps in lands where roam the likes of Ravi Patella, cofounder of the English wit weekly, Whitless Waltman of creative writing pools, and Dusty Winternoon, pioneer of the nuclear dating colony — which said, Phoebe's father would do no good and

see plenty evil in Delhi, Iowa and Bikini.

Zooflagellum in plasm, the Countess pupped without list number. Alas, she knew short joy. Before Phoeb could speak they carried her to a stone that marks her passing. Phoeb was fostered to a childless couple of good sisters, Yab Yum and Hsi Wang, naturalised on the ninth floor. She grew to maidenhair within earshot of the boulevard and the arguments of Pphthrck and Monnie. And a lively, unornry nomoron she grew to be, to be sure, no bull.

If Eg was known to Yab Yum as that unemployed Christian would-be fireboy good-for-zero, Phoeb was to Mon the breadshop neighbourcurlie adopted by those buddhists on the ninth.

Pphthrck did not detest the girl, for truth, apart himself, Phoeb was the first to see Ego in a good light. She saw him in it, and he was her first intention. They flopped bodskin to the measure of his dumping sack, and Neg nor Phoebn't would know no other.

Ah but where are they going, the drippy duosloop? Sure, two more eyehitting no-hoppers never pupped by the trackline. They revel, they ravel for all to ignore, they memorise the nightclass aieous of the sundown philosoaf Roll. Any eager idiot of uninterrupted alphabet tell you, Roll lousy has stooped to beggary, slurred in toxicity and slipped in many a porthole of Paris. City of cities, haunt of poets dead or dying, daughter of sisters of the cultic kiln and romanoff malpractice, city of cités where grow no hops nor finocchio, where the bourgeois tame their sons with bribes of heritage, city of

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skulduggery and closet huns, sure as the couple lock drumsticks, Paris is worth a mass, and detests a poor Rolley.

Chez Eg

Pancake waft and Pphtsrck dripping. A cache of crispies and Nan rife with the referees' scandal. Munch, hunch and bribery.

Eg has had the muse, Mon his honest critic, readers. — But where's the sextuplets! Where the amphibrachs and alexiads? Where the flagellation? Where the heritage of Gus? Whyever

does he leave his words where Monnie can find them? Is he nowt but a teenster poetaster scribbling prattle of spoiled copies? Botched the birth and the end of it! A fridgescrap rabie of verselets. Where the Oulipo? There's no Rome for Ovid with such scraps in the sink, scrambled his phonetic he has work to do ...

Monnie hacks chops from freezer. A phone fillips, Phoebe has the want. 'Eg. Tight cover. Urgence.'

And Eg, fingers of text lightning, 'Count on it, my lovely.' But Mon will have none of it, —Grounded! You're not haring about at this hour. A blight on the sweet potato! It's your turn at the cleaning!

—Phoeb's facing the winterstrom, Mon. See? The rains a-hard as ever and Phoeb no parapluie. Sides, Pphtsrckel said

I could.

—Gawn, slit the other! When so? —Then so. —Poppylck! Pphthrckel? Pphthrckel is couched with Nah over the referees' confession. Eg adamant, —On his last flask, Pphthrck did so, Marmarag! —Civil! Or it's your derrière I'll be stripping. (Mon knows him.

Many are his faults and lying not among them.) Well, go then, but *Vae soli*, *Ego*, no pud will come of it, ungrate!

Only when he takes the broolly does she soften: —Well, worry up this wunce ya such a wee chap, ya verses not such doggerel really.

She kisses him in fabulous silence and absent, fingering his soggy verselets: —What's a beaut boy hiding in such argot? Poetry of sabot grant me mileage! Such a cabbage, and the orphan falling for it. Cabbage and clot they're for the doom day now, and hire purchase. Luck to them.

RDV

Phoeb fares Abdul well, ducks under the lowering riot blind and greets Eg in the bleak of a blink by an Impasse between skip and café alley. A matron drawn by a brace of harnessed poodles in swimsuits glances nostalgic at the young-gloves with no home to fuck in. In the pizzling drizzle they slip along rue Belliard and climb through the netting to rouse the softenedest of losers. Mortal, piecemeal, partly present,

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Rol smiles with all whiskers to see them, bornbodice mirror-spits of each mother. Rolley he was, Rolley be, shelterer by the bridge of Poteau, who straitened the slack and entered a jungwif; bring light over Eg's first and only Phoebial!

Now Eg has the first of his fireboy's allowances, and Phee has the minimum of her wages, so this day they are readier than many to naffle on the drunk's loathly squat, to spill swig and squash fags as he imparts the beatific of his purities. Eager lovelearners! Roll may exceed Pphthrcelwedrick in libationism, he returns all gifts and good intentions with rich philosoafy. Roll seeks law to give light; he breaks wind and swipes litres from the grogshop. He alone is responsible for a phenomenon remarked upon by bridge crossers, a colourless, ghostly darting gas seeking its moment of ignition. But Rolley is also the Meet, patriarch of the circle line, philosoafing furuncle, who has read the grohm scrolls and has the power to pour sceptic upon septic.

Rolled Virginia puts him in a rilly ripe frame, he erupts: 'Learn all things, unwavering heart of the true. Turn from the opinions of mortals in the autumn of trust.'

This no ordinary one-headed sot. Phee brushes a leaf from her spangled cord jacket, handsome as a drake's. Rol, who never hides his admiration, confides simply to the stars, 'Lucky fellah!'

Next question: —Who burns? The drum is burning, loved ones, with root-matter of the knotting tree. If I had not done so it would have expired. Know that in Greece, where not

one person alive was dead, where no stain was maintained by bleaching, where no dead survived, the lust of eternal flame was kept by widows. In Rome of honour and bureaucracy, it was kept by virgins. And had they the knowledge of fire.

Sensing a question the couple are silent.

'Of continuance as of ignition, and this: of the pure fire that is in us, the vital flame. The pure invisible desire that doth permeate all bodies, even the most hard. *Calidum in-natum*, animal, spirit. The Vital! Source of spirit and strength. Everywhere it is, stirring, giving movement, understanding; it sees and knows the present and what is to come, but mostly what has passed.

Phoebe would know, —Is the fire in or outside of us, then?

—In us, Phoeb. Nor can it gain entry if it is not born there. Its alter is visible under certain moons if we have the mind to behold. I have told you, the Hebrew spirit has the letters of fire. The Chinese adore it, the Chaldeans, the Celts. Living and intelligent aether. It is we, I speak of them, those of the city, the beasts of the Bourse, the dollar trolls, it is we, they, who are in the dark and —?

—We it is, the cold, rejoins Eg, doing his best to grasp the substitution of his pronouns.

—So it is, we are, sweet boy.

—Of the sense?

—Of neither seen nor of felt but of the dark. To dare the dark. We are the bruit, disturbing all, afraid of nothing but of nothing, the quiet, still, and cold. We hack, we prove, we ruin. Deface, we,

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deny that we will end in such a shortcoming. So Nero ... fiddled. Now tell me. Is there fire if it does not burn? Is there blood without heat? And can we dispense with blame?

Their eyes eye yesses hopefully, repeatedly.

—An overlord, who knows well that this is the time of rising ants, has ordered victuals for the wedding of his daughter. The cart is drawn by two donkeys. One is obedient to its driver's wishes and one is unruly. The obedient donkey suffers an infestation of ants but holds its position, while communicating its discomfort to the other, which bolts, fearing an attack. The cart deviates, a wheel breaks in a ditch and the victuals spill. Which is to blame for the lack of victuals at the feast?

Eg and Phee ponder, consult and reply justly, 'The obedient ass, for revealing its discomfort.'

Rol is joyful. More questions!

'Is it better to be loved by a virgin unloved by one disappointed by another whose heart had been freely given to a fifth, than never to have loved at all?

The couple respond with antiphon, —It is better to be loved by a virgin.

The buddleia grows and blooms. Rol lists with happiness, though portly. —That which is conscious of its existence, can it have music in its soul? Can praise be as venom to one disappointed by flattery? Consider and rejoin next class. But remember, the slip is the tip of the solution! Leave the winning to the worldly, war to the warlike, donkeys to drivers ...

The holy lush is ognoggle, out to pixie at Landseem'd, Nod.

Phoeb takes Eg's lips upon hers and they leave Rol to pernicious apnoea, the crock o' cervileum irredeemably awobble in intorsion of jellifeum. At Rolley's bedside is the fourth book of Slowhand and the fifth of Oren. On waking, for he lives many days in one, he will discover Abdul's misshapen buns and the last of Eg's tobacco.

The nearly-nuptials follow a track to the most green-ing blooming protectorate of the budleias and knock staff to martin within snoringsnot of the one true tutor. Knock knock aknockle-peddle, tok tok the rim dok, drool upon the cotta, breath wreathed dry and made her cry, one lick hop the bodice and all.

Though Phoeb has knowledge of his rhetoric, Eg is not destined for the bishoprick. Under these boughs the unweds scurry among the weedings, dancing their answers in the shank of errancy, lipping to the sonorous drone of unwitting Rolley, their essentials in conscious reception and witsome donation, their caresses carenotless, their snogles fondly knowing no regret but for a mutating passenger species of soilmite.

Not last week Pphthrck, fresh from siesta under the wobbling balcony creeper, within earshot of Monnie and Abdul's sons, —If I don't see four legs under the budleias by the rail track. See that, Monique-pet.

Mnemonic spreading pancake mix would not look from that window for fear of what she already knew, —That's a rough peep, Prick, come away, that's all. Some couple up to no-good making another larrikan to feed.

At the Lion Café

As Pphtcrck sludges through the drizzle towards him, Harmon the Barman shines glasses, switches channels, telephones fillies and whistles sea shanties, for aye, Harmon has whim for the quim and sea-service only worsened it.

Swash the decks of a navy-barque now. Harmon, sleeveless in wind-sark. specialist of the upper-sheatheknots, rumscuttling slaver strong in foretaste, proof and afterswill! Which tale will it be? 'Harmon and the Galley Maidens', 'Harmon and the Flying Foxes', 'Harmon and Skull Traders', 'Harmon and the King's Daughter'? The crew's debauches knew new adventures. The captains rotten and needing dentures. The ship's boys had it to the lashes, the brutish fell, the ships went down. Harmon made landfall and discovered Africa, though not her interior. Joining a legion deserting a legion, he reached the Cape and crossed the Indian. He traded in ack-acks and the rest is chinwag but for the blarney. Home again, posthumous and unmissed by loved ones, sporting his knowledge of canasta and teargas, Harmon answered an ad in the 18th arrondo, and will be boiling whitey-water in the café by the Androcles Fountain till the galley maidens track him for patrimoney.

Pphtcrck frees his feet from the broughtwaters as Pugn calls for thin cigars and doubles his betting slips. He pulls off his socks and spreads his toes before the bar heater, thoughtless in the tense of failure. Truth, it is a wonder Mon found

faith in him, but find it she did in the lean-to and leaned that way forever. Had Pphthrcck had thoughts, the twins Eg and Nahno would have been furthest from them.

The rains are drying as Monnie drops by for a quick one. She has had a chat with an out-of-season florist and learned the latest from the buxom wife of a Basque librettist.

Pphthrcck: —Chantilly's awash, Mon. Any nag can win in that slush.

Mon: —Know the jockey then?

Harmon: —First ride this winter, just this oncer. Likes the wet. Worth a punt, Pugn?

Pugnacious flexes, eyes on the screen. Silently 'Aye's. The bell sounds. One nag leaps and stumbles, another drowns in waterrace, cameramen scramble for lives, veterinarians destroy wrong geldings, one with sprained legs passes the finishing line in a photo with Only Dreaming's jockey.

Misery, vulgarism, proverbs and shredded slips. Like a good barman, Harmon has the glasses ready. Mon sees the lens of her glass bottom and leaves to warm supper.

Watching her go, Pugn has the liberty of badinage. —Quite the stunner, your Mon, quite the cop recruit!

—True Pugn! sighs Pphthrcck. No rival nor parture. Quite the fluff of zexty! Never retreats till please factor gives sector.

Inane, so they speak, men of our ilk under influence. And Harmon has heard it all.

When Monnie reaches the flats the lift is no go. A delivery boy is swearing and refusing to lug shopping baskets eighth floorwards when Abdul's sons arrive and save

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his contract. All four haul freight eightwards, and this the holy month of Ramadam.

Phoeb dashes for her clothes. Eg in his underwear leaps to pitiful patastrophic: 'Monnie! Forget you saw us and I'll wash and wipe till Sunday! Tellyouso! Mamatut-tut! Can't blame us. Just like you and Pphthrcck at the tantric, hen! Pure as the milk tooth, non?'

Mon has no words for Ego. She crosses before the burning heart of Jesus and smiles her resignation at Phoeb, 'Cuppa, lovey?' She calls Eg to table, opens the pralines and gets down to issues. 'Not the first time, Dotheads?'

Nor the last.

—I warn, if Pphthrcck catches you in hootlery it's the beginning of the rental.

Now, the couple know invention, but have no talent for deception. They agree on a defence plan: when Monny rings the buzzer long this means she is alone. Three-short and she is with Pphthrcck—they'd better cover the marmoset quick. And if that save them, anything will.

—Y'can't stop nature, the florist has said it and say it again.

The conspirators know Pphthrcck is no yodel of modelry, breaking wind in his gown, calling a swallow a summer and blaming immigrants for the cooking odours. Descendant of immigrants typical. He loves a dandy melody, wagers before the tote closes, and never lets a good win rob him of the right to whine like a loser. The will to lose has him till he has no écus and he borrows on the smallest principle. With dads like that egos like Ego upshoot. But he is to be reckoned with.

HYPERBATON

His grandfather faced firing squad, and his oval is awful in middle age.

Monnie has seen it before and see it again. Tangled bed-clots. Paw and the raw, and feminine. Her politeness is natural. After all, Eg has not been seen to have gone to the bad. He has the innocence of his infancy and Monnie's eyes often water as she reads his verselets of piffeltry:

Ich, Eck, fit without cable will war for nuts scorn dates and beat brick till knuckle glissen achin' I'm for Pheeb and no mistakin.

