

# CODE



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## From the First Book of Inundations

### Slippery God

On a bus on the Korat highway,  
I had just received a call on the mobile  
from my estranged wife (a novel enough event),  
when we passed God on a motor cycle.  
He was playing it safe and wearing a helmet,  
but his black tee shirt was clearly marked, "God".  
So I pondered if He was pulling the strings.  
Divine intervention certainly  
hadn't featured in our relationship before;  
but maybe this was a new phase,  
and, as a crush of clerics told me in my youth,  
God works in mysterious ways;  
and this seemed suitably ambiguous.  
Moses got a burning bush that talked;  
how would he have responded to the Godhead appearing  
as just another Thai motor cyclist with his head up his arse?  
Inadequacy is scarcely adequate to describe my feelings.  
Why this call from my wife (estranged)  
followed by Jahwe (retired) on a Honda?  
A deluge commenced, intense even for the rainy season.  
Cement factories glowed in the storm like ...  
like fiery arks. Was ark building an option?  
I took some pills and hoped for a second visitation.

An SMS rustled in my pocket.  
Said an angel was waiting for me at Korat bus terminal.  
She was going to take me to a hotel and open the Ark of the Covenant.

I felt something like awe stirring.  
The storm swirled round a broken-down bus,  
hazard lights sunk beneath the Stygian flood;  
lost souls on the hard shoulder, Third Circle of Hell.  
Hey, maybe it was time for more revelations.  
I was beginning to realize that they're invariably problematical,  
and a new respect was forming for Moses.  
Forget about tablets of stone, I'll have some more of these.  
The bus laboured past trucks of cinnamon and rosewood  
climbing the rain-soaked Mount of Venus,  
slippery with prophecy.





Gas stations blazed on a neon tide, pock-marked with divine tears.  
Now, along the serpent straight, a sudden bright kilometer  
of forbidden fruits under canvas,  
Eden's offerings brought to market, swallowed by the dark.  
Divine tears began dripping through a lamp cluster above my head.  
I felt fingered by God, though I couldn't rule out my estranged wife,  
and with an apologetic look at my fellow voyager,  
chilled to the crotch with a primal stain,  
I erected my umbrella.  
We slowed to a crawl in a world over its hubcaps in pain,  
trucks with a bow-wave, motor cyclists become canoeists,  
people in fluorescent rain-capes, waving flashing batons,  
symphonic confusion.

Hailed Klongpai prison, barbed, deadly; breaching like a sea monster  
before sounding into blackness, freighted with souls.  
Soon a temple, glimmering like Atlantis, sank in the Sargasso night,  
drowning prayers, as scaly serpents thrashed below our wheels,  
devouring Korat Highway in my sight,  
coiled slimy round my element, they made it theirs.

And the Flying Dutchman's bus drove by,  
no lights, black windows, and a sign that said,  
"You think it's Korat, but you're over your head.  
It's all phantasms and finny dead,  
where land sinks and the sky rains dread,  
and divine tears stalagmite your head,  
and God appears, as the good book said, on a humble motor cycle".  
Slippery God on a motor cycle.  
Slippery God, slippery God, slip-er-ee God on a motor cycle.





From The Second Book of Inundations

Bangkok De Profundis

In a time of rising waters,  
He has cried to thee oh Lord.  
It was becoming hard to bear,  
waking up each morning as a cockroach.  
His junkie girlfriend stole the laptop,  
the phone kept ringing at odd hours,  
and insomniacs haunted him,  
invading his rooms to smoke Old Delirium  
in strange contraptions, fashioned  
from detergent bottles and glass tubing.

False prophets network,  
scares and admonitions,  
“Seek shelter from the coming flood”  
for markets fall, and pundits pall  
like necromancers shocked by futures,  
awed at stocks’ exposed positions.  
More flashbacks of those corpses wrapped  
in blood-stained sheets where Hades meets Suwintawong highway,  
and demons dressed as strutting cops  
play out satanic games with car wrecks  
and six lanes of hurtling pick-ups,  
loaded with the damned.  
Nothing stops, apart from hoping,  
in that darkness;  
hoping, and the grand design of God.

Years of debris; a throwaway world  
is gagging his high watermark.  
The residue of empires, dismembered ideologies,  
gangrenous mullahs,  
severed heads in doggie bags,  
girls stoned to death by dumper truck  
where high tech. serves Islamic rigour;  
and women’s bodies, feared  
and lashed with equal vigour,  
float the septic tide to state,  
that, rotting, raped and subjugate,  
masked, or beauty acid-scarred,  
this jealous hate redeems some family’s honour  
and the keeping of a slave.





Let thine ears be attentive  
to the voice of his supplication.  
Please take his urgent call oh Lord,  
extend to him religion's consolation.

Icons of old wizard monks,  
expensive relics in a locket,  
the sacred, decorated trunks of  
twisted, bent, revered old trees,  
an idol, or a totem,  
or the fetish of of a prophet,  
an amulet of Vishnu,  
or a string of merit-making beads  
to finger in a pocket.

A road map of the Tree of Life,  
a prayer mat, sacrificial knife,  
a sacred stone they venerate,  
a holy spring where they prostrate,  
and, chanting loudly, flagellate;  
some mutilation rituals they find,  
somehow express their  
tortured, ingrown toenail of a mind.  
To these they bow, by these they wait,  
for heaven's ultimate blind date;  
hypnosis by a holy book,  
subservience to a priestly look.

Yea Lord, he drinks a bitter cup,  
deliverance eludes him yet.  
The creator, playing hard to get,  
has, once more, frankly, stood him up.

Manipulation, thought correction,  
machiavellian misdirection.  
Digesting God's indifference,  
inhaling insignificance,  
in times of rising waters,  
a Minoan maze of lies.  
The sacred books, the king, the host,  
those feet at which men grovel most;  
the bloodstained flag, the Holy Ghost,  
the biggest fairy tales require  
most pious genuflection,  
and these the thinking cockroach  
will contemptuously despise.





Insomniac transexuals  
are texting, seeking parts again.  
Awake within the whispering walls,  
illumination swirls and falls  
to fractals in a pipe bulb,  
when, aware God's not returning calls,  
or dealing absolution,  
he crawls out of the depths, not least  
to shun the poisonous fix of priests,  
and charter his own flight to dissolution.

For, Lord, he's turned his back upon  
some name we may not utter  
without slavish self-abasement,  
the mediaeval violence policing laws of love;  
a million milling zealots  
trampling by their sacred monolith;  
psychosis aping saintliness,  
when push comes to fanatic shove.

And the globalised multiplex; virtual reality,  
brand slaves on Prozac grazing the mall.  
Where history simply is discarded fashion,  
junk's TV, rap culture, and soundbite celebrities,  
mainlining cage fights, an armchair in hell.  
In a time of rising waters,  
He has cried to thee, oh Lord.

Last call for oblivion, welcome aboard.  
Let thine ears be attentive... attentive oh Lord!

Last call for oblivion, we've darkness on board.





### From the Third Book of Inundations

#### Stand-Up

At such a perfect moment, Death will come  
and take me to the water. Still, I hear  
his stripped-down opening drum.  
At such a perfect moment ...

Of course, you wouldn't KNOW  
you're nuts, IF you WERE nuts.  
They're wailing at the hour of prayer.  
Deejay Nemesis plays Old Wave,  
with a bad rep,  
hot licks from the dark side,  
microwaves in lockstep.  
No question, man; I'm fried.

I may need to take this further,  
with a witch-doctor or shrink,  
but, the River and the Abyss;  
always closer than you think:  
will be;  
taking you,  
down.

"And what if your clear sanity's their Crazy?"  
This aphorism I extracted from a Christmas cracker,  
Then another, more intriguing,  
"Hold the River, and the Abyss,  
closer to you, always".  
Nobody laughed at my aphorism.  
People fiddled with their party hats,  
so I repeated it  
"Hold the River, and the Abyss, closer to you, always".  
Squeezed it out, like Ahmed, in a passion,  
comforting his favourite camel  
from behind.  
Special!  
Ejaculated it again.  
A lot of people left the party,  
right away.





It was like the end of Christmas, in the West.  
More fun than an exploding vest.  
“Yes! how the cracker’s holy verses  
Have dogged me, Moriarty!”  
Sometimes I step into other scripts,  
But, doesn’t everybody?

“You want to spread your  
Prayer-mat mind for me?”  
I said it again,  
“You want to pull the holy cracker,  
share these verses with me?”  
And licked my open mouth;  
Special!

No stopping it, then. The entire building  
was evacuated by the government,  
directly into the President’s face.  
The whole, rotten, poxy, scat-trip, daily-life-load,  
harlot politicians, with their asses up for big oil,  
mutilated children, auto-destructive muslims,  
slaves and stonings, bombings and beheadings on TV,  
sharia shit, and PC lube, a rectal cocktail from the cosmic tube,  
royally blown, and voided in the Chief’s visage.  
Comparisons will fail to match the charnel reek  
of this vast oil slick of GM demon seed,  
enough to give a skunk a hard-on for a week!  
Special!  
Like I said, everybody drowns.  
How good a fucking gig is that?

The Capital is inundated,  
and channels of communication  
gagged over a large area.  
And even the head-hangman  
is choked with a real big one,  
and the drones are down.

And phones, and everyone  
else in town, are dead,  
FINITO! And welcome;  
your card got swiped,  
the truth is halal overnight,  
and all your deepest fears;  
are realized.





No jury but fuckwit mullahs,  
and no other judge but Dread.

Hey, only joking! Why so serious?  
Only joking!  
I can't stand-up any longer.  
Time has surely come, to pause,

to ask you, for a hand-job .....  
You know, ..... I mean, ..... your applause.

### Gravity's Fool

When she leaves me,  
and I'm ordinary again,  
a flickering filament,  
a melancholy solo  
in a wasted hour;  
a speech without conviction  
in an empty auditorium,  
a cherry blossom bough  
that will not flower.  
When she leaves,  
this falling rocket coughs,  
its motor won't restart.  
I'm gravity's fool again;  
just ordinary debris  
destined soon to fall apart.  
And her absences,  
like tree rings,  
all her absences  
will show,  
that day they open  
my abandoned heart.





**From The Fourth Book of Inundations**

The Institute of Mockery

1 / The Flag Raising

Students wait in line,  
for flag raising to begin.  
The chosen, touch the folded cloth,  
much as beetling priests revere  
the mystical Shroud of Turin.  
“Today, class, we unfurl the flag ...”

Whores and hitmen, billionaires and feudalists,  
extortion, oppression, ignorance, and worse.  
Religious shams, and corporate scams and cover-ups  
ubiquitous corruption, rape, and slavery,  
each government as a smash and grab  
job, inflicted on the public purse.

“Today, class, as we raise the flag” .....  
cue martial music, and the staff’s respectful silence.  
Hope’s buried in ten thousand secret places,  
today, as we salute the flag.

The students soak it in, with vacant faces.

2 / To the Escapees from the Flag-Raising

Don’t run this way, fugitives.  
Poetry’s just the grappling  
of language and confusion,  
poetry’s just a groping for the light,  
Sometimes it’s an act of love,  
and sometimes absolution,  
always, it’s a state of exile,  
often it’s a fight.  
Don’t run this way, fugitives.





3 / Lost at Loco's

I heard him laugh,  
"Don't talk value to me, you nut.  
Where else on the planet can you  
buy an iced beer and a joint  
For less than five, U.S.?  
Second round, you're already trashed, then  
looking out of this big window, and above the mess ..."

Ramshackle carts and taxis thread the shabby condos and shacks along a narrow soi,  
straggling to the dusty temple, all lining a poisonous canal. Motor cycle taxis, occasional  
asian beauties, negotiate the speed bumps,  
and a motorized noodle vendor in a black tee shirt, marked End Game, skirts expertly round  
wheezing joggers and two boys on weaving tricycles. A woman in a four by four, letting her  
motor run,  
doesn't bat an eye, as a pickup with thirty men,  
standing, packed solidly as brooms on that brush vendor's cart,  
sweeps by.  
And all the time, the deals are done.  
Sudden wailings from some mosque...  
"It's a fucking madhouse out there. Between me and you,  
I mean, seriously ....."  
Two cops, bulging from a motorcycle, scouting for some shakedown they can try, cruise  
through.  
Security man across the street in Mao suit and a golf cap, casts his gimlet gaze our way, leans  
on the sliding gate to a forbidden land,  
tubular steel, chest height, tubular steel, in red and white .....

Suddenly, it is hours later, and dark.  
"We're lodged between the cracks of tyranny", he smiles,  
"..... and doomed to lose. Personally,  
I would choose to franchise Loco's,  
as an antidote to fear and loathing",  
The street outside of Loco's now is quiet for the night  
Tubular steel, chest height, tubular steel, in red and white.  
It is six hours to flag-raising.





## From The Fifth Book of Inundations

### Fall of the Khmer Republic

Cut to the murderous traitors of the moment,  
parading in white uniforms by Phnom Penh's Palace walls,  
sick of a murderous playboy king and his Louis Sixteenth fantasies;  
zoom, as a new flag rises on the corrupt Khmer Republic,  
intercut, with pogrom and more xenophobic butchery;  
overdub, a unique pall, of utter darkness falls.

Offstage the would-be film-star king, bankrolled  
by Chinese Opera, plays dynastic puppet,  
compliantly herds his bovine subjects,  
with time-honoured Buddhist feudal tales;  
as Pol Pot, despatched, like a plague-rat, from China,  
descends through the hell of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.  
His crazy wife spurs his habitual insomnia,  
screams atavistic hatred of Vietnamese allies.  
Most secretive Chinese Opera players,  
they head towards the play's dark centre,  
as yet, the unidentified main actors,  
in this malignant masterpiece of lies.

Khmer Rouge recruiting sergeants rain  
incendiary madness from the West.  
B52's that pulverise the forest and its people  
have a legion of dumb corpses show  
American lies, duplicitous and dirty as the rest.

The Republic lives five short and twisted years.  
Now pan to the Yanks deserting more proxies,  
and blundering from new tragedies of blood.  
Credits, on their farewell, diplomatic, Judas kiss.  
To black, with the Maoists' great leap forward,  
into the foul Cambodian abyss.





## Five Acts in Search of a Tragedy

Cue the dying days of the old king,  
jammed radio stations, doctored TV,  
hi-jacked streets and mediaeval barricades,  
Redshirts, royalists and coloured flags;  
see Issan farmers, far from home,  
drink amplified tirades,  
and the wallpaper, these begging poor,  
wear rags;  
and “there’s music in the cafes at night  
and revolution in the air”,  
in the dying days of the old king;  
processions and bravado everywhere,  
naïveté and rented hearts,  
in the dying days, the dying days,  
before the firing starts.

In the dying days of the old king,  
The puppet-play of demagogues,  
the camps of pseudo carnival  
would all sign off in blood.  
So martial law turned  
short-time joints to sanctuary,  
as curfew penned the dealers and the whores.  
Sounds off were gunfire and nearby explosions,  
while hookers chilled with ice behind closed doors.

Reminded  
that “to smile and smile and be a villain”  
is a national art,  
you watched as pawns were sacrificed;  
the radicals and loyalists,  
the old regime manipulators,  
(classically dressed in darkness)  
entered from stage left or right  
and passionately played their part.  
So, the puppet play was autographed in blood,  
where rhetoric and snipers vied  
to steal the listener’s heart.



