

POLEMICAL MIDDLEBROW WTF

Catachresis as text, traditionally considered at the level of the individual word, with reading as a starting point.

I hope to provide a new critical tool for thinking about poetry which cannot be discussed using

the conventional vocabulary of imagery or metaphor. If the term does not exist, then the term does not exist.

Productive wrongness comes out of grammar and this can be drawn out by contemporary rhetoricians

and linguists working along boundary lines between fundamental reconfiguration and the misuse of words.

Not as a kind of irresponsibility with regard to meaning but as avant-garde theory leading to fresh use of language.

It seems authors have always broken the rules and been complicit in a downright erroneous use of words when

they wish to describe. Their work is deliberately misleading, has a mildly grandiose feel, an untidy suggestion of truth.

I left because I didn't want to endure life imprisonment for hitting someone repeatedly and slowly over the head.

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THE AGE OF DESTRUCTION AND LIES

So how do we understand and act upon
the doctrine of the separation of powers?

We may be jealous of those who are dead
but a new orthodoxy suggests that

we may *all* be dead before too long, are
acutely susceptible to the coming epidemic.

The best way to understand anything is to use
the science fiction cliché of global consciousness

as a response to unmentionable goings-on
compounded by the decline of social engineering.

Odds are you are happy with how it's all worked out:
creative destruction is the name of the game.

The ultimate consequence of these upheavals
is a predatory intimacy in response to the unmentionable

and badly written puff pieces which are often a pretext
for vivid set pieces and paid trips to the frozen north.

Let's agree that overall goals are often unattainable.
I am understandably sceptical about doppelgängers

and new ideas which circulate among poets too slow
to notice a whole constellation of books and dreams,

but you don't get to choose who reads you
or who does what with music and words.

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HARD-WIRED

Halfway through a novel I realise
I read it last month. Can't find that copy,
must have gone to the charity shop
in one of the boxes of books I turned out
to make space for those I'm bound to buy
in the future, however much I say I won't.

Stories swirl around, though now they're
mostly aphoristic or collections of notes,
discrete passages for the reader to assemble
into their own narrative. More than ever
that's how the world around us works:
loops and tangles, strings of events

with no cause or effect. The space between
is as important as the edges, the thing itself
casts a shadow, leaves a trace; that is all
we know or see. I have strayed into ruin,
must look at the mouth moving if I wish
to hear and understand. The raw material

I need to build my life is here but all that's left
of me is you and some half-finished paintings,
jumbled words, my sweet life in disrepair.
I am sorry for my loss, prefer silence now
to music or bewildering radio plays. I can
hear the rain and wind, they make me worry,

do not steady my heart or pacify my mind.
The points and planes of future moments
are invisible, all I can do is send signals
into space. I am hard-wired for feeling,
primed with despair and despondency;
birds fly up even as the days count down.

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DAMAGED LAND

Forty minutes from home, winter sun lights the wind and turns the daffodils more yellow. Inside it's warm and jazz fills the table and chairs; the tide is out, gulls wheeling, dunlins everywhere looking for food. First footsteps of the sandy day washed clear out to sea, nothing: sky and spray signs say they're open but they're not. Only this white box over the cove, next to circus-coloured chalets shut tight for the winter.

Drink my coffee, drink in the view: pointillist blur of seagulls where sea smashes into the rocks. Can hear the sea everywhere; the horizon line has waves on it, onshore wind flattens everything. Surf, white water, gull moment, froth soup and the curtain snakes through the gallery to divide the darkened room.

DAMAGED LAND REMIX

Daffodils looking for winter flatten whitewater coffee. Pointillist gulls blur over dark and everything is inside: curtain warm gallery, in-wheeling chalets, jazz seagulls, more sea wind. It's where then can and yellow lights fills coloured tide, tight out of the sky and the shut view sprays the room. Wind circus smashes winter waves, drinks the next rock soup. Surf lines, sea-washed gulls, clear footsteps, divide horizon onshore everywhere.

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CONTEXT

Never look for things to do, they will catch up with you. The recycling pot is full again, it is too far to walk to the compost heap, and it is raining anyway. There is no context in which my audience will understand or expand to fill the hall, there is no way I even care.

Unscheduled is when a student has tapped on the card reader in the room but wasn't expected to be there. If you click into unscheduled it will tell you who they are.

I wish I knew and why I should be reading them or listening to their music. If they're genuinely not meant to be in there, hopefully you can redirect them or arrange for a transfer. The response was not good but that was only to be expected.

CONTEXT REMIX

Wasn't context the anyone up to it again?
The expected reader, the genuinely there-
but-I-don't-care care reading, the not expected
transfer? If the catch be meant, why tap the pot?
It was good. Understand rain, hopefully students
can be their own person, be given room anyway,
an audience with a when-or-if response. Walk-in
listening or arranged looking is unscheduled,
never the music. To redirect but compost,
expand: the recycling should click into you.

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PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Already known but slipped away
in the confusion of life, something
regarded as not important,
just *there*, unused, unprocessed,
an open system of distant origin
not made use of, in the DNA:
synthesized sounds, shiny black shoes
repaired with Chinese ink, buffed up
for an interview, washed off
in the rain walking home.
Didn't get or want the job.
Why so miserable? The transience
of things, all that I don't know,
prior knowledge gone to waste,
jars full of inks and dirty turps,
the paintings only I can imagine,
waiting to be made and finished
only to sit in bubblewrap or
go to the dump later on. Trapped
on my own Circle Line, I'm going
round and round to nowhere
whilst tannoy voices annoy me.
The babble fades away, the sun
comes out, it should be resolved
by now but isn't, won't ever be.
I'll slip away into forgetfulness
without saying goodbye or hello,
will wait to be read or heard,
for someone to look at my art.
The wind blows away the clouds
and the creek comes into view
while we indulge in jokes at work,
banter and innuendo in the pub.
Light on water is always magic
but Spring is impossible right now.
I wish it was like it was, back then.
Back when I thought I knew it all.