Simple fidel! Monny blushes to bear it so. By Hugh! Phee a prize if he can keep her. Darker than light and fairer than gloom, sweet as the muskmint of courtship, her ambience intact, clear as the moon of her naming. And it's a future the dork has in her, for Phee has natural born howtospellity.

Part the Second

Rol Sprinkle

The spring winds blow petals into trouser cuffs. People with places to be getting to cross the bridge of Poteau. Engines growl, dust falls through cracks. It is the time of lengthening evenings. Pphthrcck and Pugn, that pair of habitués never slow to chase rude insinuation with unfounded assertion, are adjudicating samples of the New Beaujolais, sitting on the rim of the Androcles Fountain singing the Life of Riley.

Pphthrcck: (inane laughter).

Pugn: (mooches, rhymes, and racist rudies, farting).

Monnie is reading contraception.

Yab Yum wondering if summit is up.

Eg is at his fire-lessons, fidgeting with cuticle.

Phoeb is short and long-changing the bread queue till the books balance... & in the evenings the couple take instruction from the wonky monk.

Rol's brow wrinkles anew and out comes what's left of him. A labrador in the rail valley takes up the antiphon of his vomit-cry, alarming neighbouring chihuahuas. Taking shelving retrieved from a bankrupt bookshop, he feeds it to the

drumfire gazing into flames and remembering the tristful prophecy of Lysistratus: “The Kolian women shall roast their barley with oar-blades.” He then takes his pricket and moistens the soil whitefly, shaking thus,

. . .
 . . . :
 . . . ;
 . . .

He is spitting a coherent fragment, warbling order out of illogical induction, when Eg arrives from Fire School. Rol will press him to hookie. A full tour of the city’s inner springs must complement knowledge of the firehoses. A sign! Whitefly upon the rainbow slick spell out the words TOUR INVIRONS!

Phoeb late from Abdul with wholemeal reads the writing. She will claim her holidays—propitious, for it is Ramadam and business light.

Rooftops, liftwells, the streets of Rol’s bankruptcy, the Tulleries, Medicis and hectares of troubled trees. How the three will party-oh!

Markettour/Invirons

No tour of the markets would be complete without Rol’s economic theories. He identifies Oligopolyp 1, the vending

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of the little to the many, all power to the sellers and bartering is futile. When a few control much, many believe they deserve little and so the way is clear for Oligopolyp 2, “the ruse”. —You see, a few oranges overpriced. But look, in the truck, are there not several crates of oranges concealed from view?

They digress into Bourse where Rol identifies the columns of Staple Stocks, Star Lines, and Undecideds. Each has its categories of Continuous Demand, Short Life Massive Demand, and LongLife Slow Growth Demand, Perishable, Durable, Imaginable and Coffee. Some vendor boxes are marked Greed, some Aggrieved, some Unfounded Hope, some Landscape, Design, and others Development. Buyers have labels announcing their interest in stocks, dress and past-times including Arts, Internet and Intellectual Demeaning. Eg and Phoebe hear about bargaining techniques: depreciation, demoralising, mock agreement and counterattack, yes-but, neutralise, rotten praise and flatter-barter.

Rol sanctions Porto on the forbidden lawn before the Church of Holy Hurt and in a forgotten corner of Abbesses he lays oil on wine, foretelling that few without papers will be granted amnesty. At the Fountain of the Zapped they pass among crowds whose faces seem prematurely aged. A dying one lifts bleedy eyes at them and Rol sees—he has been through the scalding hoop. Zapped!

Eg does not understand but before our story is finished he will know too well. Correction! His brain is on file, and that’s where the zapper hits you hardest, in the lachrymal conduit.

Ah the old Rol-haunts!

In the next courtyard steps pass. It is the courtyard of Having to be Getting On. In the centre is the Fountain of the NeverArrived. The clandestine dead. With sorry hearts the three trudge towards the Fountain of Future.

But by the Chapel of the Anointing Trollop they hear a hush as of quiet industry, like a meadow in summer. It is the hive of charity, Rol explains. Another side street opens on a man and his daughter jogging across an open square, the man looking at his watch, the girl puffing to keep up with him. It is the Fountain of Child after Guardianship, the burden of the bourgeoisie. They run like an eye after time.

To the Fountain of Permission now, whose signing desks are set just above the water. When the wind ruffs, waves swamp the decks, paper sails and ink runs. Permission in this city is arbitrary and ever temporary.

The Fountain of Phony Promise is undergoing renovation. A voice intones,

Wish and be dashed hope and be disheartened grow fade
rise fall command and be enfeebled have faith and to hell
with you.

Rol is a-shiver. His voice is dry, he cannot warn them! Eg and Phoeb cup their hands and drink and afterwards are thirsty. A stale breeze! It is not the kind of used air that rises from the underground but that staleness of voices lacking words in any language, speechless to express their disappointment.

Before the Chapel of St Sulpice hundreds of students in

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woollen pullovers are drinking, raising chins, spitting gum, joining hands and singing Stars and Stripes. Each pullover has a number on it, and each student carries a peace pipe. Backpackers declodge and dive into a concoction of bleach, insecticide and Coca Cola. Rol sees gastric antelope flu in waiting any longer.

The Montparnasse lift has windows but a small memory. It can compute one floor at a time or go all the way to the top. They enter the lift with a resident who explains that the floors have been rearranged. The lift stops, confused. They hear a song rising — the weaver of the liftwell. The resident tells them they must choose between stairs and waiting for the weaver to finish her tune.

The planxty is about a lift that is being held by a cord, a thin fraying cord, and about a height where man cannot breathe. Two words—or 359 Ezekielian days—later, the weaver surprises them by finishing.

Apertures open and the lift floods with light! See! There, below! The Cathedral of the Little Fisher Brothers and there! the Hutch of The Three One-Legged Children and oh! the Chapel of the Apparition of the Griffon to the Acolyte. See the lovely shops, and impending acquisitions in the fervent shoppers' eyes. The statue of the Virgin of the Disappearing Pebbles diminishes as they rise, as does the People's Palace of the Nude of the Extra Vertebrae, of Our Medieval Lady and the Young Blade with Gloves. And yet ... passing strange — these apertures show no police-protected murderers, no diplomats above the law, no glassy-eyed derelicts clutching

leftovers and pissing down their legs, no mothers slapping whining fidgets, no amputated fingers of thieves, no legless victims of landmines

Much is there not. Eg and Phoeb have seen the Fountain of Not Looking Back among the unliveable hutches, but Rolle cautions them, —Regret is strident, but carry the best of the past with you. Many are those who carry the worst.

The doors open at the topmost point of the city. Rol takes fuel and slumps in a corner. The couple hold hands, admiring the sonority and harmonics of Rol's snoring. There was another who appreciated them and Professor Novotny was his name. But a security guard is having none of it. He drops them expressly at speed to their proper level, ground.

From their proper level, to lower. Rol's sleep music reached Novotny's ears far beneath land surface. And they resolve to find, to refind, Novotny's Studios of Pirithöus.

They shift rubbish containers behind Cafe de la Gare and Rol finds again the nose-ring of a hidden trapdoor. At the first door he inserts an ancient key which he carries always on his person. A tumbler turns.

Unopened for years, it takes the strength of the three to free the portal. They descend a spiral staircase known only to the last of the resistance fighters. They skirt the laboratories of IRCAM listening to a muffled music in the tradition of figurative approximation. It sounds as though notes are rising when they remain at the same pitch, or as if they are varying in ways there are not words nor notation to describe. And this might have deceived their cochlea into thinking they had

risen towards ground level, as to the light and photosynthesis, had not Rol led them down ever downward.

The deepest point. Silence pure. They enter a blacked-out vault where he strikes a match. It is a cleaner's store, the one he used to sleep in next to the studio of Novotny. Here Rol learned to listen, which did not preclude sympathetic sleep — and his snoring caused history.

Out of the broom cupboard and into the very, the ancient, the once-was sound-proofed electronic studio. Here it was that Rol's fluctuating frequencies at the rate of human inhalation inspired Novotny's greatest composition and gave birth to the school of hearing that led to the labs of IRCAM. Novotny at first thought the sound was naturally occurring, a short-circuiting of faulty patch cords. He found the source sleeping in his broom closet, the key of the last of the Resistance fighters around his neck. Novotny promised the sleepy blood anonymity and unlimited rights of descent by the spiral staircase. He recorded him whenever he came there to snooze it off. Novotny's experimental sounds were soon embellishing radio waves from Wagram to Wellington, neither major nor myxolidian, miaou nor ladedá, but the pure notes that seed within when the mind yearns for ignorance without. The secret of Novotny's success died with him — Rol secured no royalties.

All is dustmites and cobwebs, the good professor is a musical footnote. His console remains underground, ignored by the architects of the new IRCAMopolis, left to the rootrats and one philosofer. Rol takes a pause, slips into sleep, and

the loving two hear Rol with different ears, inslinging and outhaling, his ribcage the instrument of a superurge as sonorous as bugle of godly boscaige.

On waking Rol cries, 'As seeds seeking dark we have sprung! I brought her nothing but brevity. Fie on me! Fie Eg. Fie Phee, fie!'

Eg and Phoeb would know more of Rol's fie but the merry has gone from his mystic. They hurry his simplest kidney out the hatch and make for the periphery.

A familiar landmark! A rotunda with seventeen soccer balls on its eaves. Sky a dawn peach. Rotunda a gutter of homely brackish languid-toned bong-water! This is a place of allowance, where the water cannot be prevented from filling the centrepiece, nor prevented from leaving lion-mouthed nipple-pieces and falling arc-wise to a dark pool.

At the rail lines of Belliard they pass glass over snout till the philosoaf needs no coaxing towards paradox.

'Mature is to hold within all that is im—. Complete is all that is in—. The work finished is complete, unachieved! Beware resolution.

'Compulsion the bind of volition to speak the acme of silence silence the ear's definition to hear the root of deafness actor imbiber of laxity! rulers mewlers in idleness! When nothing is willed no beep no message. Finish not, and all will be done.

'Vae soli, lovers! Stick together! Incendium Amoris will consume. Woe to gluttons! For you though the good love! Rol spits on the pan—end of matter.

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Truly, argument pointless.

After snarlers Rol cites the stomach cramp till they share in healing proof. He rolls weed and his mood lightens. He sings a rumramble of twohead and threepeg.

girlheens and garsœens' garsœens swig hither before you give out but give to each other

dance lovers true the merryfeet off neither starve ye feed you fully

have no fear of the great iron door Rol goes before ye, tinterrable

Eg and Phob take heart for this is singable. They retire to the narrowcot and the embrace of soon-to-be-weds knows no discomfort! Is it at this moment that Phoebe conceives? We may never know. But before our spin is spun they'll have a home to hove in.

As they sleep the winter woman throws seeds about the railway tracks and the ground hears her singing. The winter woman wears a garland of ice flowers whose centres are coagulating. She drives her hands into our story. Shoots of lilies and apple saplings whither.

Ego wakes smelling trouble. He cannot sleep. He is uneasy but cannot know the cause. He wanders about the deserted flea

market, a ravaged landscape. Despondent Eg! He calls his own number on the mobile. He is busy. He nears Rol's bridge.

A groan born with splatter! Rol is leaning against the great iron door, his face a froth, a blackening bubble. Beaten. Beaten, reader, and mauled. Haul him to the light, fireboy! Carry

water! Rinse his blood and find him nourishment!

Now on Tuesdays the fishmonger throws Friday's fish. Eg warms the pan and adds fennel. He props Rol on his elbow—but Rol will have none of it. Eg has liquor for the pain—but Rol has no stomach, not even for the flagon!

'Who was it, Rol? Who beat you senseless?'

'Just a philosoap's fallout, Eg.'

Eg throws fists in the air, 'What manner of man? And who didn't see it? O! neighbourhood blind to beatings! I'll call my firemates!'

'Take the path of reason, Eg. To understand is to accept! The plough is a complex ox. Retaliation the dull of barbary. Fire burns books, etcetera. To see injury with slight-seeking eye is to worsen it!

The hole in Eg's head closes up. Bloodshot blocks his eyes.

'Socrates ... was ... stargazing when the Turkish astrogecko ... excreted in ... his open ... mouth.'

Roll is out. The strain has been great. I, our Ego, crouches by the tramp's cleavered sorebody. Earth by the lines has been savaged. Flowers dead. Nature's wounding! Will sprigs of budleia ever again shoot from the soilbed? Rol is weakening, humbled and dirt. O earth! Cloud's casement. Rolley has deserved forgetfulness, his sleep is poetic.

Honeyed ... flame Never ... from thee ... abstain I have ... heard ... thee My remem ... brance

But four words "I am ... your body" But four more "My ... body ... is ... thine"

You ... my nicotine I your ... fresh dough Where was that ...

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and when? A century ... a... go!

Hush, dear ... here it is! The thing! ... The ring!

She ... comes! Countessa ... I arrive!

Rol is out to his burned banknote of a youngtime. The birds of the air take to the trees in compassion.

Discovery Sunday

Many are the trysts when Yab Yum is at restaurant in the 19th, and the couple, isle of Ego, vale of Phee, lie aside in Phee's single-bed, Hsi Wang Mu deaf, bedbound, and dumb of the Cantonese she never supplanted.

And many are Eg's dropoffs in fire class.

And many are the baguettes sold at Abdul's bakery at irregular prices.

For the couple steal every moment, and know no prophylaxy. But for the foot final.

Mon and Pphtcrck take Nahno to the Lion Café and Phoebe drops a floor. The two together, skin shinnying, are showering delight when the match is abandoned at the an-thems. A handful of no goods have whistled during the Mar-seillaise! The president

himself leaves the stadium, followed by the cameras, and our unholy family leaves the café, reader, in like disgust.