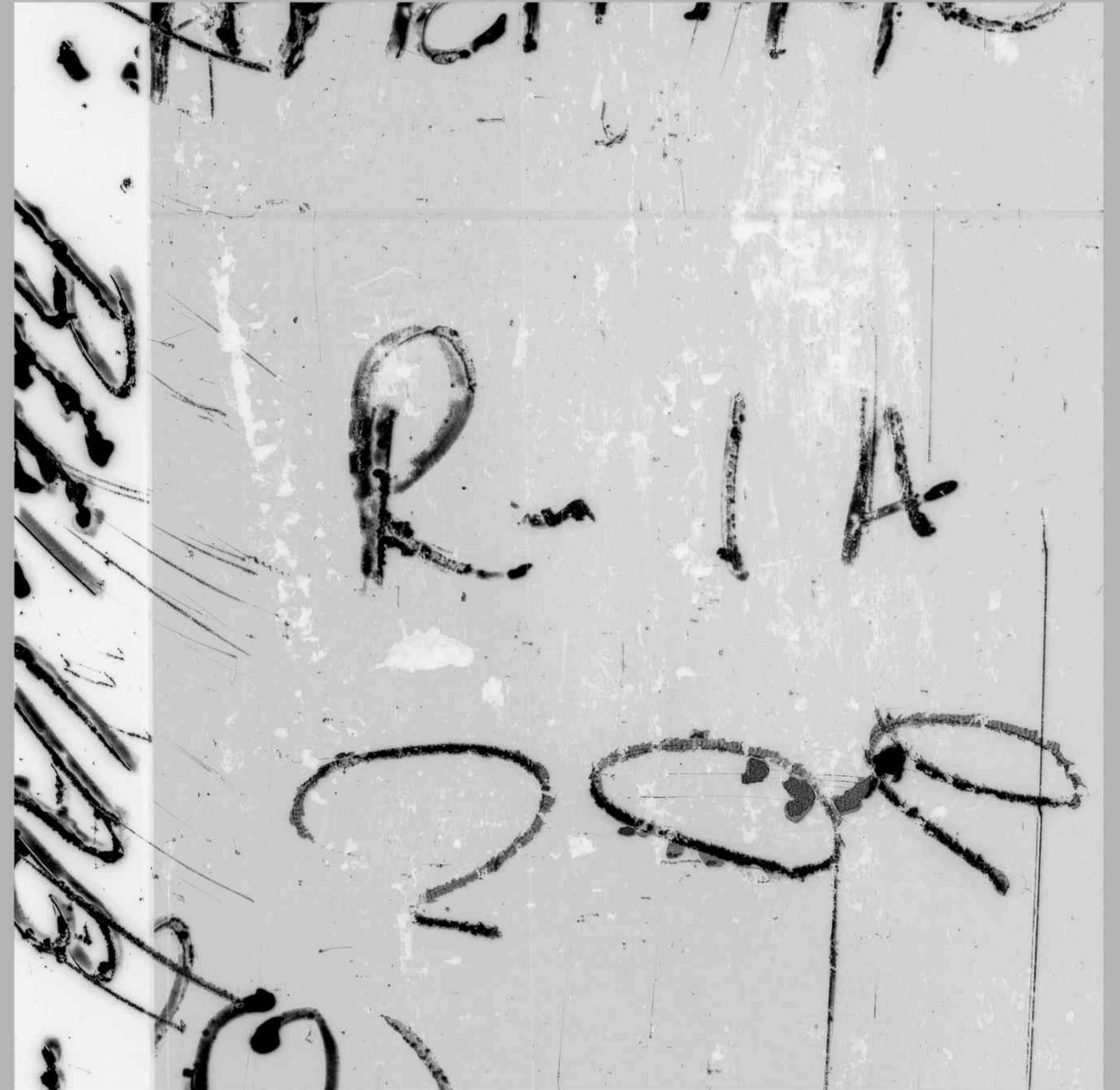


Some lit a pyre of brand-names;  
vowed revenge for slaughtered friends,  
returned in rage to village life,  
(an alternating stretch of feudal  
somnia and noise).  
Sought out the chanting temple  
and some semblance of a calmer age,  
a fellowship that memory commends,  
a fellowship that city life destroyed;  
corrupted in a thousand different ways,  
in the dying days,  
the dying days of the old king.  
Now, on the towering billboards  
of the Ministry of Truth  
the crafted smile of the heir apparent  
suddenly appears,  
benign salve for forbidden doubts,  
new father figure  
in a time of democratic fears.  
In the dying days,  
the dying days of the old king,

the crafted smile of the heir apparent  
suddenly appears .....

### Freelance

Heavier than any back-pack,  
dude, the centrifugal darkness,  
of three million murders.  
That place has an awesome negative field,  
and so does every trash-choked,  
blood-soaked kilometre to the Thai border.  
The highway bus stops have a bench  
of the desperate and dangerous,  
and more choking than the stench  
of those unspeakable latrines is  
the crocodile breath of Marxists,  
and embedded Party reptiles,  
gorged on graft and carrion,  
still slithering among the corpses,  
stealing all the scenes.





In Phnom Penh you know  
the jungle never really left.  
A torture vortex, with tourists.  
I swore I'd never go back.  
And now this invitation  
from Cadre Number One,  
to edit his self-vindicating fiction.  
The ultimate progressive scoop,  
one last hubristic loop-the-loop.  
And  
charismatic journo skills  
can sometimes prove the gift  
that kills.

### City Limits

That's the way it is,  
out here,  
not a lot of pure.

Your days are cut  
with toxic trash.  
Propaganda on the walls,  
martyrism in the web,  
and everyone who's clued-in,  
tiptoe,  
waiting for the crash,

or for a cure.

Out here, clear thought  
and its practitioners are rare,  
condemned men, motley heretics and such.

Nitrous oxide nightmares,  
and the rubber masks they wear;  
recognize these demons, going down?

Uncannily familiar?  
Oh, really? Not so much;  
for they whispered to you, coming in.  
That first imprinting's not your mother,  
clown,





but this malignant midwife,  
who is reading you your sentence,  
which you “do not understand”,  
and this you’ll mutter as a mantra,  
till you get here, all your little life,  
will mutter as a mantra every day;

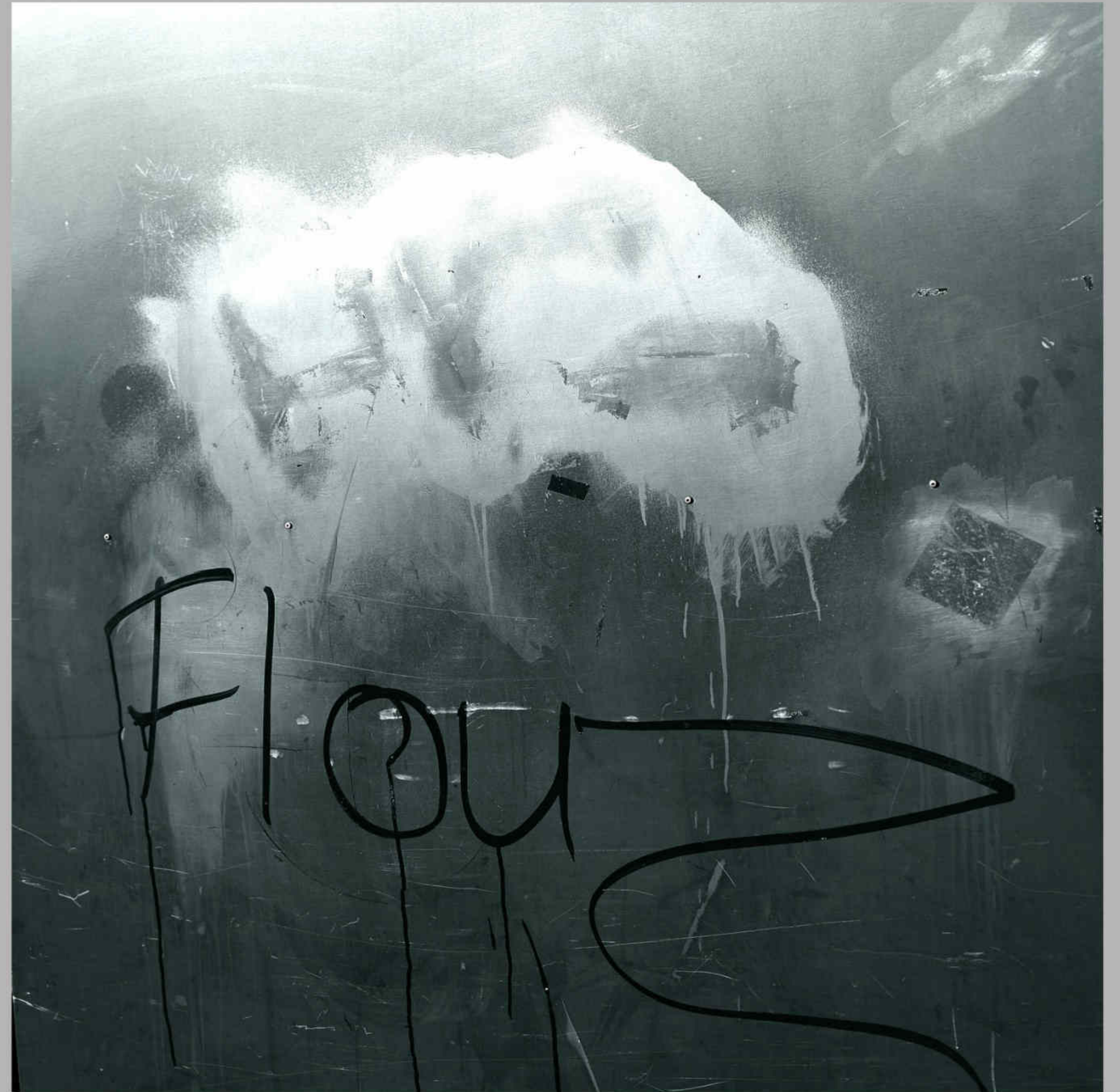
still marveling how sweet the fruit is,  
here at city limits,  
out, at city limits,  
on the edges of decay.

Random search, unregulated, out at City Limits,  
condemned men, motley heretics and such.  
The military sent editors for re-adjustment,  
and, out at City Limits now, the Oracle’s  
not googled very much;

So, during hours of darkness  
you might try a proxy oracle,  
for it was never twenty four seven.  
Sometimes, for a fix of truth,  
you’ll catch some short-time cool  
promotion, curated by seven eleven.

All the voices, demolition.  
Some areas completely gone.  
The Garden of Sad Concubines  
was turned into a Tussaud franchise.  
‘Course, Tussaud began modeling  
with the Terror’s severed heads.  
Now TV works as guillotine instead,  
and millions get the treatment.  
Think you haven’t been beheaded, sucker?

Just try nodding your agreement.





## Bangkok Air

It had to be the Emanon bar,  
I can't tell you how unhinged he was to see me.  
We'd had a few of their specials and we were getting loose.  
I'd probably be teetotal if it wasn't for this bar.  
You get drunk of course, but, it goes without saying  
(you're obviously a cultured man)  
that context is everything,  
always, and juice is only juice.  
He ordered a trio of witch killers, bottled in Japan,  
it's thirty five percent; strontium and alcohol.  
Bottle's so cold you can't put it down but  
after a few pulls you aren't afraid of frost bite  
or polar bears or even the Koran.

A couple of rats were foraging  
confidently under a food stall opposite,  
the cat, as usual, was in hiding.  
The mamasan, as only she can  
displayed her astounding assets to man  
leaned across the bar and lit a smoke.

There's poison in the city air,  
wherever you're residing.

It's the frisson before storytime.  
He looked his age, whatever it was,  
but obviously he could tell a joke.  
A surprising number of city folk  
are masked for pollution apocalypse.  
I haven't fully sussed it yet, but  
it's like a horror movie set, and  
maybe we don't know we've had our chips.  
He allowed himself a long consoling toke.  
Decomposition, baby, your place, or mine?  
I hadn't planned on retirement  
in a zombie social paradigm.

He looked his age, whatever it was,  
but obviously he could tell a joke.





Took up where he'd begun  
when an arch and sexy female voice says  
are you sitting comfortably children?  
Here's the latest shit from the oracle,  
as she leaned across the bar and lit one;  
do bars get better than this he asked  
and I took that as frankly rhetorical.

She will eat you alive  
but I will risk it he said,  
then I'll describe it later.  
I'm old, he laughed, and bent  
by all the vortices of vice,  
but I retain a certain skill  
in my role as the narrator.

It's been poisonous for years out there  
and will get worse tomorrow.  
My advice to those outside this bar  
is don't inhale, or swallow.

### **Nong Kai Train**

An old Bangkok hand,  
was drinking with me  
on the Nong Kai train.  
"Same old story, I'm afraid,  
'Don't ever rent a room without  
a spy-hole and a chain, my friend.  
The girl says she'll get more to smoke,  
and calls someone, then gets the door,  
they burst into your hotel room,  
she's gone, and now you're ransom bait  
for crooked cop extortionists  
that work out of their station  
in Thong Lo.  
Your wrists are cut from  
handcuffs, for a while, but .....  
The girl? ..... sold you out  
to stay out of jail, probably.  
None of them want to go back  
to the monkey house, certainly.





In the station, as cops pocketed  
my cash, and checked my cards,  
I recognized the officer in charge  
as one of my ex-graduates  
from TLAk University. He'd been one  
of the few with any English skills.  
"Guess the family business never will be  
sexy as the drug trade in a uniform."

He laughed aloud, as the night blew in,  
and the fields rushed by,  
and I'd rate that as a major high,  
that night on the Nong Kai train.  
"I got off with a less than crippling bribe.  
He wouldn't want the TLAk Alumni  
tribe at their bullshit banquets,  
hearing he's corrupt. But, after all,  
why else do people join the police?"  
Never, never rent a room without  
a spyhole and a chain.  
Sounds like a comic opera song  
or some virginal refrain;  
or the cool night breeze  
he's shooting  
on the Nong Kai train.  
"You bear the wounds of handcuffs  
for a while, but .....  
that gut-paranoia never goes,  
ammoniac fear that whips you sober.  
Could be a social paradigm in there,  
who knows? For students of police states."

The steward brought more drinks;  
and the night was far from over;  
with a sweet breeze off the ricelands,  
as the night blew in,  
and the fields rushed by;  
and we rode, with the immortals,  
on the night train to Nong Kai.





