A MEASURE OF PARALYSIS

We are concerned with two enigmas: writing and its way of disorienting readers. Narrative can be dissected into its component parts and then reassembled, imagined into existence and narrated by plausible and fluent voices.

We are restless for the supposed opportunities of anarchy, long to address the realities of fragmentation and structures of feeling, although we do not know if the connection between them is any more than theoretical.

Traditional answers to this conundrum frequently affect the function of memory, influencing what is done and its eventual interpretation. The past, found in widely different states of preservation, is rapidly retrieved and carelessly recorded.

We view ourselves as grains found in ancient soil, sounds from unforgettable places still to be investigated, words we do not understand, dusty relics which have little value in themselves and are resistant to established syntax or detailed excavation.

Connections between agent and action can be considered as a bridge linking modern man with his ancestors. The parameters of risk facilitate techniques and strategies which attempt to capture shadows and compacted experience.

The way narrative fits together is by no means obvious; language propels story forward using possibility rather than prescription. Understanding has not evolved from the shrouds of mystery which allowed our questions to remain unanswered.

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CHOICES NOT MADE

1.

Humans' false memories

are surprisingly simple.

Overturned concepts,

commonly found data,

algebraic equations

offer new human intel,

fundamental reasons

about the time being.

Be done with productivity,

explain the consequences;

lower expectations

when writing anything.

People addiction

means less than we are,

reduces intention,

takes you into new depths.

Apology though valuable

is currently impossible,

brings interaction

with multiple words.

2.

Thrown overboard

we refuse to make progress,

every person's story

must be invented again.

We can be otherwise,

feel lack of intention,

properties of systems

that reject gravity's pull.

Energy into movement,

impossible connections:

wanting the feeling

of coherent prayer.

Infer the truth of it,

our universe is a bird,

just one passing text

that explains the words.

Source the quotation,

combine emerging sources;

develop mapping skills

and operate something new.

3.

Depression can be weighty,

does not improve cognition.

Eagerness is expectation:

know exactly what to do.

Accelerate the process,

learn to create a vacuum;

wage rises and promotions

produce keener motivation.

How the world should be

deserves your full attention;

beautiful soundtracks

delay the progress of despair.

Spinning rings in orbit

suggest plausible encounters;

when tangled molecules react

do not expect the human brain.

Have never understood

theories of communication,

the idea is not appealing,

knot theory has been pulled.

4.

Different topologies

are harder to imagine;

very little fiction

creates convincing worlds.

Determine the effectiveness

of inspiration and perception,

the laws of maths and physics

make everything behave.

Fundamentally alien

completion and construction

regulate the difference

between the good and bad.

As you inscribe every word

language comes unstuck,

adopting the mysterious form

of vaguely scrambled text.

Ideas have all but dried up,

what was happening didn’t.

Within our austere vision

we can never see the sky.

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BEAUTIFUL IN THE WRECKAGE

1.

Being able to move through space and time is never

easy to live with, is transformative and terrifying.

The past is immaterial and I can only look ahead

in total isolation. I worked at a ferocious pace,

cut ties with everyone, believing what I believed,

crestfallen at the lack of celestial trumpets,

nearly destroyed by theology's endgame. I became

lost in rooms and corridors of my mind, remembered

what didn’t happen as much as what did, collapsed

under the weight of excess but hopeful possibilities,

compromising the present. There is mystical structure

to my writing, a new cosmology of matter and energy;

work enables me to become myself, yields bad poetry

and unexpected ideas, essentialist vibrations produce

psychological phenomena and school magazine parodies.

I conceived of the universe as a wondrous stage set

bathed in soft light, narration in another language;

then walking along the garden path I went through to

a parallel reality where cultural dissection commenced.

Our occult generation always discusses TV and songs,

suffering and evil in the greater scheme of things;

psychic refuge has become a kind of religious delirium,

a space for messianic unease and new belief systems.

The counterculture simply must come to its senses,

achieve resurrection intellectually and emotionally

by charting personal moments we have not experienced.

The world is underpinned by a preconceived framework

driving humanity towards ruin, we must be clearheaded

and ruthless, be beautiful in the wreckage, should learn

to live where we are now, at the beginning of the past.

Joy is at the heart of eternity, love and acceptance

facilitate data transfer between possible points of view

enable bewildering spiritual vistas and physical sensation.

Epiphany turns out to be an abandoned citadel in the clouds,

thought an aimless monologue, a last thrust of nonsense.

No, an intellectual avalanche of eureka moments,

secret architecture, strange and wondrous phenomena

involving faith and archaeology, quantum physics, time.

I have heard conversations you would not believe.

2.

Dreams are about seeking truth not unreality,

distillations of metaphors, myth and ignorance.

I am going to be free, believe pre-destination is

not hard to understand, is simply a result of how we look

at impossible numbers of stars and each individual's depths,

how we make links between unexpected strands of language.

In my own way I am documenting all our flaws and traumas,

struggling to fathom belief and disbelief, appreciate reality.

Conspiracies which can’t be proved or disproved scare me;

in distant parts of my damp mind, corridors of betrayal

are lined with discarded manifestos and high-level truths

explaining broad conceptual structures. They contain errors

but that does not mean that I reject anything written down

or have warmed to fundamentalism, obsession or fascination;

an infinite number of interpretations is not confusion,

the way they blend and blur together without stopping

is an example of intuition, connection to creative acts.

Although you generally excuse yourself and are elsewhere,

I see *now* as a phenomenon that I can’t commit to.

Information arrives at the speed of light, is the only way

to understand or deal with oil drums full of burnt remains.

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STORM WARNING

for Richard Siken

'This convergence of the real and fictive has always been, it seems to me,   
the very mechanism by which art is formulated. This convergence brings us   
to the place of the imagination.'

– Okwui Enwezor, *Art in Question*

It is grey and wet outside. The cats are chasing each other around the house, having spent the morning looking out of the windows and catflap, bored. They cannot believe this weather and neither can I. The mist is persistent, the heavy rain cannot wash it away. Leaves and branches are being swept to the ground, the garden path is a stream, pouring towards the house.

It is not thunder, it is a cat on the stairs. The electric light flickers, a second cat emerges from under the bed to chase the first, although these events are not connected. There is an encounter on the landing: all stares and attitude that lead to standing down before they initiate a new bout of play fighting.

A poet I do not know but whose books I have read and own has spent five years recovering from a stroke. His new book, which will be published next year, is about recovering, is part of his recovery process, moving from dislocation and incoherence to new ways of thinking and understanding the world. He says it is not a recovery story because he does not recover, is about becoming somebody else who will never be who he was or write the way that he once did.

I am still fascinated by poems about rain, the impossibility of writing them, although I collect my own and others' failures. Sure, you can pretend you are out at sea in a storm, write about the elements, or recreate the noise of rain drumming on a wood or tiled roof, but in the end it is only a natural occurrence or a soundtrack to a mood.

I often write by association, deliberately disrupting sentences and everyday order, feeding phrases to a cut-up machine then finding out what the remix says. The poet says he only recovered because painting and poetry make 'such weird pathways built on lateral thinking' and offered 'help with the neuroplasticity'. He 'wasn't going to tell anyone anything', couldn't, wouldn't, but then decided that he would. The heavens have opened, there is another storm warning in place, the cats are now asleep on the bed.

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