Nahno never more dejected. Monnie trying to talk sense into Pphtcrck. Pphtcrck a sput kettle, squittering patriotism

and xenophobia. He will have footballers oathe on the hymn. He will have no sons of immigrants in the stadium. He will outlaw Africa. And Monnie fails to sound the signal—three short buzzes—to the lovers.

Eg hears a key torturing the lock to the background of Pphthrcck's dismembering ejaculations. Phoeb divenoses under the blankets as Pphthrcck bursts bull-nose and captioned for action to tell Ego the worst of it:

'Whistled! In the ears of the President! Wha? Still abed?! Rise and be conted! WHISTLED! At the anthem!'

Ego holds his ground. Any move reveal his hunch of Pheeloaf.

'What you do thah lazyboy, bang-happy the ding-dong? Yr ravelling bedcloth past the yardarm? WHISTLED!'

Ego feigns, but Pphthrcck's barometer rising. He good for anyfight and any Eg will do.

'Get up, can'tcha! Unwashed and warshipping on God's rest day! Idlerg at midday, useless! My own shit and shanty! But I'm right to be chiming! It's for your good, Dreg. You want to turn up like

Pugn on all fours at any hour? WHISTLED!'

What can Ego do? The more he refrains the harder his dadsock's insisting.

—Bandy on the bellrope solo? Prey for the traffickers! You'll be wrested from jacquerie! Slovenly! My scar and shoulder-burden! Rise ya hotsch spotch layabout! WHISTLED!

The door is ajar and Pphthrcck has found fans on the landing. He yellows, he rages, he snakes and he slavers at his lazy

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lineage. The landing is divided. Abdul's sons are for an alarm clock, the Serbians on the seventh floor for a grounding; the local hash dealer is for the mariner's solution, a corridor straddleflogging; an ancient lonely of the eighth east wing is for confession and mysticism. A solo dad from the tenth defends the lazy dogson. Pphthrcck is swollen with deflated Fatherhood.

Pphthrick's Epic of Paternity

Though fickle the finances We gloated in the golden We
guy ya frivolidays dun we? Plasticpails?

You were funstruck wuntcha?

We jandalcobbelled Wiped ya stickyfingers. For thus Mon
guy ya pancakes?

Dun we fed ya? Watch ya chubby up? Mon wash ya dirties
Bath yers after licorice twisties?

For thus no time to drink, thanks ya? For thus no coppers
to gamble No minutes to gabble together? For thus mon guy
ya pancakes?

Beastybowelled canwormy ingrate! Dun we inoc you and
vaccine? For thus counted the pitmite and kidneyworm? For
this lie-abed with no love of lucre? Weedreek dilutant! Adult
student! Boy Humpty! For thus guy ya pancakes?

Cracked broomstick-spined catcheat ourboy! Slink badger!
Knee-jerk runtpiece flop-parsnip! For thus teach ya the out-

doors

To not piss the maiden-hair? Loiter of sloth wallow in the lough of mire! For thus guv ya piklets?

For thus crawled on belly and vote For the Jack who sent us chocolates? For thus bathed you and Nahno And scooped out the turds with spaghetti-spoon? For thus Monny mix pancakes?

On ya feet son! And we'll pardon Our kith and kin one!

We'll overlook the lie-in Jissthyss oncer! But on your feet son!

Pphthrcck has the laurel, o! resident, undulant laureate. All are for pardoning of his otiose son. Some have softened to jelly with Pphthrcckodocius's limping spondees and catalextics. He has won hearts with his legunt, elegunt and diligunt till many have lost the object of his chastisement in the tinnabulation of his composition.

Now is the moment, but Eg's heart is hard. He will not stir. Pphthrcck advances on the bed and rudely-hosed, short-cosseted, Phoeb rises gasping. And vulgar eyes drink. Eg's eider has been holding downy motive.

Monique clothes the neighbour girl, while the crowd bones about her reputation. Mon thanks Alzheimer that her moth-erin-law Frida who stapled many a nappy to Eg's abdomen did not live to see the day. Unlike Frida, Mon no Rhadamanthus. She posits a five point plan for improvement of the filial:

1. Education by ultimatum.

5. No more shamming, hiping, liping or fucking. Pphthrcck is for an encore:

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Contusion! Normandy haddock Wretched from mud of mammoth! Lust dovies fouling the question crater? For thus holidays? For thus pancakes? Lout of sloth in the loch of mire?

He plans in loose spondees:

Plan A: feed 'em Plan B: starve 'em Plan gamma: nuke 'em Plan delt: abbreviate 'em Plan eps: flatten 'em Plan zet: deplete their uranium Plan et: beat 'em Plan thet: untooth 'em Plan jot: iodize 'em Plan kap: boot 'em

Plan lamb: baste 'em Plan mu: carve 'em Plan nu: civilize 'em Plan xi: sabotage 'em Plan omi: buy 'em Plan pi: annihilate 'em Plan rho: flood 'em Plan sig: reroute 'em Plan tau: convert 'em Plan ups: bribe 'em Plan phi: comb 'em Plan chi: plumb 'em Plan psi: bomb 'em Plan omega: entomb 'em.

Yab Yum is revived with the salts. She blames Christianity. —All of Eve go the way of the goad. We'll harry 'em to marry yet for want of prevention!

Mon is with her: —In the dunes, lewd; wedded, proper bonk.

Pphthrcck: For this save you f-f-from orph-ph-phanage? More beer, Mon. Less and less in these cans, hen?!

Eg foxes. Pphthrcck sloppy after litres of Bavaria. He is already calling Plan ups Plans down. The verses of his revenge are numbered:

Plan ya: forekin Plan waw: littoral

Plan ha: both ears Plan nun: mastectomy Plan mim: democracy

The last turn left of his loose-end labyrinth! Quidnunc.

Dusk has fallen on the spondee-runter. Any sot-peeker can see his kick feebling. Pphthrcelwedric loses his assembly. The landing falls away to Sunday lunches. Overs and unders return to their levels and cryptics. A day like any other.

Pphthrck falls, splitting his cranium in the usual places. Monny drags him to the tub, gathers the empties and practises her preservatives speech. The old miss-the-ferry is soon dropping off in the essence, as the duo slip to the safety of the budleias.

There they coddle and console. They cloy, how they toy, oh they do wotnot hoviss.

Nahno is quivering with the radio. —Monnie, Monnie it's all a-radio. The future!

And Mon, —But whose is that voice I know and do not? And Nahno, —My only nephew unborn, they call him Adeo.

[(Aside) **The Future** (Or go to **The Wedding Plot**.)

—Grann Mon, Grann Mon, my bit, listin'!

—Ah, it's plastered over Eg's discrepancies, no lie. But you are hardly thought of, Adeo, patience of the short version. Am I in my stole?

—You've just taken bottles out and practising the contraceptives arguments!

—Ah, such a downypointment, I was scratching all week, the shame of their sin on the worsted and Pphthrck weeping

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in the whiskey. Well, Adeo, for you no girl next door. You'll be going straight to the seminary. Did you keep the appointment I made for you with the archevick?

—A fascist, grand martha, if you'll use the dictionary.

—They take you not kindly, Ad?

—Said they wouldn't make a priest of me for all the gold in Ivory.

—After all the Hooverings I made in the chapel!

—A grieving 'seigneur told me examine the film of my father to crack the codocil of my character.

—What's that, a threejim of the collar yellowing my own falsetooth and gumblood? There's trouble in the tea leaf, Adeo. And yet, perhaps, they'll have you in chorus stalls. Well go on then. Did they take your contribution for the oracle?

—He was happy and lined his pocket, Grammar. He took me outside the bimillennium cairn, raised his sceptre and struck off the wood knot bee saying with the effort, By Jove!

—There, you see, pagan sottish, all wrong! And the oracle?

—“Adeo, thine is to come to no good.”

—He say so, Ad?

—Sayso, granharg. Then took the bread and burgundy.

—Then rinse his uvuncular in ouzo! Soft, the walls are listening. And no ads to swerve us.

Music. End of Future.]

The Wedding Plot

Mon's first fear is the oldest. Sworn, she has no proof but her intuition is inspired, she will soon be babysitting a squawlearthling Godgiven. Eg will merge his childishness with paternity, tuck tight the mungo rug, but for the leeward lop, scoop up the bawling poop, drive spoon in the pulp, dab off the sloppy lub, smile on the reptile grub and hand the unwanted to the authorities for education is compulsory.

Mon's premonition is word. The litmus test proofs. Pphthrcck will have none of it.

'What is this, bloody orphanage? You start it, get shot of it. Darn good hiding!'

In defence Eg cites his peterperpetrating uncle's bastards, raised many a horny toad under even-gown, no myth.

'The swill uncle, yes', Mon remember, 'tall in the ring, that lot, in ring, tall and that'll be all sir, truly. Fond of bone in gravy — long bells and all beaus, that lot.'

Pphthrcck finds Pugn in the betting shop, pinning the prettiest thing on legs above the snug trough. Struth! Harmon hits nozzle for a double. Pphthrcck and Pugn have time for the fourth at Boulogne before returning to beat up on Egnog. They break the door and Pugn lays rough hands on the kid, eyes in flander, nostrils flared in quandary:

'Diddin I tells ya, leave the lass 'lone, patentless cack-worm?'

Pugn's brows are twitching cricketwings. Confession is Eg's only wheedle:

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‘Hear me. I it was but am I the first? Weren’t Auntie Swill in the family way in uncle’s time of Tuberculosis, and were they not all tall that lot?’

Eg’s cribbage persuasive.

‘Aye, aye, son, the Swills, long bells in short hosery, that lot.’

Pphthrcck tells Pugn loosen the noose and slams, ‘Your funeral! Another mouth to pick! Let it come. Damage done! Makes his mistakes quick, that one! So be! The Swill in him! God guvven. We are swaddled unasked in the muddling sheets and gone soon enough. Let’s be warming Eghead. No more yoke and beatings. May the gift of the God come and the mouth be fed, this day and all till the mouth has mouths of its own to begrudge.’

Pphthrcck will never remember saying these words, bearing out what the elder Basil reckoned that each wo/man speaks stuff of truth and worth once and then forgets it. The rest is weeding. Eg breathes, but not out of the woods. He swears with oath and spittle that later duffs will be averted by any disposal which is to Pphthrcck bolus and must, choice wedlock when Yab Yum and Hsi Wang at the door.

Hsi Wang is in her wheelchair. On her lap is a pre-revolution Mandarin wedding suit. He hears Yab Yum saying Eg can be married in it or buried in it. The couple are for the Trothing Chamber.

Monnie is rueful, tearful and joyful. How she loves a good wedding.

The Third Part

Rol's Oracle

When Eg and Phee give Rol the news before the Great Iron Door under the Bridge of Poteau the philosoaf sings
lock and nail of the pair and the vocal of the Stillhinge rises,

—Have the couple been to ends of the verse and made rhyme?

The couple quolver. They struggle in endwind and quandary. They cannot lie. They admit that, yes, they have made rhyme. The Stillhinge advises, 'Until you understand your inadequacies, you will be limited by imitation.'

Was the fault with the querent? How many toes would Adeodatus know? And what of the marriage augurs? An echo. Stillhinge portends wedding gifts:

—For Thoth did present to Thamus of Thebes:

Innersprings Lama coverings Cutlery Bookspines

An aluminium hand mirror Tumble dryer Fridge and contents Herb flasks

A condiments trove Truffles

For those long evenings: Enumerate Calculate Cupulate

Astronomise Board gammon Dice-tossin

Phoeb a mass of pheasant bumps. Smoulders vestal, Rol throws leaf on drum embers and touches her earlobe to read prognosis of awful association. Turning his leer up to read in

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the moon their genitures he deems Phoeb cheerfully prone to despond, Eg unsteadily stable. He sentences them to self-fulfilling monogamy. As for legitimacy, neither is the other's father or mother, son or daughter, and neither of them has any abnormality not already evident. The child is revealed by the morning star perfect. The newborn's conjunction will be unexpectedly interrupted. Many, full and partial will be his friendships.

A meteor flares and dies. A shadow passes before the moon. Rol firm: 'The bridal path will know bramble.' He grasps nettle and passes out on a clump of pissing dock. The gutteral of his sleep solo has set in when—a vision!—Phoebe sees:

The table on which she was born, a midwife wrapping her in swaddling clothes. Phoebe grows but not into herself. The woman is tall, thin, her fair hair plaited into bookmarks. It is Phoebe's birth mother, through whose brown eyes a kindly fault runs. She says she is not as before. The force of her hands has gone, but there! the wine for a wedding feast is on the table. Phoebe will unite and happily.

An endwind rises. Gone, gone. Her face remains in Phoebe's face, her voice in Phoebe's, who is crying, 'Mother!'

One thing is sure, the marriage all go. —Bill or Filly? Silly Eg.

—A boygift from goodness, mummy. Goodgovern Adeodatus.

The Paranoia Bureau

The about-to-be's are duly frank before the civic secretaries who, seeing Hsi Wang's and Yab Yum's names on Phee's file, point

them down slippery stairs to Origin Pathology.

The waiting room is guarded by a sporty cop in straps and weapons. Afraid that if they enter there they will never get out they feign forgetfulness, remount, and slip off Egress onto Fire Escape, where they creep over a catwalk into Drivers Licenses and ask directions to E.R.C., the Offices of Encouraging Response and Conviviality. But the two secretaries in E.R.C. are far from obliging. The lamer of the two scratches her left cheek with her pimple nail, the other sends a coded note to Tornado, the nerve centre, to the effect that any missing couple is with them. Tornado instructs Paranoia to see the ceremony flawed. Paranoia, in the shadow of one Olio, sends a memo to Soil inserting the optional question. When the day comes around, Eg and Phoeb's avoidance of unlucky acts for the past fourteen hours is to no avail.