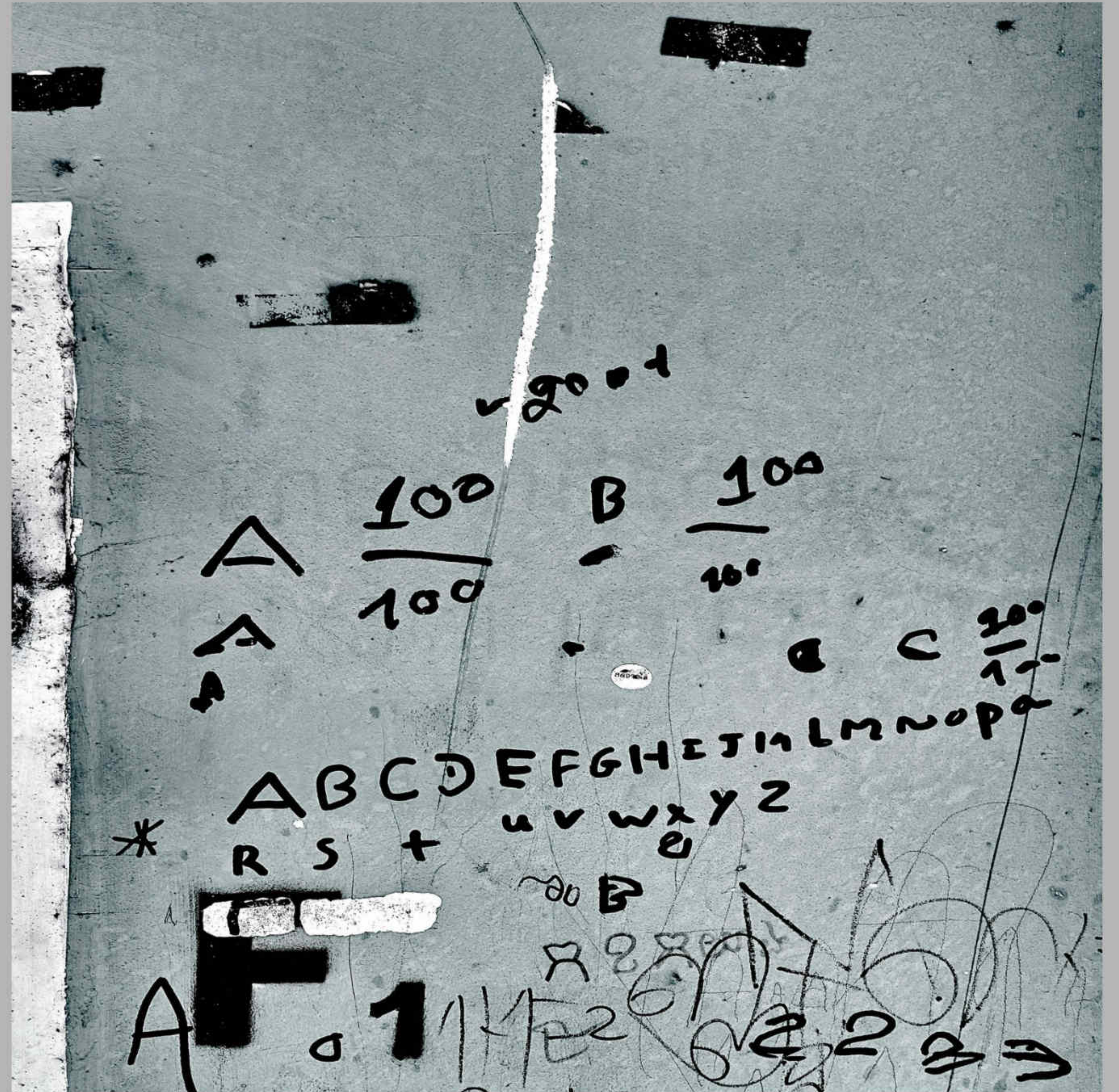
Seneca in Silom

was a scoop.  
He sat at the Pavilion stooped like Atlas  
shouldering all the world's absurdity.  
We ordered pineal gland pate, and fresh baguettes;  
despite a poisonous fog of ideology  
a sage adapts to everything he gets.  
Especially, when interviewing ghosts, creative  
adaptation is the wisest methodology;

I confess to prefer the black bandito face masks  
worn by ladies; the white ones are so bland  
and, frankly, surgical.  
The zeitgeist, sadly's, neither pure nor lyrical  
and it's likely to be this way for a while.  
You may cough and spit, and fulminate with passion,  
but you can at least asphyxiate in style,  
and stoically still relate to fashion.

Existential nausea's out there, walking in your shoes,  
tattoo-covered tourists with overweight wives,  
users and losers and mafia bruisers  
and tarts and transsexuals, stark exhibitionists,  
staggering toppers and spiralling lives.  
It takes intoxication to inoculate the blues.  
Don't make a big deal out of it, the drama of extinction.  
Whole galaxies of dust and gas assure us  
it will come to pass, our history's demise.  
Some new reactor meltdown or some warhead of distinction,  
some accident or spill of really toxic and impressive size.  
Just give the scientists enough rope and  
you'll be a Malthusian isotope. Problem solved,  
and the final answer is talking to a Geiger-counter.  
Don't fret too much, don't sweat the job, as it's likely that  
some globalist mob will prematurely claim the prize,  
and cut the species down to size;  
the route's mere technicality, we're done.

Stay busy and find things to do, lounge-lizardry,  
some gallery daubs, a nose-ring or a new tattoo.  
Project yourself, inject yourself,  
re-write and re-invent yourself. That's you,  
up on the plasma screens, there, waving to A.I.





The route to the miasma's merely technical. Besides,  
they took you to the cleaners, now you're all hung out to dry.  
Inevitably you'll represent the Society of the Spectacle.  
I'm tired of offering tolerance to religiose insanity,  
your head's a media dumpster-fire, full seven days a week,  
combustible consumerism, ignorance and vanity.  
Alive today, I'd deal in Zen and Situationist chic,  
blast-off with Elon Musk, to Mars, and take it inter-planetary.

They're announcing a new emperor.  
Catullus nods, from explorations of depravity  
conducted with his usual intensity and gravity.  
It's Silom, after all. And when in Rome .....

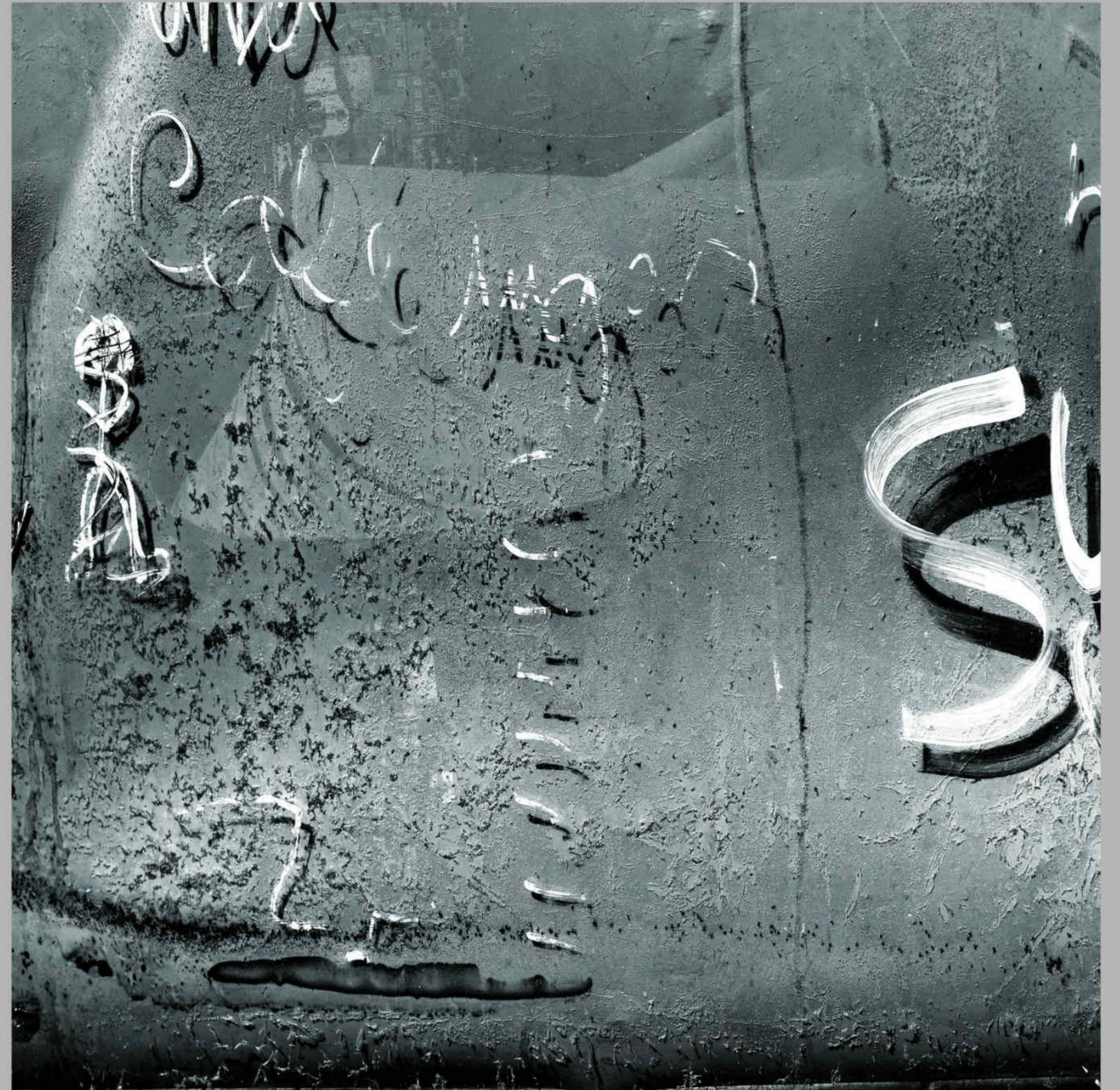
Offstage, more trumpets, pomp and obsequies.  
Praetorian processions, slaves, robotic dancers.  
We raise a toast to Gibbon from our radioactive cloud,  
to knaves and touts, triumphant shouts,  
sad elephants and milling crowds,  
forbidden questions, contagious answers.





## Framed

A broken sleep;  
with strangers,  
out of Sukhumvit as bars close.  
On the night bus to Cambodia  
your visa page is questioned  
in a borderland of dreams.  
The old address was overstayed,  
relationships, all out of date;  
the small print changed,  
and far too late  
you're suddenly afraid.  
The Absurd,  
meanwhile, in countless acts,  
advances.  
Still featured in the cast,  
you re-enact flawed parts,  
in dramas and romances.  
Reprise your questioned role  
within a love that did not last.  
Act out the old illicit game,  
discover recollection framed you,  
then mis-spelled your name;  
where you are hung, unvarnished,  
with desire, and death, and blame.





## Empedocles on Ephedrine

“Sophocles, in his lost play about me  
would expound atomic theory and the  
fissile formulae of love and strife,  
the lava lake of genius within  
that would illuminate and finally  
consume my famous life.  
Just so.

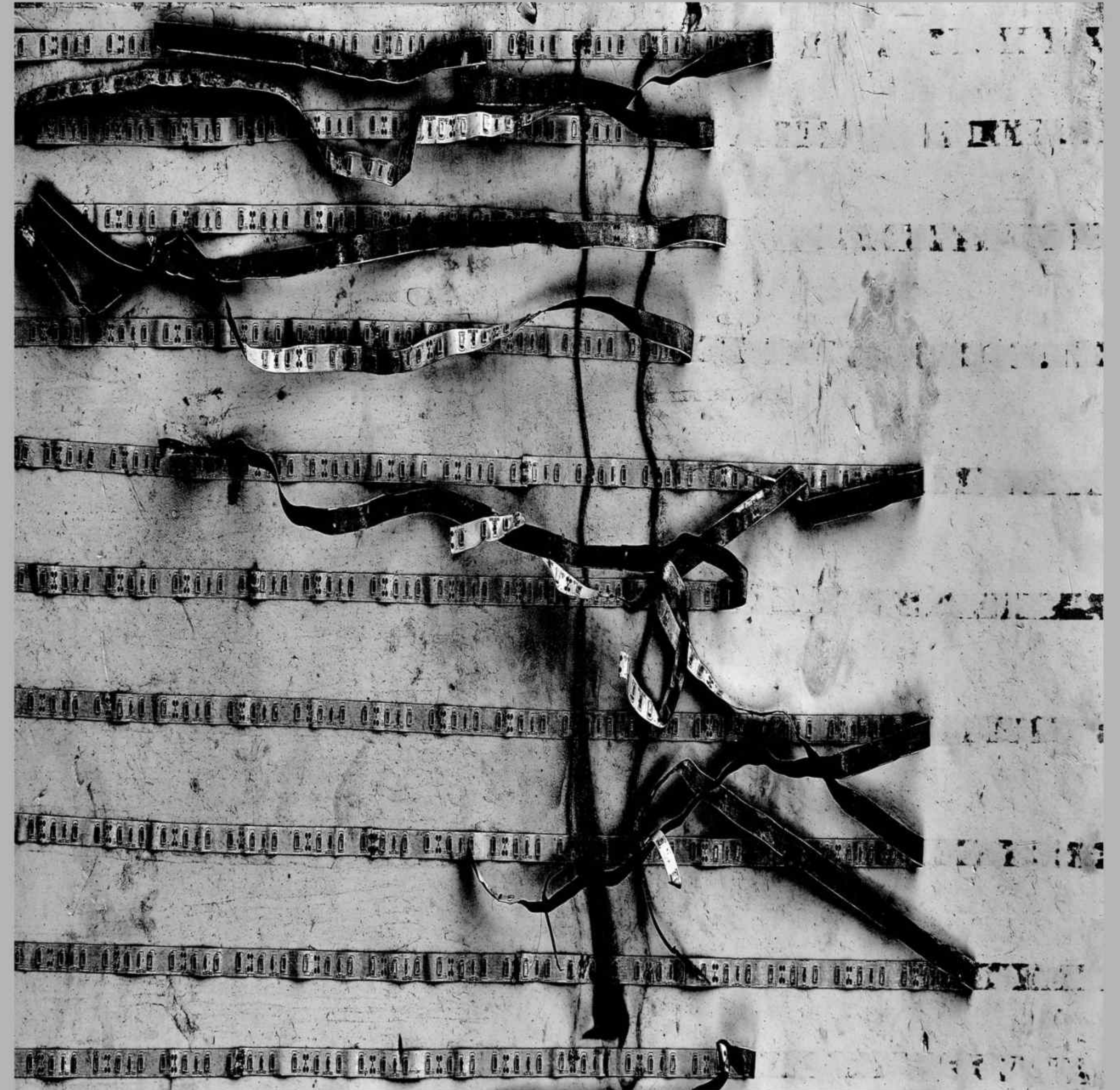
There are lethal visions to inhale  
at the sulphurous crater’s rim.  
The reactor fires of Vulcan seethe below.

In the drama it is Armageddon.  
The last surviving missile-submarine  
commander gets his signal;  
and it’s carried shoulder high  
to him, in sombre ceremonial mode,  
past those expectant crewmen, then  
he opens up a safe, and reads that letter  
from a vapourised Prime Minister,  
a politician who once flinched  
at signing it in faraway Act Two.  
The Captain reads;  
re-reads it, poker-faced, until  
a gust of the Apocalypse hits everyone.

Oh Jesus, this is not a drill!  
Sweet Jesus, this is not a drill.  
There are operational rituals, arcane  
as doomsday, they must do.  
Officers speak with extraordinary gravity.  
They are become the Oracle  
of Delphi, or Von Humboldt’s parrot,  
the sunken echo of a lost humanity.

The audience shivers, and sad actors,  
white-faced, choric, speak their lines, then  
turn, together, night’s infernal keys.

Someone wrote the operational codes for us,

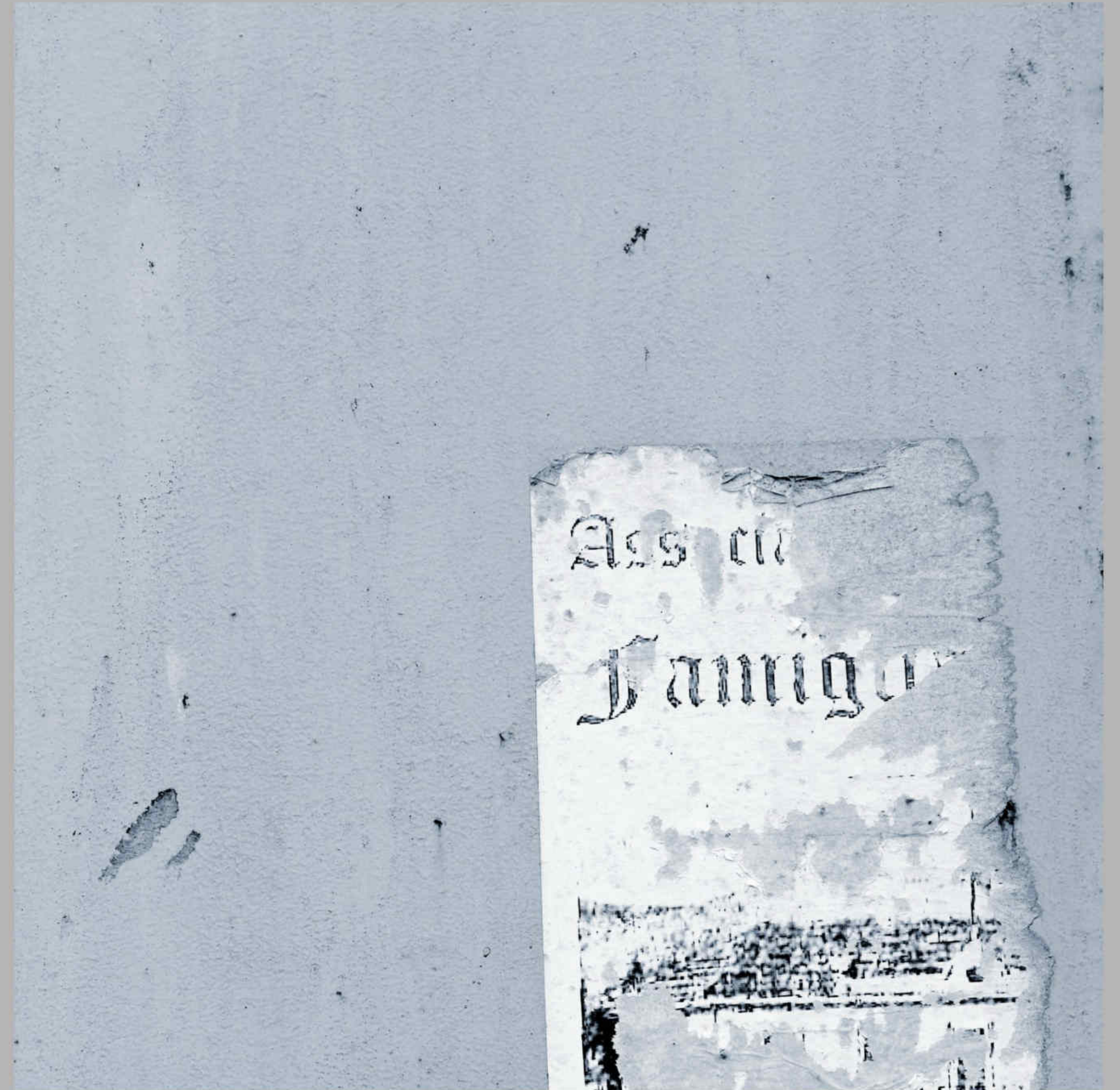




someone decided how this had to be,  
this doomed and bloodless script of exodus.

The gods will spin their sub-plots  
round the nucleus of tragedy  
and their mission, deconstructed,  
will decay all hope to vanity,  
turn history to glass, all fact to fission.

For what it's worth,  
I was the greatest futurist alive.  
The laughter of the Gods attends our birth;  
and a double shot of navy rum precedes my final dive.





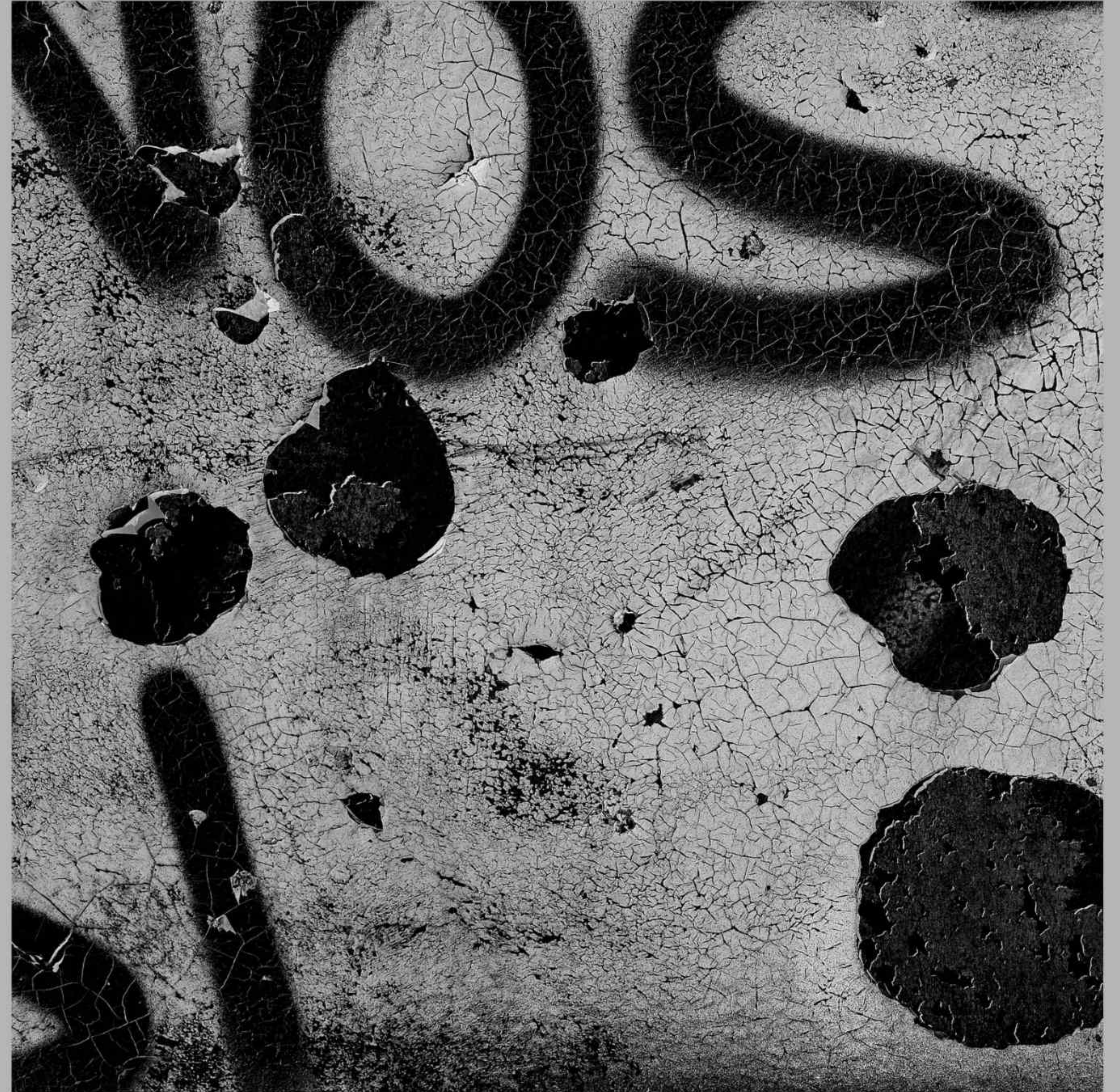
## Creative Writing

“What should I write about?” she asked  
and lit me in that daybreak of a smile.  
Her neck’s warm curve was eloquent enough  
to make a legion of dead poets lift their bony pens  
and write impassioned sonnets from the grave.  
“Take some small feature of your day and start  
with that” I said, and wrote my name  
in kisses on the jasmine of her skin,  
poured wine for us in orchards  
green as memory, then  
walked barefoot in the rainbow shoals  
where thoughts as bold as dolphin swim.  
“Take something ordinary first  
and work with that,” I said,  
and painted her a dozen ways,  
whispering secrets in the firefly night,  
or gazing over orchids at some table  
on the lonely Cretan shore,  
the hot wind’s fingers in her hair,  
some olives and a glass of ouzo there.

And to the haunted walls of Knossos,  
herb-covered hillsides soar behind,  
and that ruined sweetness spills on us  
in some Olympian wind, so that  
our very breathing there is charged  
with deathless blessing and the doom of kings,  
a kind of epic beauty, and a thousand  
scattered ancient things.

I search the broken murals for our faces,  
and find her perfect smile survives  
the layered ages like Minoan gold.  
I steal it unashamedly, grown dizzy  
with wild herbs and poetry,  
and run into the echoing labyrinth.

“See how that works for you; first  
build your strength by writing about  
ordinary, then unusual things.  
Put pen to paper, try it out,  
find what this method brings.”





**Nights: Rust Belt Cantos: 6**

Life's perverse; of course, you know that;  
and though I've never been a flagellant,  
I don't risk much in guessing  
just how good it feels to stop.  
So, hammered by the din till numb,  
a twelve hour shift of eating rust,  
shot-blasting pit props, once again is done.

You spit black mucus out from underneath  
your mask, in that miraculous hush  
that follows shut-down, and your  
final task, as dawn comes up,  
is emptying the filters in the coolness  
of the air outside the doors. You know a  
town is stirring for the rush to work  
while you punch out the clock at six,  
bid mates good day then floor  
your burner, foot hard down for home.

Birds serenade the factory zone,  
the day-shift power up the plant,  
behind the wheel, you improvise  
a descant of escape, alone.  
Your wipers clear the morning dew,  
the tape deck pumps out rocking licks,  
and that's some special high, I'm telling you.  
The ending of a shot blast shift is  
one wild way to get your kicks.  
So good, I almost miss it.  
Life's perverse.  
Of course, you knew that.





## Getting It Wrong

A smudged autumn night.  
One of our rare sessions in the bar.  
Kin Lok, heaping up a single skin with dark tobacco,  
had been talking about women, as he would when he relaxed;  
and Singapore.  
"How a simple smile can sometimes be misleading;  
generate all kinds of problems for a man."  
He rolled the neat white tube, and licked it.  
Anticipating him somewhat, I said,  
"Misreading someone's signals can."  
"Something along those lines", he murmured;  
tamped the dangling strands at each end with a ballpoint,  
lit the roll up, and began.

Chinese. And she had warm, disarming ways.  
In Singapore, a nightclub bar, she recognised me;  
came across to say hello. We fell to talking.  
Laughed and joked a while, about old friends, old times.  
She'd grown up, since those far off days.  
And, taken with her smile (you know how these things are)

I was reflecting, as she went back to her table,  
that I'd never slept with her, and that my chance  
was most unlikely to arise, to coin a phrase.

The meeting was forgotten,  
once the parting words were said.  
Or so I thought, mistakenly,  
till later, as I turned to leave the washroom,  
and this gun was at my head.  
The strangled Afrikaner voice accused me  
of designs upon his woman, of insulting him.  
He asked me how I felt, there,  
on the brink of being dead.

"You've got this wrong, so very wrong", I said.  
My tongue stuck to my mouth.  
The universe contracted to the smells  
of gun oil, cloying aftershave, and fear;  
to whisky on his breath.





The words I needed fled.  
'What do you see?'  
He jabbed the barrel in my face.  
'What do you see?' he asked.  
And it was near, 'I think I see my death', I said.  
I couldn't say how long he made me sweat,  
until he pushed me out into the club again.  
I had to take the microphone, apologise  
onstage for my presumption, his embarrassment.

I said what was required, until he nodded satisfaction,  
swaggered back into his drinking and dismissed  
this insignificant distraction from his life."

Kin's eyes assumed that glitter.  
Some ironic, jet black stone.

"I phoned my younger brother. Said I'd had a little trouble,  
but I'd need to stay around there, for appearances.  
My face was too well known.  
The Africaaner drank till late. And when they left,  
I thought that I'd hang out a little longer.

Just as well, since someone jumped him in the car park  
with a Remington pump action. Cut him off below the knees.  
He'd made a lot of enemies. Who did it? Hard to say.

But they didn't take his money, or his passport.  
Perhaps her screaming, in the end, drove them away."





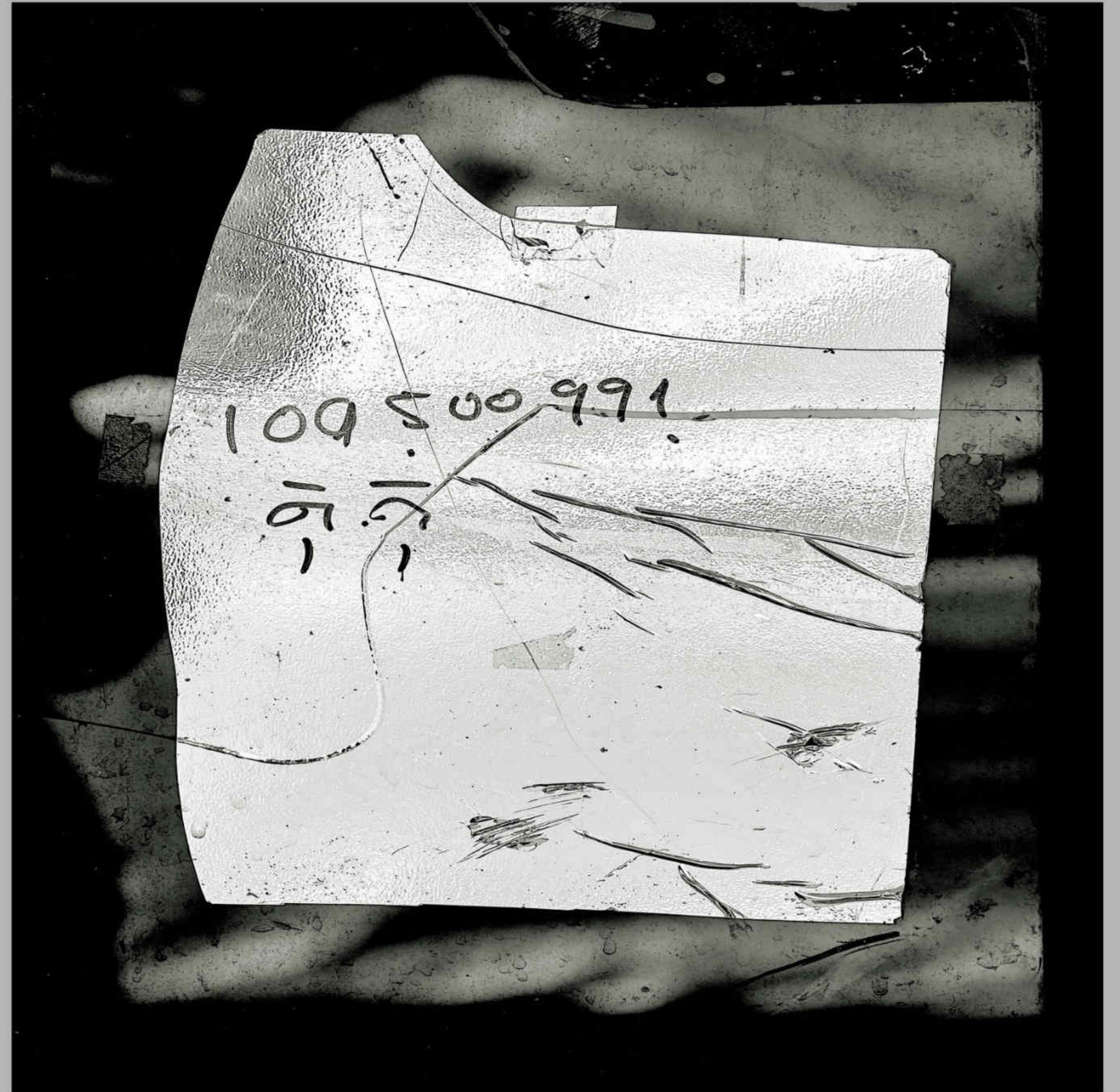
## Poetry ID

All those years ago, on Tyneside,  
when we'd asked of Paris between the wars,  
of Eliot and Pound, and their meetings of course,  
and he'd looked at our fledgling poetry;  
Bunting said, "It's all right, but live some more.  
You need to go out and live some more."  
I said thanks, and knew, as I closed his door,  
he meant Poetry ID.