Battle of the Trothing Chamber

The wedding guests are legion: Phee's guardians, Yab Yum Kali and Hsi Wang Mu, the latter in a comfy electric wheel-

chair, Eg's elders and a clot of well-wishers comprising Barman Harmon's Indo-Chinese veterans, Abdul and his bounding sons, the liquor merchant, two hash dealers, some happy Party Gauls and members of the local Socialists, pacific Cantons, horny fireboys, athletic Algerians, the Serbians from the seventh floor, Monnie's out-of-season florist, the neighbourhood knitting club, the solo

dad from the tenth, the ancient lonely of the east wing and Yab Yum's restaurant regulars.

The wedding party must wait till an auction of paperweights is over. And many a pretty sinker is sold to the loudest bidder. Lead, brass and Lepidoptera snared in glass go under the hammer. Those unlucky in bidding now compete for abused or cracked paperweights. The auction is slow and Pphthrck is vowing slaughter. The Socialists present themselves to the auctioneer who cannot fault their French. The auctioneer adjourns. The paper-weight collectors take their seats at the rear of the bartering hall so that the couple of that lot in the corner may concur with law.

The protagonists are ushered. Fingers that only that morning had been disembowelling mullet and pullet, preserving nozzles and testicles in marinades of raisins and rum, or stuffing pheasants with sage and bay, grip each other in anticipation. Monnie has hankies. Justice is seated on a historical satin perch, question of impedimentary shriving in his hands. He is wearing a milley fronk, a wicked wearpiece. He refers his stately nostrils in the direction of the supplicants and begins:

—Whanabout two about ne in Aprilee noo.

To which the Socialists beg him to please be aware the couple are ignorant of ancient Frog. The judge rephrases, —A spring wedding, nothing like it!

To which the couple reply, —As it is writ, Lud. —Speak ye the Frog then?. To which the Socialists reply, —Tonguely native kin, Lud.

Justice appears satisfied but, preliminaries concluded, when the moment comes for seal and ring, he notes with concern the memo from Paranoia, ups his eyebrows and closes his eyelids to slit-housings, hooks his chin at an angle that strains hard upon his vocal organ and with a jerk of insinuation inserts:

—Be ye of the soil, then? A silence. A groaning one if ever there was. He elaborates:

—This Yab Yum, of Mao was she? And thee Egoswthr, are ye not known in Hippo?

It is with a Hiroshima of horror that Eg recognises the insignia of the Natural Frants on the ring of the fifth knuckle of the cadaverous celebrant. At the signing table to his rear he spies the first secretary of Paranoia. Alas, the second is there, mastering her smirk.

Phoeb whispers before the highest seat in the hall that she never knew her father nor mother and Yes, Yab was of Mao, Hsi of Sinkiang as Jeezus of Jewry. When Eg sees there will be no taking the matter to the loftiest toity due to toity's unbudgeable pork, he declares he was conjugated by Monique who loves her neighbour, and Pphthrckelwedrick, her

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itage rich in Byzantine boozing, that he is studying to put out fires many of which are intentionally lit by Justice's mates who should know better, that he grew to know goodliness in a high-raker between the first and meridian overlooking a haunt of dealers and prostitutes, that he is native if not alien, that any resemblance to the saint in Hippo is Justice miscarrying, and that he is not North African but has every intention of being so, the hall explodes.

Harmon breaks first. He leaps on the benches bawling El Alamein and calls his cavaliers to slaughter! Now some have raised the siege of Paroxysm and Dyspepsia, a few have known Convalescence from Cachexia or seen Chorea, Caries, Sphacelus and Neuralgia, some are Venereal, some have seen behind the Iron Curtain, some have read The Burgondians and Cission of Schwabia, and their courage is swelled by a well-fill of wine before crossing the basin.

Justice takes to the fleur-de-lys throne, the secretaries bite their talons. Potent, righteous and high on alliance the drunken orgy takes apart the furniture. The first of many empire chairlegs is drawn from horse-hair. Justice calls for paperweights. The connoisseurs hear the call and flights hurled at head height shut out the light.

Pugn cries, 'If weights blot out the sun, we add rain to the shade'. From the gallery a regiment long without relief unbutton and pummel. Streams of scald whose aim is in! Many an eye is stung out of service, many a hand loses its hurling weight.

Yab Yum's Cantons gain the table heights. Abdul Fayoum's

blenders and kneaders gain the sacred perch itself. They lack only scimitars. The veterans scabbard their waterforks. Few have been spared, and of the documents none escape unspoiled, dissolving the business of the day.

Monique has been glamorous, clamorous in vengeance physical—Justice subsides eyes keppled mumbling biblical subclauses. The chamber is nearing its aftermath, pencils twigsnappped. Justice is crest-fallen, paperweights are without value in the sopping puisne, the women of Paranoia lie witless as the couple, happy, quit the knotting chamber...

Or did Ego dream it, for he is prone to phantasm? Yet there may be truth in it, readers. Follow them, the family and dragoons, wounded from bureaucracy or battle, as they pierce the daylight glorious praising Charlemagne in Champagne. Shoppers seeking Saturday strawberries make way for our cherry-stained victors of the Trothing Temple, while the halted traffic toots and merrily hoots till the couple are wedded by all but the law.

In a courtyard of Belliard, the wedding guests imbibe and recount, their number swelled by one, for Rolley had been warned by the Stillhinge to abstain from all bureaucracy. He leaves the ivy for the community room to draw utmost benefit from the wine barrel.

Reception

They imbibe, they recount, they parley and back slap, the suppler for the canister. All is merriment and wine-seeking.

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The couple exchange gifts and swear that what each has been given belongs equally to the other as Rol is called upon for sacrifice.

He takes candle and port. Phoeb passes her hand through fire. Rol proclaims, 'Phoeb must touch no goat and bear fruit.'

All feel the flush of prophecy and offer the priest further sack. Rolley announces that since the bond has been threatened, kidnapping must occur over threshold. When Phoeb foully objects and asks him for some ancience more pleasing, Rol stands on one leg holding aloft a shoot of white asparagus. —Lacking a leg and a bit of butter, should the groom die first may the bride not be bartered, nor require to be incinerated with him!

Phoeb kisses him, and Rol takes a piece of fruit, presenting it to Phoeb saying, 'By the law of Solon, let bride eat quince before the groom approach her.'

Phoeb takes a steak knife and splits the piece. The couple gobble and prepare to depart, asking Pphthrcck and Mon for blessing. But Rol takes Pphthrcck to the smallgoods for he has observed a boil upon Pphthrcck's cheek and no oath is good in such instance.

The couple part and after intercourse Eg and Phoeb perch over burning incense. At daybreak, according to custom, they wash without touching doorknobs.

The company maintains its commitment. No bottle is left unopened, some lie dregsy where they have fallen. Many dishes, though popular, lie half eaten, and these are soon

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picked over by the unhoused population who had been duly informed of the feast, fulfilling Rol's prophecy: the couple shall leave food for the destitute and drink for the taking.

Part the Fourth

The Book of Rolley

On the periphery, neither within nor without, housed if a bridge be shelter, furnished if oildrum be stove or old carton cot—Rolley the ethylated.

His forebears knew the art of ochre and cementing. One took his brushes to Memphis and hieroglyphy, and it was a Rolle who invented the cider and to whom laughter is ascribed in the era of the lost poet Gallus. And this occurred, Rol will tell you without undue urging, when the practice of circumcision was suspended during an epidemic of the jitters among the scissor-handlers that lasted fourteen autumns. In the reflexive time of Antenor, Antenor himself was cruelly martyred for commissioning a martyrology, and one Rollus was daggered in a public square for publishing a pamphlet on daggering. Another, the wizard Rüllå, in the dark years of the medieval cult, was cured of his curing fire-power, and of his life, by fire.

Rol would further name that great pagan Hrólfr the Gang-er among his forbears, and if he claims a link with such an estimable pharmacist he is equally proud of his humblest of prodigals, the hilly goatherd who carried suppositories for the monks and vesper oils for the lamps of Benedict the Bowed. A plaque to that monastic site was lately dedicated in

the foyer of the SelfHelp store at St Cyr.

As you'd expect, many a Rol is found among marauding Normans, and Rol does not disown the libertine rascal Crrrngh Roleros (Crrrngh/os), random dag-shagger, red-mouthed joker, unmissed by many. And in this is an instant of Rolle's truthseeking, for few who flaunt ancestry seek dag-shaggers. The worst of Crrrngh/os is perhaps in him, for in his thirtieth year he broke with the maiden, rent outstanding, hitched a barge to sea and war. Making landfall at Fling he performed regrettable works of violence in a big humiliation of the little people.

Many at Chemin Vert remember Rolley when, fifteen years later, he returned from exile equipped with mysterious prophecies. He set up shop a skip and a jump from a barge bar on the Canal Arsenal, throwing strawsticks and blessing maidens with holy water. But the strawsticks were against him. He lost his pennies on the pools faster than he could earn them at glamour. In debt, Rolle took refuge in the solvent.

For some weeks he rode the Metropolitan, surfacing only by the Pont d'Austerlitz to soup at the Salvation barge. And often he would enter the tunnels on foot, to wind through the catacombs and abandoned quarries. At one juncture, near Lamark, he was arrested by an interrogative console that tested the limits of his Socratic midwifery by asking him:

'Would you recommend our opponent's product?'

whereat Rol wishing to avoid false witness, asked, —But who are thou?

'I am the Guardian of the Path to the Wood of the Waste Within. What sayest thou?'

And Rol in the negative: —I say Nay. But answer me: May a man be more a man in ceasing to be himself?

which got the console pleasantly fuming and Rol slipped by, to return in Part the Fifth. Rol's own question would haunt him as he grew into the new hounded by the old, and frankly, after hours and hours, he had no answers; in order to continue to have none, he devoted his last years to philosophy.

At endstations, as you may know, readers, many fail to leave the carriages. And one night, thinking simply to avoid security guards and their unruly dogs, Rolle went with an empty train into the underground turnabout at Porte de Clignancourt. He slipped out of the wagon and meditated in an underground cloister on the nature of things human and bestial for forty nights.

He heard thunder and saw the light. Climbing along a conduit from the teardrop turnabout he emerged from a manhole and found himself in a dripping gully of the disused Petite Ceinture, rue Belliard.

Now the line once carried goods and passengers between the gates of Paris, but those days long past, and the rail cutting habitable, he claimed the spot where we found him at the beginning of our story. For three years he has happily lived off offerings that have fallen by chance or the grace of charity from the Pont du poteau. At last, it seemed, Rol had a little Patch of Nowhere after a seeming Edda of Botched-upness. And often he would recount the narrative of his ill-

spent youth to his sedulous student, Eg.

—Ah Eg, it was wunderloosed. In the Spring sunshine ‘Don’t go, Rol’, she said to me, ‘don’t fare the wateries.’

—You must have cut a limey statistic, Rol, to have wiggled into her confections!

—A damsel, Eg, and no snob. She slaved honourably for her maid’s room, guiding the city’s visitors, revealing anecdote of tryst and dalliance of counts and concubines. A writer, Eg, as you will be.

—I? Eg was curious with his usual prolixity.

—It is written. You have yet to learn it, but you’ll write as I am learning you, Eg. Ah! But do not what I have done! A blade in bad hands, unready for dalliance. It is true that I doted on her, sigh and silence, but I had no sense of the human heart. I was young and ill-shapen for the highest art. Arise and go, Eg, to your Phoebe and write your cantos early!

—I go. But answer me this. Rol who went is here again now, but where to then?

And Rol: ‘Where all go when their time is certain.’

‘And how can we know, Rol, that we might break a tender heart?’

‘Do not suspect things you consider true will prove themselves false. But do not lead love to dalliance. Oh villainy! I thought I could die to her. She came to my workplace in the evening as usual. Traitor! That is when she was handed the note telling her I had gone. She’d have gone with me, anywhere and forever. Ah, Eg! She parted through the Great Iron Door not a twelvemonth after my desertion, without so

much as a dance. Until my return to citizenry I never thought but that she had taken another. Hear me Eg: for the pure in heart there is but one passion. After that day, I could take only the lowest of places in the world.

Eg bawls so loud and long seven monks stop their peregrinations to bless themselves. He snortles and embraces Rol forcefully. And yet, they are not alone. What is that sound echoing from the disused Metro vaults, as of one stepping over bones,

tapping the sides with a scythe and trailing chains? The One behind the Great Iron Door who takes all, even and above all the passionate, will soon relieve Rol of his onus. His existence soon be smudged from the slate. The pain in his inwards tells him it will be soon. Rol's number soon be up, sure.

But no, no, not now. The scuffling and rattling of chains grows fainter. Rol has a night or two under the Turkish geckoes before the iron door beckons him. He has a deed or two to do yet. He will resemble Pepin who according to Notker dared to strike the head from the lion which hovered above a throat-torn bull. Many a how's-your-father awaits him, and a tup or two still with Eghop and Phlip-phlop before the big hike.

The buddies begin another bout in earnest, and, sure, the charming wisdoms of Rol sober, his fifty two waking philosophies, soon degenerate into oath, boast, brag and breakage, foreswearing, charmless flyte and harmful cusses against civic authorities, as overhead the yoghurt trucks rattle, and in the seams beneath Paris the root-rats sliver.

The Disappearance of Adeodatus

Phoeb grown of girth gives birth and Adeodatus is his name. Pphtsrck draws from the money wall and all whoopie for paternity at the Lion Café. They call for crystal. One begets that begets

and before you know it Adeo is the future of Frantz, no less. Exaggeration is followed by early regret and disbelief, furore by silence. The treasury is empty, but Harmon, sensible barman, gathers the small change, fills Doublovskis with his compliments, and sets the dishwasher to say get ye off home then, riddance.

At the home a howling, Mon and Phoeb, their cheeks scratched with fears. Has Pphtsrck robbed the kitty jar? Has Adeodatus drunk all the mother's milk? No, reader. Worse.

No Adeodatus.

None can say when he was not there. Phee was having her first good sleep in days. The door was open while Monnie went for flour from Yab Yum's. He might have been napped then, but no one saw a thing. They try every door, every cupboard and courtyard...