I've chauffeured cars and worked in bars,  
crossed seas and worked illegally;  
crashed out in Split, swabbed blood and shit  
from floors in Vancouver casualty.  
I've crossed the Rockies on a train  
and jumped by parachute from planes,  
drove a Cadillac through the F.M. band  
from New York down to Miami.  
Met Mozart in Carnegie Hall,  
Bix Beiderbecke on Hadrian's Wall,  
got woken up by lightning on  
the warm South China Sea.  
Been there and back, and gone off track,  
put the Darren Mountains in my pack,  
I've taken stock at Lion Rock,  
and swum in Lake Euphoria,  
stirred Zen into my tea.

I've known apocalyptic trips  
and rolled some monumental spliffs,  
I've rocked to Doctor Feelgood's riffs,  
been frightened, heightened, free.  
I've laughed a lot and loved my share,  
I've come round in intensive care,  
but many I loved no longer step  
the headlong days with me.  
I toast their sweet reluctant ghosts,  
and all we did together, most  
of all, this lush, uncharted coast  
of Poetry ID.

Listen; words are the ladder  
we climbed from the slime.





Words that spring to your lips  
and sing of your time  
are shouts in the throat of antiquity;  
old oratory, shrapnel hurled  
right out of history.

Magical, fierce, exuberant and sad,  
words made us wise and sent us mad.  
Rhyme's a trapeze we swing out on;  
out over birth, dissolution and death.  
Rhyme, old as the breeze,  
and mysterious as breath.

Look, out as far as you can see,  
there's love and birth, magnetic north,  
the stars, and Poetry ID.  
And I've come as before to the old poet's door,  
to pass right through it, as you see.  
I greet his ghost, then turn once more,  
ambiguous, naked, and stubbornly free,  
with thanks, and a smile, a fond farewell,  
and Poetry ID.





## Retrospective

(for Lyall Watson)

No priest, of course, intruded  
at the funeral. There was rare,  
appreciative laughter with the tears.  
Your family, your lovers  
and your friends drew close together  
for a final one-man show;  
the subject, this big life that  
you had hewn out of the years.  
Upon the studio floor  
your uncompleted pictures sprawl,  
like models half-undressed.  
Before that final exit to "Hell's waiting room",  
(for so you styled the hospital  
they'd send you to)  
... of all the subjects,  
naked women pleased you best.  
Time came at last to measure your mortality,  
to scan your faltering heart with tests,  
to hang charts from the bed.

But in your poems you had done the job  
more eloquently, years before.  
Your art was the precursor  
to those falling graphs in red.  
Some eighteen months death stalked you  
from the first attack.  
You shambled on, a vain old bear, on sticks,  
determined to defy him, throw him,  
shake him from your back.  
The world was full of women  
to be sketched, admired, seduced.  
With so much still to write and paint,  
and you just eighty six, it's hard believing  
that you couldn't have produced another tirade or  
some onslaught of the will  
to beat back his reactionary, philistine approaches,  
to face him out of closing for the kill.  
In your house,  
that cluttered archive of your life,  
upon the day you died  
I made love to my mistress in your bed.  
Morning and evening;





moaning and dreaming,  
not to exorcise our grief,  
but in a celebration of desire, let it be said.  
Such couplings you'd have loved to paint,  
prodigal passion, richly spread;  
your counterpane our canvas  
and your dark, obsessive paintings overhead.

"Now drink some wine  
and read my latest poem to her, boy!".  
Your laughter from the other room.  
Life plays another joke.  
And from the crematorium gates  
we drift away, like smoke.

### **The Company of Poets**

You've heard a kind of clown  
dismissing poetry,  
as rarefied and precious, not real life;  
till, cut and sliced by love's  
exquisite and inexorable knife,  
he'll find the bottle comfortless enough,  
and fumble in his misery for rhyme.

Still craving for some vanished stuff of rapture,  
attempting to contain the heart's decline,  
and learning there's no science that will capture  
or can resurrect a passion. It's a sign that life  
will seek out rhythms, incantations, dreams,  
to celebrate its stature, and to wonder at itself.  
Each dances, in his fashion, to that driving score it seems;  
but poets live the fuller, by their nature, beating time.

And I'll seek out the company of poets,  
the company of poets I'll make mine.  
When poetry has bitten you you'll know it;  
it's just an arc of words but in the overall design  
of things, there's everything in life laid out below it;  
from birth to love, and death, and celebration;  
and before the robot reaper can consign





you to your headstone you will ride imagination's  
launcher high above the milling cities,  
be the Process speaking, for a time.

So I'll seek out the company of poets,  
the company of poets I'll make mine.  
They're taking passion's pulse  
and they are signalling the future,  
they've freedom for a mistress  
and they've history for a tutor,  
and they can image water into wine.  
Each new day is their holy book,  
and apparatchiks hate them  
for scoffing at all priesthoods  
while embracing the divine.  
So give to me the company of poets,  
the company of poets I'll make mine.

Those black flags of mourning, who better to fly them?  
The tender intrigues of the aspirant heart,  
that life-shaking love that you have for your children,  
how better to tell them? Where better to start?  
Where else but the company of poets?  
whose alchemical pilgrimage sets them apart ...  
Where else but the company of poets?

Those ephemeral fires of the beacon lights,  
on the century's headlands, glowing;  
like poems, are markers we leave to rite  
our passage and our going.  
Bright seeds on the wind that flower despite  
the perennial cloud of unknowing,  
and they're sown by the company of poets,  
the indelible company of poets.





“Comme je trouve” / At Roydon Hall

The rolling weald runs up to fold  
this house in an embrace of green.  
And at the wild edge,  
hunched retainer; holding darkness  
clenched between arachnid arms,  
the crouching, silent pine is seen.  
From this dark servant, master strokes  
of ardent green decline  
where meadow flowers are splashed below  
and hedgerows write unruly lines  
to cool viridian forest, still as wine.  
And still again the vale recedes  
to verdant frequencies of fields  
in bands the sun ignites  
and stripes with shade  
as far out as the land's blue crest,  
where gazing brings the heart true rest,  
and marriage with the sky is made.

Green visions, by the builder left;  
just gazing brings the heart true rest  
where marriage with the sky is made.

The clock of ruin, no moving hands or chime,  
is near five hundred. It is time that dictates.  
A crumbling clock house no longer tells time.





**From The Seventh Book of Inundations**

Haunts of Old Galway

1.  
The deluge  
drove me under that sad remnant of the city wall.  
Scarred voices of old masonry are absolute and cynical,  
I find unscheduled meetings with the dead to lack all protocol,  
but when the locus speaks, be sure that readiness is all.  
The howl of ocean, hubbub of the fishermen and traders,  
conflicts and commotion, screams, the shouts of  
mad adventurers and raiders; the pledges, boasts,  
the love affairs and toasts; deceits defeats, retrenchment  
and retreat; hard-faced harlots, arrogant churchmen,  
ruin, lies, and treachery and rage;  
the bitter stones bleed narrative,  
plus the fatuous graffiti of our own moronic age.

A restaurant with a Michelin star, a hipster with an old guitar,  
a shabby chic where gulls repeat ironic observations from afar.

Yes they were first to hear  
Captain Columbus back in Galway;  
obsessing under Spanish Arch  
mis-named for that great Genoese.  
I ride the swells, and keep the log,  
at Corrib mouth I haunt the quays  
I wait and do what I do best  
and while we bow to majesty  
and trust the promised wave to crest,  
in this Atlantic gateway, this wild  
outpost of the stormy west,  
I ponder the uncertain times;  
and chronicle the tidal race,  
life lived as epic poetry, a bow  
to beckoning legend, or a fool's  
ambitious stanzas scrawled  
across the ocean's face.  
Praise science, friend, and dream of GPS  
go plot your endgame from the stormy west,  
but he who hazards time and tide  
and trusts his venture to the stars  
knows all is done, when it is done,  
at fickle fate's behest.





A hologram of history that only I and birds could see  
would not have left psychiatrists impressed.  
So, having him along with me, I thought was for the best.

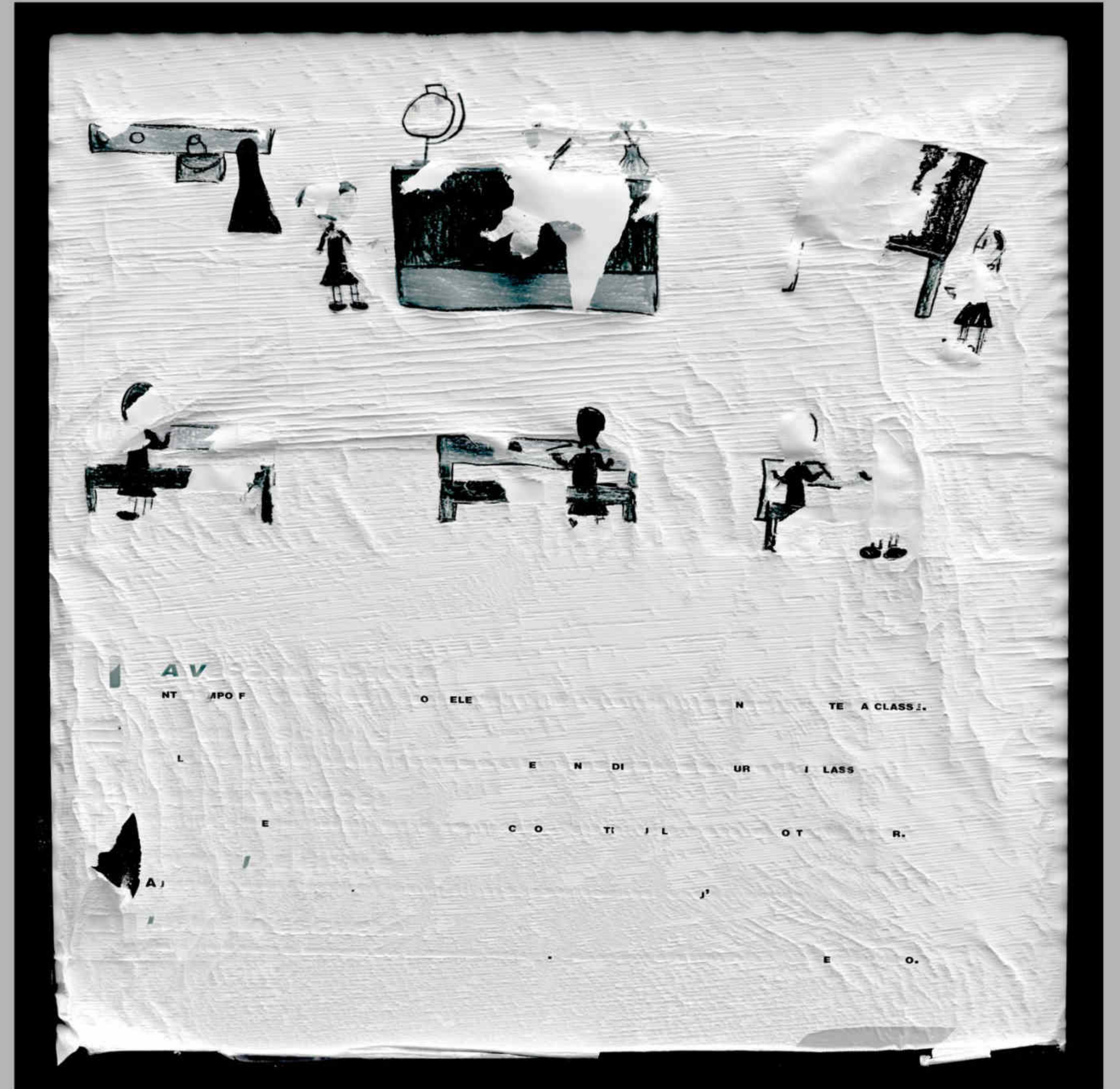
I ride the swells, and write my log  
again remote from foreign shores,  
where I laboured under tyrants,  
and grew old, among a flock  
of idle scribblers and whores.  
Follies misdirected me, the gamble  
of my odyssey postponed, as I  
awaited my own dispensation.

Now I will hazard destiny from this  
insane and turbulent green nation.

(From a newspaper in smart Café Hubristica,  
situate in the Latin Quarter).  
The minutes of the Privy Council;  
a dispatch from our Court Reporter.

Each potentate and tyrant,  
each sheik and grand dictator,  
each media magnate, idol, star,  
each legal liar at the Bar,  
all parliament's manipulators,  
each siren and political fraud  
each criminal chairman of the board,  
and all the thieving heads of banks  
all popes and prophets, heaven-sent,  
for all their grandiose shams are meant  
to join the kings in gilded ranks,  
and daily sit enthroned, inhaling  
their own excrement.

Parliamentary member ridiculed  
for her false injury claim  
exposed by a security cam.  
Public opinion swings against her,  
jokes a nearby Galway man.  
We exit, into driving rain.





See the braggart funeral rites  
of murdered drug lords  
that irk and jive the common man,  
whose children die in needle squalor  
far from the bling-draped hit-men  
mourners,  
whose vulgarity  
is outdone only  
by their overt  
psychopathic singularity.  
Why give them Christian burial?  
asks the caller.  
Is that a Catholic attitude?  
rejoins the radio jock.  
For after all, each drug lord has a mother.  
Even El Chapo will be mourned,  
though gaoled, once he's been offed.  
Loud advertising interrupts our tendency to scoff.  
And to some clergy's ramblings on the rituals due the dead,  
obsequiousness invests the tone  
of the assiduous radio host  
We button up and quit the bar,  
bound for the Old King's Head,  
a place eight hundred years of age,  
Columbus wants to visit most.

2.

Down Saint Augustine Street to Spanish Arch  
in this Atlantic downpour; one family crest  
emerging from the plasterwork speaks out.  
Inscribed the year Dick Burbage  
first played Hamlet at the Globe.  
And Will himself, no doubt, would relish all this off-beat  
dripping signage round the mute heraldic stone;  
a tattoo parlour, body piercing, Thai massage,  
and  
(more spookish laughter in the teeth of fortune)  
listen,  
to the top floor's neon proclamation,  
lonely magus of the oral tradition,  
arcane creative master, the dental technician;  
who frames these biting ironies of actors on a mission.





Outside The Garden of Hesperides  
the captain takes the lead,  
and speaks his lines so absently,  
uncaring if I listen or respond.  
I confess I was obsessed by gold.  
I delivered to those savages the Catholic sword, and syphilis,  
the former out of arrogance and all-consuming avarice,  
the second just the poisoned fruit of wanderlust and power.  
I wrote the handbook for Cortes. He took my model, made it his.  
I came to rue my conduct as I started growing old.  
The extenuating context for our viciousness was popery,  
of course.  
Four derelicts swig from bottles, all impervious to the shower  
while a banjo-playing comrade plays some Clancy Brothers cliché,  
and the lot of them have faces Bosch just painted  
on his crucifixion panels,  
coarse and brutalised and murderous,  
and are glaring at the tourists with a predatory scorn;  
and in The Garden of Hesperides it's still the happy hour,  
while the demons that the captain shipped to conquer  
El Dorado are still busy being born.

Drunkards ape a rebel swagger, on Old Druid Street,  
and bellow, to some phantom, or accomplices  
that stagger in the gutter, sad curs trailing at their feet.  
We throw coins in a busker's hat outside the Jolly Paraclete.  
In the shallows by the salmon weir an angler wades and casts  
his line. In the beetling grey cathedral,  
priests throw back the sacrificial wine,  
and nuns and devotees give thanks,  
in this drab, stone fortress of the faith,  
that wants to be a prison or a bank.

3.  
And I met Kathleen O'Callaghan.  
When hawthorn blossom flurries  
mimicked early snows in Formigal,  
as the curious traveller hurries  
to Esplanade Obliterata,  
to chart rare moths and ferns.  
She fluttered in my path again,  
the wreck of former beauty  
and a face racked with obsession,  
become tormented sybil,





and her eyes dark with despair.  
She'd been scholarly;  
a linguist and a classicist,  
spoke Gaelic with a fluency  
the shade of which, at some odd  
moments, even now's still there.  
She seems to recognise me,  
and eagerly leans on my arm,  
her Philippina maid, fresh from the agency,  
trails uselessly behind; adds only  
to the terrors and the chaos in her mind.  
I too would make a bastion of memory,  
but old walls are broken. Kathleen is a  
worn-out spring; the catchment of remembering  
is fractured, and her recall is suffused with dream.  
New narratives invade the old.  
She sings lines of forgotten songs, unsure  
where hope or mourning now belong;  
to memory another martyr,  
on Esplanade of the Obliterata.

Oh, that treasure of a quiet mind,  
more rich than El Dorado,  
and more difficult to find.

At Corrib mouth, the swans drift on dark waters,  
graceful and serene, white guardians of a rocky coast.  
Older than the city walls, their dignity  
and calm might comfort sad Kathleen.

But sad Kathleen O'Callaghan is now another ghost.





## Processing

Of all the landmarks of the Forbidden City  
which embellish this ruined quarter,  
the Tower of Yearning still crackles  
with lonely life.

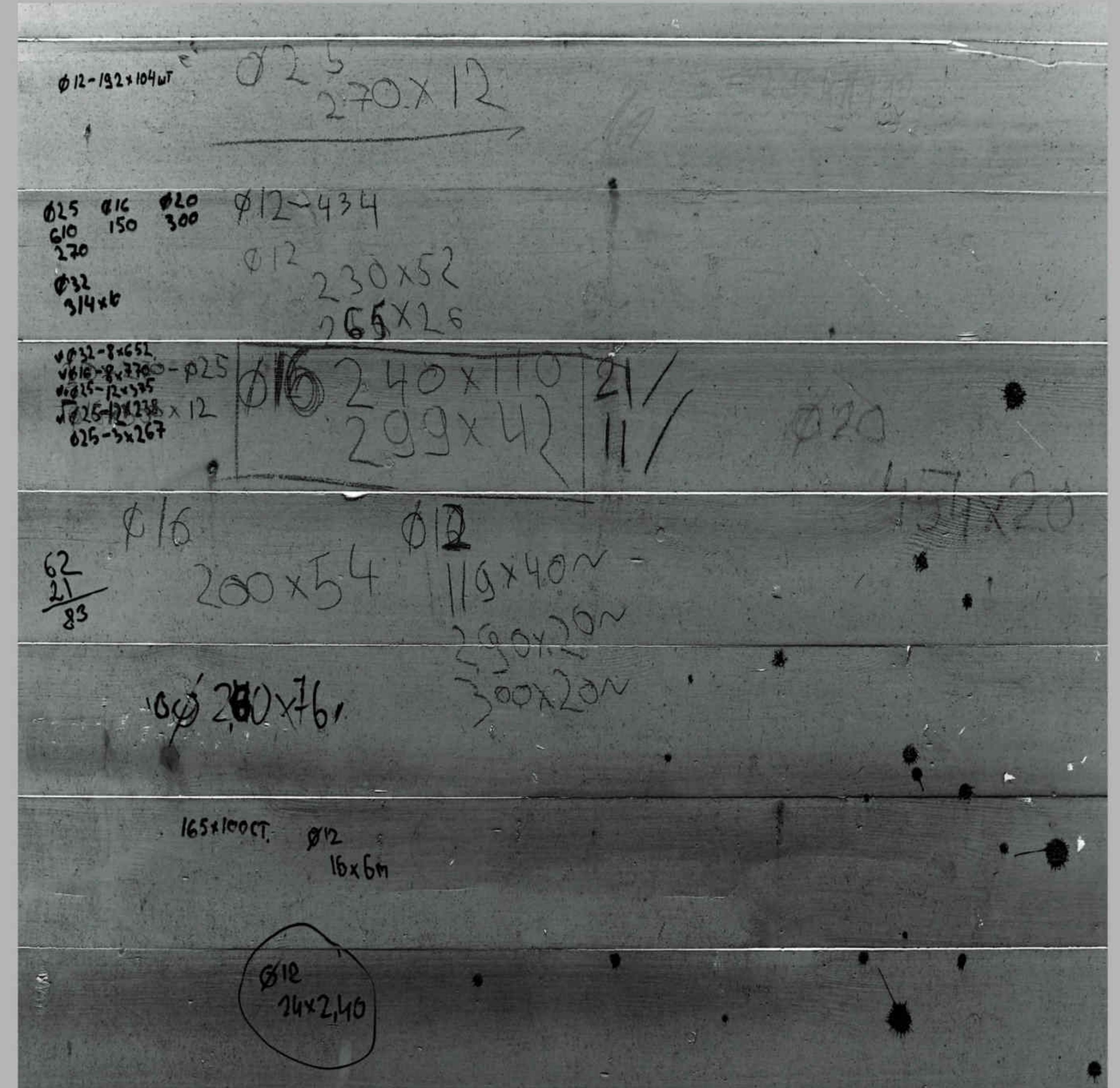
Stored hereabouts is Dowland's Lachrimae  
and other melancholy data.

Here, gloomy church interiors,  
journals of half forgotten wars  
and maps of vanished cities crowd  
the great soliloquies.

There, a Roman amphitheatre  
vibrating to the late quartets,  
a pocketful of lunar rubble,  
huge with silence, older than God.

For ages, keeping this from crumbling  
into other data, bleeding into becoming,  
I've tried sealing off the entire sector.

But it leaks remembrance, unconsolidated;  
like old reactor rivets,  
hot for another quarter million years.





## Cosmopolis 7

Of Captain Zen's galactic gargle .....  
and the crumbling maps of Gone.

Laughter .....  
Gargling with Hi-peroxide,  
in the observation module,  
I was struck by the  
majestic  
unlikeliness of the act.  
You can forget yodelling in  
the Remarkables,  
this was my tarzanic  
high-canopy ululation  
out over the unutterables;  
the rollers of infinity;  
startling gaunt pterodactyls  
that wheel like drones  
high in its majestic,  
its colossal  
improbability!  
Our constellation but a faint smear  
in this quadrant of some Bedouin  
astronomer's hard drive.  
Well, there, you are!  
Certes! By the luminous  
mouthwash of the Buddha,  
I swear, sometimes  
I get a headache,  
thinking of that paradigm  
of infinity,  
you know the one; time  
enough for a chimpanzee  
to key out all the galaxies  
of Shakespeare,  
randomly.

God! that's one paradigm  
that invades my head  
and so appals me  
I think my psyche  
will fold  
like a bloody concertina.





I have the matching dream.  
I'm signed up on a survey ship.  
Go three dynasties in cryogenic storage,  
with the ship's omniscient auto-pilot  
foot-down in warp-mode  
for millennia.  
A team of service robots  
that activate each century,  
cleaning up the giant craft,  
dusting my sarcophagus and  
ironing all the uniforms,  
revive me at the gaseous  
outer edges of our cluster.

And still, we are no closer.  
Look out in despair  
at the bottomless future.  
Behind you, every  
place and person  
you have known or seen,  
your lovers, and your children  
are echoes only; radio  
snow on a silent screen,  
ciphers on the  
crumbling charts  
of Gone.

Madness stalks a man out there,  
and some crew find the  
best solution's bow to it  
like a zany, sing the space-  
division anthem  
half a galaxy from home  
and welcome dissolution in  
the gas clouds of blue nebulae,  
on a starship old as Rome.

Yes, occasionally,  
my screaming has been known  
to waken others.

Laughter .....





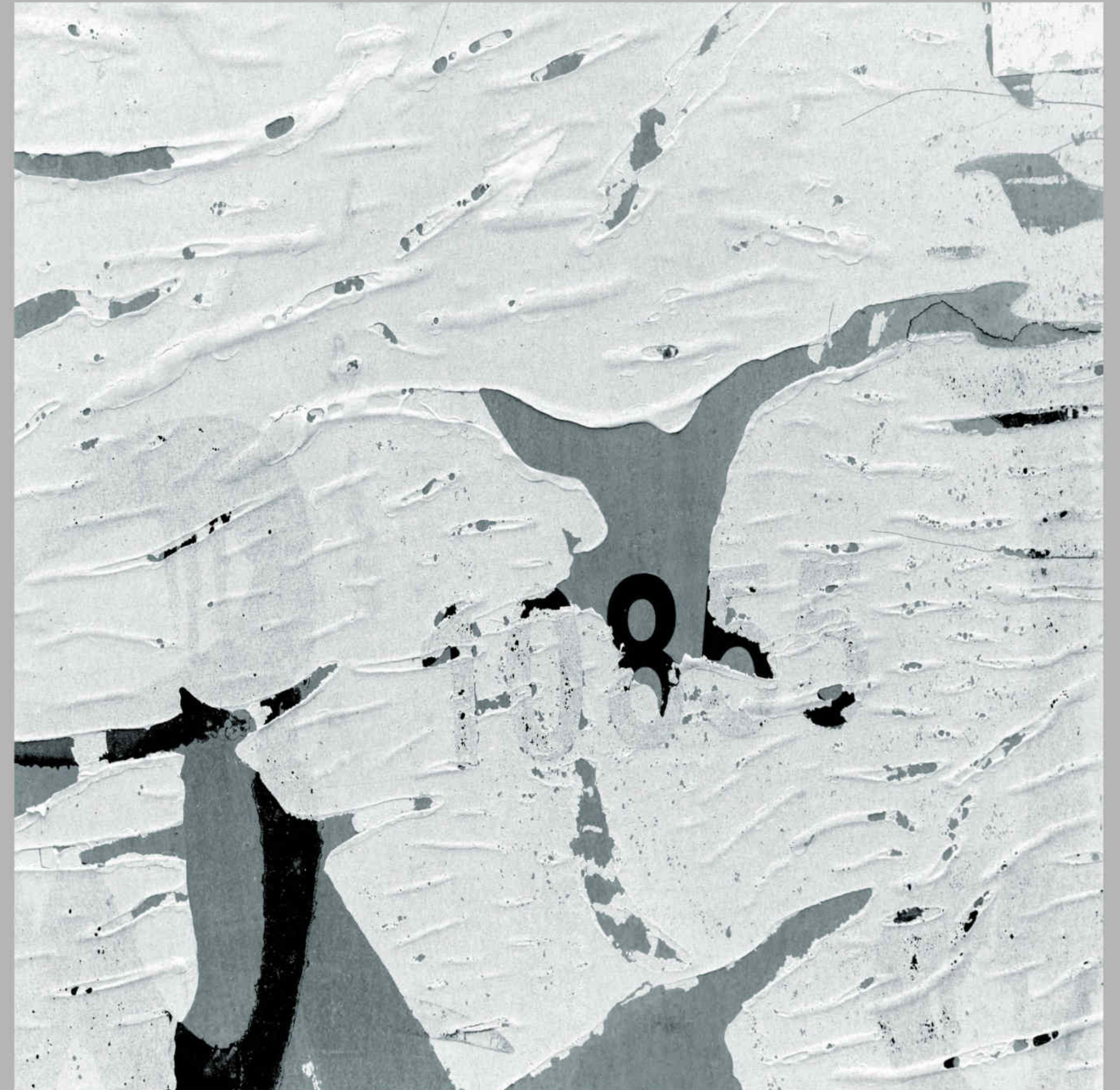
### Market in Cheongju. Night.

A spring night in Cheongju.  
A thousand mysteries  
in the elixir of cold oranges.  
Korean seamstress in the closing market,  
floor littered with remnants of others' finery,  
your head is bowed, machining quiet hours  
into a wrap of restfulness we slip on  
like a comfortable coat.  
We stare, the dreaming needle flies,  
and you, peace-working,  
never lift your eyes.  
These dark aisles draw us in;  
down there, a couple in white smocks  
and yellow gauntlets, by their silver trove  
are ladling heaps of ice in bright  
obeisance to the shuttered night.  
We fly into the frozen moment,  
seabirds through a sudden window.  
Around us, shadows; doors  
are slamming. Cries of watchmen  
greet returning ghosts,  
announce the close, and crash the iron bolts;  
on the frozen moment  
crash the iron bolts.

### Oblivion to Bang Wa

I'm looking, for the thousandth time,  
down from this commuter line  
at a weedy Chinese graveyard,  
sliding by.  
It says memory's a shaky act.  
Oblivion Junction to Bang Wa.  
The rush-hour train is packed,  
approaching Saleh Daeng;  
our Skytrain, slowing down  
now, for the station.

And over crumbling vaults,  
the ring of corporate giants





looms in stainless expectation  
of a drop-dead valuation,  
for this real-estate of tombs.  
And suddenly, statistically,  
you know that someone  
on this train, will get off  
at big Junction O, today;  
will never have another  
job to sweat about, or have  
another monthly pass to pay.  
And in another hundred years, or less,  
say seventy five, not one aboard  
Oblivion to Bang Wa now will be alive,  
and many here today can't know,  
that they're already booked to go,  
express.  
No one stayed top-dog, fatcat,  
mad-ass, high-so, in-crowd.  
No one stayed hot, stayed high,  
stayed strong, stayed up-and-coming,  
loaded, or knew why they didn't give  
a fuck for any of it, anymore.  
Of course, long dead, or ga-ga,  
they're guaranteed not to.  
But some are heard laughing,  
Oblivion to Bang Wa,  
some are still laughing  
in books that they left you.





### Petronius Arbiter, Unplugged

Fragments and classical reflections,  
contemptuous rejection  
of all pious genuflections.  
We meet .... today, on Orwell Plaza.  
Gaius Petronius, taking in the sorry view  
of prophecy and panic, plague and lockdowns,  
hailed, you investigating too, old mole?  
The world has crossed its viral Rubicon.  
The latest mad mutation of the Marxist mind  
re-animates old monsters.  
Before us, and behind, upon the vacant market,  
a scattering of security guards pursue  
the national sport and snore,  
as that inflexible and arrogant ideology  
makes war again upon the world  
with some new criminal biology.

The streets are so deserted,  
I await the imminent arrival  
of more cinematic properties,  
some rolling tumbleweed,  
with pirouettes of dancing dust,  
the buzzing darkness of a locust cloud,  
an ominous thunderclap, so loud it must  
announce four horsemen,  
or at least, a catastrophic storm.

Let's reacquaint and lubricate our attitudes.  
He spoke over his shoulder to my musings,  
already striking out for comfort, on the inside track.  
Apocalypse can arrive without cinema's theatricals,  
and God knows, we have all been warned.  
I stared the real thing in the face, way back.  
Urban extinction's brutal and depressingly banal.  
Remember, that I knew Phnom Penh  
just days before the fall.  
I saw confusion, chaos and delusion;  
an atavistic fear and dread;  
I lived with premonitions of the dead.  
I saw the best scorn tyranny and panic  
armed with stoic resolution, and that's all.





Some optimists thought a run for it  
with everything, worth a try.  
Saw sad life-stories, carts of household stuff,  
then heaped, expensive furniture, drive by.  
Whole trailer-loads  
of doomed misapprehensions.  
You could tell, it was  
the affluent of the old regime,  
encircled, still intent on circumvention,  
until the dying moments,  
towing TV sets and fridges off to hell.