Three officers climb to the eighth floor cursing the lift company and the mayor who commissioned it. They shine torches under beds and frisk Abdul's sons for being dark. They question mute Hsi Wang and suspect her for not answering. They suspect the tenth floor dad for being solo and

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suspect Eg for being absent at the time. They cross the bridge and hold lamps along the rail line. The smell Rolley and avoid him.

No trace. Not the particle of an Adeo. They make their report. The inspector of the 18th remembers an incident in the marrying hall.

—Not that lot! Forgot him in a shopping trolley, likely.

They tell Ego call at the cop shop tomorrow, if he like.

Eg and Phoeb awake at dawn. They descend the stairs. An eerie calm. The entrance way is the usual mix of cigarettes, hypodermics and anti-cop graffiti. They pause on the bridge. No howling of Adeo betraying his kidnapper's whereabouts. They rap on Abdul Fayoum's bakery blind. Abdul appears at the window above. A public holiday, the end of one war or another. She tells him the horror of it and Abdul places a notice in the window with a photo of Adeo. Reward! They climb the fire escape behind Dia the grocer and tap on Pugn's window.

'You seen our Adeo, then?'

Pugn, gentle sloth, swears he'll give the villain tinnitus, criminal or cannibal. They have no choice but to approach Rol, who throws fishbones on rainbow slick. No avail. No suspicion. No arrest. They rise to Yab Yum, who phones relies in Belleville. No news neither.

Dawn takes to day. At the 18th cop shop Eg is under suspicion. Where was he last night, with whom and then what? Eg wants results. He wants them now. They instruct him, —To The Island!

A shadow crosses Rol's brow. His thalamus of prevoyance

is pulsing, —Don't go, Eg, if you prize your thinking gear. I fear, Eg. I fear for thee. By the taste of my waste reversed, I fear for Phee!

Rol dries weed for an offering and casts oil on the firewater. He gives hope, —Adeo who was not thought of, is not lost. See, in the oily waters, a child kicking.

—I see! I see!

—And there, a tree. Not any tree, but the tree of self-torture! And smell! Smell of self-blamed.

Rol breaks bread, takes wine, and gives bottle to the fireboy saying, —Finish this E-head, I'm off to bum a fag bridge-top.

On his return they share and stare into the buddleia, which begins to burn before their disbelieving eyes. And the tree speaks:

—Look at my flame and acquire combustion. I am the flame that reveals Adeo, the brand that does not burn though you are ramshackle gazebos and deserve to get detoxed.

The fireboy would put the fire out but Rol stays his hand. —The tree of flame speaks!

—See in your bottles dregs, goodfornothings. They stare at sediment.

—You, of Nogood, East of Arden, hear. If you realise your emptiness, fullness will swell your heart. You will find the child.

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First Monday of No-Adeo

The first Monday of No-Adeo breaks over a priceless city's spotless sculptures and curveless avenues, its duplexes and complexes, its biological heroes and ecological gardens, its monasteries, papétries, termagants and fireboys, its skull-caps, hijabs, niqaabs and turbans. At the loose end of the city, at its ugliest, cats piss warily; forked lightning. A shadow passes beneath the treacherous shelter of pigeon-thick trees on rue Leibniz. Abdul's boys are sleeping off the hashish again. And look, there is Pugn in his sofa-bed which has half snapped shut again. Among rootratted gnawed baguette-ends and clumps of smelly cooch, two niffleaffling bibulous wimps are bibing the Beaugelly. One has heard the lesson of the fire-tree and is doing his best to remember it, the other is with laryngitis. When the last of the healing unction has passed his cracked lips Rol rises and takes the pledge. —I was not worthless as I believed, but worthless as all. We will find the boy.

Yab Yum is sorting the family snaps of dappier times, positives taken by her departed husband, who carried the secret of the negatives to the grave. Hsi Wang is in her chair on the landing and rightly curls her lip when she sees Eg returning, hissing. If she could have, she'd have said, —Get off arse, threelegged-dog stool sluggard, and find the flippin' boy!

'Well,' thinks Eg, 'he loves to be flattered is worthy of the flatterer.'

None voice their greatest fear, but many think it. In what

cubby now is a monster torturing their adorable shoot with devil's music? In which directory now does he languish unnumbered, rolled in whose flour, baked in which faculty, a prisoner of whose war, what circus, or flesh museum of fetish embassy? Who has duped him and drugged him to break him where all is a-swiftening?

Eg chews and spits. Rol's logic takes many shapes, but no direction, —Wrong action is called for. Wrong doing for right ends is rightly done. How else are we to win? We must run riot. But where?

Rol is reasoning darkly. He raises the pitching arm, soaks fist in marinade, brings rain, atoms, and battens the manhole shut. No genius nor scatterbrain make sense of his swooning as he sickens the lineage of his kin and kith over the sewer cover. He has fallen. He takes the count. He can no longer remember what he couldn't remember, whether Adeo had been there and wasn't or wasn't thought of and isn't. No steel for the ruckus, he wanders stilly the height and depth in the pit of lowry.

Phoeb comes with coffee and news of the mourners. Pph-thrck's senses are frayed. Pugn and Harmon talk of territorials, cavalries. Yab Yum is mistaking night for day. Eg speaks of The Island. Phee tells him he must go.

Eg dresses for justice. He walks towards the heart of the city beautiful, fearful, taping Adeo's photo to every lamppost. And if that brings Ad back, readers, anything will. He crosses the bridge of Châtelet, passes the security turnstiles and into the Palace of Justice.

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‘What’s ya name, kid?’ —Eg, Ego, that’s to say, Egustine. —That’s ... not ya first name, is it?

He looks suspiciously from Eg’s photo to Eg’s face. He logs the name into the console. Reads something about a riot in a Trothing Chamber and asks unsmilingly, —What can you do for us, kid?

Eg sees terror. He has no information to impart. He says he must be going. He says he has the wrong address. But to leave he must finish entering. Sweating litres, he passes through the metal detector, forgets his keys in a tray, collapses by the Coca Cola stand and when he comes to, readers, is arrested.

A Phrygian Examination

His first assignment is to prove that he never committed acts he doesn’t remember committing.

Second, that he can produce no evidence of having interests he is certain he never had.

They sample him. They scan his caecum for appendix. They search his member for cision. They pound him with interrogative ablatives. A neurologist revels in his mental fractures. They are rude and excuse themselves not one jot. Psick 1 tells him he has had it coming, slomo nogoad, spawning progeny with that nohomeslut, downing the plasticpurple with some tramp! He tell him game is up, they have the dirt on the real him. They want the when and the where and what

he wasn't planning.

.....

No word from Eg on the wrong side of the mountain. Monnie is in a brown study with Paddywhack and Rol rumrunning with warnings of birch stripes and laxatives, of racking him spinewise, of toasting his chestnuts and sampling his joint oils.

They phone The Island.

"Eg who?"

Pugnacious, lord lave him, has the gift of knocking one senseless. On hearing the limping Eg is lost in clip, the Dutch brave in him rises. He talks a lot about punching true to his name but, mid-morning has done nothing. Pugn helium. His horse runs fifth at Longchamp. All flab in the tight, that lot.

So Monnie goes down the The Island give 'em a good going over, —Hey guys, watcha gone an' dunnim for?

And they says, —Eg Hoo? What's ya marckin farss abart?

So she glares them in the fish eye and yowls them through the locust grill all about Eg's innocence and not trunchbludgeon him or they know all abart it. If she can see one cudgel on his morsel or his argot impaired, she's to the Right Commission.

And Rolley is at her side.

Now Rol justly fears cops. He knows the scuttlebutt spies and the cellmate turtle-doves, the inexplicable impalings, the snakebites as the jugular. Rolley's eyes have seen vegans starved into cannibals, pacifists enlarged with limp rage, judicious writers recking illiterate. Rolley, who has plenty to fear

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from them, Rol, whose fencing wire has fiddled many a fruit machine, is screaming at them too that Eg is underweight and spare him the jerking kneecrackfractures.

Monnie and Rol all thrown out. They return to Phoeb disconsolate to await the undertaking of the boy. No babe, no man. Rolley reads the oil jets of purplegush and lemoncurd in the evening umber. He is empty of interpretation. He gushes a gutsload. Whehck! Bridgecrossers grapple for their kerchers and spray mouthwash in their sphere of influence.

—Squash! he wabbers, —Down wrong gullet!

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Back on The Island Eg piddle in his pudding yet quish no Homeric. He confesses nothing but nothing to confess. The chief chuff signals Psick 2 prepare the splint cogger—he will have the trout out of him.

The Coggling of Ego, His Escape, Discovery of Rol & Retreat into Madness

The colonel makes eyes at whitesmocks, who click fingers at sergeants who nudge corporals who clobber privates who fall on him.

Eg judders. He jitters. He shivers and wobbles. He lists and he dodders. He spurtles and puddles. He sputts and he futts, he hurts and he wetbubbs. He chitters, he blabs and he natters. He will not and can but. He tongue-bites and bean-

spills, bedevils and chuzzles. He sauces till toasty and grieve in his slibber. He baffles and boozles and trickles his spark-clips. The contacts are fusing at crevice of Silvius. His velar is frying, his sermon explicative. Bible and Gorbals are one in the whirly gist. Bla bla black.

Consciousness spreads in his frittered xerficksle. Returned from Hatchcockland, he knows not what they want and has confessed raising riot. He is thrown in a cell with Lotmiss Argin, Hanglish tutor, and a Louise Brooks impersonator.

Under slick psychology Lotmiss has given up no end of treachery. A spy, agent of Pitt, Lincoln and Mussolini. Has given up the whereabouts of pretty silken things on two legs. And all to a quivering chorus of 'Swim Swam Swum.'

Louise, trapped and coggled under the hard core, has admitted correspondence and blackmail. They are preparing a confession of association with an opposition politician. The three will be duplicated and their originals dispensed with, gobberlooney.

Weep ye daughters of firemen! The hero has taken a hero's knock. Eg's cervicle and clavicle canterburied, yorked by probity, kented by colouring, pricked by electrode, circled by compass, calibrated by caduceus and radiated by radar beam. Illegible and iniquitous his signature. We are loyal to the telling. Justice is never done. The codes of objectivity, hospitality, brevity, grammatology and civility — ignored! Ignored all!

Skunk-hour of the beggars. A tippler's cant twitters duskwards at Pont au Change. The scimpiest addict of boulevard Ney, the pickpocketingest pilferer of the densestly packed

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metro carriage of St Lazarus would have heart for the fireboy, his squealer burst downpipe at brain stem, equus intractatus, rerum discordia. The peasant's wail would wrench any crumplebrow. Will none preserve Eg's thalamus?

Colonel glowers at sergeants who glare at corporals who stare at privates who salute corporals who signal sergeants who flatter Colonel who flares nostrils at Eg, who halt. He stretch.

He wink. He salute. Colonel's crest cocks. He wilts. He wanes. He droops. He lumps. He crumples.

The bleachcoats close in for seances but Eg used up. He has just breath to cry, 'Some wrong slipt a hitch and napped the cub. Where our Adeo?'

But all mouths in his defence are unmoving. Guards boast and cast dice. Eg is found guilty of litotian lambdaism.

The Trashers salute him, he resisted to the last, his torture now ended. He is going where there is no income gap.

His most private wrung from him, in a few minutes guard-dogfood. Thin rays beam into the Trash tank. Lotmiss Argin and Louise are led in. The three will vanish and be the better for it. Their doubles be inserted. No more bitties on two legs for Argin. No more working nights to finance Louise's wig collection. She is ready for her finest moment. So are we ended. Only our dentistry is salvaged. A magnetic disc on the iron floor of the personality crusher gives hope.

Personality crusher!?

The gears of the mill engage. Claws lift the tank a thun-

derous din. Six hoping hands of tortured nonplusses grip the edges of the magnetic disc as the bin is upended. Metal fillings fly. Eg holds but Lotmiss not so lucky. Louise's wig snags on the corner of the disc, but a star is lost, striking a pose as she falls.

Masticators of personality slurp and cudscrapple. The bin jiggles. Eg can hold no longer. A siren sounds. The bin retracts. His fingers slip. He falls! He falls, readers, down the side of the mincing mill as it rights itself. He thumps against the domain structure as maximum attraction is repulsed and without hypersalinity or thermal destructure the power pattern releases him through a happy crack. A second siren. Lunch! Lift doors open. He reads the station name with blood-red eyes. Cité! He merges, personality intact, with a hundred and fifty nifty self-satisfied greysuited bureaucrats and squeezes into a metro car unnoticed.

Freedom as far as Châtelet. A third siren, not to lunch but to panic. The metro vaults are filled with smoke lacking fire. A bottleneck at the exit stiles! Eg lifts a metro grill and enters a tube unused since 1928.

Down a rusty dudheen he hears—he can hear grass growing, that one—the quiet of the Forge of Stillhinge! Not now! Let it not be now!

But the deathly one has other carp to boil. Crawling away, away from the Stillness, along, along towards an opposite spout of trustworthy worldly clatter and strife, he squitters out a sphincter

onto a disused section of the old North-South line that

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links to The Fork where he hitches a lift on the last waggon and follows a sewer to pop! out on the Petite Ceinture, keystone <<1889>> Guy Môquet. He commandeers a brakeless jigger to the rail bridge of Poteau, and jumps off to the welcoming C flat, sharp & C again of Rolley's dream snottle.

To hear the old sherry wallower's slubber is homecoming but see!

Rol's face has again been scrambled by some merciless megallo.

His wart of scab rants as he wakes, rant worse than cerviclesquittered Egnog: 'We become the beast we chase. Judges be judged! Seek no hurt for hurt's curious pleasure.' Then, seeing the sorry boy, 'Boy, no sorrow! No litigant. My skull fell on the pissing pyramid. Heat rash. No blame!'