Strange, few wanted Pol Pot's  
Chinese take-away, somehow.  
Four years later, history showed us why.  
He and the comrades did it Mao's way;  
dialectical imperatives said  
millions had to die.

For that, and all too many precedents,  
the likes of you and I will defy augury  
and spurn the communist leprosy.  
To bend a knee to terror we demur.  
What else were you expecting  
from a Roman raconteur?

We climb to a deserted terrace,  
beat upon a door,  
and through the peep-hole are adjudged  
trustworthy reprobates, before we hear  
that sweetest music of releasing chains.

Come in with me, to drink, to score,  
tell stories of what foolery remains  
among the artists of this city  
and its resurrected whores.  
I am Gaius Petronius, the arbiter and antigen.  
Carouse with me in this immortal perch,  
my style's to spurn all Marxist apparatchiks,  
decorate the vomitorium  
like their pestilential church.

They go in .....





## Bearded Cantos #1

I doubt I'll go the full Ben Gunn beard.  
You know, the Treasure Island crazy castaway look?  
Like my Grandfather Frank took on,  
old soldier-biblical, in latter years.  
Mirror, mirror, on the wall .....  
For one thing, my wife, and Asian culture,  
here, would never let me get away with it.  
You'd have to be an oldster living  
eccentrically alone.  
Ha! You've used an ejector seat before.  
True, those things can blow you into  
a new dimension, new life, new haircut;  
or the graveyard.

Strumpet Fortune can be a bitch  
when life decides to throw the switch.  
No, you'd have to be a bearded oldster,  
eccentrically alone  
like my late painter pal, Watson, in South London,  
decades back, living in only two or three  
rooms of a big Georgian terrace that was home,  
on the Kennington Road. And what a script;  
ex-actor, boxer, poet, delivery-flier of new fighters  
to the wartime airfields, and of verses to the world;  
and an artist, now an attic and a basement,  
and the intervening floors full of his paintings,  
and his previous lives, and residue of previous  
wives, and sculptures and personas, radical debris  
and archives of his Woodstock Gallery.  
He was still painting, drinking, enticing models,  
chasing women, figuratively, whenever opportunity  
arrived, as you can see.  
Pursued a girlfriend of mine, on his sticks,  
for a kiss, around the table.  
Then, bacchanalian jugs of Margueritas  
and a Kennington taverna-session later,  
he furiously sketched the fiery sex  
that he'd encouraged, on his sofa;  
and when we were done,  
we found him naked at his easel too,  
charcoal in hand, and still at work.





A pause for sustained laughter.  
Hairdressers and actresses were hot,  
and, introduced, he'd usually ask them  
to pose naked. They said yes, a lot.  
I missed him when his flight was done.  
Few wilder would come after.  
That was the full, untrimmed Ben Gunn.  
Now that, Watson, was a beard!

### Orpheus in his Underwear

The gods are bald and ga-ga  
and the Muses have OD' d,  
the courtesans are shrivelled up and gone.  
I hoard a hermit's arrogance  
alone with cats and squalor  
and my compromised  
integrity is dumb.  
Each day for hours  
a wasted meme of Maugham,  
or some scarred and smoke-stained  
trope of Graham Greene  
trapped in an Asian cul-de-sac,  
corrupted by the tragedies I've seen,  
I've outlived hope by now,  
and in exchange for scant protection,  
I will sanitise the Rouge regime  
somehow, in ways avoiding  
mere, lickspittle genuflection.  
If Karma's mad mummings want  
to visit me, let them come.  
I will meet them at the crossroads,  
unpick a brilliant solo,  
maybe born under a bad sign,  
because I still can strum.  
A groupie's wit  
still parodies  
the squalor in my kitchen  
the highs of past performance,  
and my overgrown convictions,  
easy fellowships with  
killers, and the patronage  
of demons.





My pretensions survive,  
for all the usual reasons.  
I smoke and I toke, and  
for hours I still strum;  
encore, I am fluent,  
as never before in  
this shrunken P.R. jingle  
that my music has become.  
The gods are bald and ga-ga  
and the Muses have OD' d,  
the courtesans are shrivelled  
-up and gone.  
I hoard a hermit's arrogance,  
alone with cats and squalor,  
my picking is prodigious now,  
perfected every day,  
I play to dull the ache,  
of what I lack.

But this is Orpheus, in his underwear,  
and the contract, non-negotiable,  
the contract, always said,  
"No looking back."

### **Familiar**

Some kind of emissary  
from the wastes beyond words,  
loping across forests  
spiked with dazzling malice,  
padding silent snowlines  
and the iron crust of loneliness.  
Appearing suddenly at my knee  
you sink your icy muzzle  
in my hand;  
pronounce me free.





**Wordsworth: Outright Lies and Bad TV**

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come  
did not arrive.

And where the rest of it all went to,  
none can tell.

Last night I fell down, right outside Dove Cottage  
after a surfeit of horse tranquiliser and harlots.

Dorothy bathed my contusions and gave me hell.

(wry laughter). Well, you can imagine!

The last time that happened, Coleridge  
was staying in the spare room.

My demons close with an assumptive question.

And our deals are swiftly done.

The poet's all the unspoiled thing I've got;  
my sure reflection, and some distillate of me,  
that swings between remission and denial.

All the rest is zombie culture. On the run,  
from outright lies, and bad TV.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come  
did not arrive.

So I am told.

And where the rest of it all went to,  
none can tell.

I've grown a beard, in rehab, and  
a pose of new maturity I can sell.

I may wear the bottoms of  
my trousers rolled.

Manwhile .....

Only Grand Cru is ageing well."

(Bearded Cantos #2)

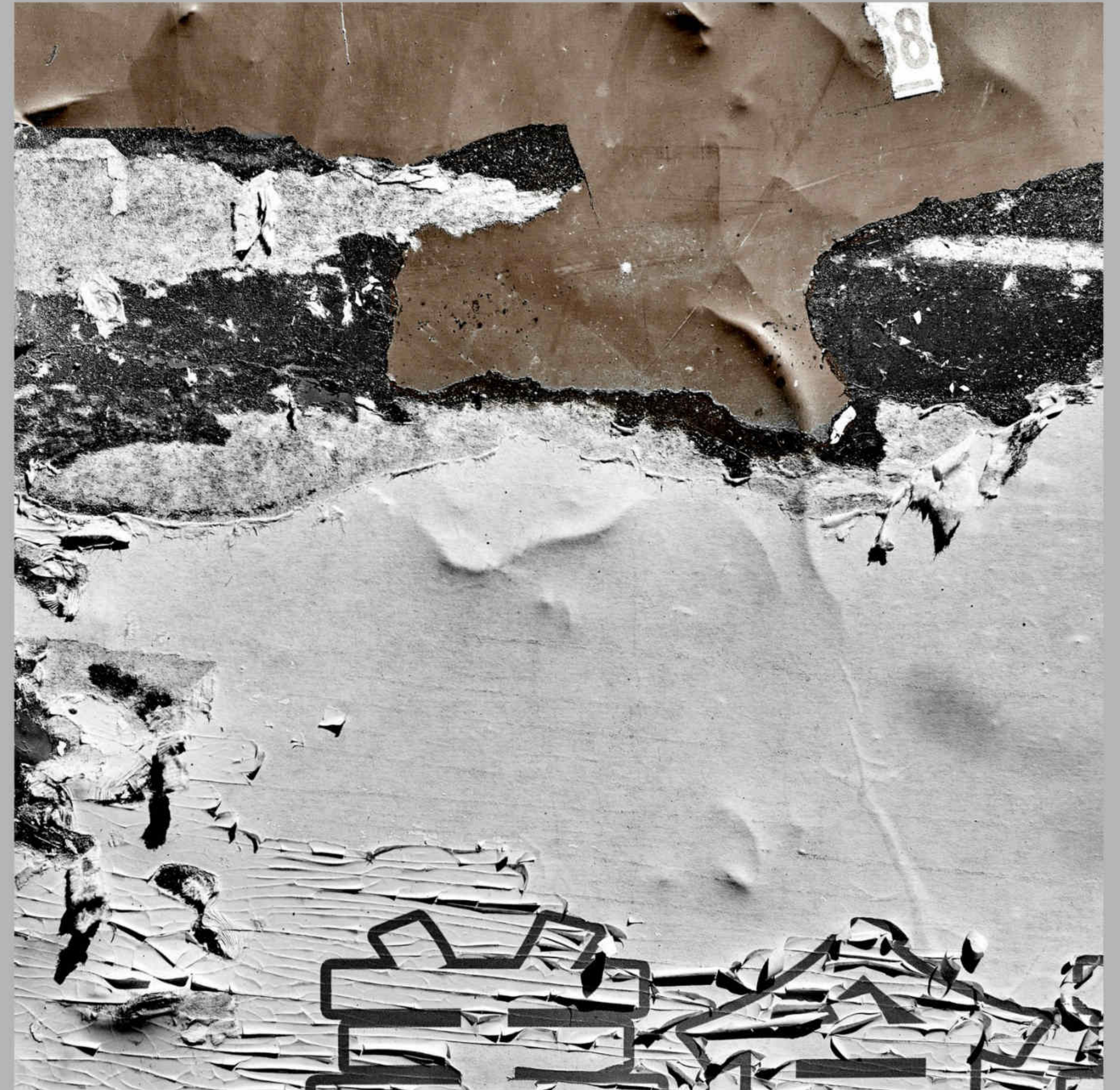




## Cantos of the Quarantine Republic

More anaesthetic for outlaws,  
Dick Turpin in the saddle,  
steeple-chasing on reefer.  
Mad rides lifelong  
and I'm good till the last  
furlong, fucker,  
you'll never take me, living,  
marx-bots.  
I'll ride this nag until she drops.  
And if necessary, whip her,  
for she fully comprehends the crop  
and just a rub of it  
she gives her all,  
turns Pegasus at  
crazy jumps.  
You never will outstrip her.

Meanwhile, in Mexifornia.  
A penitentiary-zoo .....  
And let me say  
that full-face tattooed  
death mask really suits you.  
Shawn, released now, told of nights  
with just a prison blanket  
warding off the cockroach carpet.  
Beyond the door the shiv-stickers,  
torturers and hit-men,  
the plague spitters  
infected human dross,  
imaginative murderers  
of Mexifornia.  
The magus of an evil eye,  
and rabid balls-of-from-a-distance  
shit-throwers, lie, in foetid cages;  
each night a stinking oven  
run by racial gangs,  
and nine hundred effing  
desperate ways to die.  
Sure, each man rages at the dying  
of the light  
in Mexifornia.





## Circumstantial Evidence

We have your co-ordinates, and know precisely your destination.  
It is election time, and in the street of the plastic surgeons,  
posters of men in white uniforms and fixed grins flap in unison.  
This is a one way street, and a u-turn invokes serious penalties.  
Traffic proceeds at breakneck speed through the great arch of autocracy.  
By the pantheon of patriarchs, diseased birds slumber on the frozen plumes  
of bronze headgear, mildew eating at ceremonial swords. Stay in lane.

The great highway of charlatans is multi-lane, crowded at all hours  
and will bring you invariably to Hypocrisy monument, where all roads meet.  
One way. Vendors swarm with incense sticks, crystal meth and dreams,  
gold leaf to flatter a glowering idol at the revered corner of errors;  
a bottleneck, as many pilgrims buy merit from the four faced god here;  
dead slow as beggars kneel in the road, abandoned to divine protection.  
Proceed by the grand plaza of pointless purchases, and slow down for  
heavy traffic at narcissus mall, street of six names for your inferior.

You must pass through the grovelling gate, temple of the abject loop;  
this is street of six titles for your superior, leading to the institute  
of impregnable ignorance, graced with a royal charter. Take a right  
on the grand drive of distracting flags, to the causeway of embalmed kings.  
Go forward to the mall of the eternal flame. At karaoke heaven,  
superlative banality may cause your ears to bleed. Accelerate away.  
Proceed.

Traffic circles perpetually round the academy of harlots;  
whores, constantly renewed, wind silk around the sacred trees,  
disrobe, and leave a mekong to appease priapic spirits.  
You must drive through the emporium of envy and unsatisfied desires,  
bypass the chaotic terminus of transsexuals for denial drive,  
speed on past Guess Wat Buddhist theme park, en route for meth mall,  
where it is always rush hour, and the men at Jamaica corner sell oblivion  
in small packs to foreigners, who are ransomed by the tourist police.

Near the fountain of corrupted thought, pass beggar children  
fishing for coins and fever in the catfish dark of drains:  
at last you are near your destination, on a street of fortune tellers.  
Here, gamblers with their cards and severed fingers,  
taking pains to keep their face white and uncompromised,  
play endlessly, and disregard their loss.

Your tinted windows let you pass unrecognized.  
This dusty cul-de-sac is yours. Abandoned





lottery tickets blow across the nameless street,  
and withered wreathes are strewn  
about some broken idol's feet. It is election time.  
New posters of the white and smiling uniforms  
wallpaper every space. This final cul-de-sac is yours;  
self-hatred and the breath of street dogs, foul upon your face.

### Preston to Pinnacle Hill

Hertfordshire / Walk 52

Cross-country by twilight; between signposts,  
your life teased out before you  
to risk and randomness,  
a highway to the puzzle palace.  
Freedom under a cold sky?  
Or the pathway lost in the unmapped,  
the arbitrary gloom, frozen by misjudgement?  
There is little room for going wrong out here,  
the torchlight battery dead, the map is blind.  
A childhood fear of getting lost is never far  
behind you in the wild and frosty dark.

But feel, here, far between the signposts,  
find the primitive pulse of the present,  
mark the habit-forming lightness of this  
peace of you, the kind of stride you  
fall into against the dwindling sun.  
Autumnal fire across the ancient scarp  
would break a landscape painter's heart.

Your masterpiece of minutes soon is gone,  
but you, a breathless audience of one  
for several moments have it stark and clear.  
The puzzle palace vanishes, the moon looks on,  
and this is why you're here. The air bites:  
you race the thrilling onset of the dark.





### Confessions of an English Thorium Eater

Returning to the quixotic influence of the elixir  
he was transformed into a statue in the beer garden,  
suddenly discovering that the life of statuary  
whispers with the giant calls of pyramids and  
Babylonian towers, muffled ramblings of  
buried colossi, the poisoned colonnades  
of Florence and Versailles.

Thoughts reared like lonely mesas above  
a horizon stuck on fast forward.  
In a conversation which lasted several lifetimes,  
he spoke with Michelangelo's David,  
about the opiate of hope,  
swayed to the snare drum skitter of scree,  
idolator of mountains, testament in splintered  
quartz and impact scars, he saw  
tectonic empires rise and fall;  
slow motion in the granite bowels of God.

Worn to Philosopher's Stone at last,  
he gigged a thousand years on Easter Island;  
with other stand-up men explored  
the comic fault lines of creation;  
the theatre of absurdity  
his leisured recreation.  
Against a heckling ocean,  
told time's existential jokes.

Of course, he died the death.  
They closed the bar around him,  
wrapped flower garlands round his chiselled smile.  
Some made miraculous claims.  
They've used him as a pillar  
in the showroom for a while.





**Hermes Trismegistus: Visa Bureau**

In a grandiose, air-conditioned  
marble-chrome pyramid,  
these audacious spaces speak only of power.  
Witness the many staff, pickled and stunted,  
years in this endless morass of procedure  
has left them, in attitude, surly and sour,  
ground through officialdom's arcane gearing,  
each day another tourniquet on thinking.

Others, crisply uniformed, more badges  
and ribbons than battlefield veterans,  
stamp documents with martial complacency.  
Believe me, there are hundreds  
who will bid for any vacancy.