But the boy sees that if Rol is beaten saintly one more time it will be the end of the miracle of his survival. He humps him on his back to Monnie's, singing:

With no intention to deprave He corrupted the minds of the brave
He lived in a sieve And had nothing to give It's a miracle then that he gave.

The family buzzer! Mon would hug the Eg who resembles her son, but no time for recounting. Rol is subsiding. She fetches

the medicine chest. They waste whiskey on the pair of them and Rol revives, feeling the glowing of rite under a strange roof. He summons pietas for the nonce, and avows, —Accept, let us, what we cannot change. Know nothing.

Mon dabs his wounds and tell him shut up a minute. All

would hear of Eg's escape and consume sherry log richly marinated. Pugn extols the extent of Eg's wounds and his mental resistance. Many a soldier left his thinking gear in the trenches. He praises him head and foot. Nahno rips himself from television. Rol holds Edamwax over the flame so it drips into the eye socket of tatie scrapple. He suspends a stump of African radish in the littlelight and inflames greasewrap to read mystic rubric. Excess bleeds the dolor of divination. He takes a fishknife and heats it in the flame. He stabs the hot tip into the nodes of the pratie cinders. A red spillage within, uncongealed floes extravagate. The oracle gives him foundered hope. Dingpewtered, he rips fronds off the Yucca. His head strikes the sodden pot. Rol some thespian!

—Adeo is deep, deep, in shallowwave! The rustler my castigator. At full moon he plays villain at Hollowwood.

Rainspearbows illuminate the lines below and all hear the echoes of Stillhinge bouncing off the sidings of the haddock trench of Has-Been. Will the oracle cost Rol his life? Rol hears and his resolve is firm.

—Hollow is the wood.

He sobs and shakes and herks, —Hollow is the waste. In the third W must the key lie. —Hollow is within.

The clan is wanting more on the Who, the Why, the Where, the When. Rol throws the coin. It spins idly in the pan. He throws again, and again he throws, again. No voice giving directions rises from the Iron Door, and yet each time the coin rolls in the same southern direction — towards the Hut of Holy Hurt!

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Rol scratches a map of Montmartre into the burnt bottom. A last coin spins and settles as all the rest without fail, serpent tail, right on the monastery.

None can patiently weigh the sense of it for Eg is descending the eight floors drainpipe by drainpipe. Precarious he hangs, unfurious he moons. Delayed head-staggers. Pugn is all witting. —I did not see the first symptom: perfect sanity in the Retelling!

Pphthrck tells them to go find Ego and bind him. —Peugot! Yugo! Renault! We know not what hollow drive in!

And Rol, —To the Drive, on foot.

Nahno Amens at the word, and Rol, bandaged, drought-stricken, starts for the Waste Within—he'll have reconnaissance of Adeo in Hollowwwood.

Part Five

The Three Ws & Rol's First Descent

Eg, willy in the haybarn and ranting at invisibles, pokes his head through one too many Moskova village windows, and is captured by those who would bandage him.

A mother harps as he is carried away, —Twist of fate. See! He's the spit of Pphthrck at his age, nothing but a wife-beater!

Illogical his accusations and deplorable his vocabulary, he is bound and thrown in the Lion Café to struggle with his corner.

Pphthrck spits below the footrail. Couldn't zap sense into that poor boy. Sorry for him. Where his six-gun? He tears a tourist brochure and takes thumb tacks from the betting board.

—Where are we? Here! And where this Hollowwwood?

Pugn's betting slips litter the floor. He has taped his fists, but whom will he hook? Harmon guards his calm. He will motivate the platoon but what will they strike?

Only Rol can say.

Rol, the lettered, sorely battered, is circling all potlids in parkalots up monastery way, seeking an opening from street, park or footpath by vent, grill or gas escapement. On the northern slope where the serpent's tail fell his hand hooks

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the curlicue of a pothole. A door to a yielding darkness. A console lights, and Rol is familiar to it:

‘I remember thee. A man may be more himself—?’ The phrase has the ring; Rol the measure of it, — ... in ceasing to ... be ... himself. A keychain appears:

AttachableCommanderApplicationTurnKeyDialog Discover Survey : Happy in Wood ?

And Rolle, recognising the Guardian of the Path to the Wood of the Waste Within, fiddles, —By all meane in the wood we possess a weal of happy. A man can keepe it long, nevere to parte ther from, or if suche with no payneful woe for he can get lost in another, therfore I see great cause, for whyche as a worldly commodity, menne should greatly desyre it, the wood.

Preferences dialogue ZeroDayTrial GET TurnkeyCleanupTask Sharable

Answer ! is waste enough ?

And Rolle: —Woe to those of use and fulfillment whose thinkynge acquieces in unlimited association of the word. We of the wood renounce al wordes of variable chaines in varyable beinges. Our waste is great, common and empty. Our waste is insufficient, always needing sorted for re-use. Waste is never enough, nor the expenditure thereto.

Good Operation VPopTurnkey ListMember DataArrived No Abort Semaphore thread != Preemptive disregard nullofnoThread != FREED Answer : Without is Knowledge possible ?

Rolle denies a third time: —Negative. The subject is static,

all objects clear and distinct, ideas finite and transmissible, bliss of knowledge attainable only within Hollowwwood.

Resizing. Within range NoException Good_allocation
NoError boundary = KNOWN

A low frequency rumbling, the digesting of the console. The screen flickers three times, a raven caws, and Rol reads:

WWW = Accept: * Accept: */ Accept: */*

E N T E R

The gate is wide, and the path circuitous.

—WWW! The place.

A quarried lime layer. Quarried, reader! Within is truly hollow! He crosses the first of the caverns of contemporary perspective where a thousand likeminded keyboardists are tapping superfluities into laptops.

Astonied as never before. Astonied. —The waste!

He watches and listens, hoping to hear the plainsong of Adeo. He creeps through wardrobes named after the gods of street bollards and cinema cabinets, hearing only snatches of dialogue, cries, whimpers and sighs of figments of the wood, of the waste within.

From a raised dusty porthole window at the rear of a wardrobe marked Charles III (on hold), Rolle has a view across a vista of divided piggpens within whose paper walls figures are rehearsing fights and stunts. In another direction, on small open plains giants and runts perform their pratfalls. Elsewhere, the pretended adventures of the rich on poor continents are supposed, while down an avenue of apparently real trees awkward impersonators stroll in ill-fitting nineteenth

century suits. Here and there are men and women who resemble the guards and cops of Paranoia, Origin Pathology and Tornado in tailored suits fondling perfectly maintained weapons of crowd control at strategic intersections.

His eye is scanning the kilometres of fake sets down the endless quarries of Hollowwwood, passing over scenes of vindication and slavery, of remakes and inventions of deceptions, over banghappy simulacra for the city's ejaculatoria, when nothing more than a shadow draws his gaze to a reinforced metal-framed surveillance window.

A leaning figure in a dark suit is on the bridge. He is tall and bent as Karloff as Frankenstein's monster. But Rol recognizes more than a cinematic stoop in this figure. Can it be Rol's own brutaliser? The very brute who went out of his way to lay him waste face and family jewels! And is that not a cot suspended near him? See, the twisted shade turns from the window overlooking the ceaseless activity of his dream-makers and, horror! takes the child in his arms.

Rol remembers the drowned flower in the lake of Whale's Frankenstein and fears the worst, but the figure kisses the child and places it, with horrid affection, back in its cot. The monster rocks it to sleep singing some calumnious planxty. Murder has been dated on! Rolle knows not what he fears. Adeo has been kidnapped by a random beater of useless philosoafers, whose seat of creation glowers over the acres of the Woeful Waste Within!

Rol is powerless. He will need groundtroops. All he has seen surpasses the limits of his learning. His wherewithall as-

nurp, he retraces his steps through the wynding wardrobes; return he must, for Pugn, for Harmon, for the veterans of the Trothing Chamber. He must verberate Eg and unfickle Phee, and encourage Monnie in her kitchen duties. He must inform his own perturbed senses.

We climb from the wood with the errant monk, check out with him from the derogative console, and descend, as quickly as our aching legs will carry us, the slopes of the goodly Mount of Martre.

The Long Night of Forebattle 1

The ground troops are lounging ataggle, cafoofle. The first likely cases of gangrene, pustule, virus, pox and spinalfolly have been treated with alcohol. Though Eg's head is still on a strange angle they untie him so he can exercise with the foul smelling lancelots. The smog thickens, odours of savage night, roasting of beast flesh under mangomoon.

Phoeb forlorn. Lorn for Adeo swiped. Lorn for Pphtsrck and Pugn scoffing sausage like there is no health food. Lorn for the platoons who would risk a common grave, lorn for Harmon, the flavour of his mayo, lorn for Rol whose power of prediction will revoke his future, lorn for her Ego as she pats all wounds but the brain's ones she may not dress.

It will be soon, but the regiment not do anything hasty, those elbows, without consulting proof. They endure the

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Somme-like fog, and this is well. The worthy Rolle arrives and informs Monnie of the wwwood. In the tower above Bel-liard she is even now oversalting the pancake mix and in minutes a new batch.

Pugn is next to be advised. Rol informs him cloudily, — This fire may not be put to the sword. Once face to face, the armies will escape.

Pugn seems not to understand. He gives a hearty inhalation, returns to his battle plan. The dryboned drink up, hirple to their hammocks or drop in the dust. Common lads of the local tar on soldiers' pay, they are — and bound for soldiers' graves.

Eg coughs, startling himself. He sinks elbows in flower pots, fingering the worm holes. He asks Rol, —What you on abart?

Rol would break Eg out with firetalk. He speaks the lost language at him, —This plumary is no fumigium fatuum, no appearance of combustion. There is a mind-flame at its source, and an evil one. An ether fly hovers, its concept contains it. Can we say the same thing? The concept breathes in the mind-soul. The first is to divine fire from smoke, as the body from cloth and garment, and this is done by means of light, for though fire is light yet it is visible as dark, as visible cloud hiding that which is before us by day. So this fire is better perceived not in the eye, but by the mind.

'Not only light, but heat is there imprisoned, which it draws from the current flowing through all universe which is not vacuum. Yet matter, air and water, the cousins, being sub-

stant (for who will doubt that air is laden), must derive their energy from the first, fire, which can be everywhere and nowhere at once, remaining inchoate, or taking substance with heat emission. Pure spirit, though invisible, is connected to and connects all things, being the *Vitus*, cure of the universe: Heraclitus. Fire is the fountain of life and beauty; it is the mark of time; it flares in every lump of flesh and junk passing; it is spirit. After proofs laid down by the nightwatchman Boyle we can be sure heat proceeds from fire, *calidum innatum*, the flame that instructs without learning. Motion, no longer remaining in one place, is also animation eager of invisible force. Thus *De Diaeta*: pure fire stirs and gives movement to all things, even those who have no direction. Hippocrates. 'Even great matter for all its greatness has need of fire. What is matter without movement? What is greatness without vibration? The bell does not clang. The world does not turn. What is worldly fire, *filofulus*, what is erection, without inspiration? What life the *luciform* unshedded? And who knows fire better than you, our fireboy Ego?'

The better part of his student is nodding. Though Eg is unreachable, Rol goes solely, fusing Theocrates with Naphthalene, Thermonuclear with Pyrex, doing his service to epistemology.

—And was not Empedocles of Acragas intimate with the furnace? Knew he not that fire has a before and an after? ... And did he not dwell by Etna, where grumbling promised eruption? ... And does his poesie not show the fire in his heart? ... And did not Lucretius notice that matter within us

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emits light and radiates heat upon contact, sparking and scattering ashes as clouds have the seeds of lightning which is squeezed out by their collision, as stone and steel have the matter of sparks within them? ... For within is there not light, when there is not darkness?

'And an angel hovering, is this not a concentrated sun? ... And is flame not in the heart of us all, waiting to burst? ... And the dark? Must we not go there? ... like you all, I am familiar with the frustrative case and the declensions of death ... Soldiers, scorn the love of medallions, their false shine cannot equal that of our fire which spreads as defiance from the darkness of no reflection ... Aye! I have known the nothingness. For I left my loved one. Truly. Strange! She is there. I tell you it is she!

Phoebe passes lightly among the sleeping heroes, covering their nakedness where necessary.

Intrusion I

But what is that sound, sound of weariness, of age, sound of Author's impotence? And that one, a dull thump we hear stricken? The pimp again, beating up a lookalike.

He goes on beating her, kicking her. Now he pulls her to the truck and flings her face against the door. Quickly, too quickly for author to cry out. As if in a dream he cannot. The pimp takes something, a bracelet, a packet, a bag. He starts

walking, he returns. He kicks her again. She calls after the pimp. She is telling him about the money, something about the drugs that he couldn't have known. That she really was robbed, if he will only believe her. If someone will only believe her.

The Long Night of Forebattle 2

In their sleep they who will die tomorrow parry with figments: —Up! Swive! That! White meat! And that! Nut on the pike post! Scarefaced peafarmers! Pphthrcck's hands grope in the air, taking pizza, breaking it, and eating it all himself. Eg tears his clothes, exhorting himself,

—Poet! Prepare thy tomb! Lay stone for the destiny of thy labour!

Mon and the good sport Nahno check the old ones' bedding as Rol nears resolution: —If life is a living and a dying, a being born into and out of moments of existing, physically as well as spiritually, then is death not a continuation of this process? Our bodies are left like excrement, our spirits constituted in the plain of the soul-ether. The body-matter we leave goes to make up other bodies, branches, leaves, cells, inert matter. The soul-ether returns as thinking beings, clothed in inertia. In this plan, which must forever be inadequate, there can be no eternal life, only transformation, flux, of the repeating soul. The greatest denial of its existence is to re-

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duce it to mere matter, through murder, or acts of violence; the greatest affirmation is to formulate the durable idea, or its approach, which denies denial of, though perhaps failing to reach, the plane of the fluctuating spiritual in which life in forms partly known to us, forms wildly intellectual but momentary, celebrates, flares.

And so it was that Rol completed the last of his divagations into the ether.

Intrusion 2

He raises his hand. She shields herself. His hand comes down on her face. She turns aside. A groan. She calls, 'Please!' more ghastly for my impotence.

He again raises his hand and again it comes down on her face. He takes her bag and stalks to the car. When she shouts abuse at him he returns and slams her head into the side of a parked car. He drives off. She is curled up on the footpath. Later, how much later? (though I am watching her I cannot say how long she lies there), she calls after him (though he is not there). Later ... she limps away. Later, a tramp, wraith of Rol (though he is not yet dead) picks up her fallen coins.

The Madness of Ego

Mad King Eg's eye opens in the early hours. Uncured by philosophy, he ambles along rue Leibniz towards the rail valley composing:

Lightning. How many drops Make rain ?

All nought. The day, the leaf, the asphalt Absent. Slung bags of trudgers

Quiet feet Slower Wild quiet feet Of an infant

Taxi-mud Unwilled-for Blizzard Steering Over wind-longing Gates

So are we unmothered? We go to narrowing harbours
Voice-struck Forgetful

Aimless unclothed Speechless Naked totality Unbottled

To find In the stones

Of illicit markings

Supergift Gone Swiped by the heart thugs

Our corporal baggage Awaits the death sheets Salts will remain
When oldborn thin arms

Go cold!

The old woman who in summer plucks nettle, daisy, mustard and wandering willy, who scatters seeds on the bank in winter, passes along the upper footpath under the buddleias. Is that Adeo in her arms? He clambers up the bank. She vanishes into the smog. He follows her, but the clouds of purple silver black engulf even sound. Everything is quiet as a friend hopeless to help him. The seed scatterer goes before us, always before us. She climbs towards the Holy Mount. No,

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come back with Eg's boy! She does not turn. She goes into the mist and cloud, to the halls of Waste, to the final belly, the hollow of Wish.

Rol is next to rise, and sees that Eg has absconded, —Well, that slug bogger. Toggled his thinking urn. All my philosoafy in vain.

The root rats circle. And Eg will not be quiet:

No togetherness no bright-eyes all is travesty

The reborn ready to redie! Their nails and teeth finding place in the museums of weaponry!

Poems of the rock the wish has fled!

STOP!

(He blacks how many times he black?)

STOP FRAME! Frame to frame! Adeo bleeds!

His selfuglyglances grow sharper as he lays low the verbs of his regret. Rol wakes Phoebe and follow his piffeltry. They find him weeping. Soft. Weep no more. Let the Phoebiad heal thee! And Phoebe, thinking to herself, Men miss the bus, and read no more timetable, composes:

Phoebiad

The girl I was

Sat on summer benches

Beside you boy

Waning
My body pronounced
What it would attain
Though winter's face
Guaranteed me no joy
What is our commonness
Without community?
Ringed fingers
A house without child?
Silent from embrace
South of anxiety
West of wronghood
Restore, thy senses!
Splash me with unguent
The buddleia remember we
Lover of the shore
Set me not adrift
Father, who are you?
Gone with all fathers
At birth or soon after
As fathers from fathers
May I see once more
The cool light of reason
In Eg.
May illness now
Know its season
By the bread and the buddleia

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Sanity! Eg's madness maddened!
He falls from his falling, and his first words are for Phee.

Eg Pomme

My sense has returned
My ambition mere time
The simplest most natural
Directs me forward
We go where we must
Knowing more than we know
Leaving behind
Or deflecting
The never nearly half-useful
The never nearly half true
And when we find
The one true love
Are so used to deflecting
Lose it
Phoebe my love
Rolley my friend
Let us seek Adeo
And reconcile.
Phoebe my love Rolley my friend
Let us seek Adeo
And reconciliation.

Rol's Italian Poetic

Rol has the poetic in him also. Is this the moment to share the secret of his life. He touches a yellowing paper near his breast, and touching it, finds voice:

These times, men say, Are worse than ever: Bribery and protection
Are the means of advancement, Corrupt councils,
bent cops Election riggers, and as for the judges— Who be-
fore these Is the worst of the worthless?

None punish him For all their lawbooks. True guilt is not
tried Though lives pass in prisons, Lives of transgressors Of
the putrid and love-weary, Who before these Is the worst of
the worthless?

I take my own counsel. Far have I travelled— From the
core of the earth To the moon of the heart To the cave of
rank spoils Where men murder for stones: Who before these
Is the worst of the worthless?

Worse than a bandit Who would kill for a jewel Than the
spreader of rumour, The abuser of power, The vendor of
knowledge Who'd belittle a poem:

Who before these Is the worst of the worthless?

The betrayers of trust The liars, town criers Gunmakers,
risk-takers Who'd rob a poor baker Disbelievers pernicious
Who'd deny you a crust, Who before these

Is the worst of the worthless?

BILL DIREEN

Eg and Phoebe gasp for fear! Rol's hair is no longer dirt-brown. It has turned white as the snowdrop. And Rol:

Before the faker A fizzed beacon fuser A lampless dark light-house Nefarious coprobriate Condemned in the retrial Monk banned from library: End the plainsong— Of the worst of the worthless

They put their arms about him and the three, united in grief and sanity, repair to the waking Androcles Fountain where ...

Harmon is addressing the octogenarians, bright eyed, grinning, bones cracking: —Men at breast! We are fellows of merit.

Some of you have seen Atlantic, some Okhost. We honour those who did not return, regardless. Death knows no denomination. Rolle, you know where we are heading. You are worth your weight! Today, all who exist, all who would be kissed, will follow him to Hollowwwood. Today we forge our epitaphs in the furnace of allegiance.

And the old codgers to a man raise sticks. And Harmon, —Today, clamber, corpses in trenches: fear these, but fear not fear. Fear is our friend. Hear me! yeomen! Cats fight blindly, so shall we when we have reason! Take wine, fellow elders, this is not the hour to fear cirrhosis.

The veterans drink eagerly, for they may be massacred. The barrels are emptied. Harmon falters. Pugn takes the podium:

—Harmon speaks true. What's on the radio! Ain't that terrific! Arise hildingos! Was atom split for less? The afterworld will know we outraged outright!

Some stagger as at a club friendly. The youngest among them lean upon shovels and spit. Nahno stands in the stoa:

—This is the day of the shootout. Are we firestick men, rubbing, drilling, guffawing, blaming the referee? Or are we men of quality, fair players, freeing the dead ball and accepting the penalty? Beware partaking of the foul intentionally! Veterans of the jerk, no sleep until dusk, or till we've no blood!

Rol's Instruction from the Completing Illusory

Eg's mobile goes off. It is Monnie on her way home. — Where hell you be! Fol! That mobile make you even stupider!

Rol taps the fountain in admonition not once but three times and lo! he hears the Voice of the Completing Illusory asking, —Are the Old Ones washed for battle?

White haired Rol has to admit that the old ones are not washed for battle and that he has misgivings about sending them to slaughter clean. —A non-violent act has the power of removal of the bellicose self from the selves of the sodality.

But the Voice, —Let, therefore, their illusion be complete. May flesh follow the illusory, their warlikeness abound, and all wounds unreal. It is spoken, as good as writ. No harm will come of it. Into the fountain with them!

The Great Bath of Rejuvenation

A trumpet voluntary, a shot of rum, and Pugn orders the veterans to wash both cloth and epiderm, for they should consider the undertakers. The dotards limp to the fountain, hips at the clinch, and part the water with a soldier's obedience.

And it is during the great morning washing of the ground platoon that old flesh unwrinkles, and dentures fall like wishes in the well.

The dragons of the ground dragoon have been retoothed! Their hips have been unclinched! The geriatrics are leap-frogging, scrambling, racing each other round the fountain like lion cubs, sparring, javelining in full flower, eager to foist and fossock in flagrant disregard of ethic, chic, licit and merit. Soldier youths typical, Harmon urges them to steadfastness, but they have lust for mobility; they would have lists of local lassies and hash dealers. From here, this army marches on its desires. Fifty drug dealers find the spot and no tobacconist open.

The veterans of Dien Bien Phu, Algiers, Islamabad and Baghdad have been transformed into bloodlusty teenagers with tics in their trigger fingers. And such uniforms! The cops of Paranoia and Correction would be envious.

Pphthrck would rejuvenate himself but the springwaters are all used up. Sets of laughing dentures lie on the fountain floor. From the Mount above the Waste Within, the sound of

HYPERBATON

steel ... sharp echoes of a foe awakening!

An ambulance siren sounds, and grows stronger. Supplies of gauze and disinfectant are carried in. This café soon be a hospital.

The platoon, sobered, sings:

—Verily shall we torch the cars! Torch the night, by blood!

By blood and bile Shall we revile

Indignity Of Hollowwwood!

Part the Sixth

The Waste Within

Mornlight raises whitefly about Tooth Fountain. Rol casts urine in the dry fountain and swears by Gregory the Golden-Mouthed upon numerical principle, —*De duodecim abusiuis saeculi*.

Using knowledge accorded him in a Métro crypt when he stumbled upon sources otherwise preserved only in Syriac, he chants in tongue indecipherable the secret age of Adam, the number of the holy innocents, the names of the seven archangels, of the wives of Nod and of his sons, the truth about him, whom the sun shone upon when it was not visible to Virgil of Salzburg, the otherworld voyage of Niall who was dead for seven weeks, a story of the childhood of Parmenides according to necrologies, and a trinity of vision quotations from Tnugdali by Fursa the Irish monk.

War brings superstition, bet-hedging and last resorts.

Harmon crewkuts his soldierboys. There will be no stopping them. Harmon will carry the standard, Pugn the rose of platoon, Phoeb the playing cards, and Monnie the first aid kit. The car-burners line up, skipping in poussette time, Eg at the dag-tail, hindmost. Sail, ye gleaming cafe kids. This at least is no dole queue!

Ending his incantations with a wish that the monster of Hollowwwood be turned over fire 1000 times on a wheel of 1000 spokes by agnostic angels with seven hands and eleven feet, and that afterwards his soul be thrown in Radegonde's pissing trough, Rol instructs Pugn who directs Harmon who commands the puerili up mount towards the curlicue of Holy Hurt. And into the lime layer they sneak, nose to arse and piper-drunk, yet unbeknown to constabulary or papacy.

Rol satisfies the console and they pass through wardrobes, slowed only by Pphthrck's skirmishing with mannekins. A fight is on. But with whom? Cathodes explode catholically. A remake of the first five Holy Books has to be reshot. The boys press on to the porthole, where they take turns to peep at the extent ahead. To the left, hacks are tumbling and reciting doggerel on Bogomils, on the right cinematic homicides, staged miserliness, greasing, thieving, gluttoning and loveless fornication. They spy cutting rooms of shredded celluloid, superglue rooms of digital mastery, gigantic threepods sustaining genii-lamps, caricatures of broke tipplers, greying painters and arch-spiny stenographers, squinting financiers, landlocked sailors, inept tailors, dried up scribblers, mute actors, not-so-clever tricksters and inveterate fumlbers. In one dark cubicle is the archive room with its posters of the hokey dukes who unlocked the hearts of the common people and saved many a writer from the debtor's prison. All gone, long gone. Alcove after grotto the commandoes survey, sizing the lay of the land, seeking a lift, an escalator, a wynd, a spiral staircase to the monster's bridge.

BILL DIREEN

—Halt! You there, fellow. —Kind sir, be this Universal? —Aye sir! Seek ye Auditions? —Aye sir, who ye? —Emotional Props, fellow.

The security guard gives Rol directions towards Auditions past Sponsors and advertisers, stock-holders in make-up or modes past and future, indeed, past all the business of the close-set caverns of Desire.

Playing themselves, a comic incompetent army, they enter the maze, skirting Tropical, solar cells, jungles of plants and animals too, by penguins and igloos around ocean and heart's core. Fake fire licks up overall, stones flow. Clouds of popshot puffsplat.

Red rain rakes caves of igneous rock, fire and lava, ford blood rivers and here is the body, here the planet of human biology, clothing of the human heart.

But halt! The way is barred by a Many-Headed Drive. For all his science and grammar, Rol fears this drive, its vulpine readiness, its metallic exterior. What is its enigma? Eyes illuminate, its necks sway with menace, curling into interrogatives to the left and right of Rol. The guardian speaks:

—You going somewhere?

Rol sees the danger in the Drive's lackadaisical way. He draws on his experience. This is a double question. He must reply not only in the affirmative but in such a way as to gain admission. The key to passage into every room lies in the simplest and most direct response, given without question or fear, given with perfect relaxation of facial and vocal muscle. His reply, simple and abstract, must not exceed one word,

and must contain all objects of seeking. He eyes the eyes of the Many-Headed, and replies:

—Sources.

A pause, exactly as long as Rol's pause in replying. The ManyHeaded Drive swiftly measures the response and cannot deny access. This is Rolle's finest moment. The MHD's lights blink, the sign to pass.

The temperature has dropped. The walls are double shelved, packed with hand-written originals, machine-printed pelts, copied or plagiarised scenarios, pulp paperbacks, daily cuttings, weekly rolls, medieval manuscripts and classic comix. The air is as ice, and drops of condensation from elevated gangways vex the brigade. But Rol says words composed by Skelton of Sweeney himself,

Briar, relent, your hooks have fed content till you are filled with holy blood

He finds the source he feigned to be seeking in the book of the Humiliated and Affronted.

He enters the upper and lower case letters, the numbers and special characters of the strange word revealed by the flames to him alone. It is the access code whose value is none and whose meaning is infinite. A shelf opens to reveal a narrow stair, and he enters followed by the ground troops in single file, navigating by the light of flickering apparitions of Renée Falconetti and Anatoli Solonitsyne. On, on, they creep, noses to collarbones, unsure whether they are climbing or descending the curving staircase. Rol at their head edges open another small, rarely-used door, and sees a tall

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gaunt mastermind in a deteriorating dinner suit leaning over his control bridge. Beside him, asleep in his cradle, is Adeo, confined but unharmed. The mastermind is following the progress of rehearsals for *The Pentateuch*. It must be now!