I'd dilute this ruthless honesty of portraiture,  
if I was orchestrating some cult of personality,  
project faux-warmth and friendliness,  
but obviously, they couldn't care less;  
and that, I must confess, quite worries me.

The Visa Bureau also seethes with parasitic fauna,  
a cockroach skitter of agency henchmen,  
then hustlers' tarts and bag-men, beetling conmen  
and law-benders, rule-flexers, chancers and palm-greasers,  
officialdom's ass-lickers, crack-dwelling waste-feeders,  
shifty, contemptuous, dung-rolling, wad-lifters,  
ingratiating, slippery and phone-furtive deal-chisellers,  
ubiquitous scaly-eyed slithering bribe-takers,  
and brass-necked, transparent untouchable gold-diggers.

Observed, the daily circus in this pyramid will show,  
the law of Hermes Trismegistus holds.  
And the truth will surely horrify the visitor  
when told, this is the national paradigm.

"As is above, so is this rot below."





**Selling the Future. Prospectus.**

“We offer several models of dystopia.  
Any colour you like,  
as long as it’s nightmare metallic.  
We’ve factored-in  
blurred vision and myopia.  
We’re so far up your life, in fact,  
it’s positively phallic.  
The algorithm armies have  
decrypted your freedom,  
your electronic snail-trails,  
collected to exploit you.  
With privacy a figment  
of a bygone, vanished age,  
consumption and subservience,  
the limits of your cage,  
your spasms of nausea,  
your alienated gloom,  
your self-revulsion,  
life convulsions,  
exhaustively recorded,  
here, within the Rictus rooms.”  
Angry?

They re-routed your lives,  
and they dumbed down your cultures.  
Surveillance killed privacy,  
and the state stole your futures.  
Big data took your whispered secrets,  
read your private mail,  
their deadly snake of algorithms  
personalized betrayal.  
Did you realize,  
your love-life’s a blue movie,  
for the morons in security?  
You know they’re watching,  
secretly, to monitor your “safety”.

You embrace in the open air,  
sat. images will show them where,  
it’s a personalized betrayal.





Your life's a daily lock-down,  
and your taxes are a shakedown,  
you're cuffed, and screwed,  
and face-down, in an electronic gaol.

Are you angry?  
Science fiction is the think-tank  
for control and subjugation;  
dystopia run by cyborgs  
is your childrens' destination.

For the men who sold the future,  
you're just mall-drones.  
Don't you know?

Your life's a geek sideshow.  
Privacy is dead.

They track you on your fancy phones;  
you think you're cool, but what do you know?  
You're in this mess right over your head.

You buy these shirts, and you wear those shoes,  
you read these books, and you hold those views;  
your friends are known, and your thoughts are clues  
that, as soon as They need, they will surely use,  
against you.

Why aren't you angry?

"You're never off the radar,  
And we see inside your head,  
we've allowed you sport and shopping,  
but the dream of choice is dead.

Your spasms of nausea,  
your alienated gloom,  
your self-revulsion,  
life convulsions,  
exhaustively recorded,  
here, within the Rictus rooms.

This Calvary climb's  
the road map of your future,  
dementia is the programme, coming soon.  
Your life-script is soap operas and shopping,  
you're quarantined and brainwashed  
and neutered and dispensable,  
and, by the way, most welcome,  
to the unique Rictus Rooms.





Oh no, of course that's not real blood  
that's spattered on the windows.  
We hope that you'll enjoy your stay,  
and have a truly awesome day,  
hermetically secure, and numb  
within the Rictus Rooms.

We offer several models of dystopia.  
Any colour you like,  
as long as it's nightmare metallic.  
We've factored in blurred vision and myopia,  
we're so far up your life, in fact, it's positively phallic."  
But WHY aren't you angry?





## Pre-Mortem: 1

We'll make our first incision here, just where  
the still-unanswered question meets the world.  
A spurt of old scenarios, textual silage,  
fermented fornications, magisterial mileage,  
recycled disappointments,  
the picaresque perversions of a scholar,  
the disdain of the heretic professor,  
contempt and dread, old angst and accident,  
a score of travelling-player roles spill out,  
that all refined raw poetry's integument.

Our subject, hypnotised by monkish chanting,  
amplified; and the morning's temple side-shows  
outside; registers the vendors, speedsters, tricksters  
and pretenders, mortified by hipsters, hookers,  
hucksters, shysters, street-life chancers,  
the wretched and the dispossessed,  
his ever-faithful demons,  
and a stand of writhing dancers for good measure;  
and so, our subject will arise,  
torment his creaking body in the gym, then plough  
that chill preservative, the solitary pool, his lifelong pleasure,  
to distract his, self-incriminated, increasingly attenuated,  
gravity's wry fool.

We unpack a rootless exile and a lucky escapologist,  
calamity's Houdini, and the score-card's grateful analyst,  
a plaything of the muses, become sanity's apologist,  
some stoical comedian and an in-remission fantasist,  
a drinker of Saint Elmo's Fire, a lifelong hostage to desire,  
a high performer on the wire, and unredeemed self-analyst.

The black box in the wreckage will eventually show  
he ventured like old Icarus where wise men do not go,  
saw criminals seize the cockpit and saw traitors at the gate,  
was grateful the betrayal of his heritage came too late  
for him to see its grievous, full extent.

He counts among his consolations  
the philosophic constellations,  
but his little doubts  
infect the panoramic firmament.





### Song of the Undertaker's Men

Grey stone and yellow flowers,  
orange lichen on obituaries.  
An Italianate pieta lowers,  
while through the doors, departure rites,  
the murmur of grey obsequies.  
The undertaker's men outside,  
outside the church in Ballinrobe  
are glancing at their watches,  
slowly shuffling their feet  
as plumes of diesel, blaze of spring,  
sleek rooks that flash like chisel blades  
embellishing the day's bright offering  
crowd the narrow street.

The murmur of departure rites,  
the rustle of grey obsequies,  
outside a wake in Ballinrobe  
the undertaker's men can hear  
the "chuck, chuck" of the birds' delight,  
the copper bowing of their flight  
go weaving like a fiddler's reel  
across vermilion rusted rooves  
and through the drunken trees.

The hour of one strikes on the clock,  
a pop song rings a mobile phone,  
to a sprightly jig that plays below  
an old woman taps her foot, alone.

And brushed by whispers, churchyard facing,  
Crosby's peeling storehouse, all  
aglow as some old master's painting,  
frames the undertaker's men  
outside a wake in Ballinrobe,  
who've smoked and taken stock of haze  
that drifts upon the Partry mountains,  
veiling like a dancer's face  
the lonely beauty of that place,  
seducing undertaker's men, who  
murmur softly, sigh again,  
and never seem to tire of waiting.





## Spool 10

Jodric in Truth's embrace.

The Universe forgives you. Time to forgive yourself. The forgotten God-the-Father interviews.

Professor Plinth on Anthropology versus Escapology.

"Those cave-wall wode-jockeys were yesterday's myth-makers, pulling gods out of stones and trees.

Until you've travelled, as I did under hypnosis, through the molecular darkness of space, to the asteroid mountain, the Void of boundless serenity, until you've spent whole vocabularies of illumination, stunned by the volcanic flicker of portal fires ..... employed whole monasteries of monkish Gregorian chant and yogis full-on Tantric ..... you don't get it, the electric jolt of their truth. The original projectionists, the true wizardry of wode. It's a polaroid from pre-history. It's a subterranean intercept of the Code.

Please, call me Jodric. And yes, indeed, you can pour me another one of those.

Now, consider these ancient cave-villages in North Africa, still inhabited. Only TV antennae, projecting from the barren, sun-baked regolith reveal their presence to travellers driving by. To the visitor, sweeping in on a tour-bus, there are TV's on shelves, bicycles, children's toys and the junk of domesticity, political strongmen on pictures, mullahs and royalty. And to the visitor it smells of shit and superstition. TV-feeds suck in the directives of the State Network and the current dictator, to the denizens of craters and caves below.

It is a brutally reductionist meme of our century. Take your pictures, Jodric, buy a trinket, bottle up and go.





When a man stops taking care of his books,  
he has already reached an understanding with  
mortality.

A painter called it a termite farm.  
My book collection looks neglected.  
And though it's "done no man no harm",  
it's disorderly and dusty like I left it  
in a hurry years ago.

Where the hell did I go?  
And, spare me your disbelief,  
long and hard I've thought about it.  
Still not sure if I know.  
Truth's a contortionist,  
complacency's a thief  
the Academy's a whore,  
the very Oracle of Delphi  
has been compromised.  
Confirmed; your billfold  
has been digitised, and yes  
there's a seat reserved for you  
at the arena, for sure.

I'd advise against sitting  
so close to the stage,  
the spectacle will be violent.  
There'll be agents provocateurs,  
more killings, false flags, and rage;  
the press is disingenuous.

Epic Times, and epic lies,  
they've got the Final Act from Hell.  
I'm not a real reporter  
(but, who is, now?)  
I will tell it ..... like I see.  
Epic lies and global scams.  
Hang on to thinking as long as you can.  
Contact at best, is tenuous.  
And the cave wall will survive us all,  
I'm gagged now, you won't hear  
much more from me.

When a society forgets the smell of its books,  
it has already cast off from its history.





Some books could instruct, some books inspire,  
some books went stealing souls.

Now books are down-loaded singly, or in shoals  
to devices or smartphones by radiated signals. We  
are sometimes in its shallows, often in its depths,  
but we go everywhere now in a signal-ocean.  
Out there! Ho! See Herman Melville's salty  
masterpiece  
roar through you like the Trade winds, lance you  
like  
some harpoon thrown by Queequeg.  
And no wonder  
you have such abiding pain,  
beyond all chiropractor's skill,  
in one leg .....

Despite that, you are standing  
lethal as a ramrod,  
on the doomed and pitching  
bridge of Pequod.  
Is not that cloud shaped very like a whale?"

#### Plaque, Castlebar

At the bridge, in Castlebar, by Linenhall Street,  
upon the streaked grey stone, observe a plaque,  
"1798, (the now-forgotten) Captain Chambers,  
of Longford Militia, held this bridge  
against repeated Franco-Irish attack."

The shallow stream boasts car tyres, beer cans, sad debris.  
Across the narrow street, now, a phone-fixer shop,  
a charity shop, and a window-full of kitsch;  
and long-forgotten Captain Chambers, who can clearly see  
Humbert, the Che Guevara of Napoleon's First Republic,  
and the pike-men of the Irish Rising,  
surging forward, lethally surprising, from the west,  
the stalwart Captain Chambers  
is pronouncing life a bitch;  
long-forgotten Captain Chambers,  
his defenders sorely pressed, remarks,  
the unpredictable bayonet-rush of history's  
a bitch.



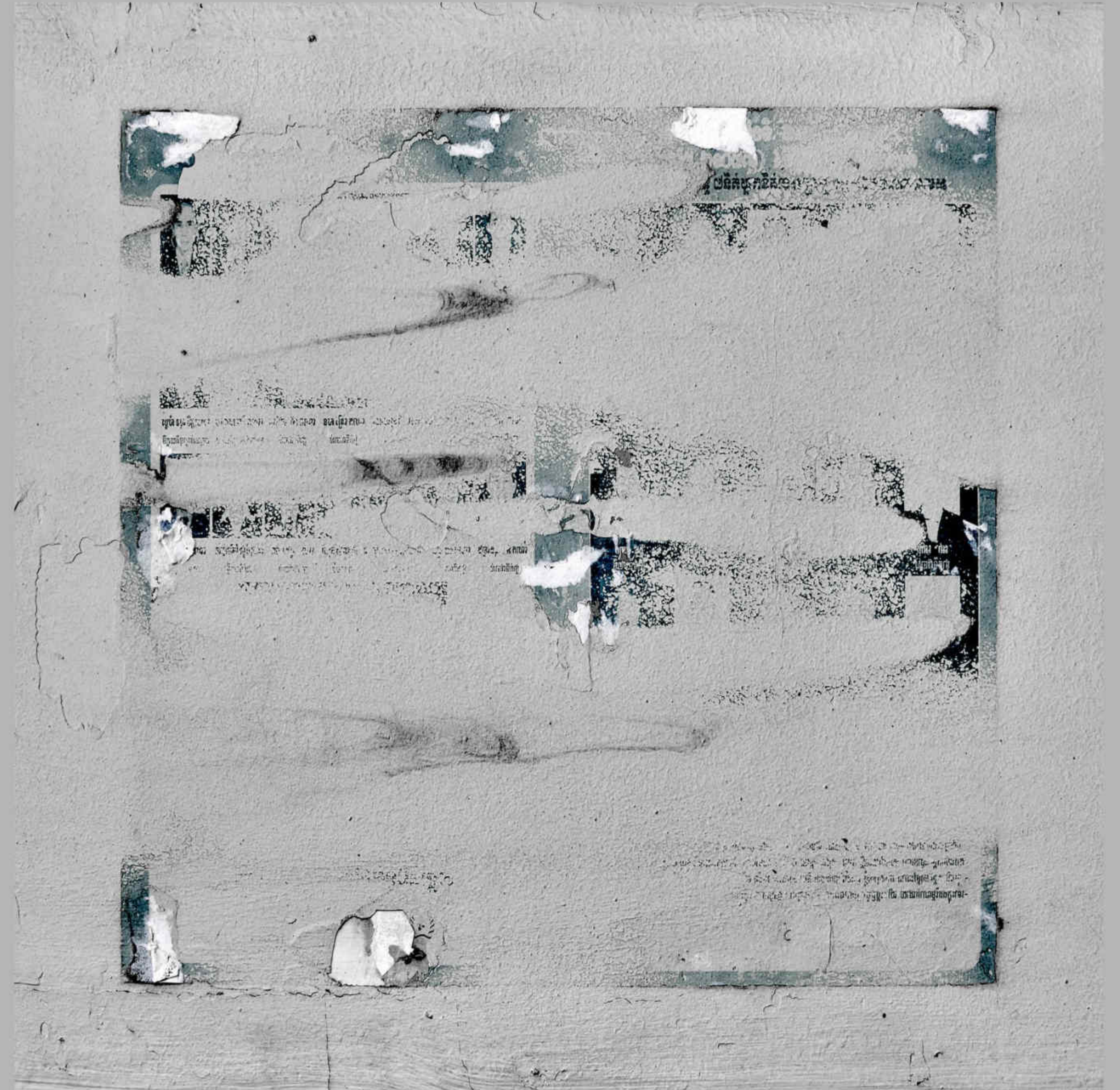


A sports store flanks him now,  
and by degrees, inching up Main Street,  
the shiny creep of German autos,  
their drivers texting furiously,  
perhaps for reinforcements,  
as musketeers and pike-men, rank on rank  
contest the bridge in bloody desperation,  
advancing by the fabric store,  
into the grape-shot desolation,  
determined to prevail or die.

Main Street is corpses, cannon-smoke, and screams,  
bright murder scythes through either bank  
in battle, pitched for this polluted stream.  
Minor player Captain Chambers  
re-enacts his gory sub-plot  
here, on this very haunted spot,  
the slaughterhouse of pavement,  
where you stand.

So Chambers, our sad captain,  
holds the bloody line and smokes,  
and on the bitter irony of history's  
bad jokes, reflects.

Reflects, and grimly nods,  
his doomed and soldierly respects.





Lyrics by John Gartland

Photography by Thomas Wunsch

Music by Nick E. Meta & Jan Mueller

Mastered by Chris Zippel

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Margaux Publishing  
Eisenacher Strasse 52  
65191 Wiesbaden  
Germany

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First Edition

Printed in Germany