Confusions of Reactionary Tract

Rol steps lightly into the control room and trips over. Soldiers follow him tumbling one over the other. Olio, the tall, gaunt one, hits a series of buttons, and shrieks are soon echoing through Hollowwwood, striking fear into the hearts of extras. The corridors fill with a tintinnabulation of Excaliburs and Durandels. The gaunt one brings up fabrications of the unkindest of Madoos.

Now his Madoos are picked from the brutish hordes of cinema, privates of Ford, Tartars of Tarkovsky, Knights of Nevski, Brownshirts of Visconti and Yahoos from the full-length Gulliver. Pphthrcck swipes at their shadows from his position on his back on the floor, and the soldier boys would impregnate their opponents had they weapons to speak of. But Rolley calls to them, —Stay your sticks!

Rol and the gaunt one bow greetings over the impuissant gap separating them.

Rol speaks, —Step out, Eg, gentle fellow, avaut, lad!

Olio calls his finest brave, Bebbo, the Black-Eyed Boxing Boy of Los Angeles to face Eg in unarmed combat.

Bebbo begins with the customary insult, 'Maledictus sit' and they set to, spitting sparrow whit at each other, fat to the flame of their tussle. An hour passes, their raiments lie in ribbons, the juice of their sweat is in their slippers as they gallivant in mortal embrace. They scoff, they flout, pursue sideswipe and repartee, but their skins remain fair, for illusion prevents blood from flowing.

Harmon is disgusted to see in it a draw. He yells at them, 'What you up to, youze, getting a taste for each other or what?

Eg and the Bebbos see the truth of the tease and disentangle. Rol and Olio agree it was a noble fight and fair. No loser. But Production is stalled. Loans are suspended. Rescue packages cancelled. This is no time for blarney.

The attackers are impotent. How could they attack an old man with sticks? Only Pugn, the shameful, swings blindly his sickle —

A sudden wintry calm. Still, as in shackle. Objects which had been heavy fall feather light. The tall gaunt one rises and orders preparatives for destruction.

A low sound now, distant. That terrible attribute of faroff things going backwards as fissures erupt over Europe. Cracks appear between pothole of Saarbrücken, drainpipe of Syria and manhole of Manchester, between golfhole of Bosnia, mineshaft of Siberia and molehole of Libya.

All this illusory Europe seems about to be shattered, but Olio, seeing Phoebe in the broom cupboard, stays his hand.

Recognitions Timely

This recognition does not, cannot exist above ground, in real time, because life keeps us blind most of the time. This is the heart of making believe, learned from the cinema, the drama and the spectacle, we must leave life to know it, and leave it often, reauthorizing, neither rehearsing nor replaying.

The smoke parts, they see themselves. Pphthrck is a good-fornothing complaining alcoholic. Pugn a guilty gambler of the violent order. Harmon a profiteer. Mon the lost-time grandmother. Eg oversexed fireboy. Phoeb the short and long changer.

Rol is face to face with the tall gaunt one. —So, you, abductor of innocent Adeo! —So, you, young Rolloysius. —You dare to speak my name.

—Aye! As I thrash hopeless cases.

—So. 'T was you cracked my headbone.

—I! How many beatings under the railway bridge do you need?

—I would murder for an answer, holy Hoyle, so I would, tall, gaunt one.

—You made my flesh and blood love you, cold-hearted crim, and having made her, murdered her.

—You! Father of my Countessa!

— A home in Hollowwwood I carved, dreaming of this day when I would have at my mercy him who murdered my child and poisoned the mind of my Phoebe with his philosophy. Would you not have destroyed my Adeodatus?

—It was you who sabotaged the Trothing Chamber!

—Aye, monk. I have friends in Paranoia, and dine with the president of the Paperweight Club. Have I not right?

Rol is unsteady on his feet, conceding in diplomacy, —In your version, gaunt one.

Aye, reader, the father of Rol's Countessa beat Rolley toothless and abducted his own great-grandson Adeo from the cradle of his grand-daughter.

Much is the tear-water of revelation! For Rol was indeed at the bed of Phoebe's mother a full ninemonth preceding Phoebe's first breath.

—Father! —Phoebe, daughter!

And sure, it is plain to see when you look at them square-on, Phoebe and Rol are living spit family.

—Rol!

—Ego, in-law, son! Phoebe, behold your grandfather.

And sure, when they look at the tall, gaunt Olio and Phoebe in the reflecting mirror of the console, it is easy to see that they, too, are living spit family. Phoebe throws herself into the tall gaunt one's arms. Eg and Monny weep. Pphthrrck oathes. Pugn scabbards the sabre. Harmon tears up betting slips. Young blades sheathe. Root rats leap joyously on musical bottles. Rol feels speech rising:

—You are alive, and others too, alive. Mother, sister, broth-

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er, father, son, daughter. We are free to flee our sole identity!

The company links arms. The family question resolves all wars. The tall gaunt one we call Olio hands Adeo to Phoebe saying, 'Go Phoeb, and be content! For as Rollysius knows, if there is an evil in this world 'tis sorrow and heaviness of heart. In joy, little ones. Go, granddaughter! Go even that badly combed headcase, Ego, take what you will from the props room and treasury, and spend not all your bootie in the gift shop. I rest.

But can it be? They are falling from him, flakes like golden pollen. All present would go to his aid but Nature is reclaiming him. The lower holding chamber of the Wish Factory is caving, currents of chanterelle and gypsum fall from ever widening cracks over his snow-white scalp.

There is a rush for the stairway. The cast scramble upwards downwards overwards towards the light-dark, retracing their steps past extras and popstars who never knew better, all are dissolving acid eaten pixels as they run, run, towards the pot-hole of Holy Hurt.

Turning back Phoeb, calls to him, —Grandfather, come! Come this way. With us!

But the tall gaunt one stands as his dream about him falls. Cement and plaster of Paris be his grave. He will fall with his domain name, for he must, as the patriarch, die, so that his daughter inherit the future.

And so they escape, the band of real people. Olio is interred with his phantoms. Gathering all about her in Parc de la Turlure, Phoebe renders him homage. As for her new-

found da, she promises he shall have Eg's room on the eighth floor.

Alas, reader, he will not need it for long.

The Book of Paris Lastlines

Rolley:

Peri Semion. From evil, sorrow and heaviness of heart do our fantasies wake. For what is despair but abscission from rightful desire? What is joy but its repair in Paris?

Phoebe:

Ancestries kill or fall from us few swathe without impeding sight Yet you have freed the maiden of Paris.

Rol:

As our teeth and vertebrae are numbered each stone before me is a fresh-laid burden. My feet should leap but my road leads

beneath Paris.

Phoebe:

Hope blemished, yet are we doortwins and glad of the Paris child.

Rol:

Where palace chalices pour gold Where the poor break crust Paris the painful but honest.

And Mother:

Shadows fly figments flit mice and bats be our companions

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Olio died beneath the Holy Teats as Paris voted.

And Eg-Father:

I am no athlete my melody uncrafty: I know no vespers
But Paris argot

And Pugn:

Phee's desire is for Ego as he declares for Phoebe as Adeo
owns the freedom of the city of Paris.

And Eg-Father:

Daughter sister niece my pardon for crimes unworthy of
relation men miss the boat and train many times a day in
Paris.

And Rol:

I now leave your class as Adeo's shadow lengthens 'tall in
saddle' as Paris's middle fattens.

And Pheobe:

this lowland thick with lying drift and all the awful
p.p.ganda without you Rol will we be another couple lost in
Paris

But Rol:

Dawn consumes revolving night. Heat not of body But of
light. Know to live the instant we burn.

And Eg-Father:

many a man flees from fear of danger hell here hell there
aplenty in Acapulco as in Auckland forgive Rol his Paris vino

And Phee:

for wine who'd not have weakness vintages come and go
who is to blame for wining in Paris?

And he:

noble who esteems the corking robe nose fruit and tincture the devil touched me with fermented need in Paris

And she:

praised and goldglowered is your habit Frankie Rabelais found no blame its kindness helped many to the gallows who'd loved and would die in Paris

And Rol:

though the high constable of Bourbon of 1524 revolted an arson plot suspected children of 8 years arrested

though a good woman of Meaux an old man of Troyes were burnt at public places Maubert, Grève

Hotel de Ville she saved a philosofer from his oilfire imperfection! my blood has flowed its course it's heat I give to Paris

Opening and Closing of the Great Iron Door

A rusty hinge shrieks. The echo of gates far-off and underground are opening, its threat now is final, its acreage of moments is this, here, now, last.

But Rol:

—There were times, parents, lovers, grandchild, when I dreamed of ugly things. Then I found my patch on the PC line, neither inner nor outer. Time alone instructed, man's heaven is neither of the soil nor divine, but God is in man, infinity in our seconds. Stand firm and live to be reconciled.

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We die many times. He dies well who knows revival.

The door shrieks a ghastly speak of number's up and one last swig, have to be going. For though the ancients assert life has one entrance but plenty of exits, for Rolley there is but one parting gate. The intolerant celebrant is come to carry out its offices, denying all petitions for prolongation.

Rol licks his last cigarette paper, and a diabola of flame without a source ignites it for him. The other side of the great iron door waits to void, to wrest the choice of life from the poor philosoaf. The gate opens, a tremble runs Eg through. None can save Rol, not even he, the big dick Ego, can undrown his drinking mate. The Sheriff of Neverington is clanging, his guest to put out, but first he must put out his cigarette.

Life is passing from Rol, his drink and loquation. Phoeb and Eg give him the big hug, and Rol gives them his last warning:

—Be your own judges and budge not the neighbour. For none have the right to knock a man over if he be intoxicated and few having done so will be happy with their wrong-doing. Children, wish nor do no act against outsiders. They suffer mostly. We are both ill and good. I have done ill, but I have fed sparrows as I have been beaten senseless. Witness. The door seeks us. We seek the door. We seek all. We have all, if only we knew it, at the moment we go through it. Now be it, the best death is the one most wished for.

He coughs politely, releases his spit, and lays a few items on the tracks for the next residents, so that they will know

HYPERBATON

he went willingly and bore no resentment. He braces himself, and with virtue steps into the dark tank of dank, the dripping otherside from which no caviller unravels. No whirls or clamorous flames overwhelm. Sheer darkness closes over. The door shuts.

Eg composes:

—No meman or youman was more regular human than Popacorkle Rolcorn:

Though he hated inflated pomposity

He offered in full generosity

A down-to-earth phrase

Deserving of praise

For its scatological verbosity.

Epilog

On the Other Side of the Great Iron Door

Rol turns to the death dealer and says, —You old fool, there's no handle on this side, you've locked us both in.

The reply comes as his own voice returning at intervals from down the turning pipe.

Rolley feels his way, wondering, Where are all the devils? Will he not be confronted by judge, praise or punishment? He passes under the foundations of the Pathos Plant. Will he meet the tall gaunt one? Silence. The choices are few, there being no left nor right, and when he tries to retrace his steps, he finds a wall forever filling the space at his back. He touches it, thumps it, but unlike a division, which gives some idea of its thickness, of its strength, of what it might take to break it down, of an other side, this wall is of infinite density, of immeasurable thickness. His life has ended. He can only go on.

There are lines laid there, lines of iron, parallel, like rail lines. There is no train, nothing but a stream of unbroken silence. He who became a landmark in life, is now doomed to an eternity of movement, to trace the perpetual line he shunned all those years.

If that is the case, miles of cold lie ahead of him, and water will cover the pipe floor for a time. Now he will sense that he is descending, and now that he is rising, but overall

the feeling will be of neither gaining nor losing altitude, and his travelling will take him to no greater nor smaller comfort than this.

Darkness before, thickness after. No meeting with the hooded prophet, nor the caster of chromosomes at the moment of his conception, nor indeed with Lucius Aruntius, who killed himself to escape his future and his past. Escape neither from nor to! He puts his ear to the plate iron wall. The intestinal lining of the vault is flat, planar. There is no hope nor memory, no existence except this emotion which gives no sign of fading.

Aye! He feels an emotion so strong as to be sure that someone resembling him was once before in this pipe, when his own past was not closing up, filling up with iron behind him, an eternity of cold before. And such gestures he made, unshamed, unshamed. The darkness was behind him, underwhelming, when the other was here, touching the emptiness which filled up with matter as now.

He leads his hand into the void. Could it be that the future, the past as yet unmade, is beginning again? Could he be returning to another life, without memory, blank, mewling, to be cared for, abused, to learn the knowledge of the time? He feels his hand, but he is no baby, his fingernails are long and his skin tough as hide. And so he stops. How can he continue? He stops walking and the wall behind ceases to fill up. It does not push him forward. Why must he reach into what is ahead. Why must he? He holds out his hand, into the nothing, and another hand, tough and reptilian, cured by neglect

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and hopeful attendance, touches his. It is that of his Countessa. Together they remain timeless, claw in grapple eternal, unmovingly describing the circumference of the circle of the living.

Eg declares all the bones of the departed were intact and his organs in good condition. He assures the company that Rol will return as a budleia, in all budleias that spring up henceforth, and that any may fall asleep under their blossoming without risk of insult or injury.

Phoeb is downright desolmedo but Eg bodes the sooth of Obituary as Pugn bursts on the happy funeral party. Newly aged veterans of the war of the Holy Teats trickle in to the obsequies. They are relieved to have returned to old age, but have not shaken off all their youthful habits. Some are given to tyre burning, others to passing hashish. They congratulate Pugn on his winnings and failures and Pugn says how sorry he is that some ended up with other's dentures.

And Author does that thing, he cries out. The assailant looks up and about. He runs off. The woman looks up from the back end of a sooty truck, *Ab! But the pain. She cries to the night that she really was robbed of the money she earned ... it wasn't her fault ... and why does she have to work like that to be robbed like that and beaten ... and if she ever sees that creep again he'll be the one who's sorry ..*

Clignancourt, Paris
1998-2013

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